

The potential of Tourism in border destinations: A study of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the tourism potentials in the border destinations of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and moreover, to present suggestions towards development of tourism in the border tourism destinations of Jammu and Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most famous tourist destinations of India having very rich tourism potential. Out of 22 districts of Jammu and Kashmir, there are seven border districts (Ponch, Rajur, Baramulla, Bandipora, Kupwara, Kargil and Leh) sharing Indian international borders with Pakistan, Afghanistan and China. The border destinations of Jammu and Kashmir are rich in tourism potential which are famous for their many historical monuments, mountain peaks, scenic beauty, wild life, local cultures etc. However, in spite of having sound tourism potential, these areas are also economically backward; the living standard of local inhabitants is low and employment opportunities are few which means that tourism is not developed systematically in these border destinations of Jammu and Kashmir. There is thus a huge need to promote tourism education among the locals and also to develop a rudimentary tourism infrastructure in the respective areas of J&K.

Keywords: Border tourism, border destinations, Jammu, Kashmir valley, Ladakh.

Introduction

Before modern politics intervened, the borders in Jammu and Kashmir were the wide areas, rivers, deserts, lakes, mountains etc., which were common to states or provinces; moreover, these areas were also open access areas. In the modern political landscape, the border is merely a line separating administrative divisions, countries, or other areas, that could be material (rivers, mountains etc.), concepts (latitudinal and longitudinal geometrical lines on a map) or some or other physical or man-made barriers such as the Great wall of China, the Berlin Wall etc. (Sofield: 2006). These borderlands became socio-culturally, environmentally, politically and through other ways very important throughout the globe where politics and cultures meet. Thus borders are the barriers between states where the regulation of cross-border trade and the flow of people is controlled, or where they

serve to indicate the evolving gateway to facilitating contact and interchange' (Hageman *et al.* 2004: 2). The concept of border tourism refers to the notion of visiting border areas in order to experience diverse cultures, acquiring knowledge (about border people, borderlines etc.), for trade, or even meeting with friends and relatives which are living along or on either side of the borders in question. There are several world famous tourist attractions on borders of different nations that are visited by millions of tourists each year.

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is the northernmost state of India which shares its borders with three neighbouring countries, namely, China in the north and east, Afghanistan in the north-west and by Pakistan in the west. Furthermore, J&K shares its borders with two neighbouring states within India, namely, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in the south. J&K

has three natural regions, which are Jammu, the Kashmir valley and Ladakh which cover a land area of 222,236 km², and which comprises 6.93% of the total national territory of which 78,114 Sq Km is under the illegal occupation of Pakistan and 37,555 Sq km under China. In addition to this, 5,180 Sq. Km. of J&K was illegally ceded to China by Pakistan under the March 1963 Sino-Pakistan Boundary agreement. The State shares a 1001 km long international boundary with Pakistan (Jammu-205 kms, Kashmir Valley-460 kms and Ladakh/Siachen area-336 kms) which is called Line of Control (LoC) and 365 km with China in Ladakh region.

There is huge scope for greater border tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. The border areas of Jammu and Kashmir are rich in natural and fabricated tourism potentials. There are several virgin

mountain peaks, ruins and unprotected monuments, rivers, rich local cultures, and other unspoiled tourism resources which should be further exploited by tourists.

Border Districts of Jammu & Kashmir

The borders of J&K are across the state covering all the three regions viz Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh (see Fig 1.) There are seven border districts in all three regions, viz Poonch and Rajauri in Jammu region, Baramulla, Bandipora, and Kupwara in Kashmir region, Kargil and Leh in Ladakh region, out of 22 districts of Jammu and Kashmir. The present study is about to examine the border tourism potentials of Jammu and Kashmir (Indian northern most state); moreover the study will present the suitable suggestion for the development of tourism in border areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

