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Air Based Adventure Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract: Due to being a permanent resident of Himachal Pradesh, I have chosen the title for the research as - Air Based Adventure Tourism in Himachal Pradesh is an Indian state located in the Northern region of India. Himachal Pradesh state is established on 25 January 1971. The total area of Himachal Pradesh is 55,673 Km² including 55402.18 km² rural areas and 270.82 km² urban area with the population of 89.67% residing in rural areas and only 10.03% population residing in the urban area. Considering the above figures, it is easy to assess that if the state has to develop and deal with acute problems like migration, unemployment, then its action plan is of utmost importance, considering it very seriously about rural tourism. Nature has summed up this state with its beauty, it is necessary to develop and propagate new tourist sites similar to the already famous tourist sites. There is a possibility of tourism in every corner of this state. This is not so simple due to the odd geographical conditions of the State of Himachal Pradesh and due to natural calamities from time to time. But this task is completely possible by the strong political will and honest functioning. For this, we can learn from other states like Uttarakhand and Kerala and foreign technology can also be used for infrastructure development. Thus, untreated and unprecedented results can be achieved by keeping the soul of the village of Himachal Pradesh, its culture and delicious dishes, by propagating the air march and by entertaining the guest with a sense of hospitality.

Index Terms -. Adventure Tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

Adventure tourism is a niche tourism activity involving exploration or travel to remote area, where the traveler should expect the unexpected. Adventure tourism has grown rapidly worldwide over the past few years. Tourists explore new destinations looking for rare, incomparable experiences. Adventure tourism can be domestic or international, and like all travel must include an overnight stay, but not last longer than one year. Adventure tourism is a niche tourism activity involving exploration or travel to remote area, where the traveler should expect the unexpected. Adventure tourism has grown rapidly worldwide over the past few years. Tourists explore new destinations looking for rare, incomparable experiences. Adventure tourism can be domestic or international, and like all travel must include an overnight stay, but not last longer than one year. This whole process can be divided into soft adventurer and hard adventurer and cultural immersion.

Soft Adventurer: These participants are usually beginners in the realm of adventure and enjoy soft activities that necessitate limited or no previous experience. Soft adventure is the term used to describe the type of adventure in which participants have little or no experiences and low risk in activities. Soft adventurer may also use mechanized transport (cars, motorbikes) and other comfortable accommodation. Soft adventure activities are often based upon their hard adventure equivalents. Although, they occur at a less physically demand level.

Hard adventurers: refers to the tourists who participate in activities in which travel experience has more physical challenge, higher element of risk and pushes people outside of the comfort zone. Hard adventure gives an adrenaline rush to participants in the elements of uncertain outcome and risk. These tourists sometime can control risks because of the level of experience, they have.

Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

The natural beauty of Himachal Pradesh has made Himachal Pradesh Tourism really popular for a long time now. Tourists in Himachal Pradesh can indulge in a plethora of activities while they are on vacation. In Himachal Pradesh, tourists can go trekking and camping, indulge in adventure tourism, eco-tourism, religious tourism, visit wildlife sanctuaries, tour lakes, and attend fairs and festivals. Himachal has snow-covered mountains, lovely rivers, dense forests, wonderful meadows, arduous passes, beautiful valleys and lakes. The Himalayas, free flowing rivers, lush green forests, clean sky, and an overall challenging environment can lure any one to take adventure activities. Nestled between the vast Himalayan ranges, Himachal Pradesh has become a hub for adventure activities. The state has numerous wonderful hill stations in store, which are freezing cold in winters and pretty cold in summers. Shimla, Dalhousie, Kullu, Kasauli, Manali, Chail and Kufri are a few of the hill Stations in Himachal Pradesh which

offer heaps of adventure sports activities, apart from the breath-taking scenery. Among the most famous adventure sport, Trekking occupies highest place. Then there is skiing, heli-skiing and ice-skating. One can also take up thrilling paragliding and the test of stamina with mountain-cycling. Camping, fishing, golf or a jeep safari are other hits with the visitors. Also there is mountaineering and rock climbing. No special training is required for most activities; all one need is a reasonable level of fitness. Himachal hosted the first Paragliding World Cup in India from 24 October to 31 October in 2015. Venue for paragliding world cup was Bir Billing, which is 70 km from the tourist town Macleod Ganj, in Kangra District. Bir Billing is the centre for aero sports in Himachal and considered as best for paragliding.

