Chapter 2

Tourism in India
2.1 Cost and Benefit of Tourism:

There has been a lasting debate over the costs and benefits of tourism. International experiences support both sides of the arguments. Examples of thriving economies can easily be drawn from countries like Switzerland, Italy, USA etc., which have been successful in selling their traditional attractions. Examples of destinations (Fiji, Thailand, Maldives) adversely affected by tourism can also be found without much difficulty. A brief discussion is offered on this never-ending debate with special reference to India.

+ Foreign Exchange Earnings: Foreign tourists are sought after for any nation because the tourists bring foreign exchange to be spent in the traveled country. According to estimates available from the WTO, the average spending of a tourist was about US$ 715,019 in 1996. Hence every country, specially the poor ones are trying desperately to bring in more tourists to the country.

+ It is evident from the above that tourism can help in boosting the Gross National Product of a country. The effect of tourism on GNP is far more than the receipts from the foreign and domestic tourists because of the existence of a multiplier effect. Tourism is a cluster of innumerable services starting from the transporters to the services of the barber or the laundry. And the spending by the tourists is more likely to remain in that particular region. However, a small percentage of it might go out by way of import. (Exceptions are seen if capital items are acquired from outside the country.) The multiplier effect on the spending by tourists is bound to raise the GNP of the concerned country.

A generally accepted definition of tourism multiplier is offered by Douglas Pearce (1981). According to Pearce the multiplier effect is the way in which tourist spending filters through the economy, stimulating other sectors as it does so. This can be seen as the specialised application of Keynes's original explanation of economic multipliers. Pearce subdivides tourism multiplier into three categories, namely, Sales and Output Multiplier, Income Multiplier, and Employment Multiplier. The Sales and Output Multiplier measures total sales
or output stimulated by an initial expenditure as a ratio. Thus $100 spent by a tourist on a meal could result in a second round of $50 spent by the waitress out of her wages in a dress, and another $25 in a third round by the dress shop owner on weekly groceries. The total of $175 against the initial $100 gives a multiplier of 1.75. *Income Multiplier* measures the relationship between tourist spending and subsequent changes in income as shown in the formula below.

\[ K = \frac{A}{1 - B \cdot C} \] .......................... [1]

Where,

- **A** = percentage of total spending remaining in the region after some leaked away;
- **B** = percentage of income spent by residents on local goods and services and
- **C** = percentage of expenditure residents receive as local income after leakage.

Pearce defined *Employment Multiplier* as the ratio of total (primary and secondary) employment generated by the marginal tourism expenditure to primary or direct (primary) employment alone. *Donald E Landberg* (1985) came up with a comprehensive formula of calculating the multiplier effect of tourism. According to Landberg, multiplier effect of tourism is related to the local beneficiaries' propensity to save and also the tourist's desire to use imported goods. In both cases the money spent by the tourists will not be available for further use in the economy, thus nullifying any multiplier effect described by Pearce. Landberg's formula is shown below.

\[ TIM = \frac{(1 - TPI)}{(MPS + MPI)} \] .................................. [2]

Where,

- **TIM** = Tourism Income Multiplier
- **1** = Tourist expenditure
- **TPI** = Tourists' propensity to import
MPS = Marginal Propensity to Save of the local beneficiary
MPI = Marginal Propensity to Import of the local beneficiary

However, the multiplier effects of tourism would differ from place to place and one model cannot be accepted everywhere. John Lea (1988) has pointed out miscalculations in determining the multiplier itself. The multiplier effect, on the other hand, would work as a catalyst for development or expansion of other sectors of the economy.

+ Tourism can also increase the revenue of the government by way of direct or indirect taxes. Various duties associated with production and sales of products and services and corporate income tax from the organised travel agents may be a lucrative source of revenue for the government.

+ Tourism is also treated as a generator of employment. According to WTTC, tourism industry offered 255 million jobs worldwide in 1996. This was equivalent to 1 in 9 available jobs in all sectors of economy. Estimated direct employment generated by tourism activities in India was almost 7.8 million in the year 1994-95.

+ Improvement in availability of infrastructure is another positive effect of tourism. As tourists flow into a particular destination, investment in infrastructure in that destination goes on increasing resulting in improved infrastructure and a general upgradation of quality of life of the people of the area.

+ Development of understanding among people from different origin is another very important positive effect of tourism. Tourism is a unique event through which people would come into contact with different culture and belief of separate geographical regions. This provides the opportunity to understand and tolerate people from diverse origin. This tightens the universal bond amidst mankind and promotes harmony among different nations.
Tourism can also be a major stimulus for conservation of cultural heritage of the destination. Tourism, in many cases, help in raise resources to preserve the archeological set up of a destination. In Singapore, the old Chinese shophouses are preserved even after the building boom in the metropolitan city in the 1970s, only because tourists wanted them to be available. In most of the poor countries, governments of which are mostly concerned with improvement of standard of living of the countrymen, tourism demand for heritage and culture is playing a vital role in preservation and development of these. Tourism encourages local handicrafts and handlooms to be in their finest shape— as tourists long to buy these as mementos for their trips to the destination. Pipily of Orissa, for example, would not be as famous had tourism been not thriving in that area.

Tourism and its related activities cause tensions, which result in degradation of the environment. This degeneration leads to imbalances in the ecology and result in further problems in the vicinity of the activities. Most of the places, which are overcrowded by the tourists, are facing the wrath of nature—by way of change in the weather, temperature or the vegetation. Beaches are polluted, hill stations are facing water crisis, erosions are increasing due to unplanned additions of infrastructures to accommodate increasing number of tourists, wetlands are losing its flora and fauna, animals in the national parks are facing extra tensions, to name a few, due to unwelcome visits by large number of tourists—day in and day out. In 1985 an assessment was made in Maldives, one of the most visited Indian Ocean countries, only to find that the serenity, which was the major USP of marketing Maldives, had been rapidly leaving the island country. Fresh water sources in the island were polluted from sewage originated from the tourists. Effects of tourism on Amboseli National Park in Kenya were studied by Wesley Henry (1980), whose findings say that almost 80% of the visiting tourists restricted within an area of 15 sq. km exposing the animals in the park into great dangers. In fact, the research found out that just two species of animals, lions and cheetah accounted for more than 50% of the
tourists' time in the park. In the process as many as thirty vehicles sometimes cluster around a single animal group. The stress caused by this on the animals can easily be imagined. The devastating effect of tourism in India as well can be seen in the hill resorts of Shimla, Pehelgram and Ootty, where tourism waste have created havoc around the environment. Unplanned structures to accommodate more number of tourists have resulted in erosions in Shimla and also has created an artificial water crisis. Other hill stations like Shillong and Cherapunjee in Meghalaya would barely be able to take up more tourists as these places are facing acute water crisis even without heavy inflow of tourists. Even mountain places like Ladakh has its own story of litters and garbage thrown by the trekkers. The problems become many-folds as the places like Ladakh are having snow throughout the year and thus the natural biodegradable materials like peeled skins of vegetables, waste food etc are remaining as it is for years. And obviously as the number of trekkers (i.e., the tourists) increases, the problem becomes more unmanageable.

