

# Wildlife Tourism Development in Kerala\_ A Special Reference to Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism is travel for pleasure; also the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours. Tourism may be international, or within the traveler's country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourism more generally, in terms which go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only ", as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". Tourism can be domestic or international, and international tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments. Today, tourism is a major source of income for many countries, and affects the economy of both the source and host countries, in some cases being of vital importance. Tourism suffered as a result of a strong economic slowdown of the late-2000s recession, between the second half of 2008 and the end of 2009, and the outbreak of the H1N1 influenza virus, but slowly recovered. International tourism receipts (the travel item in the balance of payments) grew to US\$1.03 trillion (€740 billion) in 2011, corresponding to an increase in real terms of 3.8% from 2010. International tourist arrivals surpassed the milestone of 1 billion tourists globally for the first time in 2012, emerging markets such as China, Russia and Brazil had significantly increased their spending over the previous decade. The ITB Berlin is the world's leading tourism trade fair.

## Concept of Wildlife Tourism:

Wildlife tourism can be an eco and animal friendly tourism, usually showing animals in their natural habitat. Wildlife tourism , in its simplest sense, is watching wild animals in their natural habitat. Wildlife tourism is an important part of the tourism industries in many countries including many African and South American countries, Australia, India, Canada, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Maldives among many. It has experienced a dramatic and rapid growth in recent years worldwide and is closely aligned to eco-tourism and sustainable-tourism. Wildlife tourism is also a multimillion-dollar industry offering customized tour packages and safaris. Wildlife tourism encompasses non-consumptive interactions with wildlife, such as observing and photographing animals in their natural habitats. It has the recreational aspects of adventure travel, and supports the values of ecotourism and nature conservation programs.

## Wild Life Tourism in Kerala:

Wild life tourism in Kerala, whose native habitat consists of wet evergreen rainforests at lower elevations and highland deciduous and semi-evergreen forests in the east, is subject to a humid tropical climate. However, significant variations in terrain and elevation have resulted in a land whose biodiversity registers as among the worlds most significant. Most of Kerala's significantly biodiversity tracts of wilderness lie in the evergreen forests of its easternmost districts. Kerala also hosts two of the world's Ramsar Convention-listed wetlands: Lake Sasthamkotta and the Vembanad-Kol wetlands are noted as being wetlands of international importance. There are also numerous protected conservation areas, including 1455.4 km<sup>2</sup> of the vast Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. In turn, the forests play host to such major fauna as Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), Bengal tiger

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of the study is wild life tourism development in Kerala and some of the related objectives are as follows:

- To study the Wildlife tourism potentiality of Tholpatti wild life sanctuary
- To assess the Wildlife tourism practices at the Sanctuary
- To understand the tourism contribution to the local community at the destination.

- To study the community involvement in preservation and conservation of wild life
- To analysis the impact of tourism at the destination

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The scope of study covers, wildlife tourism development in Tholpatti wild life sanctuary. A wildlife tourism can be an eco and animal friendly tourism showing animal in their natural habitat. Tholpatti wildlife sanctuary having variety of large wild animals such as herds of elephants, deer, monkeys, leopards, gaur, bears, many species of reptiles and variety of flora and fauna. However, the study area covers the Tholpatti wild life sanctuary and the employees at the destination. Tholpatti wild life sanctuary is having variety of flora and fauna. However the research has taken the concept of wildlife tourism development will protect the wildlife at Tholpatti, in a sustainable manner. Therefore, Titled ' Wildlife Tourism Development in Kerala- A Study on Tholpatti Wild Life Sanctuary'.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Tholpatti Wildlife sanctuary was established in 1973, the sanctuary is now an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. It is bounded by protected area network of Nagarhole and Bandipur of Karnataka in the northeast, and on the southeast by Mudumalai of TamilNadu. It is part of the Wayanad Plateau and the vegetation is predominantly of the south Indian moist deciduous teak forests. Also, the sanctuary has pastures of the west-coast semi-evergreen trees. The wildlife sanctuary comes under Protect Elephant and one can spot herd of elephants roaming in the area. Elephant rides are arranged by the Kerala Forest Department. However, Wild life tourism development will bring the local people well being, Know the wild life practices at Tholpatti are in sustainable way and the impacts of Wild life Tourism on community .Tholpatti is a very Sensitive and fragile in Nature. Thirefore, the present study is required.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