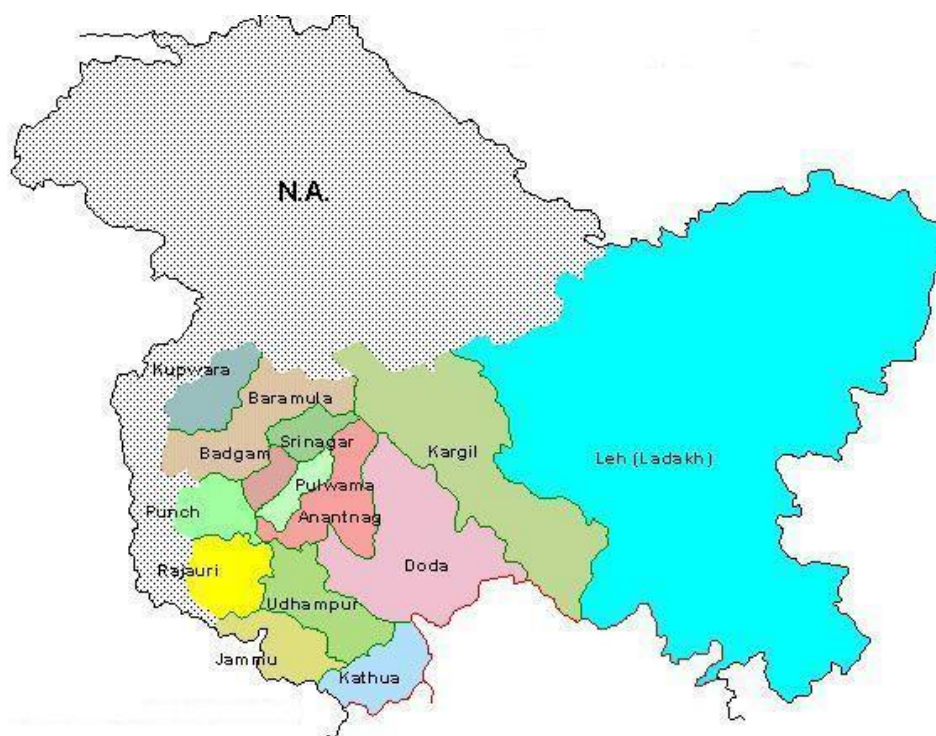


Fig. 1 District Map of Jammu and Kashmir Source:

http://img1.findthebest.com/sites/default/files/1155/media/images/Jammu_and_Kashmir_163834.jpg

Literature review

The idea of border tourism is widely discussed by many prominent researchers and scholars. The borders are the barriers between the states where the regulation of cross-border trade and the flow of people

is controlled, or to indicate the evolving gateway to facilitating contact and interchange' (Hageman *et al.* 2004: 2). The border disputes create psychological barriers and consequently a negative image of surrounding areas is formed.

That is why tourists avoid visiting what are considered unsafe tourist destinations, which are militarized and where tourists face hindrances to their free movement (Timothy, 2001). The friendlier relationship between two states makes any activity possible whether it is across borders or near the borders. Some border areas are important due to their rural and peripheral character and where tourism is the main sources for economic development. Such concepts and theories are important in order to understand the characteristics of tourism development and planning (Butler, 1996; Krakover, 1985; Timothy, 1995; Timothy, 2000). Scott (1995), Wilson and Donnan (1998) have widely discussed the psychological determinants and behavioural issues of tourists and locals, respectively in the border tourism concept. In addition, identifying and discussing obstacle (geographical features and man-made divisions) functions of borders is an important element of tourism borderland research (Timothy and Tosun, 2003).

Tourism is considered to be the most prominent and convenient industry for the development of remote, peripheral and rather rural border landscapes, but the problem is, national borders are not easily achieved. Each nation desires to extend its border share. Due to this, the borderlands remain negatively affected and are thus under-developed. In order to sustain, protect and utilise the borderland tourism resources, nations sharing common borders have to work jointly for greater development and for economic benefits to ensue (Palomäki, 1994; Tenhiälä, 1994; Timothy, 1999a; Wachowiak, 1994). Moreover, Greer (2002) and Timothy (2001) state that cross-border cooperation is a must for the development of borderland tourism in order to avoid duplications and avoid negative local competitiveness.

In Europe, the borderlands are used for economic gains and became popular attractions among the tourists for recreational and leisure purposes (Getz, 1993; Stansfield and Rickert, 1970). In the global world, where boundaries do not

exist as they used to in a sense, brought revolution to international trade, greater flows of capital, enhanced international tourism, the advent of cyberspace and interconnectivity of markets, all of which compelled the experts to predict the end of international boundaries and the rise of a borderless world (Hageman et al. 2004).