Cultural tensions might also been experienced due to visit of large number of tourists. It is obvious that the cultures of the tourists and the hosts are not same, and hence, the hosts might not be able to accept the cultures the tourists bring along with them. Their behaviour, language, habits and more importantly the way they dress (this is the most tangible among all factors), which are known as Demonstration Effect, might create tensions between the two cultures. This conflict is seen in most third world countries, mostly in case of foreign tourists, who are seemingly more affluent, and successful than the hosts are. For example, countries like Thailand, Singapore (and also other East Asian countries) are facing direct societal problems because of this friction between the guests and the hosts. Prostitution, to be more precise, is the direct effect of tourism in Bangkok, and in other small Thai towns and cities. Cultural degradations are also seen among the hosts as a result of this conflict. It is said that tourism reduces invaluable assets like culture of a region or country into a commodity, which can be sold to the tourists. Irrespective of the example of the Chinese shophouses in Singapore mentioned above, the devaluation of culture
into a commodity might affect the local society very adversely. As the cultural assets like particular ritual, folk dances and songs, to name a few become salable, marketers would try to customise these to suit the needs of the consumers. This effort of marketing in the long run may corrupt the particular culture of the society, thereby degenerating the societal values further.

Even with these negative effects of tourism, its growth remains unabated, particularly in the third world countries. As the benefits are well read by the policy makers and marketers, tourism remains as one of the leading industries in the world. Governments are, however, risen to take necessary corrective steps to reduce or nullify the negative aspects of tourism. Most comprehensive list of variables, which leads to the growth of tourism, includes the following.

- Greater affluence and increase in leisure time for a large number of people.
- The freedom of the young generation and the level of disposable income they possess.
- Better transport facilities
- Growth of international business, necessitating international travel.
- Greater acceptance of package tour by the tourists
- Better education
- Mass usage of information technology

According to John Lea (1988), the magnitude of economic impact of tourism will depend upon the factors, which are depicted in the Figure 2.1.
As the destination meets the criteria mentioned in Figure 1.4, the tourism may achieve the highest impact in the local economy.

2.2 Indian Tourism:

Economically, in spite of the recession during 1997-99, future growth areas are expected to be in Asia, because of the simple fact that this continent is yet to use its potential fully. Therefore, it is estimated that the average economic growth rate of Asian countries will be more than that of Latin American or European countries. As mentioned earlier, it is estimated by the WTO that China will be the market leader in tourism by the year 2020.

Travel is an integral part of Indian culture and heritage. From time immemorial people of this country have been travelling. Atithi devo bhava had been the mantra of the day, where guests were treated like the God. India possesses rich and living cultural heritage, varied topography, attractions those can spellbound each and every kind of tourist – from the sea surfers to the trekkers in the world’s most diverse mountain ranges, to the white water rafters- from the nature lover to the peace seekers. Deserts and the world’s most rainy place, and many a uniqueness of the world are present in this country. However, it is often said that India is traditionally a serious destination rather than a place where...
people come to relax and seek fun. With regards to diversity in India the famous orientalist, Max Mueller's observation on India can be quoted — *If we were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow — in some parts a veritable paradise on earth— I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind most fully developed some of its choicest gifts ... I should point out to India.*

According to estimates of WTO and WTTC Indian travel and tourism industry, directly and indirectly, contributes 5.6% of the total employment and over 6% of the GDP in India. In 1999, the travel demand was Rs.1,193 billion and by 2010 it is estimated to go up to Rs.6,147 billion. In Figure 2.2 international tourist arrivals in India are shown during the period of 1981 to 1998. A depressionary trend is seen just after 1997, which can be attributed to the Asian currency crisis. The projected growth for the year 1999 is, however, 8% over the 1998 figure.

![Figure 2.2: International Tourists Arrivals in India](image)

### 2.2.1 Foreign Tourists and India

Tourists from all over the globe visit India. Table 2.1 offers the details of the originating countries of the tourists visiting India during the year 1998. Tourists from UK formed almost 16% of the total tourist arrivals to top the list. UK was followed by USA. Bangladesh surprisingly came next to UK which, however, was ignored by the Indian government for calculation of foreign tourists arrival. If
region-wise distribution of tourists arrival is considered, West Europe (consisting of UK, France, Netherlands, Greece, Germany, Belgium etc.) topped the list with 8,53,375 tourists visiting India during 1998. North America (consisting of Canada, USA, etc) is the next most tourist-originating region with 3,24,920 visitors visiting India. The third place is occupied by the South Asian Tourists (consisting visitors from Afghanistan, Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan etc.) which account for 1,74,958 tourists in the year 1998 (which is down 4.5% from the previous year). Figure 2.3 offers a graphical display of region-wise arrivals of tourists in India during the year 1998. India was visited mostly by tourists of age group of 25-44 (49.8%) in the year 1998. During that year most of the tourists (91.7%) visited India for holiday and sightseeing. Incidentally, therefore, almost all tourists visiting India fulfill the definition of tourism as per this research. Foreign tourists normally visit India during winter season and lowest number of tourists is recorded during Summer.ix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Number of Tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>3,76,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>2,44,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>1,18,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>97,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>93,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>89,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>80,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>57,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>54,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>54,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10,91,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>3,39,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>44,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,58,629</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.2 Domestic Tourism in India

Domestic tourism is also vibrant in India. As the quality of life in the country is improving, the spending in leisure traveling is also increasing. Destinations like Goa, Shimla, Ooty, Manali etc. are thriving on domestic tourism. However, no systematic study has been undertaken in order to measure the impact of domestic tourism in Indian Economy. However, the sheer rush in all kinds of transportation means available in the country indicates that the number of travelers may be several billion in a year. But then, this number does not distinguish between leisure travel and other kinds of travel. Domestic tourism in India is often neglected by the Government machinery and hence as mentioned above, its actual impacts are not being measured by any agency. The emergence of large urban middle class coupled with better transportation and communication facilities (like the Internet etc.) have created a new class of holiday and leisure tourists.

It is a well-established fact that management of domestic tourism is much easier than that of foreign tourists. Firstly, the domestic tourists' expectations regarding a destination are realistic. And hence they are not fussy about many things like the toilet, drinking water, transportation etc. Thus, the satisfaction level of this group of tourists is somewhat predictable. Moreover, potential of domestic tourism in India is boundless such that if exploited properly, this can bring a new era of economic development throughout the tourism industry. This might also help in positioning of destination easier, as the consumers are better known to the
marketers. Other social, cultural and economic advantages of Indian domestic tourism might be

- Demand for service and products from domestic tourists may be simple and thus complex process for production of these is not needed.
- Domestic tourism may maintain and sustain the industry in the off-peak period also.
- It facilitates a considerable shift of multiplier inputs, thus spreading the economic benefits to every village of the visiting region.
- Improves bonds between people from various parts of the country, thus boosting national integration.

