Chapter 1

Tourism and North-east India
"The raw natural beauty, rare orchids and butterflies, brightly painted monasteries, challenging rivers, intricately woven tribal shawls, indigenous sports ....... each one has its special message to the traveler as he passes from one state to another – mesmerized by its dazzling variety and compelling appeal."

India's North East - Paradise Unexplored, TRAVELER'S COMPANION
(Promotional booklet, India Tourism Development Corporation)

1.1 Travel and Tourism

Travel has been an important activity for humans since time immemorial. The desire to travel to unknown lands and to broaden one's knowledge and mind has inspired people throughout the ages. Whatever be the motivation for travel – religion, economic gain, war, escape, knowledge, curiosity or simply pleasure – man has been traveling from one place to another since very early times. In fact, well-traveled men have often been regarded as wise men. According to Li Bai, a Chinese poet, "To be wise, a man should read ten thousand books and travel ten thousand miles" (Chen, 1998). The medieval world had produced several great travelers such as Marco Polo and Ibn Batuta. The Chinese traveler Huien Tsang, who visited India in the first half of the seventh century, left vivid accounts of his travels which have provided valuable information regarding the society and culture of that period. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, travel became relatively easier with the advent of stagecoaches. The introduction of railways in 1825 gave a real boost to the idea of holiday travel. Yet, it was in 1841 that the idea of selling travel took concrete shape when Thomas Cook, who grasped its true business potential, conducted the first publicly advertised tour in the world (Seth, 1997). However, tourism really took off in the twentieth century in the post-war period (World War II), which was a period of considerable technological and industrial development that resulted in acceleration of wealth creation and growth of disposable incomes, thereby giving an impetus to travel. There has been no looking back since then.

The fascination for travel has grown immeasurably in the past few decades, so much so that travel and tourism is widely recognized today as one of
the most important sectors of world economy. Increased international tourist arrivals, greater revenues through tourism and a real contribution to economic growth have characterized the boom in this industry. From 541 million global tourist arrivals in 1995 (as shown in figure 1.1), there has been a steady growth that has reached 842 million arrivals in 2006. Moreover, the forecasts of the Tourism 2020 Vision of the World Tourism Organization show that international tourist arrivals are expected to reach over 1.56 billion by the year 2020 (shown in Figure 1.1). Such impressive figures clearly highlight the growing importance of this 'smokeless industry.' Today, travel and tourism may be regarded as one of the largest categories of international trade with international tourism receipts having reached US$ 680 billion in 2005 (WTO, 2007a). Such an outstanding performance could be attributed to factors such as rising levels of disposable income; improvements in transportation and the introduction of low-cost airline services; easier access to destinations by tourists from traditional source markets and the emergence of new source markets such as China and India; and the diversification of the industry with new market niches, such as cultural tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism ("Regional study", 2007).

![Figure 1.1: Global Tourist Arrivals](image)

Source: UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, 2007 (WTO, 2007b); WTO Vision 2020 (WTO, 2007c)
In terms of tourism performance of individual countries, France and Spain are the world’s most visited nations while the most outstanding performance was recorded in China, which tied with the United States for the third most toured nation in the year 2006 ("World tourist", 2006). With the growth of international tourism, it is encouraging to note that tourists are not only traveling to the traditional destinations but also new destinations and countries. Though in the initial period of the growth of modern tourism, it was only the industrialized and richer countries of the world that took advantage of the opportunities thrown open, yet in recent years even less developed and developing counties are becoming part of this phenomenon. According to recent figures of the World Tourism Organization, international tourism receipts for developing countries (low income, lower and upper middle income countries) will soon cross the US$ 250 billion mark. Further, it has been reported that tourism is one of the major export sectors of poor countries and a leading source of foreign exchange in 46 of the 49 Least Developed Countries (WTO, 2007a). Another significant development has been the increasing importance of the Asia Pacific region in the context of tourism development. This region is predicted to be the second largest receiver of international tourist arrivals by 2020. According to World Tourism Organization Vision 2020 forecasts, by the year 2020 the top three receiving regions of the world by total tourist arrivals would be Europe (717 million tourists), East Asia and Pacific (397 million) and the Americas (282 million). Interestingly, East Asia and Pacific, South Asia, Middle East and Africa are forecasted to record over 5 percent growth per year (in arrivals) as compared to the world average of 4.1 percent (WTO, 2007c). In the year 2006, Africa registered the highest growth, followed by the Asia Pacific region with 7.6 percent. Europe and the Middle East both saw an increase of 4 percent and the Americas posted the weakest growth rate of 2 percent ("World tourist", 2006). In the World Tourism Organization’s Ministerial Roundtable on Asia-Pacific Tourism Policies 15 megatrends that are shaping the future of Asian tourism, were presented (WTO, 2006a). Some of these were:

