

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN DEVIKULAM TALUK, IDUKKI DISTRICT, KERALA INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The development of tourism in Devikulam Taluk has significant potential due to its natural beauty, cultural diversity, and climatic advantages. Devikulam, located in the Idukki district of Kerala, is renowned for its tropical climate, making it a year-round tourist destination. The region experiences a moderate temperature range, with summer temperatures between 15.2°C and 25.8°C, and winter temperatures ranging from 0°C to 10°C. The area receives a substantial amount of rainfall, totaling 275 cm annually, contributing to its lush greenery and picturesque landscapes, which are major attractions for tourists. The major sources of income for the region are tea gardens and tourism, both of which have the potential to contribute significantly to its economic development. With its natural beauty, pleasant climate, and rich cultural heritage, Devikulam is poised for growth in the tourism sector, which could further support local livelihoods and sustainable development. By leveraging its natural and cultural assets, Devikulam has the potential to become a prominent tourism hub, benefiting from both its historical significance and the modern demands of the travel industry.

Keywords: Tourism Development, Devikulam Taluk, Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development

INTRODCUTION

Devikulam, a tranquil hill station located just under 10 kilometers from the renowned Munnar, often referred to as the "Kashmir of South India," is an ideal escape that combines the breathtaking beauty of the Western Ghats, rolling tea estates, cultural significance, and serenity. The name "Devikulam," meaning "Lake of the Goddess," is derived from the legend that Goddess Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, bathed in its waters, imbuing the lake with healing properties. As a result, it attracts thousands of Hindu pilgrims each year who visit the sacred site for its religious importance.

Tourism and development are critical concerns at global, national, and local levels. Tourism not only provides employment opportunities for local communities but also offers essential services to visitors, while facilitating economic activities that connect different parts of the world. Munnar, as a prime tourist destination, has vast potential and requires focused attention from both government and public sectors to promote and develop its tourism sector further.

According to Cohen E. (2003), the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and UNSTAT (1994) define tourism as "the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for no more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes." Halls and Wheeler (1992) also noted that shifts in socio-demographic patterns and increased disposable income have led to a transformation in tourist values and expectations, further influencing the tourism sector.

METHODOLOGY

The current study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data, including information on tourist arrivals and the basic amenities available in the study area, has been gathered from the

Department of Tourism and Culture, Government of Kerala, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and Panchayat Statistic Records. The collected data has been processed and analyzed using basic statistical techniques. Tables, diagrams, and maps have been created to illustrate the locations of tourist areas and other relevant information, providing insights into the current state of tourism in Idukki District, Kerala, India.

STUDY AREA:



Figure:1. Devikulam, located in the Idukki district of Kerala, India

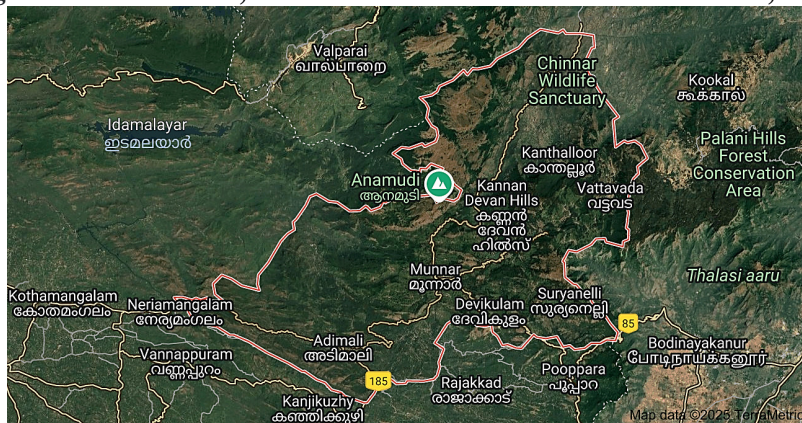


Figure:2. Topographic map of Devikulam, located in the Idukki district of Kerala, India
Historical Significance

Devikulam, situated in the Idukki district of Kerala, India, is a picturesque hill station with a deep historical and mythological significance. The name "Devikulam" means "the pond of the goddess," which is derived from a legend associated with the Hindu goddess, Sita. According to the story, Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, bathed in the pure waters of a lake in this region, now known as Sita Devi Lake. This religious and historical link makes Devikulam an important destination for both tourists and pilgrims.

TABLE:1.

S.No.	FACTS	FIGURES
1.	Location	Devikulam
2.	Climate	Tropical
3.	Temperature	Summer: 15.2 ⁰ C-25.80 ⁰ C Winter: 0 ⁰ C-10 ⁰ C
4.	Rainfall	275cm
5.	Main places	Munnar, Mattupatti, Marayoor

6.	Language	Tamil, Malayalam
7.	Religion	Christian, Hindu, Muslim
8.	Major income	Tea garden, Tourism

RESULTS

(Table:1, Fig 1 and Fig:2) Shown in Devikulam, located in the Idukki district of Kerala, India, is characterized by its tropical climate which significantly influences the region’s weather and agricultural activities. The temperature in the region varies across the seasons. During the summer, temperatures range from 15.2°C to 25.8°C, while in winter, they dip to a cooler range of 0°C to 10°C. This moderate temperature variation makes Devikulam an attractive destination for visitors year-round. The region receives a substantial annual rainfall of 275 cm, contributing to the lush greenery and fertile conditions suitable for agriculture, particularly tea gardens. This natural abundance supports Devikulam’s role as an important center for tea cultivation. The main places in the area, including Munnar, Mattupatti, and Marayoor, are popular tourist destinations, drawing visitors for their scenic beauty and rich cultural experiences. The languages spoken in Devikulam include Tamil and Malayalam, reflecting the cultural diversity of the area. In terms of religion, the region is home to a mix of communities, including Christian, Hindu, and Muslim populations, contributing to a harmonious and diverse social fabric. The major sources of income for the residents of Devikulam stem from tea cultivation and tourism, with both industries playing a crucial role in the local economy. Tea gardens in particular are a significant contributor, while tourism continues to grow, supported by the region’s natural beauty and cultural significance.