In May, 1992, Government of India adopted a National Action Plan for Tourism to fulfill the following broad objectives:

- Socio-economic development of the areas and thereby to uplift the quality of life
- To increase employment opportunities
- Development of domestic tourism, specially the budget category
- Preservation of national heritage and environment
- To develop international tourism and for optimization of foreign exchange earnings
- Diversification of the tourism product specially into the fields of leisure, adventure, convention and incentive tourism
- To achieve an increase in India’s share in international tourism.

The action plan also adopted certain strategies to achieve the above objectives.
2.3 Tourism Potentials of North East India (NE):

"The North Eastern part of India is almost another world. It is a place of magical beauty and bewildering diversity. A land nestled in myths and mysteries, lore and legends and in many tender dreams. A land where the summer rains drench the hills meeting the misty plains, where exotic wildlife haunts the jungles, where flow rivers like the Brahmaputra, the Barak and the Imphal and where the trains whistle into dark tunnels only to open out to breathtaking landscapes.

"With more than a hundred and fifty tribes speaking many languages, this region is a melting pot of variegated cultural mosaic of people and races, an ethnic tapestry of many hues and shades. The folk culture is still vital in this region. The primitive culture of at least the neolithic age now co-exists with the modern and post-modern lifestyle. Well-integrated with life and nature, the folk artworks have a common element of tune and tone.

"Indeed it's a virtual paradise for travelers, searching for continuos joy in Pilgrimage, Adventure, Culture, Nature, Heritage, Wildlife, Golf and Polo and many more. All these make a rich panorama. It's a land in the twilight of imagination and reality. It's a tourists' delight, anyway."

This is how the NE is described in a Government sponsored website(www.nerdatabank.nic.in).

North East India, popularly known as NE, comprises of the seven States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura and geographically situated in the North East corner of India, precisely at Latitude 21.57°N - 29.30°N and Longitude 89.46°E - 97.30°E with an area of 25.5 million Sq. Km (7.8% of the land mass of the country). NE shares the international boundaries of India with China to the North, Bangladesh to the South West, Bhutan to the North West and Myanmar to the East. This region is connected with the rest of India only through a narrow corridor in North Bengal, known as Chicken Neck, having an approximate width of 33 km on the eastern side and 21 km on the western side.
About 70% of NE are hilly region, and the topography varies within each State. Mountains and hills cover most of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and about half of Tripura, 20% of Assam and 90% of Manipur. The plains of the region are mainly made up of separate landmasses - the Brahmaputra Valley and the Barak Valley in Assam and the Tripura plains in the South. In Manipur, the valley is small, comprising only about 10% of the total area of the State. The Brahmaputra Valley stretches longitudinally for about 730 km, from North Lakhimpur to Dhubri district in Assam. The Barak Valley, formed by the river Barak and its tributaries covers the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi of South Assam. The Tripura plain is an extension of the Ganges-Brahmaputra plain. The topography of the hills is generally rugged and vast areas are inaccessible.

The flora and fauna of this region is numerous and varied. As mentioned in the last Chapter, NE is regarded as one of the 16 most bio-diverse regions of the world. Hill ranges forming part of the Himalayas guard the northern side of the region. The area is made up of mountains above the snow line and plains just a little higher than sea level. Cherrapunjee and Mawsynram, places having the highest rainfall in the world are here in Meghalaya. Many endangered species of fauna like the one-horned-Asiatic rhino, white-winged-wood duck, and Golden Langur can be spotted in the reserved forests of NE.

These unique and varied natures of the region make it one of the most beautiful geographical regions of the country - ready to be explored by the tourists of different tastes and habits. This land is also very rich from the angle of heritage and culture. The Vaishnavite culture, which bloomed in the 15th century in Assam and in Manipur, is regarded as one of the most revolutionary modifications of hitherto untouched Hinduism. The Satras of Majuli (the largest river island in the world) still bear the testimonies of the bygone era. The famous Pung Cholom (drum dance from Manipur) reminds the world of its rich tradition and culture. The Krishna Leela Dance of Manipur is recognised as one of the classical dances of India, just like Kathakali and Odissi. The region is rich in folk culture and literature.
also. The Nagas are easily recognised in almost all parts of the world for their unique tribal culture. Naga villages offer the example of the most disciplined traditional village councils known as Naga Ho Ho. Arunachal too is a pleasant mixture of different tribes.

No single region in the country with a meager area of 25.5 million-sq. km. can offer such diversified destinations.

However, the mostly agrarian economy of the region could not keep pace with the liberalisation and globalisation happening elsewhere in the country from 1990. The Indian nation as a whole, progressed at a faster pace than the NE. NE's per capita income is lower than most of the other regions of the country, the growth of the Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) is either still or very slow in the region. The number of persons below poverty line is increasing with higher-than-the-national-average growth rate of population in many States of the region. Industrialisation is very poor, with no private participation is coming easily. Not even a single project with foreign funding has taken off in this region in the memorable past.

Development eludes the remote villages of the region. The infrastructures like roads and electricity are hardly reaching the villagers in many parts of the region. The wooden bridges connecting many villages are broken down, roads are devoid of black tops (wherever they are, big potholes are the most common things in the roads). Buses are not plying between villages even in Brahmaputra valley. Many villages do not have electricity connections. Those who have, do not get power even for 10 hours in a day. Thus industrialisation and alongwith it, jobs are scarce in NE. Constant immigration from the bordering Bangladesh is creating pressure in the limited landmass of the Brahmaputra valley, forcing people to cease cultivation and move to the towns in search of jobs.

Such hopeless and devastating economic backdrop makes this region easy breeding ground for extremist and militant organisations. All States, except for
Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, are infested with number of separatist underground organisations, seeking liberalisation for its fellow ethnic people. Nagaland and Tripura have the dubious records of housing the oldest separatist movements. Assam joined in the recent past with more than 5 deadly and active underground groups.

This is creating a vicious cycle. All State Governments are to spend enormous amount of money to fight terrorism, leaving just enough to feed its huge staff, and in the process forgetting the development works. Due to low industrialisation, Governments can not raise enough money for the works to be done. Thus the backbone of the economy of this region is completely broken down. With this background, only labour-intensive production process, where the mass can be involved and employed, can bring about a real growth in the region. The much-waited green revolution may be one such remedial measure. However, the amount of subsidy and Government efforts may again create hindrances in the process. Tourism is another such agenda, where small-scale and cottage industry can be sustained to the greatest extent. Huge amount of indirect employment can be generated through ancillary units those support tourism in the region. The handicraft industry can receive the much-needed boost through tourism. As discussed in the first part of this chapter, the multiplier effect of tourist spending would start the pump priming effect in the economy. Hence tourism is regarded as the industry of future for the NE.