- Asian tourism is becoming more activity-based rather than destination based;
- Asia is becoming a convention hub;
- Low cost carriers are driving tourism growth in the region;
- India is Asia’s leader in real tourism growth.
Thus, the importance of tourism in the Asia Pacific region as a whole and India, in particular, may be realized.

The above discussion clearly establishes that travel and tourism represents a significant sector of the global economy. With the evolution of tourism into a highly organized business, modern tourism is no longer confined to travel and accommodation alone and includes a wide array of services ranging from car rental to entertainment and shopping. A functional framework of the tourism process suggested by Alister Mathieson and Geoffrey Wall subdivides the travel process into three main elements: a dynamic phase covering movement to and from the destination; a static phase involving the stay itself; and a consequential element describing the chief economic, physical, and social impacts on the environment (Lea, 1988). All these three elements are interconnected and together they describe the complex tourism activity. Thus, Travel and Tourism may be regarded as a multi-faceted industry that requires inputs of an economic, cultural, social and environmental nature. The travel industry has been defined as, ‘a composite of organizations, both public and private, that are involved in the development, production and marketing of products and services to serve the demands of travelers’ (Gee et al., 1997). Broadly speaking, the travel and tourism industry may be categorized into five main sectors – accommodation sector, attractions sector, transport sector, travel organizer’s sector and destination organization sector (Middleton, 1994). Thus, tourism operates within the framework of a travel industry network and there are a variety of players involved in it. But, what exactly constitutes tourism? It would be useful to examine how exactly tourism is defined and who really are tourists from a formal viewpoint. The following section, therefore, outlines the important aspects regarding the definitions related to tourism.

1.2 Definitions Related to Tourism

Tourism may be defined in several ways with definitions varying according to the underlying purpose. It has been pointed out by Boniface and Cooper (1987) that leisure is a measure of time generally used to mean the time left over after work, sleep, and personal and household chores have been completed; recreation is normally taken to mean the variety of activities
undertaken during leisure time; and *tourism* is simply one type of recreation activity. According to Burns and Holden (1995), there are generally three aspects to defining tourism. The *first* concerns the purpose or motivation of the visit (such as drawing a distinction between, for instance, business and pleasure). The *second* element will be concerned with time, making the important differentiation between day trips and voyages that involve overnight stays. Thirdly, a definition should take account of particular situations enabling categories that may or may not be counted as tourism (such as migration, transit). Thus, Mathieson and Wall (1982, as cited in Burns and Holden, 1995) define tourism as: "*the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal place of work and residence, the activities taken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities created to cater for their needs.*" Further, Mill and Morrison (1985) emphasise that tourism must be seen as a process rather than an industry. They write: "*Tourism is a difficult phenomenon to describe...all tourism involves travel, yet all travel is not tourism. All tourism occurs during leisure time, but not all leisure time is given to touristic pursuits.... Tourism is an activity when people cross a border for leisure or business and stay at least 24 hours.*" Also, a definition of a tourist suggested by Erik Cohen is "*a voluntary, temporary traveler, travelling in the expectation of pleasure from the novelty and change experienced on a relatively long and non-recurrent round trip.*" Again, Jafar Jafari (1977, as cited in Burns and Holden, 1995) defines tourism as: "...*a study of man away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs, and the impacts that both he and the industry have on the host's socio-cultural, economic and physical environments.*" This is a holistic definition that also recognises the consequential aspect (i.e. in human and environmental terms) of the relationship between supply and demand. Hunziker and Krapf published their general theory of tourism in 1942 (as cited in Lickorish and Jenkins, 1997), defining the subject in this way: *Tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity.* The International Union of Official Travel Organisations later to become the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) agreed with this description but recommended that the term 'visitor' should be divided into two categories: 'tourist' to cover all visitors staying at least one night in the country or place
visited, and 'excursionist' or day visitor (Lickorish and Jenkins, 1997). In the same vein, The United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism held in 1963, recommended a definition of international tourist. This commonly though not universally accepted definition stated that a visitor is "any person visiting a country other than that in which he has his usual place of residence, for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited. The term visitor includes two distinct types of travelers: (1) Tourists: Temporary visitor staying at least 24 hours in the country visited and the purpose of whose journey can be classified as: Leisure (i.e. recreation, holiday, health, religion, or sport), Business, Family, Mission and Meeting (2) Excursionists: Temporary visitors staying less than 24 hours in the destination visited and not making an overnight stay (including travelers on cruises)” (Inskeep, 1991).