Shimla: Shimla became the capital of Himachal Pradesh in 1966 and is popularly known as the 'Queen of Hill Stations'. Shimla was named after Shyamala - the Goddess Kali. One can travel by flight, train, and road to reach Shimla. Many tourists visit Shimla throughout the year from neighbouring states like Punjab, Haryana, and Jammu & Kashmir.

Kufri: Kufri is a small hill station located along National Highway No.22. It is very near to Shimla and is famous for skiing, trekking, pony rides, yak rides, and hiking during the peak season. The chief attractions at the hill station are Indira Tourist Park and Himalayan Nature Park. Tourists can avail themselves of skiing courses and can also hire the relevant equipment.

Dharamshala: Set against the magnificent backdrop of the towering Dhauladhar ranges, which rises up to more than 4,000 meters, Dharamshala, which literally means 'the Holy Refuge', lies perched up on the high slopes in the upper reaches of the Kangra valley. Founded in 1855, it is one of the 80 hill resorts developed in the seventeenth century by the British to beat the heat and dust of the sweltering plains. Today, it is famous as the abode of the Dalai Lama and is known throughout the world as the Little Lhasa, because of the large number of Tibetans.

Kullu: "Surely the Gods live here; this is no place for men", wrote Rudyard Kipling of Kullu, India's valley of the gods. Located in the charming Kullu valley in Himachal Pradesh and set amongst the lower reaches of the mighty Himalayas, the small town of Kullu is famous for its temples, apple orchards, and the annual Dussehra festival, all of which attract hordes of tourists. Kullu is also known for its handicrafts. Beyond the town's perimeter loom the magnificent greater Himalayas and the silver valley bisected by the Beas River.

Manali: One of the most beautiful hill stations of the country, Manali is basically a small town in the Kullu valley of Himachal Pradesh. Termed sometimes as the cradle between the lesser Himalayas, Manali is extremely popular with tourists for its lavish display of unspoilt natural beauty. Rich in its scenic splendour, Manali draws a good number of tourists from within the country and abroad every year.

Dalhousie: Compared to other hill stations, Dalhousie, 80 winding kilometres from Pathankot, is markedly different and as yet unexplored. Spread over five hills, Dalhousie has a serenity of its own. Attractive cottages and villas cling to the deodar and pine mantled hills of Dalhousie, while pink and red rhododendrons bloom and trees stand tall in different shades of green.

Kangra: The small town of Kangra was the capital of the erstwhile rulers of the Chand dynasty. It is set amongst the picturesque settings of the Kangra valley at the foothills of the majestic Dhauladhar range. The area around Kangra is known for its ancient temples and picturesque surroundings, which attract tourists.

Air Based Adventure Activities

Paragliding: Gifted with natural paragliding-friendly terrain and climatic conditions, India is proud to be home to several flying operators, who conduct paragliding activities throughout the year. You can have your pick from mountain flying, coastal flying, flying over flatlands and desert flying. The history of paragliding in India rewinds back to the early 1990s and didn't take long to capture the interest of local adventure lovers. Hence, it is the valleys of Kangra and Kullu are two places that have witnessed the birth and spread of this in India. Paragliding is with no doubt the closest experience one can get to a bird's flight. There is not much special training required to indulge in this sport activity.

Hot Air Ballooning

Hot air ballooning is a relatively new adventure activity in India, but one that's fast growing in popularity. It's a thrilling way to experience India and get a different perspective of the country. Imagine having a calm and peaceful view of India's breath taking scenery from a quiet place high above the crowds. Hot air ballooning isn't as scary as you may imagine either. It actually feels like you're as light as a feather as you float though the sky. The desert state of Rajasthan is the most popular place for hot air ballooning in India. Flights operate from the Pink City of Jaipur, the holy town of Pushkar, and Ranthambore National Park. View wild animals at Ranthambore from the safety of a hot air balloon, or get a bird's eye view of the Pushkar Camel Fair! It's also often possible to go hot air ballooning around greater New Delhi and in the mountains, around Manali, in India's northern state of Himachal Pradesh.