2.3.1 Tourist Arrivals in NE

Normally the tourists are divided into two obvious categories, foreign and domestic. This division helps the strategists to find out avenues to attract desired number of tourists. This division is also supposed to help in preparing a tourist spot for the target tourists.

NE region is receiving limited number of both the types of tourists. In fact, the number of tourists visiting the region is very low compared to national average.
Table 2.2 shows the arrival of foreign tourists in 6 NE States (excluding Arunachal Pradesh) during 1996-98 in relation to the national receipt of foreign tourists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NE*</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Percentage of National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>3,091</td>
<td>1923,695</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>3,071</td>
<td>1973,647</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excluding Arunachal Pradesh, for which data are not available.

It is seen from the Table that the scenario in NE is very pathetic as far as tourist arrivals are concerned. Table 2.3 offers the State-wise break-up of tourist inflow in the NE States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Meghalaya</th>
<th>Nagaland</th>
<th>Manipur</th>
<th>Assam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Foreign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1,54,977</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>1,55,554</td>
<td>55,78,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1,44,529</td>
<td>1,172</td>
<td>1,45,701</td>
<td>44,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1,36,183</td>
<td>1,573</td>
<td>1,37,756</td>
<td>87,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,15,563</td>
<td>1,071</td>
<td>1,16,634</td>
<td>91,620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is seen from the figures in the Table that Meghalaya and Tripura have been receiving highest number of tourists over the years. The number of domestic tourists visiting Meghalaya shows a receding trend over the years. The foreign tourist inflow is coming down from the peak of 1,573 in the year 1996. For Nagaland, visit of domestic tourists is increasing, while the same in case of foreign tourists declined from 301 in 1994-95 to 185 in 1997-98. Manipur received 50,176 domestic tourists, which is lower than the arrival figure of 1997-98. The foreign tourists’ visit to the State remains static for the years 1997-99. Clear declining trend is seen in case of domestic tourists’ arrivals in Assam. Visits of foreign tourists peaked in 1996 that came down slightly in the year 1997. Both domestic and foreign tourists’ arrivals in Mizoram is steadily increasing over the years. The statistics available from the Table shows that the domestic tourists’ visits to Tripura almost doubled during 1993-94 and 1997-98. The arrivals of foreign tourists are also increasing with an 18 times increase during the same period.

2.3.2 Destinations of NE

As mentioned above, NE is full of tourist attractions. These attractions are very briefly mentioned in the following sections.
2.3.2.1 Tripura:
Tripura is a land of mountainous cleft by valleys of about ten rivers. Legends speak of the existence of Tripura as a political entity from the days of the epic, Mahabharata. The temples reflect the religious preference of a long established Hindu dynasty.

Tourist Attractions:
- *Tripura Sundari Temple*, which was built in 1501 AD, is regarded as one of the 51 Piths of Hindu pilgrimage.
- *Bhuvaneswari Temple* is a rare specimen of temple architecture, located on the bank of river Gomati. It bears close literary reference in Ravindranath Tagore’s novels and dramas.
- *Pilak* attracts tourists’ attention for the archaeological remains of 8th and 9th centuries. Number of terracotta plaques, sealing with stupa and stone images of *Avolokiteswara* including image of *Narasimhan* have been found here, which date back to Buddhist period.
- *Deotamura* meaning ‘the peak of God’, has an interesting panel of images carved on the hills facing the river Gomati.
- *Unakoti* is regarded as the largest Bas-relief sculpture in India. The stone and rock cut images on the hill slopes belong to 7th to 9th century. The rocky walls, the central Shiva Head and gigantic Ganesh figures deserve special attention.
- *Fampui Hills* is blessed with excellent climatic conditions, it is the seat of permanent spring. The sunrise and the sunset in the hill range are worth-seeing. The natural beauty, pleasant weather, orchids and orange gardens make it an ideal place for the tourists. Located at an altitude of 3000 feet above sea level, this place displays the ideal life style of a typical serene village.
- The famous royal house *Ujjayanta Palace* at the heart of the city covering an area of one sq. km., was built in 1901.
- The fourteen goddesses are worshipped every year in *Chaturdas Devtabari* in July for seven days, which is popularly known as *Kharchi Puja*. Large number of pilgrims assemble here to pay their offers.
• More than 150 species of residential birds are found in Sepahijala. Winter brings here a flock of birds. An Orchid Garden, a Botanical Garden and a Zoo make Sepahijala a Tourists' delight.

• Kamalasagar is Situated just beside the Bangladesh border. There is a Kali Temple, on a hill-top, built in the 15th century. A lake, in front of the Temple, alloys pilgrimage with beauty. Neermahal, the water palace, built by Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, as a Summer Resort is located in the center of a lake. This lake, covering an area of 5.3 sq. km., attracts migratory birds during winter.

• Rowa, Sepahijala, Trishna and Gumti are the four sanctuaries in this State. There is a vast water reservoir covering approximately 300-sq. km. in Gumti. This reservoir attracts many resident and migratory birds. Rowa presents ample scope for a Botanist's study. In Trishna, there are patches of virgin forests, which are rich in rare vegetation. The crab-eating Mongoose, which were last sighted about 72 years ago in India, has been rediscovered in Sepahijala.

2.3.2.2 Nagaland

Nagaland, which is situated in the eastern border of India touching Myanmar is full of exquisitely picturesque landscape. The vibrant tribal culture makes Nagaland a perfect choice for heritage tourism.

Tourist Attractions:

• Tourist Village Complex at Chumukedina Old Village is set up by the Dept. of Tourism. Short rides up the hill, and an absorbing view of Dimapur and its immediate surroundings can be seen, way down below. Up here, the summer air is relatively cooler.
• *Triple Falls,* located in Seithekima village area is another resort being developed by the Dept. of Tourism. This three-tier waterfall, cascading from a height of 280 feet into an inviting natural pool, is a trekker’s haunt.

• *Ruins of Medieval Kachari Kingdom,* which was established before the 13th century AD is another place of attraction. The monoliths represent the elaborate rituals of the cult of fertility. A touch of Hindu influence on most of them can be seen. Besides, this ancient Kachari capital contains other ruins of temples, and tanks. There still exist scattered blocks of stone and brick pieces with various designs.

• *Intanki Wildlife Sanctuary,* at just 37 km. away from Dimapur, is a habitat of various animals including some rare species of birds.

• *Ungma,* the oldest and biggest Ao village, is of great interest to people who have a desire to peep into Ao folklore, customs and traditions.

**Traditional Art and Dress:**

The traditional ceremonial attire of each tribe is in itself, an awe inspiring sight to behold. Each male is adorned with multi coloured ‘spears’ and ‘daos’ decorated with dyed goats’ hair and the headgear that is made of finely woven bamboo interlaced with orchid stems, adorned with boar’s teeth and hornbill’s feathers, elephant tusk armlets etc. They wear colourful and intricately designed costumes, jewelry and beads. The present generation has ventured into fashion designing in a big way; reproducing fabrics that represent the ancestral motifs blended with modern appeal.
2.3.2.3 Mizoram

Mizoram, i.e. the Land of the Highlanders, is situated between Myanmar, Bangladesh and the States of Tripura, Assam and Manipur. The rivers, peaks, plains and the lakes are the treasures of Mizoram. Mizoram is particularly known for its colourfull dance of Cheraw. Long bamboo staves are used for this dance, hence called Bamboo Dance, a dance of skill and alert minds. Khuallam is another dance form, performed in colourful profiles to the tune of gongs and drums. This is a dance for the visitors and guests.

