In many cases the distinction between a museum and a rural tourist site is not always clear and the two often overlap, this situation means that museum and rural tourist sites must face similar if not the same set of challenges and prospects, when it comes to the management of resource and the visitors. Museums have gone beyond walls. Even a thickly populated artisan village can be referred as a great repository of living culture where the objects on display are no more confined within four walls. Unlike conventional museums where the galleries are stagnated and objects being displayed are kept in glass made niches, here in an artisan village, everything which catches the attention of a tourist is in a living form. There may be a variety of objects like making of toys out of cowdung, betelnuts, paddy, lacquer, terracotta etc. painting of a pattachitra, watering a betel leaf garden, harvesting of paddy using bullocks etc.…

An open air museum is a category of museum that exhibits collection of buildings and artifacts out of doors. European open air museums are variously known as Skansen, folk museums etc…A recent form is the eco museum, which originated in France. A comprehensive history of open air museum as idea and institution can be found in Swedish museologist Sten Rentzhog’s 2007 book “Open Air Museums : The History and Future of a Visionary Idea”. Living history museums are a type of Open Air Museums where costumed interpreters portray period life in an earlier era. The interpreters act as if they are really living in a different time and place, such as the colonial era, and perform everyday household task, crafts and occupations. The goal is to demonstrate older lifestyles and pursuits to modern audiences. Household tasks may include cooking in an open hearth, churning butter, spinning wool, weaving clothes, steaming paddies so as to make it edible, watering the betel vine etc…many living museums features traditional craftsmen at work such as blacksmith, potter, weaver etc…..

India is the only country in the world with an unbroken, living vibrant tradition of crafts. While agriculture employs the largest number of people in India, the craft sector is the next and sustains over 20 million practitioners. In earlier days, the caste system had sustained crafts production because of the social immobility of the artisans and the demand for crafted objects being restricted to local demands. In a traditional village society, there lies a deep interrelationship between artisans and the societal structure. In traditional village society, identification of artisans through their names, reasons why there is concentration of artisans in certain castes, issues of landlessness
Artisans of Odishan villages are engaged in making articles of decoration required for festival days in temples and households which has not only provided them their living but also opportunities for artistic expression. Whether the article be tie and dye textile or appliqué work, terracotta, lacquer or brassware, filigree ornaments or patta paintings etc. All these have made the daily life of Odisha people artistic and offered them avenues for trade and commerce in other parts of the country and even abroad. The once nourishing state of maritime trade and commerce of this land bears testimony to this fact. One can explore social history in village settlements, open air museums and rural household goods/ exhibits telling the story of working people’s daily lives in rural heritage crafts villages. There one can look at domestic life, everyday objects, traditional crafts, old cottages, preserved villages etc…

Once Mahatma Gandhi came out with the view that just as the universe is contained in the self, so as India contained in the villages. A special place in the global history of museums is occupied by the expositions devoted to the countryside and the culture of rural life. Rural museums are a relatively new phenomenon in the world. Museums in the open areas located in the natural environments are a well known phenomenon of European culture. Thus groups of rural dwellings with their traditional artifacts, places of worship and infrastructure facilities began to appear as museum objects. Such artifacts cannot even be placed in very huge buildings. Such kind of museums needed a different philosophy that was finally embodied in the idea of Open Air Museums. As is known, the first open air museum of monuments brought from different places was established in 1891 in Sweden by the famous ethnographer A. Hazelius. It is the “Skansen” museum in Stockholm. Later this name evolved as a noun for open air museums. Currently there are more than 90 museum reserves in Russia. More than half of them is devoted to the protection of the rural cultural heritage. Modern open air museums are just not a place for preservation of monuments of national, architectural and cultural value, but often they become popular tourist centers that attract visitors who are inclined to know more about local people and their way of life. There are certain villages of Odisha which have already started receiving worldwide attention as established heritage craft villages. These are Raghurajpur and Pipili in Puri, Khiching in Mayurbhanj, Barpali in Bargarh, Hirapur in Khurda, Padmanavpur in Ganjam, Deulajhari in Angul and Konark Natya Mandap. Let’s focus our attention on the two most soughtafter villages of Puri district.

