

A Brief Account of Tourism Potentiality in Shillong and Its Surroundings

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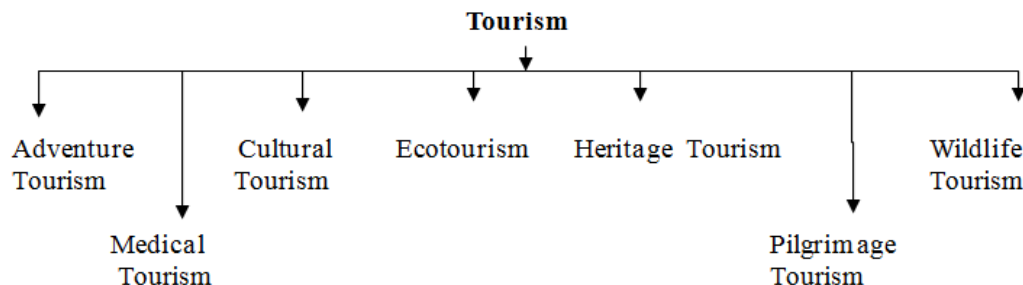
I. Introduction

Today tourism is one of the largest and dynamically developing sectors of external economic activities. Its high growth and development rates, considerable volumes of foreign currency inflows, infrastructural development and introduction of new management and educational experience activity affect various sectors of economy, which positively contribute to the social and economic development of the country as a whole.

Tourism is travel for recreation, leisure, religious, family or business purposes, usually for a limited duration. Tourism is commonly associated with international travel, but may also refer to travel to another place within the same country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure business and other purposes.

Tourism has become a popular global recreational activity. Tourism can be domestic or international. International tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments. Today tourism is a major source of income for many countries and affects the economy of both the source and host countries, in some cases having vital importance.

Tourism refers to that activity which is conducted for a short period of time, more than 24 hours but less than 1 year, for a non remunerative purpose. A person who travels to a destination and stays there for more than 24 hours but less than one year is recognized as a tourist by the World Tourism Organization. The type of tourism depends on the reason for travel.



Objectives of the study

The major objectives of this study are as follows:

- To evaluate the potentiality of tourism development in Shillong.
- To identify the places of tourist attraction.
- To analyze the possible constraints of Tourism.
- To find out the current status of tourism in Shillong.
- To suggest measures for future development of tourism in Shillong.

II. Methodology

This study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. At the same time it is mainly based on secondary information. The entire study can be divided into three consecutive stages. During the pre field stage, detailed literature study has been done about tourism and history of Shillong which includes a number of books upon Meghalaya Shillong Municipality and various websites. In the field stage, tourist places are visited and gathered information. Ultimately in the post field phase of this study, location map of the tourist places has been prepared for further analysis.

Importance of tourism in economy, environment and society

Tourism has become an important sector that has an impact on the development of the country's economy. The main benefits of tourism are income creation and generation of jobs. For many regions and countries, it is the most important source of welfare. The ability of the national economy to benefit from tourism, depends on the availability of investment to develop the necessary infrastructure and on its ability to supply the needs of tourists. Travel and tourism industry is responsible for 0.1% of India's Gross Domestic Product, as on 2011. The tourism industry directly and indirectly employs more than 26 million citizens, which represent 5.7% of the country's total employment according to The World Economic Forum.

The quality of the environment, both natural and man-made, is essential for tourism. However, tourism's relationship with the environment is complex. It involves many activities that can have adverse environmental effects. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructure such as roads, air ports, and numerous tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses and marines. The negative impact of tourism development is that it can gradually destroy the environmental resources on which it is dependent. Tourism has the potentiality to create beneficial effects on the environment by contributing to environment protection and conservation. It is a way to raise awareness about environmental values and it can serve as a tool to finance protection of natural areas and increase their economic importance.

Tourism industry has the potentiality to promote social development through employment creation, income redistribution and poverty alleviation. Tourism supports the creation of community facilities and services.