Tourist Attractions:

• Lunglei Town is full of natural landscapes, cool and pleasant climate, rich flora. All these make this place a beautiful Hill Station. The remains of the British Missionaries and the first church of Mizoram are found there.

• District Park Zobawk is an archetype place for the tourists craving for nature.

• Chhimtuipui is an ideal Hill Station for tourists looking for solitude and clean air and is located at an altitude of 1218 meter.

• The highest mount in the State situated at 2157 meters above sea level, houses Phawngpui National Park. With an area of 3000 sq. meters, this park is rich in Flora and Fauna. Its' a home for Tigers, Sambar Deer, Hoolog Gibbon, Barking Deer, Bear, Serow and birds.

• Palak Lake is an oval shaped lake, the biggest in the State, surrounded by original thick forests and plantations. It's rich in flora and fauna and even in wild elephants. Various types of water lilies and varieties of water birds nested in these plants cover a large part of the waterfronts.

• Beautiful lakes of Palak, Tamdil, Rungdil and Rengdil give the land a touch of extra- ordinary natural beauty.
2.3.2.4 Meghalaya

Literally, Meghalaya means Abode of the Clouds. The name Meghalaya describes the climatic phenomenon that brings torrents of rain to its mountainous terrain. This hilly State has been called 'a patch of beauty and grace'. It is linked to the Borail Range, an offshoot of the Himalayan Mountains. The refreshing mountain air, the whispering pines, the exotic flora and fauna, the caves - all stretch out the tourist a tremendous taste of beauty. Here's Nature in all its glory. Limpid lakes, expansive rivers, babbling streams breaking into waterfalls, twisting and turning, disappearing in the jungle constitute the tourism map of Meghalaya.

Tourist Attractions:
Numerous natural caves all over Meghalaya are a special attraction for tourists. A few of them are even the longest in the Indian Sub-continent.

- **Krem Phyllut** cave is situated in village Mawsmai, south of Cherrapunjee. It has a large section of fossil passage, two stream ways and three entrances. Length: 1003 m.

- **Krem Mawmluh** has a five-river passage with impressive proportions. With a length of 4503 m it is the 4th longest in the Indian sub-continent.

- **Krem Soh Shymi**. It has a large pothole entrance of 20 m deep. Length: 760 m.

- **Krem Dam** is the largest sandstone cave in the Sub-continent. Length: 1297 m.

- **Krem Um-Lawan** is a beautiful cave of the Eocene Age with an upper fossil passage and a lower active passage, it has numerous cataracts and waterfalls. It is the Longest (6381 m) and deepest (106.8) cave in the sub-continent.

- **Krem Kotsati** cave has 8 entrances with a main entrance through a deep pool. Portions of the beautiful river passage have to be crossed by swimming or by using inflatable rubber boat. Length: 3650 m.
• The entrance passage of 350 meter offers a comfortable stroll on moist sand of the cave *Krem Umshangtat*. Length: 955 meter.

• *Krem Lashinng* cave has a length of 2650 meter.

• *Krem Sweep* has beautiful stalactites and stalamites. Length: 970 meter.

• *Siju Caves* is a famous limestone cave, located near Naphtak lake and Simsang Game Reserve. The formation of stalagmites and stalactites in these caves resemble those of the Blue Grotto in the Isle of Capri. Length: 4772 meter.

• The small and insignificant circular entrance of *Tetengkol Balwakol* of 1 meter in diameter hides a large cave of 5334 m long which is said to be the 2nd longest in the Indian Sub-continent.

• *Dobhakol Chibe Nala* cave is well hidden by a large rock and has a length of 1978 meter.

• *Bok Bak Dobhakol* is a rather complex cave, which seems to be an intermittently active river sink. Length: 1051 meter.

• *Trekking* in this State is unique in the sense that terrain is very rugged but with the advantage of not being snowbound. An added attraction is the possibility of encountering many rare animals such as the slow loris, assorted deer and the occasional bear. Guides can be hired to take the keen trekker in terrain, which is characterised by flowering rivers, rolling hills and towering waterfalls.

• Hot Spring at *Resubelpara* and *Pa Togan Nengminla* Memorial and *Rasina* Falls can be accessed from *William Nagar*.

• A sunset view can be best seen from *Tura Peak* at 1400 meter above sea level and its summit can be reached by a 5-km trek, partly by hiking and also by rock climbing.

• *Balapakram* is a National Wildlife Park, known as the 'Abode of Perpetual Winds'. It is believed that here, the spirits of the dead dwell temporarily before embarking on the last journey. It is the home to the Lesser Panda, the Indian Bison and the Stag like Serow.

• *Umiam Lake* offers water sports facilities including sailing, water skiing, water scooter.

• *Sohpetbneng* is set amidst a beautiful scenic view against the backdrop of a sacred forest. Navel of Heaven, as per Khasi mythology, or Heavenly Peak,
which offers to fill the spiritual void and emptiness to those who seek and desire solace and peace of mind.

- **Syndai** is a unique village, dotted with a number of caves and caverns, used as hide-outs during wars between Jaintia Kings and foreign intruders. During Shivaratri, people visit this place.

- **Nartiang** was the summer capital of the Jaintia Kings. Huge monoliths form the striking landmark of the village. The Nartiang menhir measures 8.4 m in thickness. The monoliths represent the megalithic culture of the Hynniewtrep people. Also exists a 500 years old Durga temple, where there is evidence of regular human sacrifices.

- **Thadlaskein lake** is a beautiful spot for boating.

- **Jowai** is a picturesque town circled by the majestic Myntdu river.

