

SPORTS TOURISM IN INDIA



Opening ceremony of 2010 Commonwealth Games at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi

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1: INTRODUCTION

World tourism arrivals are projected to grow at 4.3 percent per year and to reach 1.6 billion by 2020. In this same period, worldwide tourist spending is expected to grow at 6.7 percent per year and to reach US \$2 trillion (WTO, 2001). One of the fastest-growing areas contributing to these staggering statistics is sport tourism.

Although sport tourism is a relatively new concept in terms of contemporary vernacular, its scope of activity is far from a recent phenomenon. The notion of people traveling to participate and watch sport dates back to the ancient Olympic Games, and the practice of stimulating tourism through sport has existed for over a century. Within the past five years, however, sport and tourism professionals have begun to realize the significant potential of sport tourism and are aggressively pursuing this market niche.

Defining Sports Tourism

The term 'Sports Tourism' basically means tourism that is based on the theme of sports. It refers to a specific travel outside the usual environment for either passive or active involvement in competitive sport. Sport is the primary reason for travel whereas the leisure element may reinforce the overall experience. Another school of thought explains it as a combination of sports activities and travel wherein it consists of two broad categories.

1. **Active Sports Tourism** *i.e. Travel for the purpose of participating in a sport, leisure or recreational activity.*
2. **Passive Sports Tourism** *i.e. Travel for the purpose of visiting a sport, leisure or recreational activity or an event.*

Sports tourism is a pretty popular phenomenon in areas such as North America, Australia and Europe. Sport tourism is a fast growing sector of the global travel industry and equates to \$600 Billion a year. It has been given sub sectored into notable products such as Golf Tourism, Polo Tourism and Adventure Tourism through various activities.

Economic Forces That Drive Sport Tourism

In order for people to participate in any form of sport tourism, an adequate amount of money must be possessed. The affluence of families today has risen to new heights, mainly because of major changes in the type of jobs people are employed in, as well as how people work. Similarly, people are experiencing an increase in the amount of leisure time available for sport tourism activities. In general, the number of hours on the job has decreased significantly over the past century, particularly as the number of holidays has increased and improvements in technology have led to more disposable

time for many people. Ultimately, for most Western societies the economic changes in recent history have increased the amount of time and money available to individuals, and have motivated them to engage in sport tourism activities.

Technological innovations that influence popularity of Sports Tourism

Equally important in making it possible for sport tourism to expand to a more extensive cross section of the population are the recent innovations in technology. The best example of this new technology is illustrated by new methods in transportation. With the invention of automobiles and air travel in the past century, individuals have been able to move to various locations to take part in these sport tourism activities. Furthermore, with the creation of these new transportation methods, people began to require accommodations away from their homes. This led to the massive development of numerous hotels, inns, and motels. In addition to the crucial role that transportation and accommodation played in the increased popularity of sport tourism, new innovations in media technology also aided in the development. The press followed by radio and then television popularized spectator sport in particular. Lastly, the innovations in sport equipment production have also contributed to the development and the popularizing of sport.

Because of the wide range in technological innovations, the opening of travel and appeal of sport has greatly increased, allowing for the rapid expansion of sport tourism. More specifically, increased access, expanded availability, and ease of participation have contributed to the increased rise in popularity of sport tourism.

Economic impacts of sport tourism

Much of the research on event sport tourists has focused on their economic impact upon a host community, although measuring spending patterns is a difficult proposition. Tourism's economic impact is one of the most researched but least understood areas of tourism. Sport and tourism each contribute a great deal to the global economy and have become an element in the armory of politicians, planners and economists seeking to regenerate local economies. As a combination of the two, sport tourism has a significant economic impact. However, the exact impact of sport tourism is difficult to quantify. The availability of data and research both lag behind the market and it is difficult to measure the overall value of sport tourism. In addition, the industry is so expansive that it has caused problems for practitioners and academicians in determining the exact composition.

Socio-cultural Impacts of Sports Tourism

Sport tourism inevitably affects more than the economy; tourists by their presence impact on the host population and, at least in some regards, hosts have an effect on

their visitors. The trend to increase sport touristic experiences and to provide them in faraway, often very different cultures simply increases the importance of addressing both the potential positive and the negative socio-cultural impacts of sport tourism.