Skydiving

Skydiving, as an extreme sport is still at a very budding stage in India but its popularity and presence is slowly spreading. While there aren't any companies offering full-time skydiving tours or packages, the frequency of skydiving camps across the country has been steadily increasing.

Parasailing

Parasailing, also known as parascending or parakiting, is a recreational kiting activity where a person is towed behind a vehicle while attached to a specially designed canopy wing that resembles a parachute, known as a parasail wing. The manned kite's

moving anchor may be a car, truck, or boat. Parasailing is also one of the much preferred sports in Goa. Various lakes in Pune, some beaches in Maharashtra and Karnataka are also the best places to try this activity.

Paragliding in Himachal

Himachal Pradesh is known as Paragliding Capital of India. Paragliding world-cup 2015 was organized in Himachal Pradesh. The World Cup was held from in Kangra district in which around 150 top ranked pilots of the world participated besides 500 free flying pilots. Himalayan Para Gliding Pre World Event held in Bir Billing attracts large number of adventurers from across the world.

Paragliding Spots

Bir Billing in Kangra Valley

Rohtang Pass near Manali

Kothi below Rohtang Pass

Bijli Mahadev near Kullu

Bandla Ridge in Bilaspur

Paragliding in Bir Billing is an experience worth remembering, as it passes through green tea plantations; further the view of the snow-capped mountains can simply make the tourist ecstatic.

Hot Air Ballooning in Himachal

Hot air ballooning is a relatively new adventure activity in Himachal, Hot air ballooning in Manali is latest trend that's gaining interest between visitors, specially newlyweds and kids. It's a thrilling way to experience Manali and get a different perspective of the country. Imagine having a calm and peaceful view of India's breath taking scenery from a quiet place high above the crowds. Hot air ballooning isn't as scary as you may imagine either. It actually feels like you're as light as a feather as you float though the sky.

Hot air ballooning spots

Manali

Kullu

Objectives of the Study

1. To briefly discuss about adventure tourism in India.
2. To identify popular air based adventure tourism activities in Himachal Pradesh.
3. To identify factors restraining adventure tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

Need For the Study

The study is done to understand the scope for air based adventure tourism in Himachal Pradesh by considering the various air based adventure tourism activities across the state and also knowing the impact of both international and domestic tourists. The study is to also know how these tourists foresee adventure tourism in India and to conclude at the changes which might have an impact on the growth of adventure tourism in India.

Popular Adventure Activities in India

S.No	Adventure Activity	Adventure Tourists Visits
1.	Trekking	547413
2.	Wildlife/ Jeep Safaris	675521
3.	Camping	341436
4.	Water Rafting	997040
5.	Boat safaris	232252
6.	Parasailing	154901
7.	Paragliding	97770