1.2.1 Definitions of the World Tourism Organization (WTO)

Having refined the various definitions provided in the discussion above, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) has adopted the classification of travelers as depicted in Figure 1.2 (Inskeep, 1991). The principal revised definitions generally agreed on by the WTO (Lickorish and Jenkins, 1997) are as follows:

(a) Tourism comprises ‘the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.’

(b) The use of this broad concept makes it possible to identify tourism between countries as well as tourism within a country. ‘Tourism’ refers to all activities of visitors including both ‘tourists (overnight visitors)’ and ‘same-day visitors.’

Lickorish and Jenkins (1997) have provided the following classifications. In relation to a given country, the following forms of tourism can be distinguished: (a) Domestic tourism, involving residents of a given country travelling only within this country (b) Inbound tourism, involving non-residents travelling in the given country (c) Outbound tourism, involving residents travelling in another country.
In the figure above,
(1) Visitors who spend at least one night in the country visited
(2) Foreign air or ship crews docked or in layover and who use the accommodation establishments of the country visited
(3) Visitors who do not spend the night in the country visited, although they may visit the country during one day or more and return to their ship or train to sleep.
(4) Normally included in excursionists. Separate classification of the visitors is nevertheless recommended
(5) Visitors who come and leave the same day
(6) Crews who are not residents of the country visited and who stay in the country for the day
(7) When they travel from their country of origin to the duty station and vice-versa
(8) Who do not leave the transit area of the airport or the port
In terms of basic tourism units, the following has been defined:

(b) Traveler: Any person on a trip between two or more countries or between two or more localities within his/her country of usual residence.

(c) International Traveler: Any person on a trip outside his or her country of residence (irrespective of the purpose of travel and means of transport used, and even though he or she may be travelling on foot).

(d) Domestic Traveler: Any person on a trip in his or her own country of residence (irrespective of the purpose of travel and means of transport used, and even though he or she may be travelling on foot).

For the purpose of tourism statistics and in conformity with the basic forms of tourism, visitors should be classified as:

(a) International visitors
   (i) tourists (overnight visitors)
   (ii) same-day visitors

(b) Domestic visitors
   (i) tourists (overnight visitors)
   (ii) same-day visitors

1.2.2 Leisure Travelers and Business Travelers

It may be noted from the discussion above that tourists are defined from different perspectives. From a geographical point of view, an important distinction may be made between international and domestic tourism. Again, considering the time element a distinction is made between tourists and excursionists. Likewise, tourism may be classified according to the purpose of visit. Tourism is regarded as the short-term movement of people from one place to another for leisure, business, or other purposes (from the WTO definition provided in section 1.2.1 a). Further, it may be seen from figure 1, that travelers are categorized by their purpose of visit into three broad categories:

(a) Those traveling for pleasure - which includes holidays, culture, active sports, relatives and friends and other pleasure purposes;

(b) Those traveling for professional purposes - which includes meetings, mission and business; and
(c) Those with other tourist motives - which includes, studies, health, transit and various other motives.