Positive Impacts of Sport Tourism on Culture

- Sport tourism can strengthen national heritage, identity, and community spirit as local people join together to promote their culture.
- Sport tourism can provide a vehicle through which visitors can come to know foreign people and their culture.
- Sport tourism can instigate the regeneration and preservation of cultural traditions.

General Benefits of Sport Tourism

- Sports are an investment in the tourism industry.
- Creates economic growth through filled hotels, restaurants and retail establishments.
- Creates exposure and enhances a positive image for your community.
- Creates new product, a new tourism destination.
- Maximizes facility use in your community.
- Builds community relationships and strengthens corporate support.
- Creates youth opportunity/entertainment.
- Attract high-yield visitors, especially repeaters.
- Generate favorable image for the destination.
- Develop new infrastructure.
- Use the media to extend the normal communications reach.
- Generate increased rate of tourism growth or a higher demand plateau.
- Improve the organizational, marketing, and bidding capability of the community.
- Secure a financial legacy for management of new sport facilities.
- Increase community support for sport and sport-events.

Classification of Sports Tourism

There are several classifications on sport tourism. One of the theories suggested that the sports tourism is defined as Hard Sports Tourism and Soft Sports Tourism while another theory suggested that there are three types of sports tourism which includes Sports Event Tourism, Celebrity and Nostalgia Sport Tourism and Active Sport Tourism

Hard and Soft Sport Tourism

Hard definition of sport tourism refers to the quantity of people participating at competitive sport events. Normally these kinds of events are the motivation that attracts visitors visits the events. Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, F1 Grand Prix and regional events such as NASCAR Sprint Cup Series could be described as Hard Sports Tourism.

Soft definition is relatively the tourists travel for participating on recreational sporting, or signing up for leisure interests. Hiking, Skiing and Canoeing can be described as the Soft Sports Tourism.

Sport Events Tourism

Sport event tourism refers to the visitors who visit the city with the purpose of watching the events. A good example of this would be during the Olympics. Each Olympic host city receives an immense amount of tourism.

Nostalgia sport tourism

Nostalgia sport tourism involves traveling to famous sport-related attractions. Visits to various sporting hall of fames such as the Women's College Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, Tennessee and the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York are good examples of these sport-related establishments. Furthermore, sports museums such as the NASCAR museum in Charlotte, North Carolina, and famous sport venues such as Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin fall into this category.

Active sport tourism

Those individuals who travel to participate in sporting events comprise the active sport tourism category. These participatory events can take on a wide variety of forms in a wide variety of sports. Golf, kayaking, tennis, fishing, snow-mobiling and surfing are just a few examples of the sports that people travel to participate in.

2: Sports Tourism in India

Overview

India has always been big in the tourism industry because of its extreme diversity. However, India's sports tourism is also carving a niche for itself in Indian tourism industry, attracting many adventurers to grab flights to India. Sports tourism in India is an absolute must for all the thrill and adventure seekers. The Historical and geographical diversities of India open up great avenues for adventure sports and activities.

India is a huge country with an extremely varied topography. Be it skiing on the great Himalayan ranges, bicycling on the wobbly Indian roads or rafting on gushing rivers – India holidays offers a range of opportunities to its visitors to test out their sporting skills! Not surprisingly, cheap flights to India are increasingly becoming more popular among sports freaks!

With adequate support from relevant authorities, sports tourism in India is indeed gaining immense prominence and popularity. People from different parts of the globe have started looking towards India as a world class holiday destination with top of the line sporting infrastructure. Sports tourism in India is also being encouraged by the tourism providers in India. It means that vacations to India are sports-oriented. Travelers book tickets on flights to India not only to enjoy some of the world's finest attractions but also to experience a vacation that is sports-oriented!

Glimpse of Past Activities in India

Over a span of 5 years i.e. 2008 – 2013, India has witnessed 8 major sports events, viz a viz the following.