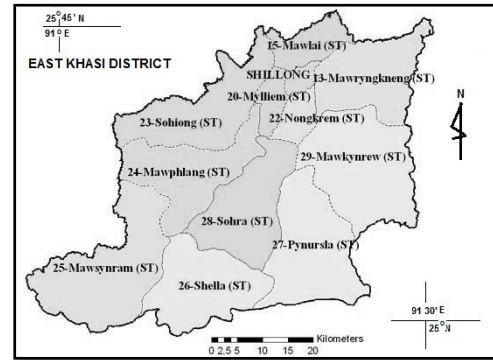
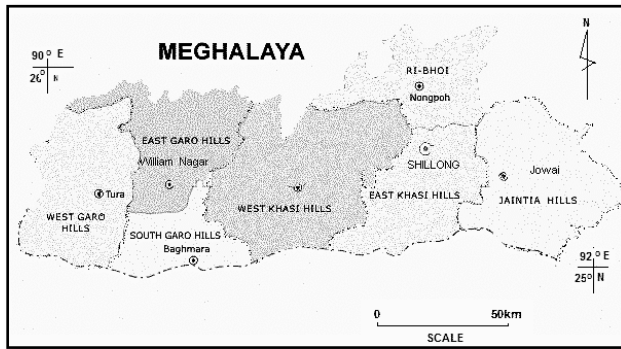
Potentiality of Shillong for tourism development

The ongoing sunny spell in the city is a matter of great rejoices for tourists holidaying here. The breathtaking gesture of them only ensures how weather can also play a part in promoting tourism.

There are opinions that leisure tourism is a concept gaining ground more day by day and Shillong and its suburbs actually have the potentiality to address such tourists, who like to spend more time in the open, under Sun and with nature than what one understands by normal tourism. Shillong the capital city of Meghalaya, which was planned by the British as a hill resort, has undergone substantial change - both in character and form. A tiny administrative unit has now become a vibrating city with commercial activity overshadowing the hill resort. Shillong, under the Shillong Municipal area with its institutions is a proud heritage of the public who inherit its culture and character. As on today, Shillong being the heart of education, Meghalaya specially Shillong under the Municipality limit has high potential for the development of tourism. Ideal climate and other factors make Shillong an area of tourist attraction and hundreds of tourists visit Shillong. Recently the Government has declared some places and churches like the Catholic Church as tourist spots. The Public are very much interested to spend their evenings and holidays in these beautiful places.

Study area

The study area is located in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya and headquarters of East Khasi Hill districts. The City is situated along the northern slopes and foothills of the Shillong peak at 25°34' N latitude and 91°53' E longitude at an average altitude of 1496 meters above the mean sea level. Shillong is an important tourist destination in the northeast and is considered as one of the most beautiful hill stations in India. It is linked with Guwahati; the capital of Assam by National Highway at a distance of about 100 Km. The city is a part of Shillong plateau which is dissected in nature with well developed valleys along which the streams flow. The climate of Shillong is typically humid and sub-tropical regions are found in the eastern part of the sub-continent. It is characterized by moderate warm wet summer with cool dry winters.



Major tourist spots in Shillong and its surroundings

Shillong has been a long favoured popular tourist destination due to its natural beauty and pleasant weather. There are many places of interest here.

Elephant falls

Elephant Falls is situated on the outer reaches of the main city of Shillong. The Elephant Falls is a two tier waterfall. The two falls that enhance its beauty are known as the Wir Phang Falls and the Wei Laplam Falls. It was named "Elephant Falls" because a stone near the falls which looked like an elephant. The stone was torn down by an earthquake in 1897, but the name remained intact.

Shillong Peak

The Shillong Peak is the highest point in Meghalaya. It is located 5 Km to the south of Shillong and is 6433 feet in altitude. From here, one can enjoy the spectacular birds-eye-view of the city and the countryside.

Umiam Lake

The Umiam Lake, located to the North of Shillong, combines beauty and adventure facilities and it is also famous as Barapani or Big Water. It is an admired tourist destination for water cycling, kayaking and boating.

