



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2017; 3(8): 32-35
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 09-06-2017
Accepted: 10-07-2017

Runumi Das
Assistant Professor,
Department of Economics,
Bikali College, Dhupdhara,
Goalpara, Assam, India

Prospects and problems of tourism in Assam

Runumi Das

Abstract

Tourism is now-a-days considered as an important industry which has vast scope for the generation of income and employment. It is one of the world's fastest growing industries, a major source of foreign exchange earner of a nation and a measure for resolving inter-state and inter-community conflict. The state of Assam is best known for her unique natural beauty with flora and fauna, historical monuments, pilgrim centre, tea gardens and its colourful cultural festivals. The wildlife sanctuaries at various places of Assam can also attract the tourists all over the world. This paper makes an attempt to explore the potentiality from Assam which will maintain a bright prospect of economic development in terms of tourism industry in near future.

Keywords: Assam, Economic Development, Tourism Industry

Introduction

Assam is the pioneer state of the North- Eastern Region of India and situated in the far, north-east corner of the country. The total geographical area of the state is 78,438 sq. km, which accounts for about 2.4 percent of the country's total geographical area. Assam shares her border with Arunachal Pradesh in East, West Bengal, Meghalaya and Bangladesh in West, Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan in North, and Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya & Tripura in South. Longitude: 88.250E to 96.00E Latitude: 24.50N to 28.00N. The entire area of Assam can be broadly divided into three well-defined geographical units namely- the Brahmaputra Valley covering the main body of the state in the north, the Barak Valley in the narrow protruding south and the state's Hilly region that separates the two valleys.

The gateway to the North-Eastern states. Assam is well blessed by nature and it lays at the centre of one of the world's richest bio-geographic areas. It has a rich cultural and ethnic heritage that can easily make it a tourist spot. Tourism has generated employment in different parts of the country. Besides creating opportunities for tourist guides, conducted tours, establishment of hotels, and so many other avenues in the tertiary sector, tourism can be a major source of employment in Assam.

Objectives of the study

- To review the various tourism destination and its potentialities in Assam.
- To unearth the problems which affect the tourism industry in Assam.
- To find suggestions to improve tourism industry in Assam.

Methodology

To cope with the objectives of the study, an evaluative and descriptive method has been adopted for the study. The present study is based on secondary data collection. The secondary data was collected from various published sources like books, journal, magazine, reports, publications, etc.

Correspondence
Runumi Das
Assistant Professor,
Department of Economics,
Bikali College, Dhupdhara,
Goalpara, Assam, India

Existing places of tourist attraction in Assam

Table 1: Nature related

S. No	Places	Distance from Guwahati in km	Speciality
1.	Bhairabkunda	137	A beautiful place at the border of Arunachal Pradesh
2.	Bhalukpung	205	A beautiful place by the side of river Jia Bhoroli, famous for angling and water sports
3.	Chandubi	64	A natural lagoon, beautiful picnic spot
4.	Dibru-Chaikhowa	490	70 km from Dibrugarh, national park, the habitat of elephants, buffaloes, famous for wild horses
5.	Haflong	355	One of the hill stations in Assam with unsurpassed sylvan beauty
6.	Jatinga	364	Near Haflong, North Cachar district, a beautiful hilly place, where birds behave in a mysterious way, the local people call that the birds commit suicide here on certain specific days
7.	Kaziranga	217	Internationally famous national park, the home of great Indian one-horn rhinoceros, tigers, elephants, buffaloes, deer, wild ducks and geese, breeding place of pelicans, habitat of reptiles and monkeys more particularly golden langurs and host of other species
8.	Manas	176	Situated in the foothills of the Himalayas, one of the magnificent national parks in the country, the Manas river flows through it, famous for the tiger project, a habitat for various wild animals
9.	Orang	150	A wild life sanctuary, known as a miniature Kaziranga
10.	Pabitara	65	A wild life sanctuary
11.	Potasoli	173	38 km from historic town of Tezpur, near the picturesque river Jia Bhoroli, famous for eco-camp set up jointly by the Department of Forest and Assam Anglers Association