YEAR	EVENTS
2008	AFC Challenge Cup – New Delhi
2008	Commonwealth Youth Games – Pune
2010	Commonwealth Games – New Delhi
2010	Field Hockey World Cup – New Delhi
2011	Cricket World Cup (Men's) – Multiple Cities
2011	Formula One – Motor Sports – Greater Noida
2011	South Asian Winter Games – Dehradun, Auli
2013	Cricket World Cup (Women's) – Multiple Cities

The Current Scenario

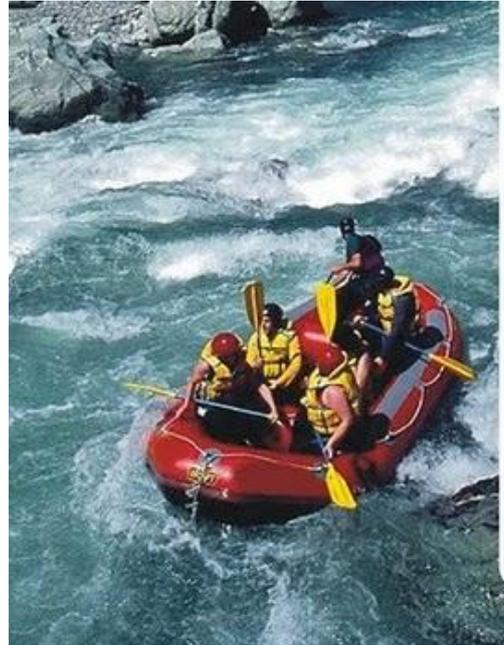
Inbound Sports Tourism in India

Sports tourism is broadly defined by the adventure sports and games in India. There are indeed several destinations in India offering sports tourism. There are varied sports activities that one can indulge in during their vacation.

Types of adventure sports: Distinguished adventure sports: mountaineering, rock-climbing, scuba diving, water rafting, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, surfing, water scooting. Aero sports like: ballooning, paragliding, hand gliding. These sports offer scope for sports lovers and enthusiasts from the entire world.

Adventure hot sports in India: Goa, Andaman and Nicobar, Kerala, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Sikkim, Lakshadweep.

Business and leisure Business tours combined with active sports are becoming highly popular where business meets leisure and such kind of sports tourism on business tours is a global cooperative strategy for employee entertainment and well-being. Moreover, sports tourism is nurtured by professional sports persons; they have to travel extensively for their careers to participate in national and international championships like Cricket World Cup, Soccer World Cup, Wimbledon, and so on and so forth. Commonwealth Games 2010, Delhi is the best example of sports tourism.



Outbound Sports Tourism in India

A holiday with friends or family to witness a mega sporting event is no longer an alien concept for Indian travellers. Today, sporting enthusiasts in India are willing to spend 'top dollar' to jet set across the globe to experience the thrill of watching their favourite game live. These fans also like to 'live it up' exploring and enjoying the destination simultaneously.

Correspondingly, there has also been a marked rise in the number of tour operators and agents specializing in servicing the requirements of this particular segment. It's not only niche specialists, but also big mainstream tour operators who set up a separate division to tap the potential of Sports Tourism. An alien concept in India about a decade ago, Sports Tourism, though a niche segment has evolved rapidly over

the past five years. A large number of agents and tour operators are introducing interesting packages surrounding major sporting events. Sports Tourism is a well organised sector and major revenue churner in several nations around the world like UK, Germany, Singapore, South Africa, Malaysia etc. Several National Tourist Offices (NTOs) are aggressively working towards promoting their destinations for Sport Tourism in India to tap the corporate, as well as fast growing upper middle class and the youth.

It was the ICC Cricket World Cup 2003 in South Africa, which kick started the trend in India and offered the kind of exposure which Indian spectators never witnessed. Another major event, the Indian Premier League (IPL), which commenced in 2008, proved to be a milestone in the Indian sports scenario. In the following year, IPL despite being shifted to South Africa played the pied piper, successfully attracting Indian and international spectators generating great volume of outbound traffic for Sports Tourism. Indians today travel abroad to watch a broad range of sporting events including cricket, soccer, tennis and Formula One

While Sports Tourism in India is primarily outbound, there are small inroads also being made on the inbound and domestic front. Overall, according to industry experts, the segment is expected to have a growth rate of 10-20 per cent in the coming years.

3: Institutional & Regulatory Framework

The institutional framework of the Indian sports industry aspires on the four pillars.

