

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 12

Special Issue: 2

Month: July

Year: 2024

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 17.06.2024

Accepted: 22.07.2024

Published: 30.07.2024

Citation:

Anila, K. (2024).
Thenmala Ecotourism:
An Analysis. *Shanlax
International Journal
of Arts, Science and
Humanities*, 12(S2),
79–82.

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.34293/
sijash.v12iS2-July.7859](https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v12iS2-July.7859)



This work is licensed
under a Creative
Commons Attribution-
ShareAlike 4.0
International License.

Thenmala Ecotourism: An Analysis

Dr. K. Anila

*Assistant Professor, Department of History
Velu Thampi Memorial Nair Service Society College
Dhanuvachapuram, Kerala, India*

Abstract

In 1983 Hector Ceballos- Lascurain coined the term 'ecotourism' to describe a new form of tourism. The term ecotourism can be defined as "environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature, that promotes conservation has low negative visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations". It is a component of nature tourism as well as a part of sustainable tourism. In this article an attempt is made to trace out the features of ecotourism project in Thenmala (Kollam District).

Keywords: Eco Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Thenmala Ecotourism Promotion Society.

Introduction

The term ecotourism emerged in the early 1980's. The first definition of ecotourism was given by Hector Ceballos Lascurain and he defined that "ecotourism is a type of tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas". Later in 1983 he modified the definition to "ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature that promotes conservation has low negative visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations".

There are many other names for ecotourism, including green tourism, alternative tourism, gentle tourism, and so on. Ecotourism's history dates back to the 1950s. Prior to it, not many people were aware of the idea. It has existed in many forms throughout its development history. When hunting became permitted in Africa in the 1950s, ecotourism was first promoted there. This led to the requirement for the establishment of national parks and other protected areas.

Following the 1980s, the idea gained traction and more people started to understand how crucial it is to protect the environment for coming generations. The International Ecotourism Society's definition of ecotourism is the most widely recognized. Tourism is a type of specialty travel that is centered around nature and is defined by TIES as "responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people." Both social and economic effects resulted from tourism. These might include

things like keeping the area's culture and history intact, fostering community bonds, offering social services, commercializing culture and the arts, reviving old traditions and artistic expressions, and so on. Kerala was one of the many popular tourist destinations in India.

Thenmala is a tiny hamlet in the Kollam district that is situated at the base of the Western Ghats. The terms "Then" and "Mala" in Malayalam are the source of the place name Thenmala. Here, "Mala" denotes a mountain and "Then" denotes honey. Together, they signify "honey hill." The area is mostly covered in forests. This location is becoming more well-known due to its distinctive views, biodiversity, and overall operation. This is the location of the Kallada Irrigation Projects of the State's Peppara dam. . This basin has a water spread area of 22 square kilometers and is home to the well-known Chenthuruni Wildlife Sanctuary. Thenmala Ecotourism project was built in the vicinity of this body of water. This is the nation's first organized ecotourism event. .

Development of Thenmala Ecotourism

After the government made the decision in 1996 to promote Thenmala as an ecotourism destination, Thenmala Ecotourism Promotion Society (TEPS) was established. In 2001, the project was put into commission. The Forest Department has also played a significant influence in Thenmala's tourist growth. . Their main concerns are resource conservation and the formulation of laws and regulations. Tourism promotion and planning fall under the purview of TEPS. The following are the main goals of the Thenmala project.

- To establish Thenmala Dam and its environs as a popular tourist attraction.
- To encourage ecological sustainability in Thenmala's environs
- To serve as an example for other ecotourism locations

Three elements are planned for the Thenmala project: pilgrimage tourism, ecotourism, and ecofriendly tourism. Three zones comprise eco-friendly general tourism: the cultural, recreational, and adventure zones. The idea behind this is to raise awareness among ordinary tourists and expose them to the notion of ecotourism. Additionally, pilgrimage tourism makes up the third component, while serious tourism makes up the second. This pilgrimage tourism sought to serve as an environmentally friendly route linking the Ayyappa temples associated with the well-known Sabarimala.

TEPS is split up into four distinct zones: ecotourism, adventure, leisure, and culture. The amphitheater, restaurant, parking lots, retail courts, visitor assistance centers, etc. are all included in the cultural zone. Large crowds, ticket offices, and an information desk are all accommodated at the tourism facilitation center. The sculpture garden and the boardwalk were the main draws of the recreation area. The opposite of the leisure zone is the adventure zone. Elevated walkway, mountain bike park, rock climbing, river crossing, short nature trails, lotus pond, etc. are some of its features. The National Adventure Foundation provides assistance in the construction of the amenities in this area.

