

Problems and Prospect of Adventure Tourism in Assam

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The state of Assam is located in the North-East region of India. It is the second largest state among the eight sister states of North-Eastern Region of the country. Assam state is covered with eye-catching natural beauty of curvy mountains, gushing rivers, exotic landscapes with soothing greenery.

There are different types of tourism such as wildlife, cultural, eco-tourism, historical, pilgrimage, river, adventure etc. Adventure tourism may be defined as the exploration of an expected daring, exciting or travel to remote areas where the traveler should expect the unexpected experience. That is adventure tourism implies traveling in remote, inaccessible and hostile regions. The adventure tourist has to take some degree of risks in his journey. There are two types of adventure tourism – land based and water based. Land based adventure sports include mountaineering and rock climbing, trekking, camel safari, jeep safari, jungle safari, gliding (hang, hand para), biking, cycling, polo, golf, horserace etc. The water based adventure sports comprise angling, water rafting, water polo, boating, wind surfing, river cruise, swimming, scabbing etc.

Adventure tourism is gaining popularity as a tourist destination in Assam in comparison to usual holiday, wildlife destination etc. In 2009-2010, 4.61 percent of foreign tourists and 5.53 percent of domestic tourists preferred to visit the state for adventure tourism.

Adventure destination possesses certain characteristics like (i) highly fragile environment (ii) rugged terrain and picturesque (iii) lofty mountains and ranges (iv) glimpse of natural beauty (v) diversity of climate and physical condition (vi) wild plants and herbs (vii) glaciers (viii) lakes and water falls (ix) rivers and tributaries etc.

An adventure tourist has to possess certain qualities in order to complete his adventure tour without which it is practically difficult to complete the tour. These qualities are (i) risk taking (ii) courage (iii) strong determination (iv) self confidence (v) necessary vigour and energy (vi) skill and technique (vii) special equipments etc.

II. Study area:

The area chosen for the present study is Assam. The state of Assam has ample scope for the promotion of adventure tourism due to the presence of the mighty Brahmaputra river and its tributaries. The Barak river and its tributaries, National parks and wildlife sanctuaries, valleys and dells, roaring, waterfalls and lakes, evergreen forests etc.

III. Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are

- i) To investigate the present status of adventure tourism in Assam.
- ii) To examine the scope and future prospects of adventure tourism in Assam.

IV. Methodology:

The study is based on mainly secondary data. The secondary data are collected from various published and unpublished documents, relevant books and journals, newspapers, magazines, electronic media etc. The Directorate of Tourism, Government of Assam. Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India.

V. Present Status of adventure tourism in Assam:

At present there are different forms of adventure tourism facilities are available in Assam. The tourist inflow can be seen in the following table 1.1

Table 1.1: Tourist Inflow to Assam 1995-2000

Year	Indian	Foreign
1995	348,532	2,575
1996	327,260	5,885
1997	842,656	4,194
1998	939,721	3,843
1999	964,939	5,218
2000	1,001,577	5,959

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Assam

The number of tourist both domestic and foreign are gradually increasing.

There are various types of adventure sports associated with adventure tourism are available in Assam. Some of these are as follows.

V.I Wildlife destination:

Assam is a nature lover's paradise. It is gradually becoming a major wildlife tourist destination of India. There are five national parks and thirteen wildlife sanctuaries in Assam. The national parks are Kaziranga, Nameri, Manas, Orang and Dibru-saikhowa. The thirteen wildlife sanctuaries of Assam are Burhachapori, chakrasila, Pobha or Milroy, Bornadi, east Karbi Anglong, Garampani, Hologapur Gibbon, Karbi Anglong, Nambar and Marat Longpi. There are four bird sanctuaries in Assam namely Deeporbeel, Panidihing, Bherajan Borjan and Bordoibam-Bilmukh. It is found in the field survey (2009-10), that 31.84 percent of total foreign tourists and 25.94 percent of total domestic tourists visit Assam for wildlife tourism. There is provision for elephant safari both in Kaziranga national park and Pobitora wildlife sanctuaries.

V.II Golf Destination:

Originally Golf courses were built by the British. They were primarily built around the tea plantations. However the numbers of the golf course have risen considerably. Anybody who is interested in this sport can avail the 21 golf course in Assam. These are scattered in Digboi, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and other places in Assam. Most of these have air strips attached to them. In the industrial town of Duliajan, the oil India limited maintains a very good numbers of golf courses. Most of the golf courses are located near to airstrips and helipads maintained by the tea garden management. The kaziranga Golf course patronized by noted tea industrialist of Assam Mr Hemendra Prasad Baruah located in Mohbandha near Jorhat is the largest golf course with eighteen holes. Some of the other popular golf courses in Assam are Biswanath Gymkhana, Borsola, East Boroj Club, Mangaldoli polo and Golf club, Jorhat Gyamkhana, Seleng District Club, Sonai Gyamkhana Club, Tingri Golf club, Samdang Golf Club etc. Tourists from different parts of the country as well as foreign tourist come to play golf to these golf courses.

V.III Adventure in River Water:

Assam is blessed by a large number of rivers and their tributaries. The Brahmaputra and Barak are the two main rivers of the state which divides the state into two valleys Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley. Some of the important tributaries of these two rivers are Manas, Subansiri, Sonai, Barang, barnadi, Bhogdai, Buroi, Buridihing, Belsiri, Beki, dhansiri, Jia Bharali etc. These rivers have very much potentiality for water sports like river angling, canoeing, para sailing, swimming and diving, water rafting, river expeditions, etc.

