SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents various problems which are rather findings with pertinent suggestions for the development of tourism in Anantapur district.

Although Ananthapur district abounds in tourist attractions, several factors constraint the growth of tourism in the district. These tourist spots are handicapped due to inadequate and uncomfortable transport facilities, lack of proper information, inadequate hotel accommodation, and inefficient infrastructure and many other factors.

Lack of information: The foregone chapter reveal the tourist potential in Ananthapur district. But, most of these places are not known to the tourists and even to the natives of the district. This is mostly due to lack of proper publicity and projection of these places in the A.P. Tourism map as tourist centres. The state tourism department has no separate information office in this district. The District Public Relations Officer is also incharge officer for tourism department. But due to lack of proper guidance, encouragement and allocation of funds and publicity material, the DPRO is not showing any interest in tourism department work. They simply attend to the duty of drawing the salaries of watchmen and attenders of tourism guest houses located at Lepakshi and Timmanna Marri Manu in the district.

Tourist information material like hoardings, panels, posters, brochures, pamphlets etc., are not available. No separate allocations are made to the district. Very rarely the subject of tourism development is a matter for discussion in the planning board meetings.
Timmanna Marri Manu which is 20 Km from Kadiri is the world's largest banyan tree occupying an area of 5½ acres. Other important tourist places are Lepakshi, Tadpatri and Kadiri temples, which are endowed with rich architectural wonders. People need to be told about the destination and should be encouraged to visit these places. Tourism promotion is concerned in making the potential visitors aware of a destination and persuading them to choose it in preference of others. Thousands of tourists, both foreign and domestic visit Puttaparthi, the abode of Sri Satya Sai Baba daily.

These visitors may be encouraged to visit Lepakshi, Marrimanu, Kadiri and Tadipatri temples. The art and architecture of these temples is on par with the temples of Belur and Halebidu of Karnataka State. But, official lethargy in projecting these places as tourist centres is the reason for the indifference of the tourists in visiting these places.

Awareness may be created among the domestic as well as foreign tourists by using the techniques like advertising in newspapers magazines and through posters, brochures, hoardings audio visual tapes, documentary films, cinema slides, press releases by the P.R. Department, publishing feature stories, news letters and exhibiting photographs etc.

Information regarding programmes like fairs, festivals or special events can attract a large number of tourists. Information about the mode of transport, likely cost of food and accommodation would enable the tourist to plan the trip in advance and make the trip enjoyable.

All this can be done by providing publicity material. The tourism department has to coordinate its activities with the railways and RTC. Information counters should be setup at important railway stations and bus stations. They should be able to provide information for queries like

a) Local places of interest.
Communication facilities, whom to contact in times of emergency.

Route maps.

Local events like trade fairs, festivals or entertainment events, sports events, etc.

Hotel and cheap accommodation facilities for various classes of tourists.

Museums and art galleries.

Guidance in shopping facilities, what to buy, where to buy, etc.

Tourism committees should be formed in all the districts and all these committees should jointly organise video films and brochures and posters.

2. TRANSPORT FACILITIES:

Most of the tourist spots in the district do not attract tourists due to non-availability of transport facilities. The torn and dusty seats in buses and uncomfortable roads scare away the tourists, especially foreign tourists. Even those buses that are available are not being used properly. Tourists face many problems if they want to cover their visits to these important places in a day. There are no direct buses which would take them to the tourist spots. They have to wait for long periods in the bus stations to catch the connecting bus.

The authorities have failed in providing adequate transport facilities to the tourists. Tourism can be developed to a great extent just by increasing, transport facilities to important tourist places in the district. For example Timmamma Marri Manu, the world's largest banyan tree
has special importance as a tourist spot. If one wants to visit Marri Manu there are no direct buses to this place from any important place in the district. Tourists from any region in the district have to reach Kadiri and from there have to board an ordinary bus to reach Marri Manu. Yogi Vemana's Samadhi at Kataru palle is also very near to marri Manu. Tourists face many difficulties if they want to go to Katarupalle. A few ordinary buses are available from Kadiri only. Even to reach the magnificent Lepakshi temple and spectacular Nandi which attract many tourists, the facilities are inadequate. Tourists visiting Lepakshi has to reach Hindupur or Penugonda check post and take another bus from there to reach the place. Another beautiful picnic spot in the district is Alum Kona which is known for its waterfalls. But, to reach this spot, one has to go to Tadipatri and from there to Alurukona. The track is not easy to negotiate. Owing to the difficulty in reaching this place, this area is not visited even by the natives of the district. Other places which are of historical significance but fail to attract tourists because of inadequate transport facilities are Ratnagiri and Hemavathi.