Entomological Museum

The Entomological Museum, established in the year 1930 is more popularly known as the Butterfly Museum. It is the sole museum in India which is dedicated to preserve the species of butterflies and moths. It is a colourful museum having 1600 species of butterflies.

Lady Hydari Park

The lady Hydari Park, a children's themed park, derives its name from the wife of the first Governor of Assam. Lady Hydari Park was established and it's maintained by the Forest Development authority. This Park incorporates a mini zoo, a deer Park and an open area for play.

Shillong Golf Course

The Shillong Golf Course located at an altitude of 5200 feet is India's first 18 hole golf course.

Stone of France (Mot Phran)

The "Stone of France" which is locally known as 'Mot phran' was erected in the memory of the 26th khasi labour corps who served under the British in France during World War I.

Don Bosco Museum

The Don Bosco Museum is a part of DBCIC. DBCIC comprises research on cultures, publications, training, aim nation programmes and the museum, which is a place of knowledge - sharing the cultures of the northeast in particular and culture in general.

William Ward Lake

A beautiful man-made lake named after Sir William Ward who was Chief Commissioner of Assam. It is a beautiful little Lake with short garden with walking and boating facilities.

Cathedral Church

In the heart of the city, there stands a beautiful cathedral of Roman Catholics dedicated to Mary Help of Christians.

Umkaliar Falls

The falls is locally known as Umkaliar or the falls into which Ka Liar slipped. A soothing setting amidst the calmness of nature is a treat to the eyes. It is also named as a Spread Eagle Falls.

Water Pipe Falls

It resembles a straight pencil of water emerging from a large size of water pipe, as it drops vertically over a distance exceeding two hundred feet.

Mawsmai Cave

It is natural light sieving caves in Meghalaya, including the longest cave system of India are situated in the Jaintia Hills. Mawsmai Cave is by far the more accessible cave for many travelers as it is one of the few caves which are developed due to karst landform.

Nohkalikai Falls

Nohkalikai Falls is the highest plunge waterfalls in India. Nohkalikai falls is situated in the midst of green sea where water cascades down 335 m before splashing the ground. It has left a deep water hole which has unusually blue water just like a small lagoon.

Tourist Inflow

With tourist inflow down by 70% due to the agitation called by NGOs in Shillong, the Meghalaya Tourism Development Forum (MTDF) under Shillong Tourism Development Corporation has called off its popular annual Autumn Festival in Ecoprotect. The Festival is one of the biggest events in the state calendar with tourists from India and abroad coming over the years and the MTDF has been organising various programmes including Guinness Record attempts to promote the State. Tourist inflow to Meghalaya and Assam is set to increase once the new airlines Vistara launch its service to Guwahati. Foreign tourist inflow into Northeastern state has increased by over 27% last year against a national growth of only 5.9 % said by a top Union Tourism Department Official.

Table 1: Tourist inflow in Shillong

Year	Domestic Tourist	Foreign Tourist	Total
2007	457685	5267	462952
2008	549954	4919	554873
2009	591398	4522	595920
2010	652756	4177	656933
2011	667504	4803	672307
2012	680254	5313	685567

Source: Meghalaya Tourism Department.

III. Accommodation

Shillong is a hill station which is relatively unexplored with small cottages which were greeted warm heartedly. Though most of the hotels are usually located near the famous Police Bazar, yet few hotels are located in the outskirts of the city like Polo Bazar, Mg Road that offers the scenic beauty of the area. The hotels of Shillong provide us with best facilities like lift, T.V. conference room, banquet hall, generator and geyser and other services.

Transport

The closest railway station is at Guwahati in Assam, which is located at a distance of 104 Km from Shillong. Shillong is connected to Guwahati by national highway 40. The buses leave Guwahati from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. and taxis are also available at the closest airport to Shillong at Umran which is 35 Km from Shillong. The other Government option available is the Gopinath Borduloi Airport in Guwahati which is 128 km from Shillong.

