



## Assam Tourism-Scenario: The Path Trodden and the Way Forward

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### Abstract

*The paper explores the status, prospects, and challenges of sustainable tourism in the state of Assam, India. It identifies Wildlife Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Pilgrim Tourism, Golf Tourism, and Adventure Tourism as promising sectors. Assam, known as the Gateway to North-Eastern India, boasts a rich history, cultural vibrancy, and diverse natural beauty. The state attracts global tourists with its scenic landscapes, vibrant culture, and the allure of Blue Mountains. Wildlife Tourism is particularly popular, and Assam features the best hill stations in the region. The state offers various tourism categories, including Health-Based, Event-Based, Nature-Based, Rural-Based, Cultural, Fairs and Festivals-Based Tourism, River Tourism, and Water Leisure activities. However, challenges such as insufficient infrastructure and natural calamities like floods hinder the tourism sector. The paper suggests that addressing these challenges through a strategic and sustainable approach, can contribute to the state's growth and development; given its significant role in generating direct and indirect employment. The study relies on meticulously chosen secondary data for authenticity.*

### Introduction

In the contemporary era, human life has become increasingly mechanized. The need for a respite from work, engaging in recreational activities, and seeking leisure and relaxation has become crucial to alleviate both physical and mental pressures associated with work. Tourism, encompassing economic, social, and cultural experiences, involves the movement of people for leisure, entertainment, recreation, shopping, and more. This industry stimulates economic activities, generating employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers. Employment is fostered in various sectors, including hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, zoos, parks, theatres, casinos, and bars.

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Additionally, the tourism industry significantly contributes to foreign exchange earnings, emerging as one of the fastest-growing economic sectors. Tourist satisfaction is paramount for the success of the sector, fostering the exchange of cultures and infrastructure development. Satisfied tourists play a pivotal role in attracting more visitors in the future by sharing their positive experiences with others (Sen and Ronghang, 2022).

The Indian Tourism Industry traces its origins back to the 19th century, with significant developments occurring in the early 1960s. The establishment of the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) aimed to provide Western comforts to international visitors at major tourist attractions. ITDC played a catalytic role in developing modern facilities for international tourists, with the government promoting tourism infrastructure through initiatives like Air India International and tourism promotion offices in London and Frankfurt. Mohan Singh Oberoi, recognized as the 'father of Indian tourism,' pioneered luxury facilities for high-spending tourists.

By the late 1960s, the Ministry of Civil Aviation bifurcated, and the first Director General of Tourism, S.N. Chib, began formulating India's tourism policy. The 1970s saw tourism gaining autonomy from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, signifying its growing importance. State Tourism Development Corporations were established to strengthen tourism infrastructure, providing accommodation and transport facilities at tourist destinations nationwide. Almost every state now has a Tourism Department responsible for framing the state's Tourism Policy.

Tourism proves beneficial in establishing new products and services, fostering cross-cultural relationships, and contributing to the economic stability and security of a region. The industry plays a vital role in the local economy, offering profitability to restaurants, stores, and shopping centers. Furthermore, it contributes approximately 4.6 percent to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) (Gogoi and Borman, 2017).

## Objectives

It is in this backdrop that; the present study has been envisages encompassing the objectives as furnished hereunder:

1. To know Brief History and Evolution of Tourism in India with latest trends
2. To learn about the District-wise Tourism places
3. To observe the Domestic and Foreign Tourists Visit Pattern
4. To know Tourism as a sustainable means for Generation of Revenues, and
5. To examine the Prospects and Challenges of Sustainable Tourism in Assam.

## Methods and Materials

- **Study area Description:** Assam is the second largest state in the north-eastern region of India. Its total area is 78,438 km<sup>2</sup>. The state has international border





Dibru Saikhowa National Park, positioned within 19 biodiversity hotspots globally, features endangered flora and fauna. Dehing Patkai National Park is distinguished for its diverse range of mammals and reptiles. Orang National Park and Tiger Reserve showcase marshlands, landscapes, and streams, with Indian Rock Pythons, Pintail ducks, cobras, and tigers among its notable attractions. Raimona National Park, situated in the Bodoland Territorial Council of Assam, is home to buffaloes, Bengal tigers, wild elephants, and Golden Langurs, making it a unique and captivating destination (Kalita, 2017).