According to Lickorish and Jenkins (1997), there are a variety of reasons for travel within the tourism definition, usually for business or pleasure; but education, health and religion (pilgrimages) are also major travel generators. In another classification, tourism has been distinguished by purpose of visit into (a) Holiday tourism, where the purpose of visit is leisure and recreation; (b) Business and professional tourism, which includes those attending trade fairs and conferences or participating in incentive travel schemes; and (c) Common interest tourism, which includes visiting friends and relatives, religion, health or education reasons (Boniface and Cooper, 1987). Again, according to Nesbit (1973, cited in Crompton, 1979), the travel market is often divided into four segments: personal business travel, government corporate business travel, visiting friends and relatives and pleasure vacation travel.

Thus, it seen from that if the main purpose of the trip is leisure, pleasure or holiday then such travelers are referred as leisure travelers or pleasure travelers. The specific term used has been seen to vary according to usage. For instance, the terms ‘leisure travel’ or ‘leisure travel market’ has been used in a number of studies (Stemerding et al., 1996; Fodness and Murray, 1997; Sung et al, 2001; Hsu et al., 2002; Woodside et al., 2004; Lee and Tidesell, 2005; Dolnicar, 2005) while the terms ‘pleasure travel’ or ‘pleasure travel market’ or ‘pleasure traveler’ have been used in some other studies (Taylor, 1986; Bonn et al., 1999; Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter, 2001; Jang et al., 2004). Leisure travel has also been defined as ‘travel for recreational, educational, sightseeing, relaxing and other experiential purposes’ (“Uniquely Texas”, n.d.) and ‘travel undertaken for pleasure and unrelated to paid work time’ (Beech and Chadwick, 2005). Again, if the main purpose of the trip is business or profession, which includes meetings, conferences and so on, then such a traveler may be regarded as business travelers. Rod Davidson in 1994 defined business tourism as: “Business tourism is concerned with people traveling for purposes which are related to their work. As such it represents one of the oldest forms of tourism, man having traveled for this purpose of trade since very early times” (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001). Other definitions
for business travel include ‘travel for commercial, governmental or educational purposes with leisure as a secondary motivation’ ("Uniquely Texas", n.d.) and ‘travel for a purpose and to a destination determined by a business, and where all costs are met by that business’ (Beech and Chadwick, 2005). Further, there are those traveling for purposes other than the above two. Such travelers include people, whose primary motive for travel is education, visiting friends and relatives, health-related, pilgrimage and other purposes. However, in common usage, travelers are generally grouped into two broad categories – business travelers and leisure travelers. It has been observed that one of the major differences between travel for leisure and for work-related purposes is that the derivation of pleasure from the journey is of primary concern for the leisure tourist (Foo et al., 2004).

In India, since 1971, the Department of Tourism has adopted the following definition (Kumar, 1995) as per the recommendation of the UN Conference of International Tourism in Rome, 1963:

‘A foreign tourist is a person visiting India on a foreign passport staying at least 24 hours in India and the purpose of whose journey can be classified under one of the following headings:-

(1) Leisure – recreation, holiday, health, study, religion and sport
(2) Business – family, mission and meeting’

1.2.3 Definitions Used in Present Study

Based on the definitions and discussion presented in section 1.2.2 above, a few key aspects regarding tourism and tourists have been summarized in this section for the purposes of the present study.

1.2.3.1 Tourism

Tourism may be defined as sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal place of work and residence for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country or place visited, staying for at least 24 hours but for not more than one consecutive year; the purpose of whose journey can be classified as leisure, business and other purposes; the activities
taken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities created to cater for
their needs.

