


Chapter 5


Exploring Rural Tourism as a Driver for Sustainable Growth in Meghalaya: Land of Clouds

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism plays a significant role in fostering sustainable growth in rural areas by leveraging their natural, cultural, and heritage resources to attract visitors while preserving the environment and supporting local communities. Sustainable rural tourism development involves a balance between economic viability, environmental integrity, and socio-cultural authenticity. Rural tourism helps to promote sustainable living and can be seen as a potential means to support local economy and growth, i.e. inclusive. 70% of Indian economy is built on agricultural and allied activities which establish a larger prospect for rural tourism. The government has thus realized the true potential of rural India. In this chapter, an attempt is made to research the capacity of rural tourism in Meghalaya; thereby analyzing role of public private departments, community participation, and various aspects for sustainable rural growth. This research examines the opportunities and challenges of Meghalaya that will retain the potential of economic growth capacity in terms of rural tourism.

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INTRODUCTION: RURAL TOURISM & MEGHALAYA

Rural Tourism is REAL. It means it is Rewarding, Enriching, Adventurous and Knowledgeable. Authentic country experience can only be found in villages. Rural tourism can be described as the village experience that includes a broad range of attractions and activities in agricultural or non-urban areas (Villanueva-Álvaro, 2017). Rural tourism is a form of tourism that goes beyond city breaks and popular tourist attractions (Gartner, 2004). Rural tourism is travel to natural places that are non-urbanised, often rely on agriculture and with low populations, such as villages and cottages, homestays, farms, and ranches or eco lodges (Wilson et. al., 2001; Lane, 2009). Rural tourism is a type of tourism that involves traveling to non-urbanized areas, such as villages, farms, ranches, and eco lodges. It involves tourists engaging with the local way of life, the natural world, and outdoor pursuits (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008). The important features include large open areas, and stimulus for tourists to explore agricultural and/or natural ecosystems directly (Su, 2011). The land of floating clouds Meghalaya is an extremely gorgeous rural tourism destination in India (Saha et al., 2022). The two colours that characterize Meghalaya are white and green. The lush green forests, picturesque scenery and white clouds, rarely fail to grab tourists' hearts. Host to an incredible variety of cultures, the tribes of Khasi, Jantia and Garo, Meghalaya is one of India's most picturesque cities, acting as a perfect portal for visitors seeking beauty and tranquillity (Priyanka and Devarani, 2022). The panoramic views, foggy valleys, abundant wildlife, waterfalls and rivers and terraced slopes soothe the minds of tired travellers. This research paper examines the opportunities and challenges of Meghalaya that will retain the potential of economic growth capacity in terms of rural tourism.

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