

SUCCESS STORIES OF WESTERN COALFIELDS LIMITED

2. ECO-MINE TOURISM

Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) has introduced this novel initiative with the aim of dispelling notions of pollution and environmental degradation related to coal and mining operations in India. Under this “Eco-Mine Tourism” programme, WCL conducts tours of two operational coal mines—Saoner underground mine and Gondegaon open cast mine, 45 km and 30 km away, respectively, from Nagpur, Maharashtra—to give people a chance to see how coal mining is actually done, understand sophisticated mining methods and machinery and to experience the conditions in which workers put in precious man hours. Also an Eco-Park has been created in between these two locations where tourists can be enjoy the nature and also learn about the mining environment before entering into the real mines.

Eco-Park

Eco-Park was developed connecting fragments of open unused land into a comprehensive network to spread understanding about the mining industry while conserving ecology. The park is itself situated on the surface of Saoner underground Mine-1 and surrounded by 3 others mines in close vicinity. The park was inaugurated on 26th November, 2015 by Shri. Nitin Gadkari, Hon’ble Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping, Govt. of India and presided over by Shri. Piyush Goyal, Hon’ble Union Minister of State (Independent charge) for Power, Coal and New Renewable Energy and Shri Hansraj Ahir, Hon’ble Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Govt. of India.

The park is often visited by high ranking officials, bureaucrats and public figures from different organizations along with mine tourists on a regular basis and appreciated by Hon’ble Prime Minister in his radio programme- “Mann ki Baat” on 27th March, 2016.

Significant features of ECO-PARK are given below:

- Eco-park has several equipment such as Scientific fountain, Scientific swing, Ocean pool, etc made using applied physics laws, made in-house by WCL workmen using mine scrap material. The equipment apart from providing aesthetic beauty to the park, are also a source for inculcating scientific temperament in the visitors. The park is also a first of its kind endeavor to promote ecological balance by using mine water in the park. It boasts of a pristine landscape preserving most of the natural forest in its original shape with addition of several plants and trees including medicinal plants, bamboo plantations and a flower garden.
- Thee park showcases several demonstrable technologies such as Solar electrification of water pump, Rain water harvesting, micro irrigation, etc. along with a science park and several adventure rides such as rope chair, lakshman jhula, rope climbers, toy train, an open gym etc. The park also has an artificial mine tunnel showcasing different mining job profiles, mining machinery and methods used. Artificial Mine Tunnel at Eco-Park
- The park produces its own organic honey and vermi compost and provides training to the farmers on the same from the surrounding villages at free of cost. The packaging materials of the organic products are procured from a special school in Saoner where children with speech and hearing challenges make them.

Till date the Eco-park has been visited by 1,72,000 visitors since its inception and after the MOU between WCL and Maharastra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) in 2016, tourists across the country are able to visit the park and understand more about Coal industry.