



“Wildlife Tourism in Goa: An Overview”

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Abstract:

Goa's wildlife tourism is a rich reservoirs of biodiversity with a bewildering range of plants and animal life. Goa is now taking a forward leap into wildlife tourism. It provides a natural habitat to a range of birds and animals in the midst of rich vegetation, well preserved bird sanctuary and five wildlife sanctuaries. An array of soft wildlife activities in Goa are now available and are increasingly popular among domestic as well as foreign tourist. A number of tour operators have made this niche segment as their sole business and their numbers are proliferating by the day. Today even tourists are seeking holidays that caters to their desire for thrill, make-believe action and exhilarating experiences. It is an area with great tourism potential, with wildlife tourism at the leading edge of development. The Government of Goa is facilitating the diversification of tourism product from traditional 'leisure tourism' to 'green tourism'. The entire range of protected forest area offers the most amazing array of biodiversity, an important natural resources for 'alternative tourism'. It has been found that newer destinations attract more tourists such as backwater tourism, eco-tourism and wild life tourism and it is emerging as the popular ones among the tourists. The Forest Department has taken initiative to promote wildlife and eco tourism to enable people to see and appreciate the rich biodiversity of the forests in the State. It is found that many of the wildlife tourism products were poorly marketed by the government. The present paper provides an overview of the wildlife tourism activities in Goa.

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Keywords: *Protected areas, Alternative tourism, Eco Tourism, biodiversity, wildlife tourism.*

I. RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive research design has been adopted to provide an overview of wild life tourism activities in Goa, emphasising the analysis of existing secondary data, literature and websites.

1.1 Objectives of the Study:

- To explore the various wildlife tourism activities that contribute to Goa's potential as a wild life tourism destination.

II. INTRODUCTION

Goa known as “Rome of the East”, “Tourist Paradise” and “Pearl of the Orient”, is located on the western coast of India in the coastal belt know as Konkan. The magnificent scenic beauty has made Goa a favourite with travellers around the world. Goa is best known as a tourist paradise, both in India and abroad. But then,

Goa is much more than just beaches and sea. It has a perfect hideaway for those seeking respite from the concrete jungles of civilization.

Goa also provides a natural habitat to a range of birds and animals in the midst of rich vegetation, well preserved as wildlife sanctuaries untouched and unspoilt by pollution. To the east of Goa is the richly forested Sahyadri mountain range, natural barrier separating Goa from rest of the country. These Western Ghats are the least known part of Goa. They are rich reservoirs of biodiversity with a bewildering range of plants and animal life and provide a variety of raw products. The hills are the natural catchment areas for rain, protected by a dense forest cover. Goa has a number of Eco-systems ranging from forest, fresh water, marine, mangroves, sumptuous cuisine and much more. Goa is a paradise for Jungle lovers. The different Wildlife Sanctuaries offers wonderful opportunities to mingle with the nature and all sorts of nature based activities. Though Goa has not been promoting hinterland fully, one cannot ignore its richly forested Sahyadri mountain range with its rich reservoirs of biodiversity with a bewildering range of plants and animal life.

Keeping in view the various opportunities available the Department of Tourism has taken various initiative to diversify and develop new tourism markets. These products include Adventure Tourism, Wildlife Tourism, Heritage tourism, Monsoon tourism. Also there is sufficient potential and it is also possible to divert visitors to hinterlands.

III WILDLIFE TOURISM IN GOA

Around 755 sq km which is about 20% of the State's geographical area of 3702 sq km has been declared as Wildlife Protected area. The Wildlife protected areas offer complete safety to the natural flora and fauna and help conserve the unique biological diversity of the region. The section of Sahyadris, that lie inside Goa and which dominates its ecosystem, readily exhibits a complexity in plants, animals and bird life. In Goa, we find some very beautiful and exotic species of wildlife. Some of these are endangered and rare and it is to see them that a lot of tourists come to the state. A diverse range of colored birds mesmerize the visitors with their enchanting beauty and their unbelievable variety of sounds. Goa has a variety of flora and fauna which could be used to attract tourists to these places.