**Table 1: District-wise Tourist Places in Assam**

| District   | Major Tourist Places                                                                                                                               |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Baksa      | Daragaon Picnic Spot, Manas National Park, Moina Pukhuri, and Manas Soushi Khongkhor.                                                              |
| Barpeta    | Patbaushi Satra, Ganakkuchi Satra, Sundaridiya Satra, Pari Hareswar Devalaya, Chinpara Vithi, and Dargah of Syed Shahnur Dewan.                    |
| Bongaigaon | Naakkati hills, Rock Cut Caves, Bagheswari Temple, Tamranga Lake, Lalmati-Duramari Ganesh Temple, and Kakaijana Proposed Wildlife Sanctuary.       |
| Cachar     | Bhubaneswar Temple, Sri Kancha Kanti Devi Mandir, Kachari Fort, Maniharan Tunnel, Dolu lake, and Hajo.                                             |
| Charaideo  | Charaideo Maidam, Dilighat, Sri Sri Haridev Bornamghar, Historical Borhat Bazar, Borpatra Pukhuri, and Cholakpathar Shyam Gaon Buddhist Monastery. |
| Chirang    | Manas National Park, Gabharukhunda, Rani Sundari Forest Reserves, Datgiri, Laoti Hagrama Bridge, and, Bhumeswar hill.                              |
| Darrang    | Orang National Park, Patharughat Swaheed Minar, Gandhi Smriti Park, Khataras Satra, Pukhuri Beel, Jaypal Pukhuri, Bar Maszid, and Batha Beel.      |
| Dhemaji    | Habung, Gerukamukh, Poba Reserve Forest, Ghuguha Dol, and Malini Than.                                                                             |
|            | Maa Manipuri Than, Rajgarh, Garakhia Than, and Rajgarh Ali.                                                                                        |
| Dhubri     | Gurdwara Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, Bhupen Hazarika Statue, Gurudwara Dhubri sahib, Dheer Beel, Diplai Beel, Soreswar Beel, and Ramraikuti.      |
| Dibrugarh  | Jagannath Temple, Bogibeel Bridge, Lekai Chetia Maidam, Dehing Satra, Jeypore Rainforest, Nestravels, Radha Krishna Mandir, and Blossom Exotica.   |
| Dima Hasao | Bendao Baiglai Waterfalls, Umrongso, Thuruk, Panimur, Maibang, Laisong, Jatinga, Hangrum, Hajong Lake, and Haflong.                                |



|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Goalpara            | Surya Pahar, Manas National Park, Tukeswari, Kokrajhar, Nagaon, Nandeswar Devalaya, Joybhum Kamakhya Temple, Dadan hills, and Barpeta                                            |
| Golaghat            | Kaziranga National Park, Kakochang Waterfalls, Deoparbat Ruins, Garampani Wildlife Sanctuary, Ugibari Village Tourism Area, Panbari Reserve Forest, and Negheriting Shiv Mandir, |
| Hailakandi          | Sri Kancha Kanti Devi Mandir, Serlui B Dam, and Madhabkunda Waterfall.                                                                                                           |
| Jorhat              | Majuli Island, Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, Kakochang Waterfalls, Cinnamora Tea Estate, Lachit Borphukan's Maidam, and Thengal Bhavan.                                             |
| Kamrup Metropolitan | Umananda Temple, Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary, Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Purva Tirupati Shri Balaji temple, and Kamakhya Temple.                                            |
| Kamrup              | Chandubi Lake, Kedareswar Temple, Joy Durga Temple, Hayagriva Madhava Temple, and Powa Mecca.                                                                                    |
| K.Anglong           | Deopani Durga Mandir, Langvoku Waterfall, and Botanical Garden.                                                                                                                  |
| Karimganj           | Chhatachura Range, Duhalia Range, River Kushiara, and Adamail Range.                                                                                                             |
| Kokrajhar           | Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary, Dhubri Forest, and Dheer Beel Picnic Spot.                                                                                                       |
| Lakhimpur           | Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Sanctuary, Frog Temple, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Gola Tourism, and Surath Bhawan Palace.                                                    |
| Majuli              | Samaguri Satra, Kamalabari Satra, Mishing Village, Auniati Satra, and Tengapania.                                                                                                |
| Morigaon            | Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary Kachasila Hill, and Sivakunda Waterfall Morigaon.                                                                                                    |
| Nagaon              | Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary, Silghat, Bordowa, Kaziranga National Park, Champawati Kunda Falls, Gatanga Beel, and Bordowa Than.                                                  |
| Nalbari             | Jain Temple Nalbari, Hari Mandir, Billeswar Temple, Jaypal Than Temple, Kalbhairavi Lingraj Mandir, and Shripur Dewalay Mandir.                                                  |
| Sivasagar           | Pani Dihing Wildlife Sanctuary, Talatal Ghar, Rang Ghar, Rudrasagar Tank, Jaysagar Tank, Tai Ahom Museum, Kareng Ghar and Talatal Ghar.                                          |
| Sonitpur            | Bura-Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary, Bamuni Hills, Dhekiajuli, Mahabhairab Temple, Agnigarh Hill, Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve.                                        |
| Tinsukia            | Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary, RuKmini Island, Bherjan-Borjan-Padumoni Wildlife Sanctuary, and Dibru Saikhowa National Park.                                                  |