- Primary data- In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the data was collected from the forest department of Kerala, and, interview from the forest department employees.
- Secondary data- Secondary data consist of information that already exists somewhere having being collected.
  - Documents related to eco tourism and Tholpatti wild life sanctuary
  - E journals & articles related to wildlife tourism
  - ✓ o Transportation problem.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Wildlife tourism can be an eco and animal friendly tourism, usually showing animals in their natural habitat. Wildlife tourism, in its simplest sense, is watching wild animals in their natural habitat. Wildlife tourism is an important part of the tourism industries in many countries including many African and South American countries, Australia, India, Canada, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Maldives among many. It has experienced a dramatic and rapid growth in recent years worldwide and is closely aligned to eco-tourism and sustainable-tourism. Wildlife tourism is also a multimillion-dollar industry offering customized tour packages and safaris. Wildlife tourism encompasses non-consumptive interactions with wildlife, such as observing and photographing animals in their natural habitats. It has the recreational aspects of adventure travel, and supports the values of ecotourism and nature conservation programs.

Historically, wildlife refers only to some game species (almost exclusively birds, mammals, and fish) that people hunt. Today the term 'wildlife' includes all living forms even those that are not used for sport (non-game species). Nevertheless, most literature confines its reference to wildlife to the Animal Kingdom, more specifically those species under Phylum Chordata consisting of vertebrates or animals with backbones. The wildlife species is only a small component of biological diversity (biodiversity), which refers to the variety of all living organisms at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels.

## **TYPES OF WILDLIFE TOURISM**

Wildlife tourism can be categorized according to the motivation of tourists and the level of interactions of tourists with wildlife:

### **1. Non-consumptive wildlife tourism**

Non-consumptive tourism involves recreational activities that neither catch nor kill wild animals. Wildlife watching, video-recording and photographing are the most common forms of non-consumptive recreational activities.

### **2. Consumptive wildlife tourism**

Consumptive use of wildlife for recreation involves the capture or killing of target animals. It can be in the form of (a) recreational hunting of waterfowl and big game (may also be valued for meat), (b) recreational fishing (fish may be released after catching or valued for food), or (c) trophy hunting and fishing (the trophy itself may be valued as well as the thrill of hunting itself) (Freese, 1998). Recreational hunting in Australia includes game bird hunting (waterfowl and quail), kangaroo and wallaby hunting, feral animal hunting,

Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary or Wayanad Wildlife sanctuary in Wayanad, Kerala, has a wide variety of animals. Visitors are restricted to the outer tourist zone. The sanctuary is located 20 km east of Mananthavady, 13 km from Thirunelly on the Kodagu Road. The wildlife jeep safari at the sanctuary offers splendid opportunities to spot various animal and bird species in their natural habitat. The safari usually lasts between 2-4 hours and takes place twice a day from 7am to 9am and 3pm to 5pm. Experienced guides from the forest department accompany visitors on the safari as it is mandatory. Also, do not forget to pack your camera's and binoculars as the moments you capture is bound to remain etched for a long time. The other attractions of the region include a lake, where animals usually come up to quench their thirst during the summer. The sanctuary is connected through a well laid system of all season roads and highways. The prime season for this sanctuary starts from the month of November and extends till the month of May.

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**Visiting hours-** 0600 - 0800 hrs & 1500 - 1730 hrs

### **Location**

Latitude: 11.951649, Longitude: 76.059937

The Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the famous wildlife reserves in the district of Wayanad. It is famous for its night camping and a watchtower, which is located above the lake. This lake is also the main source of water for the wild animals inhabiting the sanctuary. The sanctuary is part of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and is situated about 15 km north of Mananthavady.

It is well-connected with Nagarhole in the state of Karnataka by road. This sanctuary is home to numerous animal species like jungle cat, bison, tiger, etc. There are more than 900 elephants in this wildlife sanctuary, which is considered to be the same place where Pazhassi Raja fought the British. The ideal time for visiting this sanctuary is between September and May.

Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary is an animal sanctuary in Wayanad, Kerala, India. It has an extent of 344.44 km<sup>2</sup> with four ranges namely Sulthan Bathery, Muthanga, Kurichiat and Tholpetty. A variety of large wild animals such as Indian bison, elephant, deer and tiger are found there. There are also quite a few unusual birds in the sanctuary. In particular, peafowl tend to be very common in the area. Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary is the second largest wildlife sanctuary in Kerala. It is bestowed with lush green forests and rich wildlife. This wildlife area houses some of the rare and endangered species of both flora and fauna.