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Guwahati

Table 2: Religious

S. No	Places in alphabetic order	Distance from Guwahati in km	Speciality
1.	Barpeta	137	Famous for a Vaishnava monastery
2.	Batadrawa	134	Birth place of Shri Sankardeva, the Vaishnava reformer, saint and a great literary figure
3.	Hajo	35	Sacred place for Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists
4.	Kamakhya		An important religious place of the Hindus within the city of Guwahati, on the top of Nilachal hill, attracts thousands of devotees and other tourists every day by its natural grandeur
5.	Madan Kamdev	35	Vast archeological ruins of fine erotic sculpture
6.	Majuli	326	The largest river island in the world, centre of Vaishnava culture, seat of many satras which are known as the centres of Assamese art, dance, drama, music, a safe heaven for various migratory birds
7.	Surya Pahar	162	Situated on a hill surrounded by innumerable statues of Durga Devi, Ganesha, Surya, Chandra, Buddha

Source: Directorate of tourism, Guwahati

Table 3: Historical

S. No	Places in alphabetic order	Distance from Guwahati in km	Specialty
1.	Digboi	523	Famous for the first oil refinery in Asia, war cemetery of World War II
2.	Sibsagar	369	Seat of the Ahom rule, famous for royal palaces, monuments, temples and massive ponds
3.	Tezpur	137	Ruins of an ancient capital of the Mahabharata time, famous for the love story of Usha-Anirudha

Source: Directorate of tourism, Guwahati

Prospects of tourism in Assam

Assam could be real gateway not only northeastern states but also other Asian countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. The 'Look East' policy initiatives of the Government of India would be helpful for marketing Assam Tourism in South Asian and south East Asian markets. Development and diversification of eco-tourism will also be a new enchanting aspect for both domestic and foreign tourists. The proper implementation of State maiden tourism policy 2008 can make Assam a major national and international tourism destination.

From the above discussion we can categorize the prospects of tourism in Assam as follows:

i) Cultural Tourism

Assam is a conglomeration of various ethnic tribes and groups each having a distinct language, culture, way-of-life, festivals, songs and dances. Most of these people have their spring festivals. Songs and dances, display of colourful dresses, tasting of innumerable varieties of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes mark these festivals. Sankardev Kalakhetra, Guwahati, has been organising, in recent years, spring festivals, on the line of the desert festival of Rajasthan, the Rangali Utsav in the month of April in which the various colourful shades of Assam are presented. This could be as big an attraction as the Pushkar Mela in Rajasthan.

ii) Pilgrim Tourism

Assam has many ancient temples and shrines, some of which like Kamakhya date back to pre-historic time. As stated already Kamakhya is one of the most revered religious places in the country. An average of 1000 visitors visit the Kamakhya temple every day throughout the year. It becomes a centre of attraction in the month of June when it celebrates the Ambubchi mela. At that time more than hundred thousand pilgrims come for pilgrimage from different places of India. Situated on a hill top Kamakhya is also a very beautiful place that attracts many tourists. There are other religious places where visitors often come from different parts of the country.

iii) Adventure Tourism

The enchanting blue hills and speedy rivers of Assam provide an enormous scope for the development of adventure tourism. Recently, some of the adventure sports activities like rock-climbing, trekking, para-sailing, water sports, river rafting and angling are promoted by the Department of Tourism. There is an annual angling competition held at Bhalukpong-Potasali side every year in November in which Indian and foreign tourists participate. But other areas of adventure tourism like hang gliding are yet to grow. Assam has a number of ideal places like Nilachal hills (where the Kamakhya temple situated) in the city of Guwahati and the hills around Kaziranga. Since most of the tourists come to the state through Guwahati and visit Kaziranga, there is an enormous scope for hang gliding.

iv) Nature Tourism

Assam and its six neighbouring states of the North-East are known for their bio-geographic richness (Coopers and Lybrand Report, 1996, p. 49). With its dense forests, uneven topography, flora and fauna, the majestic Brahmaputra and its tributaries, wild life sanctuaries like Kaziranga, Manas, Pabitora, Dibru-Saikhowa, Bhalukpong, Pabitora and similar others, and many rare species of animals, Assam offers basically nature-centric tourism. From one end to the other, the state offers to the tourists so many places of natural beauty with wide variety of wildlife that very few places in the world can compete with it. Nature tourism understood in terms of wildlife sanctuaries constitutes the core of tourism in Assam.