RAGHURAJPUR

Rural tourism in Odisha has great future, since it not only provides natural elements of beauty but also the indigenous local traditions, customs and foods. Direct experience with local people can be a unique selling proposition to attract tourists. Raghurajpur village, a small village near Puri, is well-known for its art and culture. It is situated on the southern bank of the river Bhargavi, about 14 km away from the city of Puri. It has occupied a prominent position in India’s cultural map. The village represents the rich cultural heritage of the state of Odisha. Almost every family in Raghurajpur village is engaged in art and craft works, and as such it wouldn’t be an overstatement to refer to it as the artisan’s village.
Surrounded by coconut, jackfruit, mango and some other tropical trees, this village has a very pleasant atmosphere. The nearby paddy fields are dotted with numerous betel-leave gardens. This village houses numerous small temples dedicated to Lord Lamxinarayan, Radha Mohan, Raghunath, Gouranga, Gopinath and Bhuasuni, which happens to be the local deity of this village. Almost every house in Raghurajpur village has a skilled artist. The artists are seen busy engaged in various activities like the patta paintings, engravings on palm leaf, as well as creating stone idols, masks, wooden idols, sculptures and toys. The community of artisans in Raghurajpur creates various types of handicraft items including talapatachitra, patachitras, which are the folk paintings in Odisha, papier - mache toys, tusser paintings and cow-dung toys. They have developed mastery in creating poetry on cloth, dried palm leaf or paper. Patachitra painting is considered as the internationally celebrated art form of Raghurajpur village. There are about 103 houses, having approximately 311 artisans in Raghurajpur village. Some of these artists are the National Award winners. The three Patas painted by the Chitrakaras in this village are placed on the Singhasana or the deity throne of the main Jagannath Temple in Puri, during anasara (the fortnight following the full-moon day) in the months of May-June. The Chitrakaras also create beautiful paintings on the chariots of popular Rath Yatra in Puri. Besides these arts and crafts, Raghurajpur village is also famous for its traditional performing dance, known as Gotipua. This village is the birth place of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, the great Odissi dancer.

**PIPILI**

Pipili, the heart of the colorful art work called appliqué, is located at a distance of 20 km from Bhubaneswar on the NH 203 connecting Bhubaneswar with Puri. Pipili is located at 20.12° N 85.83° E. It is at Pipili that one takes a turn and moves eastward to proceed to Konark, the site of the Sun Temple. As a legend would have it, the Pipili derived its name from Pirs (holy Muslim saints), many of whom lived in this area. *Appliqué*, which is a French term, is a technique by which the decorative effect is obtained by superposing patches of coloured fabrics on a basic fabric, the edges of the patches being sewn in some form of stitchery. It is distinct from what is known as patch work in which small pieces of cut fabrics are usually joined side by side to make a large piece of fabric or for repairing a damaged fabric. Though the form is not unknown in other parts of India, it is in Odisha and especially in Pipili that the craft has a living and vibrant tradition continuing over centuries. While most appliqué craftsmen are concentrated in Pipili, there are quite a few in Puri and Khallikote, Parlakhemundi and Boudh. *Appliqué* works of Pipili is also known as patching cloth design. The local name of this handicraft is Chandua. As with many other handicrafts of Odisha, the roots of the appliqué art/craft form is intertwined with the rituals and traditions of Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of the Puri temple. The appliqué items are mainly used during processions of the deities in their various ritual outings. Items like Chhati, Tarasa and Chandua are used for the purpose. However, the appliqué work in its colourful best is most prominent in the cloth cover of the three chariots of the presiding deities in which they travel every year during the Ratha Yatra or Car Festival. The basic material for appliqué is cloth. The process is fairly simple and has been succinctly summarized by Mr. B.C. Mohanty in his monograph on *Applique Craft of Odisha*: Among the more popular appliqué items today are garden umbrellas, a variant of Chhati with wooden or aluminium stands, shoulder bags, ladies hand
bags, wall hangings, lamp shades, bed covers, pillow covers, letter pouches, etc. Appliqué items are also being used in combination with other handicrafts to produce composite products. An interesting use is the superimposition of appliqué on grass mats and used as partitions. Though earlier the art form was restricted to Darji caste, today it is practiced by non-caste members, notably by some young Muslim boys. Unlike many other handicrafts, appliqué items are attractive artifacts of daily use apart from being decorative. They are also comparatively cheaper. Appliqué work of Pipili is also known as patching cloth design. The local name of this handicraft is Chandua. Pipili, the heart of this colourful art work is located at a distance of 20 Km from Bhubaneswar on the Bhubaneswar to Puri road. By the late fifties only a few old men among the 90-odd Chitrakara families of Raghurajpur were still painting, whereas all the youths had deserted the profession; it was only around the year 1953 that, with the intervention of an American lady, Mrs Halina Zealey, a new future opened up and the artists once again took out their brushes and colours.

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