The tourism department in coordination with RTC can run package tour buses to identified tourist places. For example, Kadiri, Marri Manu and Katarupalle can be made into a unit and special package tour buses could be run from Ananthapur. Similarly, Gugudu, Tadipatri, Aluru Kona and Puttaparthi, Penugonda, Lepakshi may be recognised as separate units and package tours could be conducted from Ananthapur.

Bad roads and uncomfortable buses is the chronic problem faced by tourists in the district. With the exception of highways, many approach roads to tourist spots are in a bad state and travel by vehicle on these roads is not enjoyable.
Even for tourists who use their own private vehicles to visit these places in the district the trip is boring. Owing to insufficient way side amenities like drinking water, petrol and restaurants food and Snacks, beverages, cool drinks etc., are not available at important tourist centres. If a 100 tourists arrive at Timmamma Marri Manu, there are no facilities like public toilets, drinking water, food and snacks etc. The situation is similar at many other places. This poses a real problem to tourists who visit these places along with children especially during summer.

ACCOMMODATION:

The most important problem in the development of tourism in the district is lack of proper accommodation. There is not enough hotel accommodation. Besides, the available accommodation is unsatisfactory and not upto the general standard of sanitation. In Ananthapur district only at Lepakshi and Timmamma Marri Manu the tourism department owns guest houses and even these are inadequate to meet the requirements. At other places, even these are not available. For tourists who want to stay overnight it is a great problem. They have to go back to Hindupur and pay exorbitant rents in private hotels. At Marri Manu a tourist lounge constructed recently owned by the tourism department can cater to the needs of only a few tourists. Moreover food, snacks, cool drinks etc., are not available there: the tourists have to return back disappointed.

The tourism department should take measures to provide cheap and adequate accommodation facilities, at least at important tourist centres, to cater to the requirements of middle class and domestic tourists.

Since hotel accommodation require huge investments private individuals should be invited to construct hotels so as to cater to the needs of rich tourists and foreign tourists at all the important tourist centres.
Puttaparthi, the abode of Lord Sri Satya Sai Baba, is considered as a sacred place by many tourists both foreign and domestic; but, for those who come a long way to have a darshan of Baba, accommodation is the most important problem. Other primary facilities like public toilets, drainage and sanitation are also not sufficient. There is an urgent need to provide cheap accommodation and also hotel accommodation for wealthy and foreign tourists. The accommodation being provided by the Satya Sai Seva Trust is inadequate, especially during festival seasons.

Publicity It is another factor which hindered the growth of tourism in the district. As far as the district is concerned the tourism department's efforts regarding publicity have been confined to only one place i.e., Lepakshi. Publicity which include glossy literature and art should concentrate on other important tourist centres. The district abounds in many tourist and picnic spots which are not known even to the natives of the district because of official lethargy in publicizing and projecting these centres. Ananthapur has temples like Lepakshi, Kadiri, Tadpatri which are architectural and sculptural marvels, which can attract foreign tourists besides the regular domestic pilgrim tourists.

Places like Alur Kona, Sangameswaram, Timmamma Marri Manu, Bhairavanithippa Project, Penakacharla Dam, Jurutla, Veerapuram bird sanctuary and many other places are a holiday makers delight. Providing publicity by press releases, advertisement, hoardings, publications, broadcasting through local AIR would encourage many fun-lovers and excursionists to visit these places.

Besides, the thousands of foreign tourists who visit Puttaparthi may also be encouraged to visit the important tourist spots in the districts through proper publicity.
During the month of November thousands of foreign tourists visit Puttaparthi to attend the birth anniversary of Sri Satya Sai Baba. The railways and the RTC run special trains and buses from Hyderabad and other places in the State to Dharmavaram and Puttaparthi for the convenience of the devotees. The pilgrim traffic may be induced and encouraged to visit the famous tourist spots in the district by opening an information and publicity counter at Puttaparthi during this time. The officials of this counter should be provided with information material like brochures, hoardings, posters and visual aids that can be displayed so that the people are attracted. Information counters should also be set up at Ananthapur and Dharmavaram railway station and bus stations. Publicising tourist centres would promote travel within the district for domestic tourists wishing to discover their own district.