Established in 1973, the sanctuary is now an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. It is bounded by protected area network of Nagarhole and Bandipur of Karnataka in the northeast, and on the southeast by Mudumalai of Tamil Nadu.

It is part of the Wayanad Plateau and the vegetation is predominantly of the south Indian moist deciduous teak forests. Also, the sanctuary has pastures of the west-coast semi-evergreen trees. The wildlife sanctuary comes under Protect Elephant and one can spot herd of elephants roaming in the area. Elephant rides are arranged by the Kerala Forest Department.

Wayanad district has the largest population of Adivasi in Kerala. Scheduled tribes here include Paniyas, Kurumas, Adiyars, Kurichyas, Ooralis and Kattunaikkans. Comprising an area of 2126 km<sup>2</sup>, Wayanad has a powerful history. Relicts and edicts found in various parts of Wayanad speak of an important prehistoric era. Historians are of the view that organised human life existed in these parts, at least ten centuries before Christ.

## **Wild Life Tourism Activities at Tholpatti**

### **1. Jeep Safari**

This is one of the best ways to explore the sanctuary as it quick, untiring and covers more ground than one would on foot. The jeep safari takes you across the sanctuary hotspots where you get to witness most of the wildlife that thrives in the sanctuary. Moreover the driver who is also your guide knows the area well and has a keen eye for wildlife will help you spot fauna that otherwise is missed by the untrained eye. A jeep safari also ensures your safety from the animals which might prove dangerous when encroached on their territory. One should always follow the instructions and guidelines of the driver cum guide so that you may return safe and sound.

### **Best Time to Visit**

Best time to be here is during the months of November that continues till month of May.

### **Things to Carry**

Well, travel light is the best formula to make every travel an unforgettable experience. But while going for safari, these are some important things you should not forget to carry like cap, sun screen lotion, mosquito/insect repellents and comfortable shoes.

Note: Strictly follow the guidelines and instruction given by the guides during Jungle Safari at Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary.

### **2. Trekking**

this is another way to explore the sanctuary. This activity is much more adventurous due to the risk factor involved but also gives you a chance to be one with nature. The trekking time can be 2, 6 and 12 hours depending on your package. Other activities include bird watching, interpretation centre visit and paid nature camp.

### **Timings:**

7:00 AM to 10:00 AM 3:00 PM to 5:30 PM Ideal for: It is best place for photo fanatics, adventure seekers, wildlife lovers

### **SUGGESTION**

The concerned authority should appoint the qualified staff belongs to MTA, graduates and guides at Tholpatti.

- Tholpatti need promotion activities, such as sign board, brochures, and media advertisement which will help the destination to develop in the National level.

- The government and local authority should taken initiative regarding to grand loan and incentives for local people to establish the accommodation and recreational centers at the destinations.
- The department of tourism Board and the educational institution should create awareness about tourism at the destination as well as to spread the significance of tourism on their life.
- Dept.of Tourism Kerala should change the visiting hours at Tholpatti in morning and evening time which will help the tourist watch more number of animals during morning and evening times.
- Local communities and tourism Dept. at the destination adopt more safety and security measures like visitors management system. Which help the officials to record the data of the year and the main areas of tourist activities there should go for camera surveillance.
- Inside the Tholpatti wildlife sanctuary should provide proper sanitary facility to the women's, like eco-toilet.
- Dept.of Tourism Kerala should adopt the advance booking scheme for foreign tourist, which will help the tourist as well as increase the govt. reverence also.
- Dept.of tourism of Kerala should consider the entry price of foreign tourist should be fix for 150 per visit. which will be fares equally treated.
- The concerned authority should consider the waste management system. Tholpatti in one the important wild life sanctuary in Kerala. Wherever tourist visit, they will bring some snacks, that should be avoided at the entry level. or should put some dust bin to put waste.
- Dept.of Tourism of Kerala and local authority of Tholpatti region should establish will equipped tourist information centre in around the destination of Tholpatti which will help the tourist for their trip.
- The local govt. and Dept.of Tourism of Kerala should implement the noise free vehicle which will protect the ecology as well the eco system.

## CONCLUSION

The Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the famous wildlife reserves in the district of Wayanad. It is famous for its night camping and a watchtower, which is located above the lake. This lake is also the main source of water for the wild animals inhabiting the sanctuary. The sanctuary is part of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and is situated about 15 km north of Mananthavady.

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