Both the sides of LoC in J&K are suffering from lack of infrastructural development. In addition, the restriction on cross-border movements in J&K (Yusuf, 2007) makes border tourism difficult to promote in the state. Permitting cross-border tourism, for both domestic as well as foreigners, will successfully contribute to the economic and socio-cultural development of J&K (Ashraf, 2010). Moreover, tourism brings people closer in every aspect of life and promotes peace and prosperity throughout the world (Minho Cho, 2007). Sadly, 'everything', related to the tourism industry, was smashed during the turmoil in the state (Bhat, & Bhat, 2006). This could be maintained and re-established everywhere in the state if the borderlands would be redeveloped for tourist activities. In addition, there are several attractions in Jammu region (at Rajouri and Poonch) which are in close proximity to border areas that can be developed for the desired tourism development purpose (Malik, & Abdulla, 2013).

It has been widely accepted that planners and business persons should consult the local communities while seeking to achieve sustainability goals (Allen et al. 1988; Ap and Crompton 1993), because this relationship will help both locals as well as planners and will also minimise the negative impact whilst maximising support for the tourism industry (Williams and Lawson 2001). Consequently the living standards of the area will be enhanced.

Research methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyse the tourism potential in border destinations of Jammu and Kashmir. To reach the study objective the data for this descriptive study was collected from various magazines,

journals, newspapers, published and unpublished articles, reports and different websites on the internet; besides this, the author is a resident of Jammu and Kashmir and has travelled to several border tourist attractions in both Jammu and Kashmir and noted the status of border tourism potentials of the state for himself.

Discussions and Findings

Indian administered, Jammu and Kashmir has three geographical regions which are very different from each other. These are Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh; the culture, language, climate, geography and other features of these three regions are quite different and somewhat unique. All the regions touch the international boundaries of India with Pakistan, China and Afghanistan respectively. Seven districts (Poonch, Rajouri, Baramulla, Bandipora, Kupwara, Kargil and Leh) of J&K out of 22 fall on the borders of other sub-states within the state and all these districts have immense tourism potential. The natural and fabricated tourism potentials of tourism in all seven districts of Jammu and Kashmir are discussed separately, by district:

1. Poonch District

Poonch is a remote district of Jammu and Kashmir, which is bounded by a Line of Control on the north, west and southern sides. The 1947-48 war divided the Poonch district into two parts; one part is controlled by India and other became part of Pakistan. The city of Poonch is the District headquarters of Indian administered Poonch, and furthermore, has four tehsils. As per the 2011 census, the Poonch district has a population of 476,820. The Gujjars, Kashmiris, Bakerwals, Rajputs and Paharis are the main ethnicities in the Poonch district. The tourism potentials of Poonch are:

Poonch Fort: In 1751, Raja Rustam Khan constructed this fort after laying down the foundation by Raja Razak Khan. This

important fort is in the main area of Poonch district, which is in poor condition. One portion of the fort is used as government offices. Its architecture is a mix of Islamic, Sikh and European styles, but this beautiful fort is not cared for and even grass and plants have grown on its walls.

Ram Kund: is among the holiest ancient Hindu temples, which is located in Mandhir, Poonch, and which was constructed by Raja Lalitaditya in 724-761 AD. In addition, it is also believed that temple was built when Lord Rama visited Kashmir. In Raj Tarangni, Kalhana says there is evidence that Bagwan Shri Ram Chandra Ji constructed the temple.

Buddha Amaranth Shrine: This is the 2nd most pious religious attraction of Hindus in Kashmir after Amarnagth Ji which is located at Rajpoura, Mandi in District Poonch. This shrine is older than the Amarnagth Ji in Kashmir, furthermore, natural white stone Shive Ling was also founded here. It is in the foothills of the Pir Panchal Mountain Range and the Plust River is flows nearby. There are four doors to the temple which is symbolic of the fact that the doors of the temple are open for all the four castes of Hindus.

Nangali Sahib Gurdawara: This is biggest Sikh shrine in J&K and one of the biggest in north India near the banks of the Dranguli River in Poonch. It was was constructed by Thakur Bhai Mela Siongh Ji in the year 1803. The free Langar, comprising seventy guest rooms and a community kitchen is available there for devotees.

Noori Chamb: This virgin paradise is 45 km far from the main town of Pooch in the area of the Surankote valley. It is said that the Mughal King Jahangir was so impressed with the beauty of the place that he named it after his lovely wife Noor Jahan. Since then, this place is known as Noori Chamb. There is also a beautiful waterfall here where Queen Noor Jahan used to bathe.