Source: Official website of districts of Assam. (<https://assam.gov.in/about-us/396>)

The above table (1) depicts exhaustive and also illustrative lists of all the geographical areas pertaining to various districts of the state. It has been observed that tourist places are scattered in various districts. Haflong, Diphu, Umrangso, Maibang,



Sualkuchi, Lilabari, and Morigaon are the popular hill stations in Assam. Haflong is situated in the Dima Hasao district of Assam. Haflong Lake, Bendaol Baiglai Waterfall, Tumjang Trek, and Dayang Railway Bridge are special attractions for travellers. They can also enjoy bird watching, lush green valleys, exploring nature, meeting with local tribes, and photography. The village Jatinga is well-known for the mysterious suicides of birds. Dimasa, Khelma, Hrangkhoh, Biate, Kuki, Hmar, and Jeme-Naga are the primitive tribes of Haflong. Diphu is situated in Karbi Anglong district. It is popular for serene beauty and opportunities for outdoor activities. Marat Longri National Park, Iskcon temple, Shiva Mandir, and Deopani Durga Mandir are the top tourist places. Travellers can involve in hiking, trekking, photography, and nature exploration (Chutia, 2015).

Umrangso is a beautiful hills station in Dima Hasao district having enchanting and mesmerising views. Garampani, and Kopli River are the main popular places. Maibang is the another hill station in Dima Hasao district. Ek Patthar Ghar, two-roofed monolithic temple, Maibang Waterfalls: and Kachari Rajbari are the popular places. Sualkuchi is situated in Kamrup district. This place is well-known for the craftsmanship, and called as the 'Manchester of East.' Local people are involving in Silk producing activities. Brahmaputra River, Hatisatra, and Devalaya are the popular places. Lilabari is a small hill station in Lakhimpur district. It is situated in the bank of Brahmaputra. It is famous for the Sela pass, Dirang valley, and waterfront. Morigaon town is situated in Morigaon district. There are various sightseeing places in the town, like as Sitajakhala, Deosal Siva Temple, Kachasila Hill, and Patekibori Than (Gogoi, 2017). Thus, it can be seen that there is ample scope not only to maintain but to develop these locations to be attractive tourist's spots for the state.

**Table 2: Year-wise Domestic and Foreign Tourist in Assam**

| Year | Domestic | Foreign | Total   |
|------|----------|---------|---------|
| 2009 | 3850521  | 14942   | 3865463 |
| 2010 | 4050924  | 15157   | 4066081 |
| 2011 | 4339485  | 16400   | 4355885 |
| 2012 | 4511407  | 17543   | 4528950 |
| 2013 | 4684527  | 17638   | 4702165 |
| 2014 | 4826702  | 21537   | 4848239 |
| 2016 | 5160599  | 19456   | 5180055 |
| 2017 | 6052667  | 21760   | 6074427 |
| 2018 | 5856282  | 36846   | 5893128 |
| 2019 | 5447805  | 26878   | 5474683 |
| 2020 | 1266898  | 7285    | 1274183 |



|      |         |     |         |
|------|---------|-----|---------|
| 2021 | 1409161 | 536 | 1409697 |
|------|---------|-----|---------|

Source: India Tourism Statistics, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India.

The above table (2) discussed the year-wise domestic and foreign tourist in Assam. The year-wise foot falls of the domestic and international tourist patterns, shows a positively promising future of course ignoring the gap for the adverse impact of the pandemic. It has been found that number of tourists has been increasing since 2009, but later it was declined due to the corona pandemic. Lock downs imposed by the government for controlling spread of the virus reduced economic activities across the sectors. It reduced arrival of both domestic and foreign tourists.

