

Chapter 18

Tourism Development in the West Jaintia Hills District, Meghalaya, in the Foothills of the Eastern Himalayas: Prospects and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The Himalayas' most distinctive characteristics are the snow-covered mountains, the diverse flora, and wildlife and the breath-taking scenery. Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, is a hill station. It is a part of the Eastern Himalayas foothills. From Shillong, Meghalaya, on bright autumn and winter mornings, one may view the Himalayan Range in the direction of north. The easternmost district in the State of Meghalaya, Jaintia Hills, is one of the States 12 Districts. East and West Jaintia are the two districts that make up Jaintia Hills. Jaintia hills is a popular tourist destination with a lot of natural, peaceful, and picturesque views. It is situated in a mountainous area. Compared to East Jaintia Hills, West Jaintia Hills District has a higher level of tourism activity. This chapter is designed based on secondary data and observation method which attempts to investigate the tourism development in West Jaintia Hills District, Meghalaya, in the foothills of Eastern Himalayas.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Overview of the Global Tourism

Today, tourism is regarded as one of the largest developing sectors and also acts as a major source of income for many countries. As we all know, that tourism involves travelling from one place to another

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either nationally or internationally for various reasons such as recreation, rest, relaxation, leisure, adventure, religious, family or business purposes for a limited duration.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourists as “people travelling to and staying in place outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure business and other purposes.” Tourism growth and development has led to an upward trend because it allows tourist to see and visit the world, engage in different activities, experience, and share knowledge about cultures and meet new people. The tastes and preferences of the tourists are likely to grow in the coming years, as they shift their interest from the earlier concept of mass tourism to an innovative alternative tourism which will directly and indirectly contribute to the growth and development of the travel and tourism industry worldwide. Therefore, customer satisfaction, safety and enjoyment are the focus of any tourism business.

1.2 India Tourism

India is surrounded by water on three sides i.e., the Arabian Sea on the West, Indian Ocean on the South and Bay of Bengal in the East which provides various tourists attraction and services to tourists. The Himalayas in the North acts as a backdrop or a hideaway, which offers tourists to choose the destination of their choice for rest, relaxation or to simply rejuvenate their body and soul. India is also a land of various spiritual and cultural history, there are many temples, towns of various architectural styles and world-famous monuments.

Himalaya is a Sanskrit word which implies “Abode of Snow”. HIMA which means Snow, and ALAYA which means Abode, are supposed to have inspired the word by early Indian pilgrims who trekked through these mountains. The world’s highest mountain chain runs across five countries: India, Pakistan, China, Nepal and Bhutan. It is the principal source of the worlds river system, including the Indus and Ganga-Brahmaputra basins. The Himalayas are home to iconic animals such as the Snow Leopard, Bengal Tiger, and one-horned rhinoceros, along with millions of people. Tourists have been visiting the region since ancient times due to its mesmerizing perspective and appeal to many climbers and hikers from all over the world. The Himalayas reflect nature’s power, beauty and grandeur. The Himalayas are a mountain range in Asia that not only serves as a physical barrier dividing the Indian Subcontinent from the Tibetan plateau, but also as a climate-specific waterway and a cultural division. Although the term plural Himalayas is commonly used, its official name is Himalaya. Many people have crossed and left traces of their cultures on the Tibetan Plateau, which was home to people who established their own distinct culture influenced by Buddhism. Tibet received the religion in two waves: in the seventh century from India, Nepal and China, and again in the eleventh century from India.

1.3 The Himalayan Tourism

The Himalayas, a mountain range in Asia where Earth meets Sky, are more than just a physical topographical landmark, they represent the identity of millions of people’s civilizations dating back thousands of years. Without these massive mountain ranges, rainfall rushing up from the Indian Ocean would pass across the Indian Subcontinent and into Central Asia, leaving it a desolate wasteland. The Himalayas are an amazing natural wonder that has drawn tourists since time immemorial. Its enormous snow-clad mountains, breathtaking beauty, and plentiful flora and fauna have captivated people all over the world. But, among all of these attractions, its people are a standout. The people, that live in the Himalayan

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