

Ecotourism a Boon to the State Manipur: North East India

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Abstract: Manipur the land of natural beauty, there are so many tourist places created by nature in Manipur which can be Ecotourism places. Ecotourism means management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain a fine balance between requirement of tourism and ecology on the one hand and need of the local communities for jobs, new skills and income generating employment. Though small in area and population, the state is well known for its landscape, green valleys, blue hills and mosaic of a rich cultural heritage. There are many tourist centers and sites in Manipur, which can result in a variety of natural ecotourism and a huge potential of the state. These resources includes natural sites, wildlife & garden sites, cultural and historical sites, lake sites, archeological sites, dam & project sites, adventure sites and waterfall sites. Here this paper shows the benefits of ecotourism in Manipur.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Manipur, Wild Life, Culture, Sanctuaries, conservation

1. Introduction

Ecotourism emerged as the largest global industry of the 20th century and projected to be growing even faster in the 21st century (Sintayehu Aynale et al., (2016). Ecotourism created employment opportunities through number of activities such as hotel staff, tour operators, cook etc (Alberto F. Lemma, 2014). Manipur is one of the state in India that could be promoted for tourism by exploring the potential of tourism such as natural scenic beauty, rich culture etc.

Manipur is one of the seven sister states of northeast India, covering a total geographic area of 22,327 Sq. KM. The state lies between latitudes 23.80°N to 25.68°N and longitudes 93.03°E to 94.78°E and shares border with Nagaland in north, Mizoram in south, Assam in west and with Myanmar in the east as well as south. An oval shaped valley is surrounded by blue green hills, rich in art and tradition with its cascading rapids, tripling rivers, varieties of flowers exotic blooms and lakes. Major communities in the region consist of the Meites, Nagas, Gorkhas, Meitei Pangals, Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups and other colorful communities which lived in complete harmony. Ecotourism in Manipur is growing day by day. The Manipur Tourism Department is taking major initiatives to develop Manipur as a prime tourist destination of north east India. The state has a strategic importance in India's Look East Policy, thereby enabling itself to become the gateway to South East Asia and subsequently an important tourist destination in future.

2. Research Methodology and data collection

Research Methodology of this work is based on the secondary data that are available to public domain such as research papers, government report and government photos etc

Ecotourism places in Manipur

The Ecotourism places are Natural sites, wildlife& gardens sites, Cultural and historical sites, Lakes sites, Archeological sites, Adventure sites, Dams and waterfall sites of Manipur.

1) Wildlife & garden sites

Manipur like other Northeast Indian destination boasts rich wildlife. The state is home to the endangered species of Sangai also known as Brow Antlered Deer which is the major attraction during a wildlife tour, found only in the Keibul Lamjao National Park which is also famous as the Floating Lake National Park. Apart from it, the Protected Area network in Manipur includes wildlife sanctuaries like Yangoupokpi Lakchao Wildlife Sanctuary, Orchid Preservation Plot, second home of Sangai, Keilam Wildlife Sanctuary, and Zeliad Wildlife Sanctuary, which make perfect destinations for wildlife tourism in the state.

The Shiri-Kashong range in Manipur is home to the majestic Shirui Hills, known for the rare Shirui lily, the state flower of Manipur. The pinkish-white flower is found only in the Shirui Hill Range and can be seen in full bloom for a few months starting from mid-May every year.



Figure 1: Shirui Lily



Figure 2: Sangai

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2) Lakes in Manipur

The state's plain areas, as well as hilly regions, are replete with stunning lakes that any nature lover would love to visit. Loktak Lake is not only the most famous lake in Manipur but is also the largest lake in the state. Known for its Phumdis. The Pumlun Pat, The Ikop Pat, Yaral Lake, Waithou Lake, Ngangloun Lake, Utra Pat, Kharung, Loukoi Pat, and Isok Lake Pairen Pat, and Lamphel Pat The lakes in hill area of Manipur include the beautiful Zeilad Lake in Tamenglong and Kachouphung Lake - near Ukhrul which is also called Azoa Jenephiu Magi Lake.



Figure 3: Zeilad Lake



Figure 4: Loktak Lake

3) Caves in Manipur

Amongst the oldest cave systems in Manipur are Khangkhui Caves in the Ukhrul District. Other most important caves to see in Manipur's cave tourism is situated in Tamenglong District - Tharon Cave. The limestone cave of Mova in Hungpung is yet another must-visit cave where the main hall is the major attraction. Other than Mova, Manipur has worth visiting caves like Sangbu Caves in Chandel District, Nongpok Keithelmanbi Caves in Senapati District, Mongjam Caves in Imphal District, and Wangoo Caves in Bishnupur District.