- *Government of India created a Department for Sports and Youth Affairs in 1982 later renamed as **Department of Youth Affairs and Sports/Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.*
- *In 1984, **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** was established by the Government of India which was originally given the task of maintenance and management of stadiums. Later on, SAI broadened its activities with an objective of improving the sports facilities and performance of Indian sports persons. SAI is managed by General Body and Governing Body. The General Body is chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and the Governing Body is chaired by the Union Minister of Human Resource Development.*
- *In India, presently, there are 52 **National Sports Federations** receiving funds from the Government for their activities. At the international level, the competitive sports set-up is fully autonomous. Each international federation has its own governing body and is competent to formulate its regulations with regard to the rules of the game, affiliation of member. Although, at one time or the other, a particular national group may influence or control the affairs of an international federation. The same is also applicable to the International Olympic Committee. Similarly, national federations within India are also autonomous and are registered as societies.*
- *In addition, there are various autonomous institutions under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, such as the **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)** working directly with their respective international federations/organisations and run parallel to the other departments under this ministry. IOA is affiliated to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and is the supreme body for 64 federations.*

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has the following main functions:

(i) All policy matters including:

- a) Development Policies*
- b) Incentives*
- c) External Assistance*
- d) Manpower Development*
- e) Promotion & Marketing*
- f) Investment Facilitation*
- g) Growth Strategies*

(ii) Planning

(iii) Co-ordination with other Ministries, Departments, State/Union Territory Administrations.

(iv) Regulation

- a) Standards*
- b) Guidelines*

(v) Infrastructure & Product Development:

- a) Central Assistance*
- b) Distribution of Tourism Products*

(vi) Research, Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation

(vii) International Co-operation and External Assistance:

- a) International Bodies*
- b) Bilateral Agreements*
- c) External Assistance*
- d) Foreign Technical Collaboration*