Bufliaz: Bufliaz is a beautiful hill spot situated on the foothills of the Peer Rattan range, 39 Kms east of Poonch town. Bufliaz was the horse of the Greek king Alexander the Great, who died here and was buried in this village, since then this spot is known as Bufliaz. The beautiful Mughal road also starts from here.

2. Rajouri

Rajouri is another border district of Jammu and Kashmir in the Jammu region. It is bounded by the LoC Chhamba and Naushera in the south, Poonch in the north and Line of Control lies to its west. Rajouri has six mountainous district. The district is dominated by the Gujjar and Bakarwal tribes. Rajouri district has a population of 642,415 (2011 census), of which majority if of Muslims (49%). Its tourism potentials are:

Chingus Fort: Chingus, a Persian word, means 'intestine'. Here the Mugal king, Jahangir died while going to Lahore. Hakims were called by Noor Hajan and Jahangir's intestines were extracted to prevent the body from decaying before it reached Lahore. The intestines were later buried in Rajuri; a fort was also built, where the intestines were later buried. This is the Chingus fort.

Dhandidhar Fort: Mian Hathu, Governor of Rajouri under Dogra rule in J&K, constructed this Dhanidar Fort in the year 1855. This fort is just two kilometre from Rajouri town and provides tourists with a panoramic view of entire Valley of Rajouri.

Shahdara Shrief Shrine: Shadhra a holy place, associated with the name of great Saint Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah, in tehsil Thanaandi, Rajouri. Baba predicted and said to Maharaj Hari Singh that one day he would be the title-holder of this territory. The saying of Baba was true and Hari Singh became the King of J&K, and then intended to show his gratitude to Baba, but Baba had already died. Later on, Hari Singh constructed the shrine which became a popular attraction among devotees of all religions in J&K and where

they prayed for their needs and wishes to be met.

Mangla Devi Shrine: Is an important ancient Hindu shrine that is in the area of Noshera, Rajouri. A Bahramin claimed that Mata told him the exact place of her shrine and where he founded some Pendies and after performing the Havan and other rituals. Bahramin constructed the Mangla Devi Shrine at this place. Two stone snakes are there but it is said that once upon a time these snakes were alive. In addition, it is said that a tiger used to visit the shrine and that the cave opened automatically for the devotees as it was usually closed with rocks. Besides the main cave, there are further two caves called the Vashno cave and Nana Mata cave.

Mugham Sarai: There are several sarais made by the Mughals as their rest houses. Today, these are in rough condition. The Thanamandi Sarai in the main town and Mangla Devi Sarai in Noshera are the most important ones.

3. Bandipora District

District Bandipora is the northern district of Jammu and Kashmir in the Kashmir region. Bandipora town is the administrative headquarters of the district located on the northern banks of Wular Lake (the biggest fresh water lake in Asia). According to the 2011 census the district has a population of 385099 spread over an area of 398 sq. km. The Bandipora district is divided into three districts and the district is also bounded by Kupwara in north-west, Baramulla in the south-west, Ganderbal in the south side, by the Kargil in the eastern side and by Line of Control in the northern side.

Tourism of Bandipora:

Habba Khatoon Peak: This beautiful and formidable pyramid shaped peak has been named after the famous Kashmiri poetess Habba Khatoon. It is located in Gurez. Habba khatoon was the queen of the famous emperor Yousuf Shah Chak (18th century). It is believed that when the King

Akbar imprisoned Emperor Yousuf Shah Chak, his beloved Habba Khafton used to wander near the peak to look for her lover. This peak is a natural treasure.

Adventure in Gurez Valley: Gurez is the hub of adventure tourism activities (about 86 kilometres from Bandipore). The swift Kishenganga River is suitable for white water rafting, kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing and also fishing. It serves as a base-camp for trekking expeditions to the high-altitude lakes of Kishensar and Gangabal. The trekking Routes from Gurez and Tilel lead up to Gangabal and Sonamorg to its east and Drass , Dahanu and Zaskar to its north.

Tutail valley: This is the most beautiful valley of J&K in Bandipora, which is 20 km from the Gurez valley. It has beautiful log wood houses, lovely scenery, unique flowers, a unique culture and is also home to the oldest tribe of Kashmir.

Peer Baba Razdan Top: This mountain top is at a height of 3300m on the way from Bandipur to Gurez. It has breathtaking views where one can stop for a photo shoot. The army regiment on duty in the Gurez region looks after the shrine of Peer Baba atop Razdon pass. This saint had come from Lahore in 1933 and was buried at Razdan pass.