1.2.3.2 Domestic Tourism and International Tourism

A basic distinction may be made between domestic tourism and international tourism. Domestic tourism involves residents of a given country travelling only within this country. International tourism consists of inbound tourism (involving non-residents travelling in the given country) and outbound tourism (involving residents travelling to another country). For the purpose of tourism statistics and in conformity with the basic forms of tourism, visitors (international and domestic) should be classified as:
(i) tourists (overnight visitors)
(ii) same-day visitors

1.2.3.3 Tourist

A tourist is any person traveling to and staying in places outside his/her usual environment for at least 24 hours but not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.

1.2.3.4 Business, Leisure and Other Travelers

(a) Business Travelers are those travelers for whom the primary purpose of the trip is business or profession. (b) On the other hand, leisure travelers are those travelers for whom the primary purpose of undertaking the trip is leisure, pleasure or holiday. In some cases (as noted in section 1.2.2 above) including the definition of 'foreign visitor' adopted by India’s Department of Tourism, people traveling for purposes other than holiday or recreation (such as religion, study, visiting friends and relatives etc.) have been included as leisure travelers. However, for the purposes of the present study, a leisure traveler may be defined as one whose main purpose of undertaking the trip is leisure, recreation or holiday. (c) Other travelers include those who undertake a trip with the primary motives of educational, pilgrimage, medical and other miscellaneous purposes.

This section has summarized the important aspects related to defining tourism and tourists/travelers. Previously, in section 1.1 the growing significance
of travel and tourism in the modern world has been briefly discussed. It has been seen the Asia-Pacific region is forecasted to grow at a phenomenal rate. Particularly, China and India have been recognized as the two main drivers of tourism industry and tourists generating countries/regions in the region (WTO, 2006b). Remarkably, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, India is poised to emerge as the second fastest (8.8%) tourism economy in the world over the period 2005-2014 (HRAWI, 2005). A description of the tremendous tourism potential of India as well as the present status of Indian tourism is presented next.

1.3 Tourism in India

India is the seventh largest country in the world and Asia's second largest nation with an area of 3,287,263 square km ("Biodiversity profile", n.d.). It is bounded by the majestic Himalayan ranges in the north and surrounded by three large water bodies - the Bay of Bengal to the east, the Arabian Sea to the west and the Indian Ocean to the south. India's northern frontiers are with Xizang (Tibet) in the Peoples Republic of China, Nepal and Bhutan. In the north-west, India borders on Pakistan; in the northeast, China and Burma; and in the east, Burma ("Biodiversity profile", n.d.) while its southern peninsula extends into the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean. This country of boundless beauty is blessed with a vast array of biological diversity, encompassing a wide spectrum of habitats from tropical rainforests to alpine vegetation and from temperate forests to coastal wetlands. It is noteworthy that out of the 25 biodiversity hotspots in the world, India is blessed with two (extending into neighboring countries): Western Ghats/Sri Lanka and North-east India (which forms part of the Indo-Burma hotspot). Significantly, these are included among the top eight most important hotspots (Myers, 2001). It may be mentioned here that India has 5 world heritage sites, 12 biosphere reserves, and 6 Ramsar wetlands (wetlands of international importance). Amongst the protected areas, India has 88 national parks and 490 sanctuaries covering an area of 1.53 lakh sq. km. All this points to the amazing potential of the country to attract travelers with an interest in nature and wildlife. Moreover, the vast civilizational heritage of this country with its multiple religions, languages and varied customs; adds to the charm of this incredible land. It is the birthplace of three great religions – Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. This ancient land has a continuous civilization that has shaped its culture and
traditions, which finds manifestation in its varied art forms, festivals, music, and dance. One remarkable feature of this country is its unity amidst a lot of diversity. Despite having 17 official languages and about 500 dialects (Seth, 1997), 28 states and 7 union territories each with their distinct culture, the people are bound together by centuries of common traditions, faith and philosophy. With its beautiful landscapes, magnificent historical sites and royal retreats, spectacular beaches, misty mountain retreats, exotic wildlife, warm and welcoming people, vibrant culture and festivities; indeed, India has great tourism potential.