V.IV Angling:

Angling is a water sport of catching fish either in fresh water or salt water typically with rod, line and hook. An annual Angling competition is regularly held at Jia Bhoroli where a number of anglers both from outside the state as well as abroad participate every year. The Assam anglers association organizes an angling competition every year in Jia Bharali river in which both inbound and outbound tourists take part. Jia bharali river is called anglers' paradise in Assam. The tributaries like Dhansiri, Manas, Kolong, Kopili etc are regarded as suitable for angling.

V.V Boating:

It is an important form of water sport in Assam. Tourists sailing in a country boat can watch with their naked eyes different species of migratory and native birds on the river Brahmaputra. River dolphin watching in blue water may provide sweet memory to the visitors. Different species of water snakes are found in the rivers of Assam, so a tourist can get an opportunity to see water snakes of Assam. The rivers of Assam are endowed with tortoise, ornamental fishes, crocodiles, river dolphins etc. Boating is an important event in national and international games, it can be developed in Assam to attract tourist.

V.VI The River Cruise:

The concept of river cruise is a new one in Assam. It was introduced by the government of Assam to promote river tourism. The tour from Guwahati to Kaziranga by river cruise in the Brahmaputra is very much popular among the foreign tourists. One can enjoy river cruising a boarding on Jalpori, a luxurious vessel and he can also quench his thirst of beauty of Brahmaputra and its landscape.

V.VII Water Rafting:

Water rafting is another popular adventure sport in Assam. The facility of water rafting is available in Bhalukpong, situated on the boarder of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. It is only 56 kms from Tezpur town. The tourism department of Assam is also taking an earnest effort to promote water rafting at Subansiri, Manas and Jia Bharali tributaries to attract both domestic and foreign tourist. The suitable period for water rafting in Assam is between September and November.

V.VIII Wind Surfing:

Wind surfing is a water based adventure sport. Boats are rided from one destination to another over the current of the mighty Brahmaputra with the help of wind. Boats are fitted with flag like cloth which are called pals and as such boats move in the water according to the direction of wind. Generally the Brahmaputra and its surroundings are ideal place for day trippers, holiday makers, weekend trippers and for foreign tourist. Wind surfing may provide ample scope to tourists to migratory and residential birds of Assam.

V.IX Gliding:

Gliding means flying like birds, soaring through the sky with enthusiasm. In gliding, tourist ride on their own made wings into their open arms. The basic techniques for gliders include launching, turning and landing. There are three types of gliding hang gliding, hand gliding and para gliding. The Nilachal hill near the Kamakhya temple and Kaziranga are ideal places for the development of hand gliding.

V.X Mountaineering and Rock Climbing:

The adventure of mountaineering means the sport of attending or attempt to attain, high points in the mountainous region, difficult to access, primarily for the pleasure of the climbers. The routes for mountaineering are graded according to the degree of difficulty and accessibility. Some of the important mountaineering and rock climbing places of Assam are North Cachar hills, karbi Anglong and Morigaon district of Assam

VI. Scope and Prospect of Adventure Tourism in Assam:

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.

Assam has all the diverse geographical locations for the above discussed adventure sports to attract adventure tourists. But the state has to take some measures for future development of adventure tourism as well as the tourism industry as a whole. Other states of the country like Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan etc. are providing better tourism based infrastructure. Those states are also marketing aggressively about themselves as great tourist destinations. In this regard some suggestions may be made for further initiatives in the development of adventure tourism of Assam.

- i) Assam should follow an integrated tourism policy to attract more tourists to the state.
- ii) The Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi airport of Guwahati should be developed in such a manner so that direct link can be established with the countries like China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia etc.
- iii) As Assam is endowed with many rivers, river adventure may be a new area for domestic and international tourists. The government as well as private organizations can build infrastructure facilities and other facilities like motor boats, ferries, speedy vessels and hovers.
- iv) Assam needs more well equipped and quality hotels, tourist lodge, circuit houses, guest houses etc. to provide better accommodation and facilities to the tourists.

- v) Assam has golf courses, but all of them are not international standard. These golf courses are to be improved with proper infrastructure facilities and attempt should be made to attract golfers from different parts of the country as well as abroad.
- vi) Impressive advertisement along with more tourist information centre with proper marketing strategy is very much necessary to attract more tourists to the state.
- vii) The government of Assam with the help of the central government should offer fiscal and other incentives to attract direct foreign investment in the tourism sector from other countries.
- viii) The existing package tours should add more destinations and more new package tours are to be introduced with the help of the other north-eastern states.
- ix) Infrastructure mainly roads, power, telecommunication with hi-speed internet, accommodation, solid waste management are to improve a lot in the state to attract more tourists.
- x) The social problems like insurgency etc., bandh called by different organizations etc. should be solved with the help of proper dialogue by the government so that overall atmosphere improves to attract tourists to the state.

VII Conclusion:

It is a fact that Assam has enough scope for the promotion and development of adventure tourism. To fulfill the requirements of the tourists the infrastructure facilities are to be developed. The basic infrastructures for different adventure sports are necessary to attract domestic as well as foreign tourists. The new initiatives taken by the Government of Assam including the Tourism Policy 2017 for development of tourism industry will definitely help to attract more tourist to Assam and other north eastern states of India.

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