The Forest Department has taken initiative to promote wildlife/eco-tourism to enable people to see and appreciate the rich biodiversity and scenic beauty of the forests in the State. The common fauna found in the Sanctuaries are the Indian bison, sambhar, cheetah, barking deer, mouse deer, hog deer, sloth bear, black faced langur, wild boar, giant squirrel and carnivores like leopard, jungle cat, wild dog, civets. from across the borders. A diverse range of coloured birds mesmerize the visitors with their enchanting beauty and their unbelievable jackals and many more. A wide variety of reptiles like snakes, monitor lizards, crocodiles, elephants and tigers too can be seen.. Goa also has two beautiful lakes at Mayem and Carambolim where migratory birds are sighted in large numbers.

IV WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES IN GOA

In Goa, there is one National Park, one bird sanctuary and five wildlife sanctuaries. The largest of these is the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, which is being considered to be the first Project Tiger reserve in Goa.

Table 1 Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Park

| No | Name of the Sanctuary | Sq.km | Taluka | District |
|-------|------------------------------------|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1 | Mollem National Park | 107 | Sanguem | South Goa |
| 2 | Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary | 133 | Sanguem | South Goa |
| 3 | Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary | 86 | Canacona | South Goa |
| 4 | Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary | 8 | Ponda | North Goa |
| 5 | Dr. Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary | 1.8 | Tiswadi | North Goa |
| 6 | Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary | 208.48 | Sattari | North Goa |
| 7 | Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary | 211.05 | Sanguem | South Goa |
| Total | | 755.31 | | |

Source: www.goaforest.com

1. Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park – Mollem, (Taluka – Sanguem) – North Goa.

The crowing glory of Goa's wildlife reserves is the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park, sprawled over an area of 240 square), located in the Western Ghats of South India, in Sanguem Taluka, Goa The area was first known as Mollem Game Sanctuary. It was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1969 and renamed as Bhagwan Mahavir Sanctuary. The core area of the sanctuary covering 107 square kilometers (41 sq mi) was notified as Mollem National Park in 1978. The sanctuary is home to many species of wildlife such as the gaur, leopards, chital, mouse deer, wild boar, Indian porcupine, wild dogs, bonnet macaque pied hornbill, Paradise flycatcher, Fairy bluebird, shrikes, Emerald doves and much more.

2. Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary – Cotigao, (Taluka – Canacona) – South Goa

The Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary established in 1968, occupies 85.65 sq km is located in the Canacona taluka in south eastern Goa.. The sanctuary is home to many species of wildlife such as wild boar, langur, bison, deer, leopards, wild cat, pangolin and the Black Panther have been spotted here.

3. Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary – Usgao, (Taluka – Ponda) – North Goa

Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary is located in north eastern Goa, India in the Ponda taluka of the state. The total area of the park is 8 square kilometer. It is a popular destination for both tourists and school children. Though the smallest of Goa's wildlife sanctuaries, Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary is famous throughout India, A wide variety of animal's life can be encountered, including: Sambar Deer, Indian Bison, Malabar Giant Squirrel, Indian Peafowl and many species of snake. Its lion enclosure and reptilian collection has an awe-evoking effect on many spread out across around 8 sq km.

4. Dr. Salim Ali bird Sanctuary – Charao island, (Taluka – Tiswadi) – North Goa

The Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary is a bird sanctuary located on western tip of the Island of Chorao along the river Mandovi, Goa, in India. The bird sanctuary is named after renowned ornithologist Dr. Salim Moizzudin Abdul Ali and spreads across around 1.78 sq km of land, mainly consisting of mangroves. The high watch towers are a perfect vintage spot to spot various migratory birds in their element. Birds include Kingfishers, eagles, kites, drogues, mynahs, cormorants, pintail ducks etc. and as this area mainly consist of mangroves

5. Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary – Mhadei, (Taluka – Sattari) – North Goa

Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Sattari taluka in North Goa District. The Sanctuary is an area of high biodiversity. With a massive forest cover, the sanctuary is the abode of various species of birds, reptiles and other creatures. The sanctuary supports a rich variety of wildlife and covers much of the north eastern portions of Goa. It is also known to be a bird watcher's paradise where one can see a lot of species of birds.

6. Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary – Netravali, (Taluka – Sanguem) – South Goa

Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary is a major attraction for nature-enthusiasts and wildlife lovers. The Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary lies between the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary to its North and Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary to its South. Flora of the Sanctuary not only the wildlife, variety of forest in Netravali deserves tourist appreciation. At Netravali you can spot wildlife like Black Panthers, Great Pied Hornbills, King Cobras, Giant Squirrels, and Slender Loris. Apart from there wildlife species, you can also see a number of other animals also

V ECO-TOURISM SPOTS IN GOA

Interesting Eco-tourist spots in Goa, beyond the wildlife protected areas:

Sacred groves:

Located at Bambar in Satari Taluka is the abode of rare medicinal plants refuse for a unique forest – classified as Myristca Swamp Forest having great ecological significance. This grove is known to exist for the last 250 year and the reigning deity is the God "Nirankar". One of the unique feature of the trees in this habitat is the presence of numerous aerial roots in the shape of "u".

Cumbarjua Canal :

This canal is 15 kms long stretch of water linking Zuari with Mandovi river, a vibrant mangrove habitat, home for crocodile and migratory birds. Boat cruise packages are being thoughtfully designed by tour operators to give visitors most memorable experience of watching fresh water crocodiles.

Mayem Lake:

A calm spread of water with geese and pedal boats in the midst of green hills is an exciting experience, where one can commune with nature. As you drive to the lake, the picturesque countryside with lovely villages and smiling folks on the way, offer a spectacular sight.

Turtle Nesting Sites:

Morjim, Galgibag and Agonda beaches, the largest nesting places of the giant olive ridley turtle. An amazing phenomenon of nature, this is a regular annual occurrence since 1997-98. While earlier it was hunting ground for sea turtles, today it is a model conservation centre for turtles.

Carambolim Lake:

Adding to the charm of the quiet village of Carambolim is the scenic reservoir fringed by lush greenery. Migratory birds seek this verdant landscape every year to frolic in the natural splendor till the end of the season. The cacophony of 80 different varieties of birds is unbelievable, tending to their young in the mixed heronries on the aquatic vegetation. Jacanas with their iridescent colours and the spectacular purple moorhens can be seen delicately treading over the floating vegetation.

Satpal Arboratum:

Established in 1972, is about 3 kms from Mollem. A number of research plots have been laid here. The Arboratum is ideally suited to meet the requirement of students for their field studies.

Netravalli Lake:

This lake in Sanguem Taluka has unique characteristics; there are continuous bubbles emerging on the lake surface and upon clapping the intensity of the bubbles grow, with live springs, which suddenly gushes out in full spectacle.

Kesarval Springs:

Flowing through the woods at Quelossim off the Panjim-Margao Highway NH-17, the spring emerges from hard and compact rocks and people bathe in its water with strong belief that it has medicinal properties. Besides this spring, the springs at Socoile (Ford Aguada), Pomburpa, (Fondvem), Candolim, Camurlim in Bardez taluka, Keri in Ponda, Maina in Battim village, Tiswadi Taluka are others of interest. This waters run unadvertised, though full of health and curative power.

Arvalem Water Fall:

In Bicholim Taluka is set amidst verdure and sylvan surroundings. At this beautiful spot, streams trickles as they make their way through the landscape and waters roar as they cascade down the mountains from height of 70 ft. The forests here offer a soothing canopy. One can descend the staircase to look at a majestic waterfall shedding its exuberant silvery showers. The fall is best seen when in full flux just after the copious monsoon, when it presents a rapturous, ravishing and riotous aspect.

Arvalem Caves:

The celebrated caves of Arvalem, belonging to a remote era, are in a westerly direction not far away from the temple of Rudreshwar and are of archaeological interest. A mythical background is attached to these caves.