DOMESTIC TOURISM:

As said in the above discussion bad roads and inadequate transport is posing a serious problem in the development of tourism in Ananthapur district. Most of the places in the district are pilgrim centres which attract a large number of domestic tourists especially during festival times.
The Veerabhadra Swamy temple at Lepakshi, Timmanna Marrimanu, Puttaparthi, the Ramalingeswara Temple and the Chintalaraya temples at Tadipatri, the temple of Lord Narasimha at Kadiri, Gowtameswara temple at Gowrigutta near Gutti, Jurutla Ramalingeswara Swamy temple are flooded with pilgrims during Mahasivaratri festival. Car festivals are held at most of the places mentioned above during this festival. Wide publicity of the fairs and festivals through AIR and local newspapers and about the available special buses to these places would attract more number of tourists.

Other important pilgrim centrevs in the District which draw a number of pilgrims daily are Kasapuram (Near Guntakal), Pennahobilam, Sangameswaram (Dharmavaram), Papuru Aswatha Kshetram, the temples (numbering about 100) in Rayadurg.

The Forts of Gutti, Penugonda, Rayadurg, Kalyandurg also draw executionists and students. Places like Penna Ahobilam balancing reservoir, Bhairavanithippa project, Sangameswaram, Alurukona, Penakacherla dam, Jurutla are ideal places for pleasure seekers and holiday goers. What is necessary to attract tourists to these places is provision of basic facilities like drinking water and food stalls, canteens which require little investment. Most of the places mentioned have water in plenty. Approach roads to these can be constructed by inviting tenders. Unemployed youth may be encouraged to set up canteen and cool drink stalls at these places by providing loans and subsidies.

Slowly, these places can be developed into holiday resorts by developing swimming and boat facilities, adventure tourism like mountain climbing at hill forts and setting up deer parks at places like Aluru Kona (picnic spot) and Veerapuram (bird sanctuary). A swimming pool can be constructed with little cost at Aluru Kona.
The foregone discussion reveal the scope for the development of domestic tourism by investing very little amounts. So for the development of the district, the district authorities should bring this to the notice of the Sta Government and request for the diversion of funds so as to provide basic facilities at these places. Especially so, because of the backwardness and the existing conditions which do not at all facilitate the development of the district industrially and economically. Here again, I would like to cite the example of Khajuraho which is throbbing with activity, which was once an unknown remote village.

Anantapur district also may be developed in the same way. Local artists may be encouraged to make clay replicas of the famous Lepakshi Sculptures and the 'Nandi'. Local unemployed youth may be encouraged to set up canteens and cafeterias, and small food and cool drinks stalls or shops dealing with items of presentels handlooms, puppets, Dharmavaram silk sarees and other local handicrafts. The most important point which is worth mentioning is that of the rare traditional art of puppet making. Nimmalakunta a small village on the Dharmavaram Puttaparthi highway is famous for this puppet industry. Almost all the families in the village are engaged in puppet making. The artists belonging to this village received awards from the then President of India R. Venkataraman. They were invited to U.S.A. and Germany to exhibit puppet shows during the 'Festival of India' held there.

The State Government to encourage these craftsman has provided them with a work shed to enable them to make puppets and is also marketing their items through Lepakshi handicrafts Emporiums. With the encouragement from the State Government these artists now are able to make not only puppets, but also many other decorative and gift articles like lampshade etc., stalls selling these items also could be set up at the important tourists centres.
All these measures if implemented would not only develop tourism industry in the district but also bring about economic prosperity to the residents, by providing livelihood to artists and employment to local youth. Being a service industry tourism offers tremendous potential for employment to a vast cross section of youth according to National Committee on Tourism. Employment opportunities are plenty in hotels, travel agencies, directorates and development corporations of tourism. There are openings too for those providing services, such as transport and guides, ticketing, reservation, documentations, travel arrangements, publicity, sales, shopping facilities which sell gift and handicraft souvenirs etc. According to National Committee on Tourism, every year some 14,000 additional hotel jobs in the skilled categories are estimated to be created and another 14,000 in the semi-skilled category.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS:

DISTRICT COMMITTEES: District Tourism Development Committees, which would periodically review the Tourism development activities, should be set up in all the districts to explore the tourism potential in their respective districts. These committees should consist of the District Public Relations Officers, the students representatives from Universities and Colleges, eminent persons belonging to the district and officials of the Tourism Department. This would certainly provide a boost to the tourism industry, as persons belonging to the district and officials of the Tourism Department. This would certainly provide a boost to the tourism industry, as persons belonging to the district are involved. A two tier system should be adopted in the Tourism department one at the state level and the other at district level. Only such a measure would solve the problem of development of Tourism industry in the State. Natives of the district would have knowledge of the practical problems involved and can find out ways and means of solving these problems and hence this would certainly help the development of Tourism in the Districts.