Harmukh Peak: Harmukuta or Harmunda is identified with Harmukh Peaks to the north of Kashmir. About 17000 feet in height, massive Glaciers surround these peaks. The lake Uttarmanasa, which is believed to be the source of Kashmiri GANGA, lies at the foot of the north-eastern Glaciers of Harmukuta and the Tirthaa of Nandikeshtra and Bhuteshwara are near it. At Razdan (altitude 11672 ft), one can catch a glimpse of the Harmukh peak, one of the highest mountain peaks located in the Kashmir valley.

4. Kargil District

Kargil is a district of Ladakh region near the Line of Control facing Pakistani-Administered Gilgit–Baltistan to the west, and the mostly Indian-Administered

Kashmir valley to the south; moreover, Zaskar is part of Kargil district along with Wakha Suru and Dras valleys. However, India captured control of Kargil during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 and was declared as a separate district in 1979. The areas of Kargil district is about 14,086 km^2 , while as its population is 143,388 (2011 census).

Main tourism potentials of Kargil are:

Drass Valley: Drass Valley is on the way to Kargil from Srinagar, and is approximately 60 km to the west of Kargil. The beautiful Mashko valley is just 6 km from Drass where the Pakistani army made their base camp at the border during the Kargil war. In addition, there is also the famous Tiger hill just one km away from Drass. Both, Mashko valley and Tiger Hill could be used as dark tourism attractions because of the Kargil war in 1999. Furthermore adventure tourism activities could be widely done here, such as rock climbing, paragliding, trekking, mountaineering to tiger hill, rafting (in Drass River), Golfing (in Mashko valley), in addition, Pony rides to Tololing hill, Polo game and archery which are the most famous activities in Drass Valley. Batalik is also the base of high altitude campsites in the Drass valley. Moreover, the War Memorial of Kargil martyrs (near Tololing Hill) and one of the oldest Buddhist monasteries are also important tourism potential destinations in the Drass valley.

Zaskar (Penzila to Padum Karsha and Zangla): These are the two lakes situated at a high altitude of about 4,401 to 4,450 meters, which is supposed to be the highest point on the Kargil – Zaskar road. This place is located at a distance of about 160kms away from Kargil and the view of the surrounding snow covered mountains is reported to be very eye-catching. Another advantage of this place is that it is a tableland-plateau, which promises an excellent view of the Drang-Drung and the Kishtwar.

Shergol: Shergol is a beautiful village situated on the Kargil-Leh road along the Wakha River valley. Shergol is famous for its cave monastery which can be spotted from a far off distance as a small white spot with its backdrop the ochre hills. This is an ideal place for trekking across the mountain range into the Suru valley. In addition, Urgyan-Dzong is another attraction here and is a meditation retreat that is perched deep inside the mountains that surrounds the Wakha River valley. A Buddhist nunnery is situated below the cave monastery at a distance of 5kms away from Mulbek with a number of incumbents.

Mulbek Gompa: Mulbek Gompa is one of the biggest monasteries in Kargil, which is secured in an elevated rocky cliff. Mulbek Gompa is noted for its frescoes and statues which are similar to other Buddhist monastery statues.

Sani Monastery: The Emperor Kanishka constructed Sani Monastery in 1st century AD, and it is considered to be one of the eight most sacred places of Buddhism. The holy site at Sani village is called Turtot Gyat. This monastery houses some of wonderful ancient paintings.

5. Leh District

Leh is the second largest district of India in terms of area in Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir with an area of 45,110 km². The Leh is bounded by Tibet and Aksai Chin to the east, Lahul and Spiti to the south and Ghanche district in the north, a small border with Xinjiang, China, via the Karakoram Pass. The district headquarter is at Leh. As per the 2011 census the district has a population of 147,104, the majority is of Buddhists (77.3%). The Leh is divided into seven blocks and it is further subdivided .

Mulbekh Chamba: Mulbekh Chamba is in Mulbekh town of Leh. This is a statue of 9 m height and a rock sculpture in deep relief of a character called Maitreya, the 'Future Buddha'. A visit to this place helps one to better understand the esoteric Shaivite symbolism with early Buddhist art.

Nubra Valley: Nubra valley is 120 km from the main Leh town near LoC. The tributaries of the Indus River, namely the Shyok River meets the Siachin river which separates Ladakh from the Karakorum Ranges. Moreover, the valley is famous for its ultra-wide landscapes, huge mountain faces, lovely trails, wide variety of colours and the mystical Shyok River.

