Adventure tourism in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

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ABSTRACT

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, in India, is an unexplored beauty of India. Andaman is a fascinating getaway offering a multitude of activities. Large numbers of tourists visit the islands every year and experience the natural beauty and sterling beaches of the Islands. These pristine islands offer variety of fun loving and unforgettable adventure activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, sea walk, trekking, island camping, parasailing, water skiing and so on. The tourist inflow has been growing but not at the desired rate. The growth rate of tourists should have been higher considering the adventure activities offered in Andaman. Adventure tourism is at the initial stage of development in Andaman and is fastest growing segment of Andaman tourism industry. Development of adventure tourism could increase the tourist arrivals and the business opportunities in the Islands. The major problem related to adventure tourism is the discord between the safety standards and the way they are followed and implemented. This paper seeks to study the potentials of adventure tourism in Andaman and further give suggestions to develop adventure tourism in Andaman Islands in order to increase the inflow of tourists. The study comprises secondary data which have been collected from journals, articles and Andaman website.

Keywords: adventure tourism, scuba diving, snorkeling, sea walk, trekking, bird watching, forest and beach camping.

1. Introduction to adventure tourism

Tourism is one of the most rapidly growing sectors in the world, and adventure tourism is one of its fastest growing categories. Increasingly, countries in all stages of economic development are prioritizing adventure tourism for market growth, because they recognize ecological, cultural and economic value. The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) defines adventure tourism as a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements such as physical activity, natural environment and cultural immersion.¹ Adventure tourism is a thrill-based activity where an adventurist is ready to face high and low level of challenges.

There are two main categories of adventure activities, hard adventure and soft adventure. The hard adventure is a travel exercise, which involves higher level of risk elements and physical challenges. Hard adventure includes climbing (mountain/rock/ice), trekking, caving, paragliding and so on. The soft adventure is a type of travel exercise which refers the comfortable adventure activities having sometimes no risks. This is very safe and hence maximum adventurists indulge in this type of adventure tourism. Soft adventure includes camping, fishing, scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking, cycling, skiing, rafting, bird watching or simply horseback riding.²
As a kind of tourism, adventure tourism in India is endless because the country has a rich diversity in terms of climate and topography. It is estimated that on average, 20 lakh people participate in adventure tourism in India. The various kinds of adventure tourism in India are rock climbing, skiing, camel safari, paragliding, mountaineering, rafting in white water, trekking, scuba diving and snorkeling. Tourists prefer to go for trekking to places like Ladakh, Sikkim and Himalaya. The states like Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir are popular for skiing. Andaman and Nicobar Islands are chosen by the tourists for adventure activities such as scuba diving and snorkeling. In addition, Manali, Gulmarg, Auli, Darjeeling, Lakshadweep and Goa are the best places for adventure tourism in India.

2. Objectives

1. To study the potentials of adventure tourism in Andaman.
2. To offer suggestions for the development of adventure tourism in Andaman.

3. Research methodology

The present study is conceptual in nature and the paper is purely based on secondary data. The data are collected from journals, articles and Andaman website; in addition, the researcher, being a resident of Andaman, is herself aware about the adventure tourism potentials of Andaman.

Figure 1: Potentials of adventure tourism in Andaman
The Andaman and Nicobar islands are bestowed with the reputation of housing some of the most delectable and gorgeous islands in this entire planet. Thus it constitutes one of the major temptations for the anxious holiday-makers. Basically, these water sports and related activities are most enjoyed by tourists who prefer to take risks. But there are other water sports as well which are suited for the ones who are not so much adventurous.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which is surrounded by rich coral reef eco system, offers unique life time diving experience. The Rajiv Gandhi Water Sports Complex at Port Blair, offers Safe water sports activities and also Adventure water sports activities. The various forms of adventure activities explored in Andaman are –

3.1 Scuba diving

Scuba diving is one of the best water sports in Andaman. The coastal water surrounding these islands is the abode of one of the richest coral reef ecosystem in the world. The specialty is that, here the coral reefs and underwater formation have not been exposed to any sort of damage as a result of which water-sport enthusiasts from all over across the globe assemble here to view the enchanting marine fauna. There are several potential dive sites in Andaman. They are-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cinque Island</th>
<th>North Point</th>
<th>Corruption Rock</th>
<th>Rutland Island</th>
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<tr>
<td>Havelock</td>
<td>Mac Point</td>
<td>Barracuda Point</td>
<td>Turtle Bay</td>
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<td>Lighthouse</td>
<td>Pilot Reef</td>
<td>Minerva Ledge</td>
<td>North Button Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wandoor</td>
<td>Fish Rock</td>
<td>Seduction Point</td>
<td>Bala Reef</td>
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Source: www.andamans.gov.in

4. List of registered scuba dive operators in Andaman

1. M/s Andaman Bubbles Pvt. Ltd. 11. M/s Dive Mantra
5. M/s Barefoot Scuba 15. M/s India Scuba Explorers
7. M/s Blue Planet 17. M/s Lacadives
8. M/s Discover Scuba Centre 18. M/s Ocean Pearl Dive Centre
10. M/s Dive India Scuba and Resorts Pvt. Ltd. 20. M/s Scuba Loving Dive & Travel
   Ltd

4.1 Snorkeling

In the water sport of snorkeling we get to glide across the surface of the water while having a diving mask on. We can witness many gorgeous under-water creatures with the aid of snorkeling. Snorkeling is slowly but surely gaining immense popularity as there is a provision to practice it at numerous venues in the Andaman and Nicobar islands. One can enjoy the underwater marine life and view the rarest of corals by snorkeling at North Bay, Corbyn's Cove, Chidiyatapu, Havelock, Jolly Buoy, Redskin Island and Ross and Smith Island.
4.2 Sea walk

Undersea walking is another superbly fun adventure sports in Andaman. Absolutely no experience required, no complicated equipment to handle and we get to walk on the smooth and clean sand of the sea floor with a helmet which offers a close up view of the underwater world without any hassle. No wonder it’s one of the most popular water sports in these Islands.