Table 1: Popular Adventure Activities in India

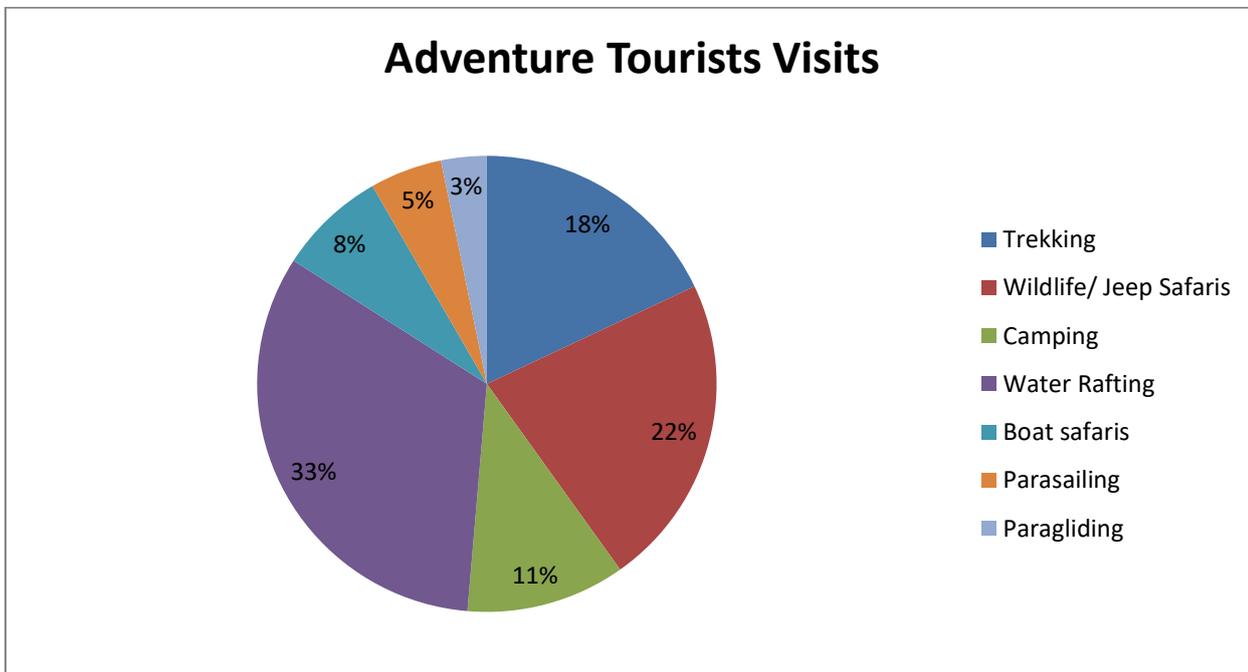


Figure 1: Popular Adventure Activities in India

Soft adventure activities like wildlife/ jeep safaris in the many national parks is the top land based adventure activities of adventure travellers in India. Trekking followed by camping are the other most popular land based adventure activity in India. India’s mountainous fast rivers are apt for adventure activities like rafting and a lot of travellers are taking rafting holidays. Hence water rafting in India is the top water based adventure activity in India. Boat safaris followed by houseboat stays are the other popular water based adventure activity in India. Parasailing and paragliding are the top two air based adventure activities in India.

Popular Air Based Adventure Activities in India

S.No	Air Based Adventure Tourism Activity	Adventure Tourists Visits
1.	Parasailing	154901
2.	Paragliding	97770
3.	Hot Air Ballooning	10168

Table 2: Popular Air Based Adventure Activities in India

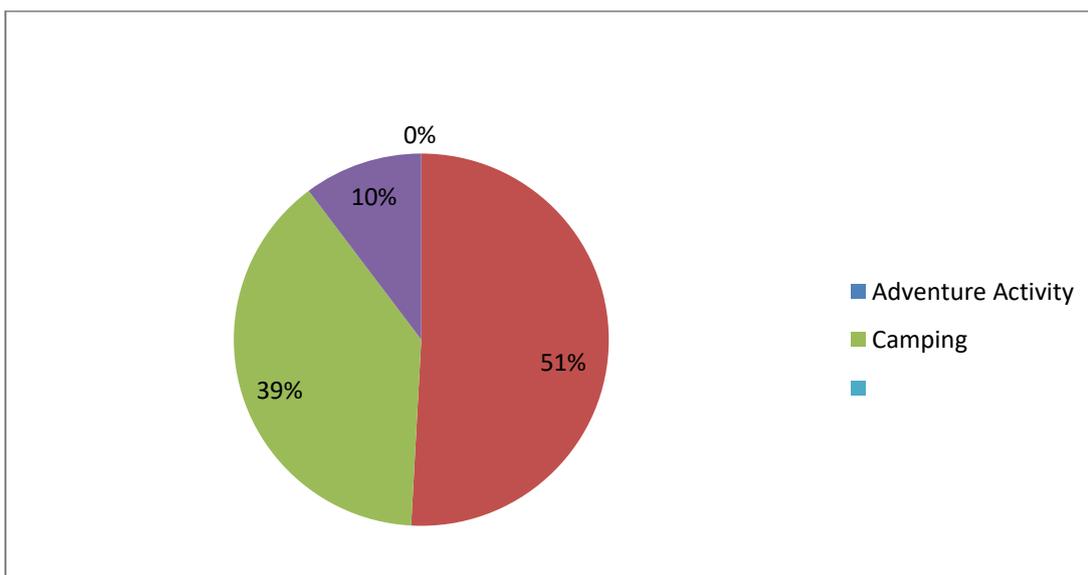


Figure 2: Popular Air Based Adventure Activities in India

These are the top three air based adventure tourism activity in India according to the number of tourists visits. The top one is parasailing followed by paragliding at second and hot air ballooning at the third place.