DISCUSSION

The lush green paradise of Devikulam and Munnar beckons travelers to experience a land untouched by modern-day artificiality. These picturesque hills and valleys have earned the title "Kashmir of South India." Aluva is the closest railway station to the region, and Munnar can be reached by road in three hours from the Nedumbassery International Airport. Visitors from across Kerala, except Palakkad, can conveniently access Munnar via the Kothamangalam-Adimaly-Munnar route. Those traveling from Palakkad can opt for the Pollachi-Udumalpettai-Marayoor-Munnar route. Unlike many tourist destinations that feature artificial attractions such as theme parks and concrete structures, Munnar’s natural beauty stands out, leaving an unforgettable impression on all who visit. It remains a green paradise for nature enthusiasts, filled with numerous natural wonders. The major tourist attractions in Munnar are organized into four distinct circuits:

1. Munnar - Mattupetty Dam - Indo Swiss Livestock Project - Echo Point - Kundala Dam - Top Station (34 km).
2. Munnar - Pothamedu - Chitirapuram - Pallivasal - Cheeyappara - Adimali - Valara (40 km).
3. Munnar - Rajamala - Marayoor - Chinnar (70 km).
4. Munnar - Devikulam - Lock Heart Gap - Power House Waterfalls - Anayirankal (32 km).

Munnar – Devikulam Route: (Munnar - Devikulam - Lock Heart Gap - Power House Waterfalls - Anayirankal Dam, 32 km) This route encompasses some of Munnar’s key attractions, such as Lock Heart Gap, the waterfalls, and the Anayirankal Dam.

- **Devikulam Lake:** Situated 3 km from Munnar, Devikulam Lake lies amidst tea gardens and forests. The lake is named after a legend in which Goddess Sita bathed here while in the forest with Rama and Lakshmana, following King Dasharatha's command. The site is currently owned by Tata.
- **Lock Heart Gap:** Located 13 km from Munnar, Lock Heart Gap offers stunning panoramic views of Bison Valley and surrounding villages wrapped in mist, along with steep rocky slopes adorned with wildflowers. This stretch of the Kochi-Madurai National Highway is an unforgettable destination.
- **Power House Waterfalls:** Situated 17 km from Munnar, this scenic waterfall originates from the legendary 'Sita Devi Kulam' near Devikulam, believed to be the bathing spot of Sita from the

Ramayana. The waterfall is said to possess medicinal properties, with visitors claiming that the water acts as a natural massage and has healing powers.

- **Anayirankal Dam:** Located 24 km from Munnar, Anayirankal Dam is surrounded by lush tea gardens and evergreen forests, making it a popular picnic spot. Herds of elephants frequently visit the lake, offering visitors a rare and safe opportunity to observe these majestic animals in the wild. (Murugadoss et al., 2016)

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of the analysis, several opportunities for enhancing the region's socio-economic development and environmental sustainability can be identified:

1. **Sustainable Tourism Development:** Given the natural beauty of Devikulam, further investment in eco-friendly and sustainable tourism practices could help maintain the region's biodiversity while catering to an increasing number of tourists. Promoting responsible tourism through awareness programs and supporting local businesses can lead to long-term benefits for the community.
2. **Agricultural Diversification:** While tea cultivation is the primary agricultural activity, there is potential to diversify crops to ensure the resilience of the local economy. Encouraging the cultivation of other cash crops, such as spices or fruits, could reduce dependency on tea and increase the area's agricultural sustainability.
3. **Infrastructure Improvement:** Developing better infrastructure, such as roads, public transportation, and waste management systems, could enhance both the tourist experience and the living standards of local residents. Investment in these areas would facilitate better access to Devikulam's natural attractions, especially in off-peak seasons.
4. **Cultural and Religious Harmony:** Promoting cultural exchange programs and community initiatives could foster greater unity among the region's diverse religious groups. This can not only enhance the social fabric but also create opportunities for tourism that highlight the area's rich cultural and religious heritage.
5. **Water Resource Management:** Considering the heavy rainfall (275 cm annually), there is an opportunity to invest in better water conservation and management strategies to support agricultural activities and ensure a steady water supply for the population, particularly during dry spells.

CONCLUSION

Devikulam, with its tropical climate, fertile lands, and scenic beauty, presents a unique combination of natural resources and cultural diversity that offers both opportunities and challenges. The region's climate and rainfall support tea cultivation, which is central to its economy, while tourism continues to grow due to its natural and cultural attractions. However, careful management of these resources is essential for long-term sustainability. By focusing on sustainable tourism, agricultural diversification, infrastructure development, and fostering social harmony, Devikulam can secure both economic prosperity and environmental well-being for its residents. The convergence of tea cultivation and tourism offers promising economic prospects, but it is crucial to balance development with environmental and cultural preservation to ensure that Devikulam remains a vibrant and thriving region for generations to come.

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