Tourist can observe the culture and traditions of tribes in the State. Schedule tribes constituted 18 percent population of the state. There are tribes like Dimasa, Bodo, Khamyang, Khamti, Karbi, Phake, Santhal, Singpho, Rabha, Mishing, Nishi etc. Koch Rajbongshi, and Moran Community are the oldest tribes. Arts and crafts of Assam is unique. Handicrafts products, like as bamboo and cane, jewellery, handlooms, toys, pottery, metal work, and wood work are popular among the tourist. Majority of Mikir or Karbi lives in Sibsagar, and Nowgong districts. Mishing tribe is more conservatives, and lives in upper tributaries. Music and dance are the important part of lives of such communities. Each tribe have unique festivals, customs, traditions, rituals, and language (Chatterjee and Dsilva, 2021). Thus, taking care of the tourist would translate a lot of economic development for the state.

**Table 3: Domestic Tourist Arrivals in Assam**

| State             | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | State/UTs         | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|-------------------|---------|---------|
| Andhra Pradesh    | 17977   | 22471   | Rajasthan         | 83407   | 105258  |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 26763   | 33453   | Sikkim            | 5271    | 6588    |
| Bihar             | 129517  | 162896  | Tamilnadu         | 27844   | 34805   |
| Chhattisgarh      | 4731    | 5913    | Tripura           | 16085   | 20106   |
| Goa               | 25682   | 32102   | Uttar Pradesh     | 132195  | 166243  |
| Gujrat            | 9867    | 12333   | Uttarakhand       | 5406    | 6758    |
| Haryana           | 48121   | 61151   | West Bengal       | 145602  | 185932  |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 15408   | 19260   | Andaman Nikobar   | 406     | 507     |
| Jharkhand         | 23925   | 29906   | Chandigarh        | 21222   | 26527   |
| Karnataka         | 25006   | 32257   | Daman & Diu       | 257     | 321     |
| Kerala            | 38794   | 48425   | Dadra & N. Haveli | 270     | 338     |



|                |       |       |              |         |         |
|----------------|-------|-------|--------------|---------|---------|
| Madhya Pradesh | 48660 | 60825 | Delhi        | 76250   | 98075   |
| Maharashtra    | 14733 | 19416 | J & K        | 2649    | 3311    |
| Manipur        | 12426 | 15532 | Lakshadweep  | 392     | 490     |
| Meghalaya      | 23925 | 29906 | Puducherry   | 4595    | 5749    |
| Mizoram        | 18248 | 22810 | Odisha       | 14193   | 17741   |
| Nagaland       | 17572 | 21965 | Home Tourist | 291312  | 364840  |
| Punjab         | 19194 | 23992 | TOTAL        | 1351689 | 1702932 |

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam – 2022, p.306.

The above table (3) discussed the number of domestic tourist of state/union territory visited in Assam. It has been found that highest number of tourist visited Assam belongs from West Bengal, followed by the Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. Assam have amazing rock cut caves at Jogighopa, Bongaigaon District. Those caves are now preserve by the Archaeological Survey of India. Umachal rock cave is situated in Nilachal hills near Guwahati. There are two UNESCO's heritage sites (natural segments) in Assam. They are Manas National park, and Kaziranga National park. Brahmaputra river which is originated from Manasarovar Lake region is called the Lifeline of Assam. Assam Tourism and private operators offering cruises services on the Brahmaputra river. Travellers can enjoy the mind blowing wildlife views. Small tours are along Guwahati city. Operators are running services to Kaziranga and beyond. Tourist can view the amazing beauties of Kaziranga National Park, Majuli, tea gardens etc. It is worthwhile to note that the tourist footfall is comparatively more from the nearby places/states as compared to that of visit from the other locations. This directs us to think on the lines that if proper supporting facilities in terms of infrastructure, transport, food, and even tourist guides are provided then, the visits from other areas of the state by the domestic tourists will show a promising platform towards sustainability.