Table 1.

Division	Circuit
Khaltse Sub-Division (Drokanpa area)	1. Khaltse-Domkhar-Skurbuchan-Hanudo-Biama-Dha
Nyoma Sub-Division	2. Leh-Karu-Chang Lal-Durbuk-Tangtse-Lukung-Spangmik-Manmerak (Pangong Lake) 3. Leh-Upshi-Chumathang-Mahe-Puga-Tsomoriri Lake-Korzok-Loma Bend
Nubra Sub-Division	4. Leh-Khardung La-Khalsar-Hunder-Turtuk-Pachathang-Tyakshi 5. Leh-Khardung La-Trith up to Panamic 6. Leh-Saboo-Digger La to Khungru Gompa-Tangyar

Tourist circuits of Leh

Other Virgin Tourism Potentials of Leh: Pangong Lake (Approximately 60% of the length of lake lies in Tibet), Tsomoriri lake (an altitude of 4,595 m; largest of the high altitude lakes in the Trans-Himalayan

biogeographic region) and Chang-la (3rd highest motorable road in the world. It is on the route to Pangong Lake from Leh).

6. Kupwara District

Kupwara district is in Kashmir region of Jammu and Kashmir State bounded by PoK on its western side and north, and has Baramulla district on the other side. It is a home of three districts and 11 blocks. Kupwara district population is 875,564 (2011 census). The district is inhabited mostly by the Gujjar and Kashmiri people along with Azad Kashmir.

Mesmerising tourist attractions of Kupwara are:

Lolab valley or Wadi-e-Lolab: It is one of the most beautiful destinations of Kashmir, 9 km from the main town of Kupwara towards the north on Lahwal River. Lolab Valley has three sub-valleys, as the Kalaroos, Potnai and Brunai. The Lolab valley is sheer beautiful, full of treasure and has lush green fields, mountains and forests bestowed by the God. The valley is full of tourism potential and there are also many orchards, trekking routes, several species of native animals (Himalayan Black Bear and Brown Bear, Snow Leopard, Ibex, Markhor, Hangul and Musk deer), camping sites (en route from Patalnag to Kambrial and Magmarg to Drass Pass), eleven lakes and ponds and the Lavnav spring at Anderbug, which are quite impressive aspects of the Lolab valley. In addition, at Kalaroos, there is an ancient cave in the forest of Madmadow. The myth is that the cave leads to Russia. Furthermore, kalaroos is famous for Satbarn (a rocky structure with seven doors) which belongs to pandavas from Mahabharata.

Bungus Valley: Blessed with extreme natural beauty the Bungus Valley lies at an altitude of around 3333m SSL in the northern part of district Kupwara within Hundwara sub-region on Mawar River. <http://www.heritageofkashmir.org/heritage-tourism/eco-tourism/bungus>. It has two elliptical bowl shaped sub-valleys as Bodh Bungus (Big Bungus) and Lakut Bangus (Small Bungus). The Bungus valley is totally a virgin tourist destination of Kashmir without any human habitation, the occasional visitors being the local Gujjar

tribal people and some shepherds. The valley is surrounded with majestic snow-capped mountains, lush green forests and has unparalleled scenic beauty, which reflects the tremendous tourist potential of the Bungus valley. The scenic beauty of this valley is more attractive than Gulmarg and Pahalgam.

7. Baramulla District

Baramulla is in the district of Kashmir region and the Baramulla town (fifth most populous town in the state) is the administrative headquarters of this district. The district covered an area of 3,353 km², while as, as per 2011 census Baramulla district has a population of 1,015,503. The Baramulla is bounded by Srinagar district and Ganderbal district in the east to the line of control in the west, Bandipore district in the northwest to Poonch district in the south, from Kupwara district in the north and Badgam district in the southwest.

Tourism of Baramulla:

Uri: Uri is town on the river Jhelum in the Baramulla district, 1,363 m ASL; Uri is 46 km (29 mi) by road from Baramulla and 106 km (66 mi) from Srinagar. Uri is a beautiful valley as well. There are several tourist attractions, some important ones are the temple of Buniar (situated on the Jhelum Valley road, two miles above Rampur) which is dedicated to lord Shiva and belongs to 9th century AD and Dhatha Mandir or Bandi Temple (situated on the Jhelum Valley cart road, midway between Rampur and Uri, about two miles below Mohora), in addition, there is the beautiful Eco Park. Khadniyar, Baramulla is located on the island in the middle of Jhelum river on the road from Baramulla town to Uri and it is approached by an old wooden bridge.