v) Ethnic Tourism

Assam has been a unique place on earth for the cultural and ethnic diversities. The state is a home land of various ethnic tribes and groups, each having its own cultural heritage. Each of these tribes possesses some unique features in its socio-cultural life including customs, religious belief, language, culture, dress, way of life, festivals, food habits, songs and dances which are different from others.

vi) River Tourism

The State of Assam has an extensive river network. Brahmaputra is intrinsic to the socio-cultural life in Assam. Assam has immense opportunities to develop river tourism and water leisure activities. Colourful canal barges, boating, luxury cruises, motor boats, dolphin shows, under water-world, water sports and lighters, para sailing, river rafting, water amusements and more. River tourism in Assam could be a great way to spend holidays. International standard of

luxury cruises can be a great driver to draw more domestic and international tourist traffic to Assam.

vii) Eco Tourism

Eco-tourism is also a new concept, developed around the idea of travelling to places of natural beauty, moving around and staying with the places of nature for a couple of days. It has the twin objectives of conserving environment and improving the welfare of the local people. Assam has immense scope for eco-tourism. The state is virtually free from industrial pollution. Its green forests, blue hills, enchanting rivers are the basis on which eco-friendly tourism can be developed.

viii) Medical Tourism

The rapidly growing healthcare sector in state capital Guwahati has gradually started to attract international patients not only from neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh but also from far-off countries, especially African nations. The domestic patients from other North-Eastern states had already started flocking to Guwahati from a decade back. From a place of primary healthcare centres, dispensaries and clinics, the city has now expanded itself into a hub of critical care, multi-specialty and super-specialty centres. Health sector experts attribute this emerging trend to low-cost treatment, quality healthcare infrastructure and availability of skilled doctor.

Various problems regarding tourism industry in Assam

From the above findings, it is clear that tourism has a great potentiality for generating income and employment opportunities in Assam. But even then, no perceptible change has been seen in this sector of the economy due to some problems. The main constraints that are coming into the way of its development are self-explanatory which can be identified as

- Insufficient transport and communication facilities.
- Unavailability of average standard accommodation.
- Inadequate public services like PCOs, ATM systems etc.
- Frequent power cut-offs.
- Communication gaps between tourists and people.
- Flash floods, heavy rainfall, waterlogged roads etc.
- Insurgency problems of the state.
- Poverty and poor living standards of the people.
- Inefficient and negative roles of the media.

Suggestions to improve tourism industry in Assam

The tourism industry is a growing service sector in India, which contributes 6.23 percent towards nationwide GDP. Lying at the centre of the world's wealthiest bio-geographic regions, Assam is rightly endowed with nature and has the appreciable possibilities for developing into a compelling force if tourism is encouraged as a thriving industry. With loads of economic resources, rich cultural and ethnic heritage, the state of Assam has gradually grown into a hub of tourist destination, thus producing abundant income and job possibilities across Assam, which is outlined by its rich flora, fauna and biodiversity. Growth of the tourism industry in Assam mostly relies with the development of conventional policies leading to the enhancement of the tourism department and all round individuals' co-operation and awareness. Further, a sincere and powerful determination of the Government of Assam in addition to

the genuine involvement of the residents of Assam will definitely enhance the tourism market in Assam in the near future.

Conclusion and recommendation

The development of tourism industry Assam largely depends upon the formulation of a proper tourism development policy and people's co-operation and consciousness. The High Powered Shukla Commission has recommended for establishing a North-East Tourist Development Corporation to develop tourism in the region. It has also recommended to issue Inner-Line Permits relax the Restricted Area Permits as well as to introduce Charter Flights for NE Package tours etc. Moreover, an honest and strong will of the government coupled with people's hearty co-operation will definitely boost up tourism industry in Assam in near future.

References

1. Basu A. Tourism Development of India. APH Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1998.
2. Bezborouh MP. Sustainable Tourism and Economic Development in the NE India, ICSSR, New Delhi, 2006.
3. Bhatia AK. Tourism Development-Principles and Practices, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1989.
4. Deka UC. Tourism in Assam's Economics Development: Policy Implication, Development Studies. 2004; 24(4):122-124.
5. Fayissa BC, Naish, Tadasse B. The Impact of Tourism an Economic Growth and Development in India, JNU, Department of Economics, Working Paper. Government of Assam (2006): Profile on Forest and Wildlife, 2007; 8.
6. Iyer KH. Tourism Development in India, Vista International Publishing House, New Delhi, 2006.