In addition, there are the Palaruvi waterfalls, boating opportunities within the Chenthuruni Wildlife Sanctuary, and a deer rehabilitation center that provides animals with safety. In addition, there is a children's Eco Park, short riverbank hiking, and treetop cottages for family outings. There are additional trips offered for guided bird viewing and walking. The tourists are given food, sleeping bags, tents, and walking equipment. The Kerala Forest Research Institutes's Entomology Department recently constructed a butterfly park near Thenmala.

The three Guiding Concepts of the Thenmala Ecotourism Initiative

1. Sustainable

TEPS implemented a number of measures to stop the issues caused by mass tourism, most of which entail accepting the environment as it is and not attempting to alter it. During the busiest

time of year, trekking is usually restricted to two days per week. To ensure that there are no traces in the terrain, different pathways are selected at random for each journey. A party consisting of no more than five visitors, five guides, and one armed forest guard is permitted. The amount of time spent trekking is restricted to a few hours per week. No one is permitted to enter the building using plastics. Only a group of ten to fifteen persons, including guides, may enter at any given time. Such safeguards for environmentally friendly .

The concept of Nakshtravanam is further encouraged to foster environmental stewardship. Organic waste is disposed of using vermiculture at a KTDC cafeteria. Two battery-supported cars are utilized to transport passengers from the tourism facilitation culture to the boat dock in order to prevent automobile congestion inside the sanctuary. All of these actions demonstrate how much TEPS values clean energy sources.

2. Education and Interpretation

In the form of tourist information centers and interpretation centers, education is another crucial component of ecotourism. Details are provided of the hard ecotourism, vegetation, animals, and the sanctuary. There are boards and signs in each zone.

Trekkers receive conservation instruction, and eco-tourists receive a crash lesson. It made it possible for experts in environmental protection to give a succinct explanation of the benefits, attributes, and significance of ecotourism in addition to nature preservation.

3. Benefits to Local People

Local populations that depend on the forest were grouped into Eco Development Committees in order to carry out the project. The two main goals of EDCs were to lessen the harm that locals caused to the sanctuary, to engage encroachers in conservation rather than exploitation, and, in the end, to win the community's support for the preservation and protection of the forests. Trekking and bird viewing are examples of ecotourism activities carried out by the Vana Samrakshanasamiti, also known as Eco Development Committees or Forest Management Committees. Shops to market forest goods are offered to the women's self-help groups Kudumbasree. To become guides, locals get training.

Future Plans of TEPS

The next areas of investment for TEP will be human resources and educational components. At Thenmala, there are plans to create an educational program on ecotourism. TEPS will also focus on sociological development studies in Thenmala as well as sustainability in the areas of education, the environment, and the economy. At Kulathupuzha, the Forest Department maintains a medicinal plant garden. TEPS is also assisting the Forest Department in its growth as a source of ecotourism. Palaruvi was another place that TEPS was considering.

Conclusion

To sum up, the Thenmala ecotourism project is a significant example of domestic ecotourism. The Government of India presented TEPS with the 2002 Best Eco-Friendly Tourism Project Award. India's sustainable ecotourism expansion was aided by the Thenmala ecotourism project.

References

1. Blamey. R.K, "Ecotourism: the Search for an Operational Definition", Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Routledge Publishers, 1997.
2. Ceballos-Lascurain H, The Future of Ecotourism, Mexico Journal, 1987.

3. Ibid.
4. “Kerala Tourism”, Tourism Statistics,2008<www.keralatourism.org.
5. Department of Tourism. Eco-Kerala: Tourism Eco-Initiative. Government of Kerala. November 21, 2008.
6. “Environment News - Kerala”. Environmental Information System Centre, Kerala, December 29, 2008.
7. Singh Ratandeeep, National Ecotourism and Wildlife Tourism: Policies and Guidelines,Kanishka Publishers & Distributors, 2004.
8. www.keralatourism.org. Kerala Tourist: Kerala butterfly Safari Park Thenmala, 2008.
9. Thampi P Santhosh, Ecotourism in Kerala. India: Lessons from the Eco-development Project in Periyar Tiger Reserve., 2006.
10. Seema P.”White Paper on Ecotourism Policy”, Ecotourism, 2008.
11. It indicates that taking a sapling of tree that is relevant to the tourists birthstar from a tree nursery.
12. Anil, Radhakrishnan. “Thenmala to Feature More Attractions”. The Hindu, November 20, 2007.
13. Ibid.
14. The Hindu. “The Essence of Ecotourism” Front Page News, December 29, 2008.