**Table 4: Tourist visited places in Assam, 2021-22.**

| Name of Places               | Domestic | Foreign |
|------------------------------|----------|---------|
| Doul Gobinda                 | 117460   | 0       |
| Dibru Saikhowa National Park | 769      | 1       |
| Pobitora National Park       | 15960    | 36      |
| Kamakhya Temple              | 216712   | 36      |
| Orrang National Park         | 1592     | 81      |
| Dihing Patkai National Park  | 268      | 0       |
| Dhekiakhowa Bor Namghar      | 315450   | 72      |



|                                                  |         |      |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|------|
| Kaziranga National Park                          | 202125  | 654  |
| Majuli                                           | 9139    | 0    |
| Bhalukpung (Tourist Lodge)                       | 225     | 0    |
| Guwahati Museum                                  | 4902    | -    |
| Manas National Park                              | 26582   | 24   |
| Rang Ghar, Sivsagar Siva Douk, Kareng Ghar, etc. | 145206  | 36   |
| Shankar Dev Kalakshetra                          | 197272  | 11   |
| Umananda Temple                                  | 33634   | 0    |
| Bordowa                                          | 175200  | -    |
| Nameri National Park                             | 3132    | 25   |
| Raimona National Park                            | 171     | -    |
| Madan Kamdev                                     | 37903   | 0    |
| Others                                           | 199230  | 255  |
| TOTAL                                            | 1702932 | 1231 |

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam – 2022, p.308.

The above table (4) discussed the popular domestic and foreign tourist visited places in Assam. It has been found that the highest number of tourist visited the Dhekiakhwa Bor Namghar, followed by the Kamakhya Temple, and Kaziranga National Park. There are 17 wildlife sanctuaries in Assam. Kaziranga National Park, Pobitora National Park, Nameri National Park, Orang National Park, Dihing Patkai National Park, Dibru Saikhowa National Park, Manas National Park, Dibru Saikhowa National Park, and Raimona National Park are the popular places for the travellers. Kaziranga National park is situated in Golaghat and Nagaon districts, and spread over 430 square kilometre. It is popular for the one-horned rhinoceros.

Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in Morigaon district. It mainly famous for One-horned rhinoceros, wild buffalo, Barking deer, wild boar, leopard, migratory birds and various reptiles. Nameri National Park is situated in Sonitpur district. It is home of endangered species, like Clouded Leopard, Indian Wild Dog, Sambar, Gaur, Hornbill, white winged wood duck, Sloth Bear, and any other winged species. Orang National Park is situated in Sonipur and Darrang districts. It is also called as the “Mini Kaziranga.” It is popular for the Royal Bengal Tiger, and Indian One Horned Rhinoceros. Dihing Patkai National Park is situated in Tinsukia, and Dibrugarh districts. It is very rich in biodiversity. It is called as the ‘Jeypore Rainforest.’ Manas National Park is situated in the Himalayan foothills. It is known for the rare and endangered endemic animals, like as wild water buffalo, pygmy hog, golden langur,

hispid hare, and Assam roofed turtle. The Assam National Park Act, 1968 was introduced for the protection, and preservation of flora and fauna in the wildlife sanctuaries, and parks. The places where less number of tourist visited including the foreign visits which is nil throws up special concern to embark upon. These areas have specific concerns by the visiting tourist which needs to be addressed. Things like safety, friendly behaviours, transport, accommodation if taken care then these can be addressed to a great extent. Hence, this would lead to sustainability for the state as these areas are almost unexplored by the visitors.

**Table 5: Tourist (Foreign) Tourist Arrivals in Assam**

| Country        | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | Country    | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|----------------|---------|---------|------------|---------|---------|
| United Kingdom | 1       | 6       | Nepal      | -       | 46      |
| France         | -       | 23      | Bangladesh | -       | 8       |
| UAE            | -       | 10      | Japan      | -       | 2       |
| Australia      | 4       | 9       | Spain      | -       | 5       |
| USA            | 4       | 41      | Austria    | -       | 10      |
| Germany        | 1       | 17      | Others     | 335     | 1054    |
| Switzerland    | 1       | -       | TOTAL      | 346     | 1231    |

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam – 2022, p.307.

The above table (5) discussed the country-wise foreign tourist visited in Assam. It has been found that highest number of foreign tourist visited the state are from Nepal, followed by the United States, and France. Highest number of foreign tourist visited the Kaziranga National Park, followed by Orrang National Park, and Dhekiakhwa Bor Namghar. Dhekiakhwa Bornamghor is located east of Jorhat town. This place is affiliated with Hinduism. Lakhs of devotees gathered in the place during festivals, like as Paal Naam, Madhavdeva birth anniversary, Srimanta Sankardeva birth anniversary, Raas lila, and Bhaona. Kamakhya Temple is situated in Nilachal Hill, Guwahati. It is dedicated to goddess Kamakhya. Large number of tourist gathered the place during Ambubachi Mela, Manasha Puja, and Navaratri. Douli Govinda Temple is situated in Kamrup district. It is located in the foothills of Chandra Bharati hill, and devoted to Lord Krishna.