(viii) Legislation and Parliamentary Work

(ix) Establishment Matters

(x) Overall Review of the Functioning of the Field Offices

(xi) Vigilance Matters

(xii) Official Language: Implementation of Official Language Policy

(xiii) VIP References

(xiv) Budget Co-ordination and Related Matters

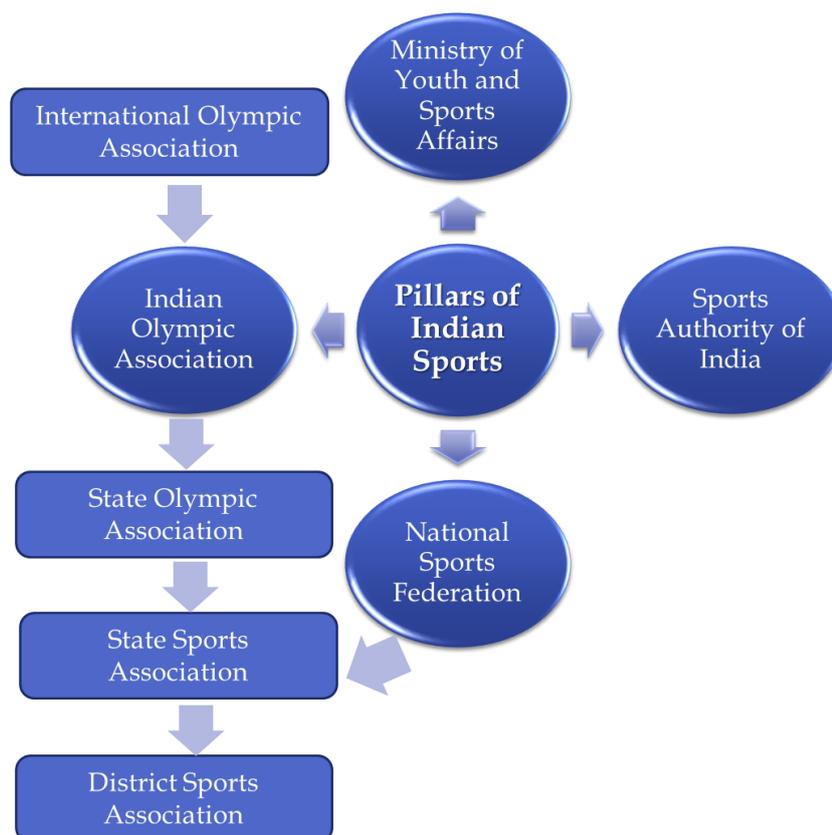
(xv) Plan Co-ordination

(xvi) Integrated Finance matters

(xvii) Overseas Marketing Work

(xviii) Welfare, Grievances and Protocol

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF INDIAN SPORTS



Guidelines / Safety and Health Norms

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has formulated a set of guidelines on Safety and Quality Norms on Adventure Tourism as Basic Minimum Standards for Adventure Tourism Activities. These guidelines cover Land, Air and Water based activities which include mountaineering, trekking hand gliding, paragliding, bungee jumping, river rafting, etc.

Any activity under adventure tourism is conducted through a licensed ATO i.e. Adventure Tour Operator. The licensing rights belong to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and are granted on the inspection report or recommendation of

the concerned Regional Director (RD) and a member of Adventure Tour Operators Association of India. (ATOA)

After acquiring the license to engage in adventure activities, it becomes the duty of the ATO to take the necessary precautions and follow the laid guidelines on Safety and Quality norms on Adventure Tourism.

With due consideration of the risk involved, Ministry of Tourism, GOI advocates the need of an undertaking by individuals taking part in these activities, with strict adherence to the set guidelines under the three tabs of Land, Air and Water.

Stress on Safety

In addition to having an element of risk, adventure sports are usually undertaken in remote areas, often inaccessible by road. In order to reduce the risk factor, it must be ensured that adequate safety measures are adopted by all ATO's and the respective agencies. Further on, the rescue arrangements should be strengthened and put on alert to come into operation to minimize loss of life and limb in the event of mishaps.

Therefore, the formation of state level committees for safety and rescue of tourists is essential. The committees should be able to oversee implementation of safety measures and co-ordinate rescue efforts. Such safety and rescue committees should function as a nodal agency for all adventure activities in the state. It should draw its members from the various executive departments such as departments of Tourism, Sports, Police and military authorities and representatives from Adventure Tour Operators Association of India. (ATOA)

4: Role of Non-Governmental Institutions

The Department of Sports, now the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has 5 autonomous bodies under its administrative control:

*(i) The **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** is the nodal agency at the national level to promote excellence in sports*

*(ii) The **Lakshmi Bai University of Physical Education (LNUPE)** is the national apex institution for Physical Education.*

*(iii) **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** is responsible for test-planning, result management, disciplinary and appellate functions to prevent doping in sports.*

*(iv) **National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL)** is responsible for dope testing and related research activities.*

*(v) **National Playing Fields Association of India (NPFAI)** has been recently set up to protect, promote and preserve playing fields throughout the country.*

*(vi) The **National Institute of Sports Science and Medicine (NISSM)** is proposed to be set up as an autonomous body, which will be a centre of excellence for providing highly integrated, quality assured services (testing), development of leading experts(training) who will subsequently drive innovation and share knowledge(research and cooperation) to positively impact sporting performance.*

*(vii) The **National Institute of Coaching Education** is being de-merged from SAI and developed as a coaching institute of excellence for coaches at NIS Patiala.*

5: Promotional/Marketing Strategy

Keeping with the pace of 1980, the All India Council of Sports then drafted a National Sports Policy with three fold aims and objectives promoting the country's sports industry further on. These are:

- 1. To inculcate sports and health consciousness amongst the masses for regular participation in games and sports, and to make the nation healthy and strong.*
- 2. To improve the country's standards in sports and games so that the nation secures its rightful place in international competitions.*
- 3. To identify the need to provide all the necessary facilities and infrastructure essential for the promotion of better standards of performance in sports and games.*

The idea underlying the draft policy is the recognition of the right of every citizen to participate in and enjoy games, sports and recreational activities. The salient points of the draft policy is summarised by experts as follows: ' Sports and Physical Education must be made a compulsory subject in all schools and colleges.'

In lieu of a better policy, meeting with the contemporary and future needs, the Government of India reviewed the old policy to bring a New Policy on Sports.

