

IIT Bhubaneswar students experience stories of ancient Odisha at cave trails

September 7, 2019



Bhubaneswar: The extended golden hour and a little drizzle was the perfect setup for a Saturday morning walk by 100 students from IIT Bhubaneswar through the Twin Hills of Khandagiri and Udayagiri.

These students along with walkers from around the country were fascinated to learn about the stories and legends of Emperor Kharavela. They were intrigued by how these hills have been in use for thousands of years and how the city of Bhubaneswar has grown around it from tiny hamlets to a cosmopolitan hub.

The students had a good time learning the history of these hills and the stories of these caves as it was something different from their regular daily schedule. The IITs attract the best minds from around the country and for them to experience the heritage and culture of a new place is an enriching experience.

The cave trails began at the foothill of Udayagiri which translates to sunrise hill. It proceeded

through the Rani Gumpha and went around the hill. The engraved panels of Rani Gumpha give a glimpse into the evolution of the art of stone craftsmen of the land of Kalinga. Also here we get to see the life and times of Emperor Kharavela. These caves and their histories are a testament to the religious tolerance practiced a millennia ago.

The lush greenery around the hills and the breathtaking view of the city from the top of the Udayagiri hill excited the students who joined the 82nd Cave Trail. The Heritage Walks taking place every weekend are an initiative to introduce people to the rich history and culture of Odisha to the world. These walks are curated to be fun and enlightening both for the young and old alike.

The heritage walks under the umbrella of Ekamra Walks aim to build a bridge between the glory of the past and hope for the future. Ekamra Walks, the first curated heritage walk of the Temple City of India, has become a popular venture for locals as well as visitors interested in Kalingan art, architecture and culture.

It has three events under its fold. While the Jain heritage trail, titled Monks, Caves and Kings at the twin hills of Khandagiri and Udayagiri is held on Saturday and starts at 6.30 am in the early morning hours, Temple Walk at Old Town area or Ekamra Kshetra (ancient name of Bhubaneswar) happens on Sunday morning at 6.30 am.

While the Jain heritage trail helps the visitor to know about the Great Emperor Kharavela and his contributions to the ancient Kalingan Empire and his patronage for Jainism. The Temple trail, on the other hand, familiarises visitors with different temple architecture and building style of Kalinga and their uniqueness and influences over other regions including the South East Asian nations. On Sunday afternoon Museum Walk has become another attraction at Odisha Crafts Museum _ Kala Bhoomi _ and the trail starts at 3:30 pm. The Museum Walk at Kala Bhoomi informs the visitor the story of Odisha's rich crafts, local and tribal art, handlooms and patterns of the beautiful sarees of Odisha.