The distribution of domestic and foreign tourist visits for parasailing, paragliding and hot air ballooning

Activity	Parasailing	Paragliding	Hot-Air Ballooning
Domestic Tourists Visits	151982	84995	9243
Foreign Tourist Visits	2919	12775	925

Table 3: Domestic and Foreign tourist visits for parasailing, paragliding and hot air ballooning

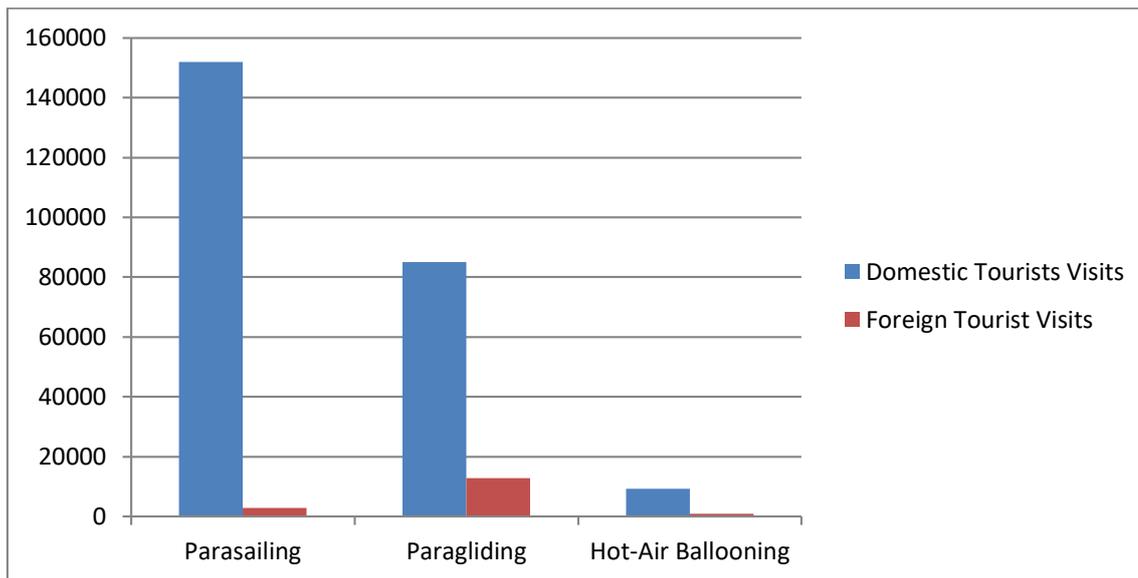


Figure 3: Domestic and Foreign tourist visits for parasailing, paragliding and hot air ballooning

The above bar graph represents the number of foreign and domestic tourist’s visits for parasailing, paragliding and hot-air ballooning. As we can see the number of foreign tourist is highest for paragliding while for domestic tourists it’s for parasailing.

Adventure Tourist Visits in terms of Origin (Domestic & Foreigner) in Himachal Pradesh

Origin	Adventure Tourists Visits
Domestic Tourists Visits	445121
Foreign Tourist Visits	104643