- **Shillong** is one of the celebrated Hill Resorts in India, neither snow-bound in winter nor over-crowded in summer. This 128 years old mini-city retains a bit of its picturesque past. No wonder it is called 'The Scotland of the East'. The architecture here is unique in India. The houses look like English homes with well-laid chimneys of beautiful designs emitting smoke from fire-places through the long wintry months. Spots of tourists' interest in and around Shillong are:
  - **Golf Course**: Developed in 1889 as a 9-hole course, it was later converted to an eighteen holes course. It is termed as the 'Geneagle of the East' at the United States Golf Association Library and Museum.
  - **Shillong Peak**: The highest point in Meghalaya at 1965 meters above sea level. The city below is pretty as if a picture postcard, lying curled at one's feet.
  - **Ward's Lake**: is a century-old man made lake. Popular for short garden walks and boating.
  - **Lady Hydari Park**: is well-laid gardens and mini zoo.
  - **Crinoline Falls**, which is a cool spot within the city limits.
  - **Bidon and Bishop**: are two well known beautiful falls just nearby.
  - **Spread Eagle Falls** is a treat to the eyes for its soothing setting amidst the calmness of nature.
• **Sweet Falls:** Situated near Happy Valley, ideal for picnic.
• **Elephant Falls:** situated at 12 km on the outskirts of the city. It is a unique two-tiered waterfall, set in dells of fern-covered rocks.
• **Cherrapunjee** (Sohra) receives the second highest rainfall in the world and literally remains amidst clouds in the summer season. It is a pleasant drive to see roaring waterfalls leaping into deep gorges, including the famed Nohsngthiang Falls situated in one of the rainiest belt in 1,300 meters above sea level. Cherrapunjee is also famous for its limestone caves, orange and honey. Cerrapunjee has been the center of Khasi culture and literature. The oldest Presbyterian Church and the Ram Krishna Mission are also here. Its natural beauty is complemented by springs and sacred forests, beautiful Park, Bird sanctuary, Mawsmai Cave and falls, which are just nearby. Nohkalikai Falls, the fourth tallest falls in the world, adds to the glory of Cherrapunjee.
• **Mawsynram** is the place of highest rainfall in the world, which is also known for the giant stalagmite formation shaped into a Shivalinga and a cave, a place of pilgrimage for Hindus. This place is unique in geological formation called Symper Rock, an almost flat topped loaf-shaped rocky dome, which rises sharply from the midst of the surrounding hillocks. From its base, one has to take an exciting uphill trek to reach the summit of the rock. From the top of the hill one can see the plains and the fast-moving rivers of Bangladesh.
• **Jakrem** is a popular health resort having hot springs of sulfur-water, believed to have medicinal properties.

### 2.3.2.5 Manipur

• **Ukhrul,** the highest hill station of the State, is a centre of the colourful warrior tribe Tangkhul Nagas. It is famous for the Siroi Hills. The ordinary looking Siroi lily blossoms on the hilltop, at a height of 2591 m during May-June.
• **Khangkhui Cave** is a remarkable natural lime-stone cave. During World War II, the villagers sought shelter in this cave.
• Besides interesting spots like Buning Meadow, Zailad Lakes, Barak Waterfalls etc., the Tharon cave is of great importance. Having 34 joints, this cave is 655.6 meters in length. It has five exits and good ventilation system so that no symptom of exphyxia can be experienced.

• Bishnupur is the 15th century Vishnu Temple built of peculiarly small bricks during the reign of King Kiyamba is of historical importance. The temple is famous for its chiseled stoneware.

• On the western fringe of the Loktak Lake, Phubala is a charming little resort, linked to the mainland by a narrow causeway. Boating and other water sports are being introduced here.

• Moirang, one of the main centres of Meitei folk culture with the ancient temple of the pre-Hindu deity Lord Thangjing, is situated here. Men and women dressed in colourful traditional costumes sing and dance in honour of the Lord at the Moirang 'Lai Haraoba', which is a ritual dance festival held in May every year.

• The INA Museum containing letters, photographs, badges of ranks and other memorabilia remind the visitor of the noble sacrifices made by the INA under the charismatic leadership of Netaji Subhas Ch. Bose.

• Loktak Lake is the largest fresh water lake in the NE, a veritable miniature island sea. From the Tourist bungalow set atop Sendra Island, visitors get a bird's eye view of life on the lake, small islands that are actually floating weed on which live the Lake people, the shimmering blue waters of the lake, labyrinthine boat routes and colourful water plants.

• The Sendra Tourist Home with an attached cafeteria in the middle of the lake is an ideal tourist spot.
• **Red Hill (Lokpaching)** is a thrilling spot where a fierce battle took place between the British and the Japanese forces in the World War II and regarded as a holy place. The Japanese war veteran had constructed 'India Peace Memorial', a monument in memory of Japanese martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the fierce battle.

• **Shree Govindajee Temple** is a historic Vaishnavite centre, adjoining the Royal palace of Manipur's former Maharajas.

• **Khwairamband Bazaar or Ima market** is a unique all women's market, run by 3000 Imas or mothers.

• **War Cemeteries** is also another attraction, which commemorates the memories of the British and Indian soldiers, who died during the Second World War.

• **Khonghampat Orchadirium** is spread out in an area of 200 acres and with over 110 rare varieties of orchids, which include almost a dozen endemic species. Peak blooming season: April- May.

• **Kangchup** is a health resort on the hills overlooking the Manipur Valley.

• **Kaina** is a sacred place of the Hindus coupled with Charming scenery. Hill shrubs and natural surroundings give the place a sanity and religious atmosphere. **Kaina** is also famous for Ras dance performances.

• In **Chingoi Baruni pilgrims** take holy dips at the Chingoi stream.

2.3.2.6 Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is on the northeastern tip of India, bordering Bhutan on the west, China on the north, Myanmar on the east and the State of Assam on the south. Part of the Eastern Himalayan ranges, this State covers 83,743 sq. km. The State is famous for orchids and there are about 450 species reported from this State and many more may yet be discovered. Many are rare and endangered. The Orchid Center; Tipi preserves more than 500 species.

Whole State is ideal of trekking and hiking. The hillocks offer ample opportunities for paragliding also. The State is situated in the Himalayan ranges and the Tibetan influences in every sphere of life, especially in food and religion is overwhelming. Properly developed and promoted, this State can offer many more
features than any other State in the country, including the beautiful Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir.

**Tourist Attractions:**

- **Malinithan** houses the ruins of a big temple belonging to the 14th - 15th century, which have been excavated. The ruins include sculptures of **Indra** and **Airavata**, and **Surya Nandi** Bull.
- **Akashi Ganga** is the waterfall where people take a bath to wash away sins. Ideal for trekking, hiking.
- **Namcharna Peak**
- **Nubo Bridge Point**
- **Mouling National Park**
- High altitude tea garden
- **Tarin Fish Farm**
- Pine and Bamboo groves
- **Angling** on the river Noadihing
- **National Park**, covering an area of 1850 sq. km., with the widest altitudinous variation which rises from 200 meter, nearly at sea level, to 4500 meter. This variation has given rise to the growth of peninsular as well as alpine flora. Because of its sheer remoteness and inaccessibility the entire area is pristine and virgin.
- Ruins of Bhismaknagar can be seen in **Roing**, which is ideal for trekking, rafting, angling and rock climbing.
- **Parasuram Kund**, is a rare shrine of India, situated in the lower reaches of the left bank of the river Lohit. It is believed that a holy dip in the Kund on **Makar Sankranti** day washes away one's sins.
- **Buddhist Temple**, a beautiful yellow roofed shrine, rises from well-maintained grounds behind a **Stupa**. It also serves as a viewpoint of Itanagar Town.
- **Ganga Lake**, situated at the end of a 6 km. drive from the capital town, takes visitors on a rugged road through some superbly primeval jungles. **Dwending**
groves, Orchids massed on tall trees which are eye catching. The serene green forest lake is situated at the top of the ridge, which can be crossed in a rowboat.