Baramulla Town: Here we find the ruins of monasteries (visited by the Chinese Traveller Hueing Tsang in 631 AD and spend 1st night here), and temples (Kalhana mentioned them in Raj Tarangni). These are located at the Ushkar or Wushar Village about 1 km from

the main town. Fathgarh village of Baramulla town is also known for its large temple ruins. Moreover, at Naranthal village of Baramulla town, there is one older temple on the Muzafarabd road which is also delapidated and which is said to have stood in a tank, but the tank is dry nowadays.

Besides the above tourism potentials of the Border Areas of J&K, the cultures of these areas are also very attractive and unique. However, these districts are all the mountainous areas, but their cultures are quite different from each other. The languages, food, dresses and occupation of inhabitants are quite distinct. The Gujjar (Gojri language) and pahari (pahari language) are the main cultures in Pooch and Rajouri, while as the Shina and Pashto cultures were influenced by the Gurez and Drass inhabitants, Kargil is influenced by the Persian culture and in addition, Leh is known for its unique Tibetan Buddhist culture.

Suggestions

The following suggestions could be useful for the development of border tourist destinations in Jammu and Kashmir and for the tourism potential in these border areas to be exploited properly:

1. Tourism-related infrastructure – transportation, travel services, telecommunications, restaurants, support services, shopping, recreation and entertainment, health and emergency services etc. should be developed at border tourism destinations in J&K.
2. Border tourism destinations of J&K should be advertised through internet, newspapers, magazines, journals, TV shows etc.
3. Uri (where about 1500 people died in 2005 due to earthquake) and Drass (Ind-o-Pak Kargil war in 1999) should be promoted as dark tourism attractions.
4. Tourism awareness programmes among the host community should be conducted timely so that the locals can take benefits from

tourism and will contribute towards the tourism development.

5. Different tourism related festivals should be conducted at border tourism destinations of J&K in order to increase the tourist flows to these areas.
6. Both, state and central government should undertake urgent steps to ensure the safety and security of the envisaged tourists.
7. Cross-border tourism should be permitted by opening up all the closed traditional routes between India and Pakistan within Jammu and Kashmir.
8. Tour operators should suggest the border-tourism destinations of J&K to the tourists and they should include these border tourist attractions in tour packages as well.
9. There are several heritage structures in J&K border areas, which are merely ruins now; authorities should take appropriate steps for their conservation and development.
10. Authorities should develop a few museums in the border regions of J&K so that to conserve and display the unique history of these areas in them.
11. There is an immense need for proper road connectivity between and to border tourist destinations.
12. The accommodation facility issue is one of main issues in these border destinations, as such this should be mitigated.

Conclusions

Jammu and Kashmir is the northern most state of India which is well known for tourism activities. J&K shares India's international borders with Pakistan, China and Afghanistan; Moreover, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab (two Indian States) also share their borders with J&K. The mountainous border districts of Jammu and Kashmir have immense potential for tourism. There are several ancient temples, monasteries, forts, traditions and rituals, food, costume etc. which are highly impressive and worth promoting.

However, although there are rich fabricated tourism potentials in these border-tourism destinations in J&K, and given that the Almighty has decorated these areas with mesmerising natural beauty as well such as lush green forests, scenic and snow-capped mountains, fast flowing and singing rivers, rich wild life, these should all be adding value to the border tourist destinations of J&K. The border tourism destinations of Jammu and Kashmir are mostly known for adventure tourism and cultural tourism activities. There are minor or no similarities among the regions of Jammu and Kashmir as far as the climate, culture and physical appearance of these regions is concerned and every region of the state is unique. The border areas of Jammu and Kashmir have rich tourism potential and it is critical to develop and conserve these.

Moreover, tourism education among the local people is very important way to reach the tourism developmental objectives in these border areas of Jammu and Kashmir and should be promoted. In addition to this, the border lands of Jammu and Kashmir are lacking very basic tourism infrastructure and this is one of the main reasons why there is a low flow of tourists to the area. Moreover, greater marketing initiatives are required for these border destinations. All in all, the area is idyllic and the varied splendors should be attracting many tourists soon

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