Table 4: Adventure Tourists Visits in Himachal

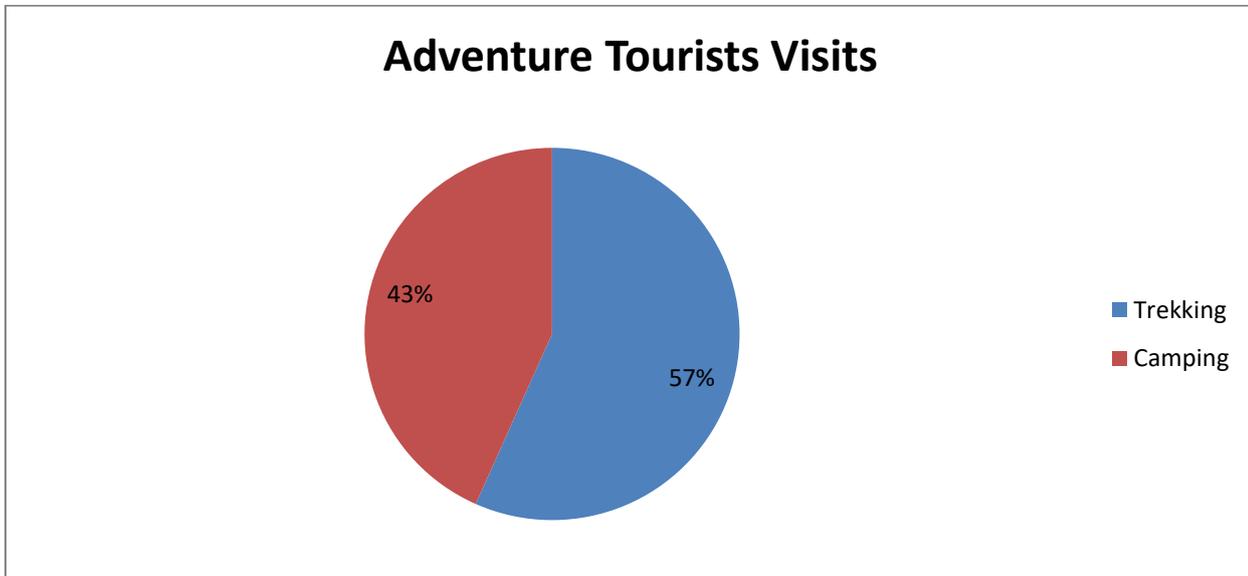


Figure 4: Adventure Tourists Visits in Himachal

The above pie chart represents the number of foreign and domestic tourist’s visits in Himachal. As we can see the number of domestic tourist is higher.

Popular Adventure Activities in Himachal Pradesh

Adventure Activity	Adventure Tourists Visits
Trekking	246471
Camping	188405
Paragliding	49701

Table 5: Popular Adventure Activities in Himachal Pradesh

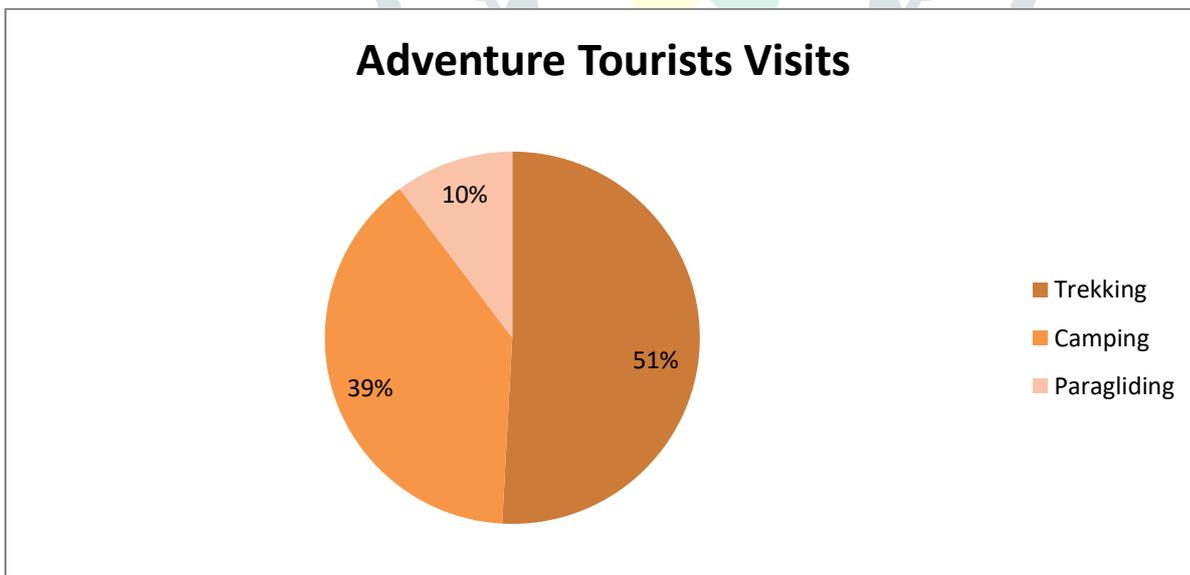


Figure 5: Popular Adventure Activities in Himachal Pradesh

These are the top three adventure tourism activity in Himachal Pradesh according to the number of tourist’s visits. The top one is trekking followed by camping at second and parasailing at the third place.

Findings

1. Adventure tourism in India mainly consists of soft adventure tours and hard-core adventure tourism in India is still at a

nascent stage.