- Buddhist Monasteries are also tourist attractions of Itanagar.
- Tawang is standing on the spur of a hill over 4,000 meter above sea level. It overlooks the wide valley, surrounded on all sides by towering mountains, and houses the 350 year old famous Buddhist Monastery. Tawang is also ideal for trekking and hiking.

2.3.2.7 Assam

Spread beneath the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas, Assam has a history dating back to the Vedic ages. During Mahabharata age, it was known as Pragjyotish. In the Puranas and Tantras, Assam was referred to as Kamrupa—the land where Kamadeva, the God of Love, was reborn. It was during the Varmana dynasty that Assam was chronicled in the SI-YUKI, the famed travelogue of Hiuen-Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim.

Assam is famous for its rich folk songs and dances. Specially, its Bihu and Bagarumba dances are very exotic and lively. Properly promoted, these can take the place of Bhangra in the national scenario. Assam’s handicrafts are very famous world wide. Its Muga silk is found only in some provinces of China. Its Eri and Pat silks are also exclusive and unique. In tourism circles Assam synonmys with one-horned rhino of Kaziranga. And in the process many world-class attractions are overlooked by the tourists as well by the tour marketers. The landscape of Assam is a mosaic of lush green tea gardens, which are presently being promoted as tourist attractions.

Other Tourist Attractions:
- Orang is a wildlife sanctuary, covering an area of 72 sq. km, on the north bank of river Brahmaputra. The animals and birds to be seen are the great Indian
one-horned Rhinoceros, Elephant, Leopard, Samber, Barking Deer, Tiger and varieties of water birds, Green Pigeon, Teal, Geese etc.

- **Nameri** also another national park covering an area of 25 km stretch of the Bhoroli river still preserves the white-winged-wood-duck whose global population is believed to be less than 450. Other species include hornbills, varieties of bird species, elephants and tigers.

- **Bhalukpung** is surrounded by mystic blue hills and evergreen forest, on the bank of river *Jia Bhoroli*. The 'Eco-Camp' is another attraction.

- **Tezpur** was known as Sonitpur (the city of blood) in ancient times. It is situated on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra river. The 3-km long Kalia Bhumura Bridge over mighty Brahmaputra connects north bank with the south. Places of importance at Tezpur are:

  - Da-Parbatiya Gate
  - Bamuni Hill
  - Hazara Tank
  - Chitralekha Udyan, the old Cole Park
  - Agnigarh
  - **Da-Parbatiya**: The earliest and one of the finest evidence of ancient architecture of Assam is found here. It is a small stome door-frame dating back to the fifth or sixth century bearing some exquisite carvings clearly representing the best of Gupta art.

- **Maha Bhairav Temple** is regarded as one of the oldest Shiva shrine in India where thousands offer prayers on Shivaratri.

- **Barpeta Satra** and **Kirtan Ghar**, established by Madhabdeva, the greatest disciple of Sree Sankardeva, is a famous place with a congregational prayer hall, which draws vaishnavas from all over India.

- **Manas**, the only Tiger Project in Assam, is one of the most magnificent National Parks in India. Situated on the backdrop of sub-Himalayan hills, it is well known as one of the World Heritage Sites having its unique combination of scenic beauty and rare wealth of wildlife. The core area of the park is of 360 sq. km. Besides Tigers, the rarest species found in Manas are Hispid Hare, Pigmy
Hog and Golden Langur. Indian Rhinoceros, Wild Buffalo, Wild Boar, Samber, Swamp Deer, Hog Deer, Elephant etc. are other commonly seen animals. Hundreds of winged species migrate to the friendly climate of Manas during winter. Among them are River chats (white capped redstars), Forktails, Cormorants and various types of Ducks including the Ruddy Shelduck and Woodland Birds.

- **Kaziranga** is the oldest National Park in the State, covering an area of 430 sq. km and the home of the Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros. The landscape of Kaziranga is full of lush green forests, tall elephant grass, rugged reeds, marshes and shallow pools. Available wildlife species are Rhinoceros, Elephant, Swamp Deer, Samber, Hog Deer, Sloth Bear, Tiger, Leopard, Leopard Cat, Jungle Cat, Hog Badger, Capped Languor, Hoolock Gibbon, Jackal, Goose, Horn Bills, Ibis, Cormorants, Egret, Heron Fishing Eagle etc. During winter, a large number of migratory birds are seen here. Barring a few places in Africa, there is perhaps no part in the world where such diverse species of wildlife exists.

- **Dibru Saikhowa** is another natural park of bird- watchers' delight. One of the bio-diversity-hot-spots with over 350 species of avifauna providing unique habitat for globally threatened species. This park is considered to be a safe habitat for extremely rare white-winged-wood duck and many migratory birds. Its *Wild-Horses*, called Feral Horses, is precisely sufficient to make the visitor delighted.

- It seems incongruous that the verdant, beautiful garden city of **Digboi** should also be the site where industrial history was created over a hundred years ago. The first oil well at Digboi still preserved as a monument to the pioneers and their epoch. Today, Digboi boasts of two modern wonders of the world - a hundred-year-old oil field still producing and the world's oldest operating oil
refinery. Tucked amid blue hills and undulating plains carpeted with emerald green tea plantations, it is simply breathtaking to have a bird's eye view of Digboi from the famous Ridge Hill point. On clear days, one can also see the snow-covered mountains of the eastern Himalayas.

- **National Oil Park**: Digboi also has an oil museum and a wildlife sanctuary of unsurpassed beauty. Going down the hill, visitors will come across oil derricks of various types and other devices still declaring the glory and marvel of the now outdated innovations. If one comes down from the hill on the other side, one will have the greatest sight of his lifetime. One may also bump across a herd of elephants or a Royal Bengal Tiger, besides some rare species of birds.

- The most dramatic event in Digboi's history took place during the World War II, when the belligerent Japanese got closer and were within three days marching distance of Digboi. These images—come back as one kneels at the headstones at the Digboi War Cemetery.

- **The Indo-Myanmar border**, with the famous Pangsu Pass is nearby. Through it, successive generations of people of Mongoloid origin entered India, to make up the vast Indo-Mongoloid population.

- **Margherita** is regarded as the centre of tea gardens, plywood factories and coal mines and lot of picnic spots dotting the sandy banks of river Dihing. Cool, misty and away from the mainland, breathing in the aroma of fresh tea leaves is an experience, both rare and heartwarming. The tea gardens here are perhaps the best in the world. The jewel of the crown is a rolling 18-hole golf course developed by the Scottish pioneers in their immutable style. In fact, Digboi can almost be called a Golfing Resort with as many as eight golf courses within its vicinity, each with its individual character and challenges.