Figure 5: Khangkhui Cave



Figure 6: Tharon Cave

4) Waterfalls

Manipur has been abundantly blessed with gurgling rivers, emerald mountains, rolling meadows and foaming waterfalls that completely paint the picture of this surreal Northeast Indian state. Tamenglong is one of the travel destinations in Manipur that has popular waterfalls. There are seven waterfalls in a sequential form at close range in the Tamenglong district that must be visited as a nature sightseeing places. Amongst the most popular waterfalls in Tamenglong is Barak Waterfall. The highest waterfall in Manipur is Khayang Waterfalls on the Indo-Myanmar border - which about 754 ft height. The most visited waterfall in Manipur is Sadu Chiru also known as Leimaram Falls situated in Senapati District. The other waterfalls are Khoupum Waterfall, Ngalo Falls, Dilily Waterfalls, Bro Waterfall, Ishing Thingbi waterfall, and Alng Takhou waterfall in Manipur.

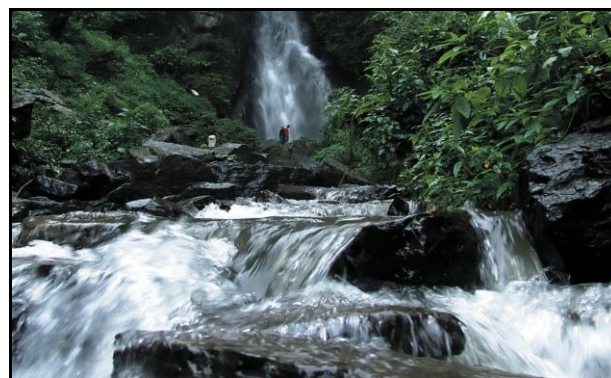


Figure 7: Sadu Chiru Waterfall



Figure 8: Barak Waterfall

5) Culture & Heritage

Manipur is a mosaic of ancient traditions and rich cultural patterns. In the field of art and culture, the state is best represented by its classical and folk dance forms. The Raas Leela, inter-woven through the celestial and eternal love of Radha and Krishna. Apart from the popular Ras Lila, Khamba Thoibi Dance is quite popular folk dance in Manipur. There is a special dance performed on certain Manipur festivals; the Maibi Dance can be seen on the Lai Haraoba Festival which is an annual ritual festival of the Meiteis. On the other side, Pung Cholom is a classical dance form seen in Manipur.



Figure 9: Pung Cholom



Figure 10: Ras Lila

6) Historical sites

Kangla is the most important historical and archeological site of Manipur. The kingdom of Manipur was established and developed at Kangla. It is located at the heart of the Imphal city on the western bank of the Imphal River. After Kangla another important historical site is Khongjom War Memorial a historical war memorial site of Anglo-Manipur War at Thoubal district of Manipur. Shaheed Minar park, a

tall monument raised to honour the sacrifice of the gallant soldiers of the Manipur Army. The park was built in honour of Martyrs, who were hung in public by the British.

The Indian National Army (INA) War Museum in the INA Memorial Complex in Moirang is the only official museum dedicated to the Second World War in Manipur today. Its focus is primarily on the rise of the INA and on the role and activities of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in particular.



Figure 11: Kangla



Figure 12: Khongjom War Memorial

7) Pilgrimage places

The Sanamahi Kyang is serving as one of the Tourist destination in the state. Besides, it is one of the religious destination for the followers of Sanamahism including the Rongmei Naga people, Zeliangrong people, Bishnupriya Manipuri people from across the country and abroad. A grand temple on the hilltop of the Nongmaiching Hill. Shree Govindajee Temple is the largest Vaishnava temple in Imphal, located next to the palace of the former rulers of the then Manipur Kingdom. The temple is simple in design with two gold plated domes, a paved court and a large, raised *mantapa*, or congregation hall. The popular Hindu pilgrimages sites in Imphal include ISKCON Temple, Shri Hanuman Thakur Temple, Kaina Hillock, and Leimapokpam Keirungba Temple. Babupara Mosque is the most important worship place for the Muslims of Manipur which is also situated in Imphal city. Apart from these, there are some known and unknown temples and churches for pilgrimage tour situated in Senapati town, Tamenglong, Thoubal, Phoibih, and Ningthoukhong.