2. Parasailing and paragliding are the top two air-based adventure activities in India
3. The estimated total number of adventure tourist visits in India was around 31 lakh in the calendar year of 2015.
4. Paragliding is the most popular air-based adventure activity in Himachal Pradesh.
5. As per the government of India report, the tourism industry is the biggest service industry in India. It is expected that the tourism sector's part of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) will grow at a rate of 7.0% yearly in the period 2013- 2024.

Factors Restraining Adventure Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

1. The factor which mostly restrains adventure tourism in Himachal is poor road condition and connectivity to adventure tour places.
2. Shimla, the gate to Himachal, is heavily filled with traffic jams. Throughout peak hours on a traditional day, it takes an associate degree of the hard quantity of your time to induce from one place to a different. Simply imagine what happens to the traffic once the traveler season is in its full flow. Although plenty is being done – widening of the roads, following different routes, etc. however that won't do. Not only Shimla, but many other places like Manali, Kufri, Chamba, and Narkanda, etc. are filled with traffic which makes it unsatisfying for travelers to wait for long in these jams.
3. Poor air and railway connectivity as no new routes are explored, no modernization, no new technology is being enforced. If a tourist is given a stronger property choice, they'd opt to visit Himachal via flights or fast-moving trains.
4. Shortage of tour operators and guides at tourist places.
5. Some places are inaccessible particularly in winters as they're blocked, thanks to hefty precipitation.
6. The safety standards of the risk adventure sports like paragliding, trekking, etc. should meet with the central government standards. There are hardly a few standards within the hands of the state government. In a country like India where emerging adventure tourism taking place, there is no central authority that can frame the rules and regulate from time to time. There is a high need to set up a central body that can frame and regulate the safety rules for adventure throughout India.

Safety Guidelines for Adventure Activities

The General Guidelines for all adventure sports, as given by ministry of Tourism, Government of India-

1. Leaders should satisfy themselves that equipment to be used meets all the safety norms for each adventure sport; all inspections have been carried out as recommended by the manufacturer and is fit for use.
2. Every person joining a group engaged in adventure sports must receive introductory training and leaders should be satisfied that they have acquired the skills necessary to participate.
3. Leaders should have a first aid certification and must be competent to impart first aid training in the use of stretchers. Leaders should be familiar with search procedures and should brief all group members in these procedures.
4. All group members must be familiar with the use of radios where these are being used.
5. Leaders should be familiar with helicopter operations, know how to approach a helicopter and procedures for being winched up and down.
6. Leaders should be proficient in the use of maps and compasses in any weather by day or night.
7. Leaders should be satisfied that all members are medically fit to take part in adventure sports.

Conclusion

Adventure is a need of monotonous life; people seeking adventure in India are the guest, customers, and visitors of the culture of the country, therefore, it is the responsibility of people, tour agents and government of the country to provide the best possible services to them. There is so much to improve but time is running out as the country is facing increasing competition from other Asian countries. It is hoped at the end that the Adventure Tourism market will blossom to its full potential in upcoming years. Adventure activities like Trekking, Mountaineering, Camping, Paragliding, Cycling, Parasailing, Bungee jumping, Water Rafting, Hot air balloon, Scuba diving, Bike tour, Rock climbing, Go Karting, Snorkelling, jeep safari, houseboat stays, Sky driving, Hang Gliding, etc. are the practiced forms of adventure activity in India.

Paragliding was the most popular air-based adventure activity in Himachal Pradesh. There is endless scope for adventure tourism activities in the state. The fabulous snow, beautiful rivers, and trekking sites offer excellent options for water sports and trekking.

Apart from water and land-based Adventure activities one can also enjoy Air-based Adventure sports. Adventure Sports also beckons adventure lovers to indulge in extraordinary activities and challenges.

The state has a great future in Adventure Tourism. This new form of tourism needs an increasing volume of resources for its speedy growth and development as well as greater safety and security measures to need to be introduced. The State Government Department of Tourism (DOT) and Tour Operators need to coordinate their efforts and concentrate on providing necessary infrastructure and facilities for the development of Adventure Tourism. There is a need to address critical issues of protecting the natural environment, protecting tourist from potential risks, and protecting long term market share, through a better understanding of customer's needs and want. If these issues are addressed now, it will help to provide long term and sustainable future for Adventure Tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

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