- **Sibsagar** is the former capital of the mighty Ahoms, who ruled Assam for more than six hundred years till the advent of the British. The large lake situated at the heart of the town with an area of 129 acres is strewn with tell-tale ruins of a powerful empire. The Shivadol is believed to be the tallest Shiva temple in India. Its height is 104 feet and the perimeter is 195 feet, at the base.

- A seven-storied palace of Ahom kings having three stories underground known as *Tolatol Ghor* is situated in Sivasagar. *Kareng Ghor* built by King Rudra
Singha (1696-1714) is in Gargaon (near the town), the Capital of Ahom Kingdom. There were two underground tunnels from the Tolatol Ghor connecting Dikhow River and Gorgaon palace, which were later blocked by the East India Co.

- **Rang Ghor** is a two-storied oval shaped pavilion from which Ahom royalty watched elephant fights and other sporting events. It was built in the eighteenth century.

- **Joysagar Tank** was built by king Rudra Singha in memory of his mother Joymati, a martyr in 1697 at Rangpur. It covers an area of 318 acres and said to the largest man made lake in Asia. Three temples were built on its banks in 1698 by the same monarch. They are the Vishnudol, Shivadol and Devidol.

- The eighteenth century tank **Gaurisagar**, dedicated to goddess Durga, is of 150 acres underwater and was built in 1773.

- **Charaideo**, the first capital of the great Ahom kingdom, built by Su-Ka-Pha, in the thirteenth century, is 28 km. east of Sivasagar town. Charaideo is famous for the **maidams** (or the burial vaults) of the kings and other royal members.

- **Majuli** the largest riverine island *in the world* nestles in the lap of the mighty Brahmaputra. Majuli emerged as the crowning glory of Vaishnavite culture in Assam since the days of great religious leader Mahapurusha Shankardeva and his disciple Madhabadeva, 500 years ago. Majuli unfolds a variety of interests to the visitor -- right from the rare migratory birds like Pelican, traditional handicrafts, ethnic culture and dance forms, water sports, to village life of a real tribal type. It is a melting pot of different plain tribes possessing colourful and resourceful identities. The present area of the splendid island is about 885 sq. km. The present (1991 census) population is 1,35,378. There were 65 **Satras** growing up for propagation of ethics and socio-cultural ideals. Presently, there exists 22 satras. Prominent among these satras are -
  - **Dakhinpat**: Founded by Banamalideva,
  - **Garhmur**: Traditional Raasleela is shown here with great enthusiasm during Autumn- end. Some ancient weapons, called Bortop (canons), are preserved here.
• *Aauni-atig*: Famous for Paalnam, Apsara Dance and its' considerable collection of old Assamese utensils, jewelry and handicrafts. The best time to visit is Autumn-end.

• *Kamalabari*: A centre of art, culture, literature and classical studies. Its branch, Uttar Kamalabari Satra has performed Satriya Art in several States of India and abroad.

• *Bengena-atig*: A storehouse of antiques of cultural importance and an advanced centre of performing arts. The royal robes and the umbrella - all made of gold - are preserved here.

• *Shamaguri*: Famous for mask-crafts.

• *Bhairabkunda* is a beautiful picnic spot at the border of Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan.

• *Pobitora* is a small wildlife sanctuary. The animals to be seen here are one-horned Rhinoceros, Leopard, Tiger, varieties of Birds etc. The tourists' season is November to April.

• *Batadrawa*, the birthplace of *Shri Sankardeva* is also a tourist attraction. The shrine is held in high veneration by the *Vaishnavas*.

• *Pobha*, covering an area of 49 sq. km, this Wildlife Sanctuary has been created exclusively for the protection of the magnificent wild water Buffalo.

• *Garampani* is a hot water spring, believed to have medicinal value.

• *Jatinga* is famous for the unique suicidal behaviour of birds. This hilly hamlet of Karbi Anglong district has been regarded as a mystery unsolved.

• *Guwahati*, the ancient *Pragjyotishpur*, is situated on the banks of the mighty *Brahmaputra* surrounded on either side by a garland of hills. It's the gateway to the enchanting region of virgin beauty. It has unique magical charm. Perhaps the magic of the demon king- *Narakasura*, who built the ancient city, still rings in the air. Or may be, it emanates from the *Nabagraha* Temple (the temple of nine planets), the seat of astronomers who perform their miracles even today on the *Chitrachal*Hill. Or this magical charm may be discovered in the sunset view from the *Bhubaneswari* Temple, as one looks down upon the crimson ripples of the *Brahmaputra* caressing the pale pink city. Some of tourist attractions of Guwahati are,
- The Temple of Kamakhya, at the top of Nilachal Hill is the greatest shrine of tantric shakticism, which finds mention in the inscription of Allahabad pillar of Samudragupta. Devotees from all over India visit this holy place.

- Umananda, a small riverine island in the Brahmaputra, is a Shaivites’ dream come true. Devotees from all over the country assemble here during Shivaratri. One can visit this island by the country boat plying regularly.

- Vashistha Ashram, established by the great sage Vashishta on the Sandhyachal Hill, is another place of pilgrimage. Three rivulets Sandhya, Kanta and Lalita meet here, bestowing the Ashram a unique charm amidst idyllic natural panorama.

- On the riverbank of Guwahati, the Shukleswar Ghat Temple-cum-Park is another picturesque spot. One can also cruise on the river Brahmaputra in an extravagant river ferry. The Sankardev Udyan, Nehru Park, Dighalipukhuri, Gandhi Mandap, State Museum, State Zoo-cum- Botanical Garden, and the Planetarium can also extend the tourists’ pleasure. A visit to the Sankardeva Kalakshetra, a cultural centre of solitary character, may also enhance tourists’ interest and knowledge of Assam, its art and culture.

- Hajo is the meeting point of three religions - Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. It has a number of temples, the chief among them being the temple of Hayagrib Madhab, which contains the relics of Lord Buddha, says a belief. A section of the Buddhists hold that Lord Buddha attained nirvana here. Large numbers of people from Bhutan visit this temple during the winter season every year. There is also a mosque built by Pir Giyasuddin Auliya and it has one-fourth sanctity of Mecca, as the saying goes. Because of this, it is known as Poa-Mecca. Large numbers of Hindu devotees apart from Muslim pilgrims visit the Poa-Mecca in the month of January-February to offer prayers, which is treated as a unique gesture of religious harmony.

- Chandubi is a natural lagoon and a fine picnic spot. The lake and its surroundings, broken by glades, is an ideal holiday resort and has the added attraction of fishing and rowing opportunities.

- Sualkuchi is another attraction for tourists, which is famous for its Assam silk industries (muga and pañ).
Madan Kamdev, situated in the outskirts of Guwahati, is famous for its archeological ruins origin of which is little known. Kamrup— the ancient name of Assam— is believed to have derived its name from the legend that Love God Kama or Madan, after being turned into ashes by an angry Shiva, was reborn here. One school believes that Madan was reborn and united to Rati in this tiny hillock. The sculpture of this temple is treated at par with those of Khajuraho.