Salaulim Dam:

The monochromatic landscape, its silent, serene splendor beckons the traveler to relax secured in the secluded warmth of nature. A quaint picnic spot ideal for a languorous break is an exhilarating experience.

VI WILDLIFE ACTIVITIES IN GOA

A tourist visiting Goa can enjoy a number of activities in the Wildlife areas and Sanctuaries by paying nominal fees. They can also engage in Wildlife water sports in the form of dolphin cruises and crocodile cruises.

Jungle Safari

Jungle safari is one of the best choices which offers excellent opportunities to view these untamed animals from a closest point. In a Jungle safari, one can even stay amid the nature's lap while enjoying the serene beauty of the jungles.

Bird Watching

Bird watching is also a significant part of wildlife tourism in Goa. The sky is filled with various colorful birds among which some are residential and some are migratory birds. It has all total of 1200 species of birds which resides in different bird sanctuaries namely the Dr. Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary and other Sanctuaries in Goa. Here, you can spend some leisurely hours listening to chirping of birds.

Wildlife Photography

Wildlife photography is an art in itself and to perform this you must have the quest for innovative exploration of these wild animals in their natural habitat. Goa's wildlife sanctuaries are delight for the wildlife photographers. Every Goa's wildlife sanctuary and National park has something or other to offer these photographers.

Eco-Tourism

The main ideology of Eco-tourism is tourism in exotic destinations without hampering the distinct flora and fauna of the region. Eco-tourism provides traveler an awesome opportunity to spend a small sojourn in harmony with nature.

Dolphin Cruise Trips

Dolphin spotting trips are very famous in Goa. Some of the prominent beaches have operators providing this activity. Dolphin watching trips are offered by many operators on many stretches of Goan's beaches.

Crocodile Tours

The Cumbarjua canal is the only place in Goa where crocodiles can actually be seen in the Wild. The canal is 15 kms long stretch of water located about 20 minutes drive away from Panaji. It links the two biggest rivers in Goa, the Zuari and Mandovi. Some crocodiles in the Cumbarjau canal is currently estimated to be between 40-50. The crocodiles found in Goa are actually fresh water crocodiles called 'freshies' and they have actually adapted themselves to surviving in the saline waters of the canal. This extremely rare phenomenon does not occur anywhere else on the Indian subcontinent.

Angling

Sea fishing involves going far out in a motor boat to expect some catch including kingfish, tuna and jack fish. Operators take the groups to Bat and Butterfly Islands, much closer to shore for fishing. Sports fishing or recreational fishing is a famous Wildlife sport throughout the world. Keeping in mind the popularity of sports enthusiasts, a set of regulations came into existence. There are specific guidelines for the fishing season in which a certain species can be caught, the permission for minimum catch per day and the choice of fishing sites. It offers an opportunity for the fishing freaks to find out the unexplored territories from vast expanse of the sea housing countless treasures. Fishing also spurs us to challenge our daring and prove our worth.

Butterfly sighting

Good deal of butterfly fauna in the wilderness area is endemic and has protected status as per the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Goa Sanctuaries is rich in butterfly species representing all families, fortunately the tourist season coincides very well with the best season for the butterfly sighting in the Sanctuaries thereby enhancing the eco tourism potential.

VII CONCLUSION

Wild life tourism is a diverse and fragmented industry with many opportunities.. Many development efforts are occurring in a grass root environment, Also, there appears to be a growing interest in the opportunities provided by Wildlife tourism. It has tremendous potential for developing new ventures in wildlife tourism, such as introducing new species and also adding more wildlife tourism activities. This will make Wildlife tourism profitable tourism option in the long term

Wild life tourism is perceived as a fastest growing segment with an immense business opportunity for Goa. The enchanting geographical landscape and range of eco system leaves a lasting impression on the tourist visiting Goa's hinterland. There are various places of wild life interest that can serve as tourist attractions; however, most places are untapped. There is a need to create increased awareness of Wild life tourism in Goa to widen the base of tourist arrivals on one hand and sustain growth on the other hand.

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