Madan Kamdev is situated in Kamrup district. It is an archaeological site. It is the temple of Lord Shiva. Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra is a cultural institution, situated in Guwahati. It has cultural museum, children's park, library, and other facilities. Umananda Temple is situated in Guwahati. It is the temple of Lord Shiva. Bordowa is situated in Nagaon district. The place is affiliated to Hinduism. Large number of tourists are visited the place during Ras Jatra, Phalgutsava, Nandotsava, Sankardev Utsav, Janmashtami, and Douli jatra. Guwahati Museum is located in Dighali



Pukhuri tank, Guwahati city. Ranganath Doula is a Lord Shiva temple. It is a worship place for Lord Shiva. Definitely, the tourist from different countries would vary. It will be a conglomerate effect of so many internal and external factors. The cases, where visitors' percentage is not up to the mark, it is recommended to deal with specific issues so that it can be issued. It can be as simple as international documentation process to as complex as international relations with those countries. The state and central government has a crucial role to play to resolve such issues.

**Table 6: Tourists in Places/centrally Protected Monuments, 2021-22.**

| Name of Tourist Places        | Tourist/Visitors (in Nos.) |         |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------|
|                               | Domestic                   | Foreign |
| Group of Maidan, Charaideo    | 32831                      | 0       |
| Vishnu Dol, Joysagar          | 2587                       | 2       |
| Ahom Raja's Palace, Sivasagar | 32121                      | 4       |
| Rangghar Pavilion, Sivasagar  | 36137                      | 15      |
| Karangghar Palace, Sivasaga   | 41530                      | 15      |
| TOTAL                         | 145206                     | 36      |

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam – 2022, p.311.

The above table (6) discussed the tourist's arrivals in popular tourist places in the state. It has been found that largest number of tourist visited the Karangghar Palace, followed by the Rangghar Pavilion, and Ahom Raja's Palace. Ahom Raja's Palace, Karangghar Palace, and Rangghar Pavilion are the historical sites in Sivasagar district. Ahom Raja's palace is a four-story palace. There are three halls in the ground floor. Karangghar Palace is also known as the Kareng Ghar. It was originally built by wood, but it was replaced by bricks and boulders in 1752 AD. It is seven storied palaces. Rangghar Pavilion is the oldest pavilion in Asia. It is a two-storied building. Vishnu Dol is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It was constructed in 1734. Group of Maidan is called as the pyramids of Assam. It is the collection of maidams. These are the burial mounds of the Ahom royalty. Thus, the above tourists visit density opens up wide scope to extend ancillary services to maintain and sustain the visits pattern. For example, augmenting the accommodation facility, providing modernised transport etc. will be highly supportive in these lines.

**Table 7: District-wise Tea Estates in Assam**

| Location of Gardens | No. of Estate | Location of Gardens | No. of Estate |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Dhemaji             | 2             | Tinsukia            | 122           |
| Golaghar            | 74            | Kokrajhar           | 3             |
| Dhubri              | 3             | Sonitpur            | 59            |



|            |     |                |    |
|------------|-----|----------------|----|
| Cachar     | 56  | Baksa          | 4  |
| Dibrugarh  | 177 | Goalpara       | 2  |
| Udalguri   | 24  | Karbi Anglong  | 15 |
| Chirang    | 1   | Shivasagar     | 85 |
| Dima Hasao | 2   | Kamrup (Rural) | 3  |
| Nagaon     | 21  | Kamrup (Metro) | 3  |
| Lakhimpur  | 9   | Jorhat         | 88 |
| Bongaigaon | 1   | Karimganj      | 23 |

Source: The Sentinel (5 Mar 2021). website: <https://www.sentinelassam.com>.