4.3 Water Sports

The Rajiv Gandhi Water Sports Complex at Port Blair offers all possible adventure and safe water sports activities. Adventure water sports include water skiing, water scooter, speed boat rides, wind-surfing and so on. The safe water sports component has paddle boats, rowing boats, water cycles, banana boat rides and many more. Water sport facilities are also available at Corbyn's cove beach and Radha Nagar beach at Havelock.

4.4 Trekking

The islands of Andaman and Nicobar are blessed with the generous presence of many stupendous knolls which are perfect for trekking in Andaman and Nicobar islands. Tourists can go trekking through the evergreen forest from Bambooflat to Mount Harriet, Mount Harriet to Madhuban in South Andaman, Kalipur in Diglipur to Saddle Peak in North Andaman and in Little Andaman to experience the life within the lovely, dark and deep forests.

4.5 Mangrove creek safari

The lush green mangroves abundantly seen on either side of meandering creeks in the North and Middle Andamans offer excellent scope for creek safari. One can experience this unique eco-friendly activity at Yerrata creek, Dhaninalla Mangrove creek, Sabari Village – Rangat, Middle Andaman. The mangrove bench walk introduced recently here is a fascinating experience for nature lovers.

4.6 Forest and beach camping

Camps are just the right choice for the nature-lovers who wish to enjoy the sun, sea and the pristine beauty of nature by spending quiet holidays right on the beach. Adventure- lovers can pack their tents and camp on some of the best beaches in the world or in the forests. The Directorate of Tourism rents Swiss Dome and tent accommodation at Radhanagar beach in Havelock Island, which is crowned as “Asia’s best beach” and “7th best beach in the world” by Time Magazine.

4.7 Sport fishing

Try sport fishing, one of the most popular water sports in Andaman. Go on a fishing trip in one of the swanky yachts. Mostly these trips begin in the afternoon, post lunch. There are organizations that offer all kinds of fishing equipments and boats. For fishing enthusiasts, the sea of the coasts of Havelock Island, Neil Island, Long Island and Ritchie's archipelago offer some of the best catches.
4.8 Bird watching

The Parrot Island near Baratang is famous for endemic birds especially Parrot of various kinds. Some thirty species of endemic birds are recorded. It is ideal to visit Parrot Island in the evening from Baratang Island to watch innumerable birds flocking in.5

4.9 Jet skiing

Out of all the adventure activities in Andaman, jet skiing definitely stands out! However, the sport is best enjoyed during good weather only. During heavy downpour or riding during a storm could be dangerous.

4.10 Parasailing

Parasailing is another one of the incredible water sports activities in Andaman that non swimmers can enjoy. Parasailing is a sport that is a wonderful mix of water and air borne adventure. We’re tied behind a motor boat while harnessed in a parachute. So, we fly like a kite behind the boat as it speeds off into the sea. Superbly thrilling it is!

4.11 Glass bottom boating

Tiny boats with glass bottoms for us to have a glimpse of the water life as it sails through the sea, that’s glass bottom boating for us. We can take glass bottom boat rides from Water Sports Complex to North Bay Coral Island or Port Blair to Jolly Buoy Island.6

4.12 Suggestions

In order to further develop adventure tourism in Andaman, the following suggestions could be fruitful:

1. Adventure operators should follow the best practices to reduce risk and ensure safety across a variety of adventure activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, sea walk, jet skiing, parasailing and so on.
2. Government should introduce adventure institute in Andaman for offering several adventure sports courses with modern training equipments as we have adventure institutes in Goa, Manali, Uttaranchal and Darjeeling and enrich the Islands with young adventure tourism entrepreneurs.
3. The communication passed on from the operator to the adventurists should be effective in order to make them clearly understand the guidelines associated with the activity.
4. The adventure operators should have enough stock of adventure machines and equipments with them such as boats, scuba, snorkels, fins and so on so that maximum adventurists can explore the activity at a time without any delay.
5. In order to give boost to adventure tourism government has to formulate appropriate policies.

5. Conclusion

Adventure tourism is a recreational activity and Andaman is one of the best destinations for the adventurists and has finest and tremendous potentials of adventure tourism. The growth in the adventure tourism market has significant implications for destinations and travel
businesses alike. Many travelers are no longer satisfied with sitting on a beach or shopping. They seek adventure experiences that highlight the natural and cultural assets that make a place distinct from any other. It is very important to give special consideration towards the promotion and development of adventure tourism in Andaman.

6. References

1. Adventure Tourism Market Study, (2013), Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), p.4

2. Global Report on Adventure Tourism, Volume 9, UNWTO, p.10