The **Draft New National Sports Policy** seeks to pursue the twin **objectives of broad basing and achieving excellence at national and international levels**. The Policy seeks to spell out the requirements in more concrete terms. The salient features being as follows:

- (i) Lays down in more concrete terms the objectives and specific measures to be taken by various agencies.*
- (ii) Defines the role of central government and state government more clearly*
- (iii) Seeks to ensure that the Federations work in a more transparent, democratic, professional and accountable manner.*
- (iv) Attaches on priority to promotion of games and sports in schools.*
- (v) Seeks to involve the Panchayati Raj Institutions actively.*
- (vi) Seeks to mobilize mass media for introducing a sport culture.*
- (vii) Sports disciplines based on proven potential.*

(viii) *Priorities seek to prepare the annual calendar well in advance for providing required support to the sports persons for participation in major events.*

(ix) *Lays greater emphasis on scientific support to sports persons.*

(x) *Provides easy access to international quality sports equipment.*

(xi) *Lays greater emphasis on training and development.*

(xii) *Setting up of a National Sports Development Fund for mobilizing resources from other sources other than government.*

Allocation to Utilisation Ratio of Funds		
Five Year Plan	Duration	Allocation for Sports (INR million)
6 th	1980-1985	270
7 th	1985-1989	2,070
8 th	1992-1997	2,100
9 th	1997-2002	4,730
10 th	2002-2007	11,450
11 th	2007-2012	46,360

According to the above figures, there was a significant increase in the fund allocation; pertinent to mention that not more than 1% of it has been directed to sports in India. In the eleventh Five Year Plan, INR 1500 crore had been approved by the Planning Commission and INR 92 crore and INR 160 crore had already been allocated for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 respectively.

Despite these efforts, the performance of Indian athletes at the international level is not very convincing. Therefore, a few steps have been recommended to make these initiatives more comprehensive.

Step 1. The allocation of funds, as the percentage of budget, should be increased to broad-base sports in the country.

Step 2. Sports should be made as an integral part of the education system to inculcate sports culture from the school level.

Step 3. The effectiveness of the developmental projects should be evaluated periodically.

Step 4: Uniformity should be maintained in sports specific activities of various states of India to provide equal participation opportunity to its citizens.

Step 5: Finally, a structure of good governance should be incorporated to make the system transparent and accountable. Also, to ensure the revival of sports culture in India, the government should revisit the sporting framework of India. Otherwise, the immense potential of the country in sports can never be realized. It can be expected that the government will play a proactive role in promoting sports in India to establish the country as a sporting nation in the years to come.

6: Mapping the potential of India as a Sports Tourism Destination

As quoted by the World Tourism Organization, by the year 2020, it is expected that India will become the leader in the tourism industry in South Asia, with about 8.9 million arrivals¹.

Of late the Indian tourism economy has been deemed as the second-most rapidly increasing (8.8 %) tourism economy in the world, by World Travel and Tourism Council. It also objectively analyses the current scenario and future prospects of the Indian tourism industry, focusing on different parameters of the industry such as: inbound and outbound tourism and expenditure by inbound tourists. It helps analyse the opportunities and factors, which are crucial to the success of the tourism industry in India.

Key findings of the report

- *Inbound tourist expenditure per head in India, is third highest in the world and even more than the global average tourist spending.*
- *During 2001-2006, disposable income grew at a CAGR of 10.11%, which led to an increase in domestic as well as outbound tourism.*
- *More than 50% of the revenue earned by the Indian hotel industry comes from room rents. Over the five-year period spanning 2007-2011, Indian outbound tourist flow is expected to increase at a CAGR of 12.79%. It is expected that the tourist influx to India.*

Geographical look at the Possible Sports Destination – India

India has many tourist attractions that have healing abilities capable of providing rewarding experiences of life. India has the Himalayan ranges in the north, a long coastline surrounded by seas in the south. In addition, India is rich in varied landscapes, enchanting historical sites and royal cities, clean beaches, serene mountain retreats, rich cultures and festivities to enjoy and rejuvenate.