The above table (7) discussed the district-wise tea estates in Assam. It has been found that Dibrugarh district have the largest number of tea estates, followed by the Tinsukia, and Shivasagar district. Assam has long history of tea plantation. There are more than 800 tea estates in the state, covering more than 312,000 hectares. Assam is well-known for the tasty tea, and the beautiful tea gardens. Halmari Tea Estate, Mangalam Tea Estate, Corramore Tea Estate, Monabari Tea Estate, Amchong Tea Estate, Sapoi Tea Estate, and Manohari Tea Estate are the popular tea estates. Monabari Tea Estate is situated in Cheriali district. Corramore Tea Estate is situated in Bodoland Territorial Region. Mangalam Tea Estate is situated in Sivasagar district. It is spread in 18 hectares of land. Halmari Tea Estate is situated in Moran District. The estate covers 534 hectares of land. Sapoi Tea Estate is situated in Sonitpur District. It is spread over 2600 acres of land. Manohari Tea Estate is situated in Dibrugarh district. Tourist can enjoy the green landscapes and the peaceful climate. They can observe the works of the tea pluckers, and the tea manufacturing process. There is more scope for development of tea based tourism in the state.

**Table 8: Income Assortment by Tourist Lodges in Assam**

| Lodge        | 2020-21 | 2021-22  |
|--------------|---------|----------|
| Kaziranga    | 7694658 | 11500376 |
| Sivasagar    | 152975  | 382842   |
| Bhalukpung   | 53700   | 72600    |
| Chandubi     | 446400  | 235700   |
| Barpeta Road | 124300  | 90400    |
| Guwahati     | 1541126 | 2097624  |
| Jorhat       | 511100  | 813890   |
| Tezpur       | 872237  | 2261292  |



|        |          |          |
|--------|----------|----------|
| Nagaon | 350219   | 676264   |
| TOTAL  | 11746715 | 18130988 |

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam – 2022, p.311.

The above table (8) discussed the income assortment by tourist lodges in Assam. It has been found that highest revenue collected by the tourist lodges of Kaziranga, followed by the Guwahati, and Tezpur. Assam is the unique state having the Islamic architecture, Hindu temples, and Buddhist archaeology. There is more scope of the adventure tourism, like as caving, kayaking, safari, bird watching, zip lining, camping, rafting, angling, horse riding tours, rock climbing, trekking etc. Travellers can enjoy the beauties of waterfalls, mesmerizing, rocky hills, evergreen dense rainforest, turbulent tributaries, rivers etc. The nature, green forest, blue hills, pleasant climate, scenic beauty, rare flora and fauna makes Assam a unique place for eco-tourism. The tribal lifestyle, fairs, festivals, cuisine, dance and music are the other attracts for the tourist. The places which contribute to the highest income generation for the lodges should be well taken care of to maintain it properly. At the same time necessary steps to be implemented at all those areas where the footfall is comparatively less. The table suggests that, more accommodation to be provided vis-à-vis the number of visitors so that, the income will also tend to generate more.

There also many challenges before the tourism sector of the state. Lack of infrastructure, absence of trained tourist guides, lack of promotional activities, lack of Govt. conservational measure, lack of organized market, natural calamity (flood), problems related to finance, insurgency, and lack of coordinated efforts are the prominent challenges.

## Conclusion

Assam presents a diverse array of tourism opportunities, poised to fuel its economy through sustainable revenue generation. The state holds promising prospects in wildlife tourism, cultural tourism, pilgrim tourism, golf tourism, and adventure tourism. Notable religious destinations like Barpeta, Batadrawa, Hajo, Kamakhya, and Surya Pahar attract visitors seeking spiritual experiences. The region's enchanting rivers, blue hills, and lush forests offer significant potential for eco-tourism. Adventure enthusiasts can engage in various sports activities, including water sports, para-sailing, trekking, and rock-climbing. Tourists have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the socio-cultural life of ethnic tribes, observing customs, religious beliefs, cultural attire, food habits, festivals, and traditional songs and dances. Additionally, the Tourism Department organizes events like the Tea Festival, Dihing Patkai Festival, Rongali Festival, Barak Valley Festival, and Elephant Festival.

Despite these promising aspects, the tourism industry in the state faces several challenges. Immediate areas that demand attention include a lack of infrastructure



facilities, a shortage of trained tourist guides, insufficient promotional activities, the impact of natural calamities like floods, insurgency issues, and a need for more coordinated efforts. The government should take more aggressive initiatives to address these challenges, encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for mutual growth and development in the sector. Collaborative efforts involving the government, tourism authorities, private sector stakeholders, and local communities are essential.

Recognizing that the tourism sector is the largest producer of both direct and indirect employment, it becomes imperative for the government to focus on strategies that contribute to the economic growth and development of the state. With the right investments and strategies, Assam has the potential to evolve into a sought-after tourist destination, making significant contributions to economic growth, job creation, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

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