Fooding

Local dishes in Shillong are cooked in the traditional khasi style and it is a well known place for authentic Chinese food. Jadoh is a very popular dish in Shillong and is essentially a rice and pork

preparation, kyat is local liquor and is made from rice and is consumed on festive occasions. Apart from chicken and fish, pork and beef form an important part of people's diet in the region.

Package Tours

Meghalaya Tourism Development Corporation organizes several local tours such as-

Shillong: The tour covers the following places of tourist interest: Elephant Falls, Shillong Peak, Lady Hydari Park, Cathedral, Church, Wards Lake, Golf Course, and Museum.

- Tour fares: Deluxe video coach: Rs.100/- per person, sumo/mini Deluxe coach: Rs.120/- per person, Tourist Cab: Rs.175/- per person.
- **Shillong - Barapani:** The tour covers the following places of tourist interest: Elephant Falls, Shillong Peak, Museum, and Barapani Lake.
- **Tour fares:** Deluxe Video Coach: Rs.150/- per person, sumo/mini Deluxe Coach Rs.175/- per person, Tourist Lab: Rs.200/- per person.
- **Sohra (Cherrapunji) :** the tour covers the following places of tourist interest : Maukdok Valley, Ramkrishna Mission, Nohkalikali Falls, Mawsmmai cave,
- **Tour Fares:** Deluxe video coach Rs.200/- per person, sumo/mini Deluxe Coach Rs.230/- per person, Tourist Cab: Rs.375/- per person.

Table 2: Distance of various tourist spots from Shillong

LOCATION	DISTANCE (in km)
Entomological Museum	2.6
Lady Hydari Park	2.7
Shillong Golf Course	2.8
Mot Phran	2.8
Don Bosco Museum	4.1
Eagle falls	4.1
Elephant falls	12
Shillong Peak	12
Umiam Lake	17
Nohkalikai Falls	55
Mawsmmai Cave	57

Source: field survey

Problems for promoting tourism in Shillong

Most of the places of tourist attraction of Meghalaya Shillong Municipality except the plain terrain belong to the category of either mountains or forest. At the same time parks are not properly maintained for natural beauty which adds some more to this backwardness. Though waterfalls are the foremost tourist spot in Municipal area, it lacks proper parking facility, drinking water facility and garbage disposal facility. There is no such conducted tour facility to visit all those places comprehensively or no proper infrastructure is available to know the actual beauty of the nature of those places by tourist. The participation of tribal community in tourism development is very low. The rate of crime, water scarcity, pollution and robbery are quite high. Conflict between the tourist spots and promotion of tourism development is a common affair. Moreover since neither Government nor the Municipality has taken any drastic steps to promote tourism in this area and remained unnoticeable in the tourism landscape.

Proposal for developing tourism in Shillong

Problems can be solved through mutation and promotion of proper tourism policy by the local self government. Development of infrastructural facilities is also required. Tourist information centers are needed to be activated for proper maintenance of (Natural) tourist spots. Essential detailed information about the nature should be arranged. At the same time basic facilities for tourist like food, drinking water, lighting, toilet, accommodation, lodging, security etc. should properly be maintained, to preserve the physical landscape from the man-made and natural hazards.

IV. Conclusion

Tourism is an important instrument for augmenting economic development of an area. It credits employment through guides, handicrafts, food stalls, transport etc. It contributes largely to the national income. At the same time it provides exposure to an area. Tourism can also stimulate new and expanded community facilities; it provides opportunities for residents to interact with diverse people, lifestyles, values and cultures.

In the present day, the capital city of Meghalaya, Shillong is known for its quiet and pristine ambience. Shillong tourism covers famous places and holiday attractions in capital city of Meghalaya, at the same time there are a significant number of tourist inflows are experienced throughout the year. But owing to Lack of awareness by state and local government, tourism is yet to develop here. Tourism could flourish here through proper co-operation and co-ordination of the Survey of India, State Government, Tour Operators and Meghalaya Shillong Municipality along with active and effective participation of all the local beneficiaries.

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