

Sports Tourism in India

Abstract

India has fast been gaining recognition as a Sports Tourism in the world. Its different kind of Landscapes provide splendid opportunities for all kinds of sports like Football, Cricket, Swimming etc. Its potential as a world class Sports Tourism destination can be further enhanced with better infrastructure and Govt. initiatives.

Keywords: Football, Cricket, Sports, Tourism, Hockey.

Introduction

Sports Tourism in India has gained prominence in the tourism market in recent times. These two different sectors have mingled from the very ancient time in India, but now, the entertainment and sports have paved a new way in the amalgamation of these two sectors.

Sports tourism in India has scored a high place for its self in Indian tourism industry. Sports tourism is broadly defined by the adventure sports and games. There are indeed several destinations in India offering sports tourism. There are varied sports activities that one can indulge during their vacations or leisure.

Sports Tourism in India, a new market in -the Asian Sub continent is where sports and travel mix with each other. From the very ancient times in Indian history, sports have amused the masses. Throughout the world, different types of sports have entertained the people. In Rome, the Roman amphitheatres were built to promote several gladiators. While in Mahabharata, Chess and Pasha emerged as an entertaining as well as strategic game to rule the kingdom. While Martial arts emerged in the name of "Kalaripayate" in ancient India to foster not only emerging soldiers, but also it amused certain sections of people in India. After the medieval era, the Europeans influenced Indians in different sectors of society. Football, Cricket, Swimming and many other popular games emerged in modern India. Now in this modern age, Indians are entering in the world of games and tourism. From Indian Premier League Cricket to Traditional Boat Race (Boat races in Kerala) and from Indian Super League to Traditional Buffalo Race, English Polo Game to adventure sports treat travelers with entertainment as well as fitness. Now all the organizers have a motive not only to foster sports or the sports culture, but also to enhance tourism in India.

Sports as Tourism Sector in India

A holiday with friends or family to witness a mega sporting event is no longer a strange idea for travelers from India. The number of travelers keen to have ring side view to applaud the Blue Men of Indian Cricket Team is increasing day by day. Indian Premier League, Indian Super League, Buddha Circuit Formula-1 Racing are evidence that sports tourism is growing rapidly in the country. The sporting enthusiasts are willing to spend a lot of money to jet-set across the globe to experience the thrill of sports with nationalism watching their favorite game live in a stadium. These followers also like to live it up by exploring these destinations simultaneously.

Tourism Opportunity in India

Correspondingly, there has also been a noticeable increase in the number of tour operators and agents specializing in servicing the requirements of this particular segment. It is not only niche specialists, but also big mainstream tour operators who set up a separate division to tap the potential of sports tourism in India. Since a decade, the concept of sports tourism though a niche segment has evolved rapidly. A large number of tour agents are introducing interesting packages surrounding major sporting events. The sports tourism is a well organized and booming sector which attracts major revenue in several nations around the world like United Kingdom, Germany, Singapore, South Africa, Malaysia and many other countries. Several National Tourist Offices are uncompromisingly functioning towards promoting their destinations for sport tourism in India to tap the corporate, as well as fast growing upper middle class and the youth.

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Advent of Sports Tourism in India

It was the ICC Cricket World Cup 2003, which started the sports tourism trend in India and offered the kind of exposure which Indian viewers never witnessed before. Another major event was the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20, which commenced in 2008, which proved to be a milestone in the Indian sports scenario. In the following year, Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 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. Today, travel abroad to watch a broad range of sporting events by the Indians including cricket, soccer, tennis and Formula One is no longer a strange concept.

Offerings of Sports Tourism in India

The Grand Prix, or PGA Championships enhance the sports tourism and have diversified from its conventional form restricted to viewing the sport live, to be clubbed with MICE or leisure trips. Hence, the members from corporate world are often witnessed weaving their conventions and business sessions with various sporting events. The present scenario has further evolved itself to include families accompanying delegates and fans to the sporting event. They consider the event as an incentive to visit and explore the destinations wherein they treat in shopping and other leisure activities.

Influence of Sports on Tourism in India

Switzerland, like most other nations, faced a dip in inbound sports tourism post the global economic slowdown. Hence Switzerland Tourism was keen to travel around to promote the destination in the Indian market. The Cricket World Cup and other international sports events generated great interest in India about the sporting destinations. The word of mouth publicity from those who visited the country for the World Cup aided by packages by the travel trade resulting in tourist traffic also promoted sports tourism. The subsequent Indian Premier League (IPL) T20 tournament raised the tourist traffic and catapulted South Africa among the popular destinations in Indian market.

Contribution of Commonwealth Games 2010 in Sports Tourism in India

Commonwealth Games 2010 in New Delhi turned out to be greatly profitable event. The sports tourism finally emerged as a most successful tertiary business sector. Many major travel agencies and tour companies in the country also decided to promote the Commonwealth Games 2010. Commonwealth Games 2010 played a vital role in creating a major chunk of long overdue infrastructure in the capital and also showcasing 'Incredible India' to the world. The opening ceremony was a spectacular mélange of our diversity and culture. Commonwealth Games 2010 went off without a hitch and gave great exposure to the sports tourism in the country.

Contribution of ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 in Sports Tourism in India

After 2010 Commonwealth Games fever barely left India, ICC Cricket World Cup (CWC) 2011 paved a new way to promote India Tourism to the foreign countries. As the cricket mania gathered impetus in the country with a massive cricket craze, most travel agents and tour operators in India seemed to be making the best of the opportunity by designing packages around the tournament to change the outlook of sports tourism.

India Showcasing as a Sports Tourism Destination

When an international sport aficionado or a player comes to India, he or she also has a familiarity with 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, offers the watcher with diverse experience while touring the country. The Rural Olympics 2010 held in Kila Raipur, Punjab, attracted hundreds of international tourists. Some tourists from UK and USA, who had come to watch the event, felt that the Punjab Government should promote it internationally.

Contribution of Skiing to Sport Tourism Sector in India

Skiing is a prominent sport in New Zealand and various European countries. It is also being promoted in North Indian states like Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand, which have world class skiing slopes and skiing tournaments. They can attract large number of international tourists.

Contribution of Traditional Sports to Sport Tourism Sector in India

The traditional sports in India can be capitalized upon for the development of Sports Tourism in India. Polo, whose origin dates back to AD 15th Century Mughal era, also attracts large number of foreign tourists to India. 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 like Gilgit, Chitral, Ladakh and Manipur. State Tourism Boards of these states and the travel agencies focus on developing such sporting events and marketing the same as they deliver unique experiences.

Conclusion

Indian sports enthusiasts and international travelers are keen to explore their interests in different sport fields and as well as destinations of tourist importance. Various NTOs across the world encourage tie-ups with Indian tour operators to make it possible for the promotion of sports tourism. There is sufficient incentive for India to emerge as a great sport tourism destination and boost overall tourism in the country.

Suggestions

India has the great potential to emerge as world class sports tourism. It has great culture of Cricket, Football, Hockey as well as several traditional games. It has all kinds of landscapes including snow covered mountains, beaches etc. In order to utilize all these advantages it is necessary to develop the sporting as well as general infrastructure. It will also be beneficial to develop world class facilities near the sporting venues. The events should also be promoted well at the national and international level to attract the large number of Indian as well as foreign tourists.

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