Figure 13: Sanamahi Kyang



Figure 14: Shree Govindajee Temple

8) Festival and fairs

Manipur is rich in culture & history. That richness is also reflected in its fairs & festivals. One of the major festivals of Manipur is Gang-Ngai, which is celebrated by the Kabui Nagas. It is marked by an oath taking ceremony followed by a common feast and the Nagas get together to celebrate the Lui Ngai Ni, a collective seed sowing festival. With the arrival of Spring, the whole of Manipur gets ready to celebrate Yaosang, the most widely celebrated festival in the state. In Manipur too, a Rath Yatra procession is taken out, but here, it is known as Kang. It is dedicated to Lord Jagannath. In September, Manipur celebrates Heikru Hitongba, a boat race which is held on long narrow boats. Another popular festival of Manipur, is Cheiraoba, the Manipuri New Year. Ningol Chak-kouba is a festival celebrated by the Meitei people. Celebrated on the second day of the new moon in Hiyangei, it is marked by the arrival of the married daughters of the family to their parent’s house. Then there is Kut, an autumn festival celebrated by the different tribes of Kuki Chin Mizo groups.



Figure 15: Yaosang

3. Result and Discussion

Flow of tourist in Manipur

As per new guideline issued by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, tourist considered are only those tourist who stayed overnight as tourist.



Figure 16: Rath Yatra

The volume of tourists’ traffic and magnitude of revenue earnings in the state are presented in Table No.1

Table 1: Progress of Tourists flow in Manipur (2013-2019)

Number of tourists flow in Manipur			
Year	Foreign	Domestic	Total
2013-14	2,588	1,43,059	1,45,647
2014-15	2,900	1,34,584	1,37,484
2015-16	3,102	1,32,013	1,35,115
2016-17	3,036	1,45,685	1,48,721
2017-18	3,787	1,64,483	1,68,270
2018-19	9,794	1,66,032	1,75,826
2019-20	12,102	1,66,839	1,78,941

*** Source: Directorate of Tourism, Manipur.

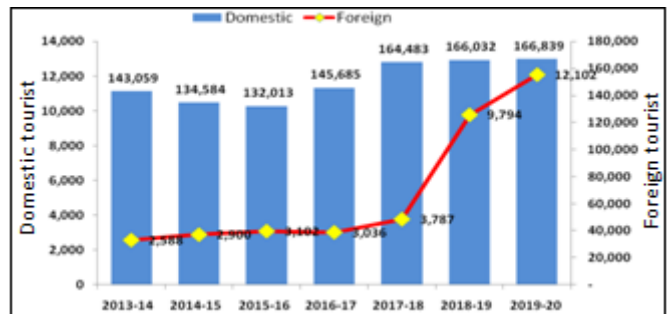


Figure 17: Graph of Progress of Tourists flow in Manipur

Benefits of Ecotourism

Manipur, the land of jewel, famous exotic greenery, rich flora & fauna gives a huge potential economic resource for generating income, rich culture and ethnic heritage because of its natural assets, tourism holds high potential of the state.

Some of the benefits of eco tourism are

1) Economic benefit

- Helps to develop the local economy, employment in the tourism sector.
- Generates foreign exchange for the country and into the local economy.

- Development of domestic industries, hotels, restaurants and food services, transportation system, handicrafts and guide services.
 - Improves road system and infrastructure by the tourism development.
 - Increases tax revenues from tourism.
- 2) Natural Environment Benefits**
- Parks and natural preserves may be created for natural based tourism.
 - Increased awareness and concern for the environment.
 - Waste management can be achieved.
- 3) Social Benefits**
- Provides greater understanding and communication among people.
 - Public spaces may be developed.
 - The quality of life of a community can be enhanced.
- 4) Cultural Benefits**
- Can exchange local cultural awareness.
 - Can generate revenue to pay for the preservation of archaeological sites, historical buildings and wildlife areas.

Despite criticism, the sharing of cultural knowledge and experience can be beneficial and can result in the revival of local traditions and crafts

4. Conclusion

The development of the tourism industry in Manipur leads to the many benefits such as economic benefit, Natural Environment Benefits, Social Benefits and Cultural Benefits etc of Manipur state. As tourism supports the creation of community facilities and services that otherwise might not have been developed, it can bring higher living standards to a destination. Manipur have unlimited potential of tourism which could attract tourists from all over the world. The development of tourism industry in Manipur directly depends upon the formulation of a proper tourism development policy and people's co-operation and consciousness. So from the above discussion and Benefits we can say Ecotourism as a boon to the state Manipur which lies in the north east India.

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