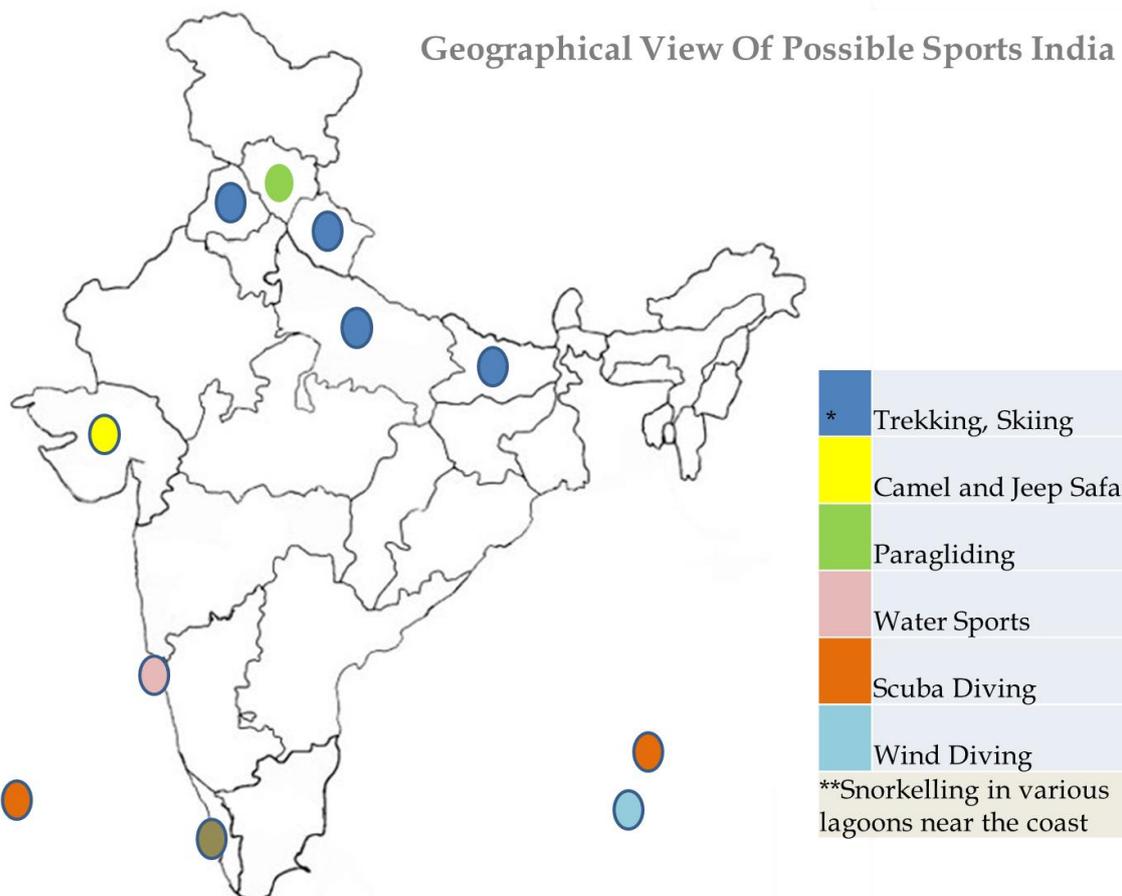
In any part of the year, India can offer a wide selection of destinations and experiences. In summer, there are lovely retreats amidst the heady beauty in the Himalayas or the lush-heights of the Western Ghats with cool trekking trails, tall

¹ http://www.ficci.com/sector/40/Project_docs/Tourism-profile.pdf

peaks, or stretches of white water for the adventure seekers. In the cool Indian winter, cities come alive with cultural feasts of music and dance. The sun-clad beaches are ideal locations for rejuvenation in the winter. The wild-life sanctuaries with their abundance of flora and fauna provide delights to the mind and rejuvenation to the body.

The country offers a wide range of sports for tourists:

- *Trekking and Skiing in the Himalayas*
- *White Water rafting on the rivers such as Ganges and Beas*
- *Camel and Jeep safaris in the deserts of Rajasthan*
- *Paragliding in Himachal Pradesh*
- *Water-sports in Goa*
- *Scuba diving in Andaman and Lakshadweep islands*
- *Lakshadweep islands also offer excellent wind surfing*
- *Snorkelling in the crystal clear waters of the lagoons.*



Tagging India as a Sports Tourism destination

When an international sport enthusiast comes to India, he should also experience the rich cultural heritage of the country. Watching a round of the snake boat race in the Backwaters of Kerala or a bullock cart race in Tamil Nadu, will provide the spectator with diverse experience while touring the country. The Rural Olympics 2010 held in Kila Raipur, Punjab, attracted hundreds of international tourists. It was organised by the local Grewal Sports Club. Some tourists from England, who had come to watch the event, felt that the Punjab government should promote it internationally.

Skiing, which is a prominent sport in New Zealand and various European countries is also possible in North India. Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand have world class ski slopes and skiing tournaments in these states can attract large number of international visitors.

Another traditional sport in India which can be capitalised upon for Sports Tourism is Polo whose origin dates back to AD 15th Century Mughal era. After the British rule in the country, during which the sport suffered a dip, it is not only played by the royal families and the Indian Army, but in recent years, corporate sponsorship too has been able to make a contribution to the sport. Today, Polo is played primarily in the state of Rajasthan and a few remote mountainous enclaves of the subcontinent, notably Gilgit, Chitral, Ladakh and Manipur. State tourism boards and the travel trade should focus on developing such sporting events and marketing the same as they deliver unique experiences.

7: Way forward: Opportunities and Challenges

Challenges

Lack of infrastructure tops the list of challenges faced by most tour operators in the country while promoting Sports Tourism. Most travel operators feel that the government should cooperate more resourcefully for them to showcase India's true potential as a sports destination. The media coverage during 2010 Commonwealth Games exposed India's 'eleventh hour' planning policies, a number of event management companies face difficulties in scheduling their sporting events due to this problem. Mayank Khandwala, President, Cutting Edge Events Pvt. Ltd said, "India has always been a 'last minute' market because of which there is lot of pressure on every aspect which in turn affects our functioning. Getting visas for travellers becomes difficult then."

Another major problem faced by industry players is of touting and ambush marketing. According to Premdeep Gangadharan, Co-Founder-Director, Fans on Stands, "We bring with us the passion for the game and we also have a compatible clientele but a major problem is that the sponsors hike ticket rates for petty profits which often results in underselling of tickets. Also, a lot of ambush marketing has been taking place these days. Even though it hardly affects our business, we are trying our best to curb the issue."

Potential for Growth

Increased media exposure of sporting events over the last decade has raised the profile of many sports, and although TV coverage is better than at any time in the past, an increasing number of sports fans want to experience live events.

The media also has the ability to make national and international icons of sporting stars, thereby generating greater demand, as fans want to see their sporting idols "in the flesh".

Sporting events themselves are being made increasingly appealing to attend, with greater levels of comfort, and other events – such as festivals - being created around them (such as horse racing weekends, boating regattas, etc).

Low-cost regional airlines (and more affordable long haul flights), are also driving demand for sporting events as flights become more convenient, more regular, and of course more affordable.

Overall, the sports tourism niche market is expected to grow annually at around 6% for the next five years.

Future of sports tourism Scope and future of sports tourism is endless in India because of its diverse topography and climatic condition. You can enjoy on land and water, under water and in air whatsoever form of adventure sports in India. Future of sports tourism and adventure sports in India is very bright.

The Road Ahead

Although Sports Tourism is a niche segment in India, it is growing rapidly, with a large number of entrepreneurs willing to invest in it. In order to support their endeavours, the government needs to arrange an overall sprucing of infrastructure management, security issues and marketing strategies. The travel operators themselves feel the need to introduce more value-added services so as to beckon international tourists to India.

Owing to New Delhi's developed infrastructure and transportation, the Indian government has always given it a top priority while hosting sporting events like the two Asian Games (1951 and 1982) and Commonwealth Games 2010. However, sport event organisers and state tourism boards in India should be ready to invest in other metro cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Kolkata.

With booming interest among Indian sports enthusiasts to explore their interests in different sport fields, and various NTOs across the world encouraging tie-ups with Indian tour operators, there is sufficient fodder for India to emerge as a Sport Tourism destination and boost overall tourism in the country. It only needs to be utilised efficiently in order to gain significant benefits.