Though this land of beauty and culture has always attracted visitors, yet it is only in recent years that tourism has emerged as one of the important sectors of the Indian economy. Compared to the seventeen thousand international tourist arrivals in 1951, Indian tourism has grown significantly in recent years (India Tourism, 2005). In particular, the period 2003-2004 saw tourism emerging as one of the major sectors for growth of Indian economy. There was a significant increase of 18.5 percent in foreign tourist arrivals in the country with a significant 27 percent growth in foreign exchange earnings (Parliament of India, 2004). In the year 2005 too, India witnessed a positive growth in foreign tourist arrivals, which reached a level of 3.72 million against 3.46 million in the year 2004 (as shown in Figure 1.3). Consequently, the share of India in world tourism, which had been hovering around 0.38 percent to 0.39 percent for a number of years, was expected to touch 0.49 percent in 2005 (India Tourism, 2006). In the year 2006 it crossed 4 million arrivals. The foreign tourist arrivals for India during the period 2003-2006 have been shown in Figure 1.3. As far as foreign exchange earnings are concerned, it has reached Rs. 29, 604 crores in 2006 compared to Rs. 16, 429 crores in the year.
2003 (as shown in Figure 1.4). A report in the Economic Times has cited that the direct and indirect contribution of the tourism sector to the total GDP is 5.83%. It further states that according to the first tourism account (TSA) report (compiled by the National Council of Applied Economic Research for the Ministry of Tourism) for the year 2003-04, out of India’s total GDP of Rs. 2,249,493 crores, the tourism industry accounts for Rs. 62,436 crores. Also, in terms of employment, tourism accounts for 4.59% of the total number of jobs and along with indirect share, the figure goes up to 8.27% which means that at least 38.6 million jobs are estimated to have been generated due to tourism activities in India (Awasthi, 2006). Again, according to The 2006 Travel and Tourism Economic Research of the World Travel and Tourism Council, India’s Travel and Tourism industry was expected to contribute 2.1% to the GDP in 2006 and employment is estimated at 24,349,000 jobs in 2006, which is 5.4 percent of total employment, in other words, one in every 18.4 jobs. The report further pointed out that for India travel & tourism activity is expected to grow by 8.0% per annum in real terms between 2007 and 2016 (WTTC, 2006). All this definitely points to the increasing importance and contribution of tourism to the nation’s economy. It is heartening to note that India is now being recognized as having firmly established itself on the world tourism map and has been referred to as the next Asian tiger (WTO, 2006c). In a presentation of 15 megatrends that are shaping the future of Asian tourism, during a ministerial roundtable on Asia-Pacific Tourism policies, India was recognized as Asia’s leader in real tourism growth (WTO, 2006a).

Part of the success of Indian tourism in recent years, has been attributed to an integrated and imaginative marketing of India’s tourism products through its
‘Incredible India’ campaign. Prior to 2002, Indian tourism was mainly promoted through delegates at the Indian tourist offices located globally. However, as the promotional approach was unorganized, varied and limited by the skills and capabilities of the delegates, so the promotional campaigns were not too effective. In September 2002, the Tourism Department unveiled a new campaign called ‘Incredible India’ to promote Indian tourism globally. The campaign focused on the Himalayas, wildlife, yoga and Ayurveda and was widely promoted in the print media, television and the Internet (“The Incredible India”, 2006). This multi-pronged promotional campaign was a major initiative by the Government to position India as an up market destination for the perceptive travelers. It focuses on the diversity of India as a holiday destination ‘with something for everyone, from beaches to mountains, world heritage sites to cultural fairs and safaris to holistic holidays’. According to Amitabh Kant, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of tourism, “The Incredible India positioning and branding has focused on what makes India unique and unmatched in the tourism world. This has brought back the discerning traveler to India” (Chatterjee, 2003).

1.4 Tourism Potential of North-east India

In terms of natural as well as cultural attractions, one region that appropriately showcases the amazing diversity and unique charm of the country is the north-eastern part of India. Situated in the eastern most corner of India, the North-east region traditionally comprises of seven states namely - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Geographically, this triangular shaped region has a unique situation. It is bounded by China to the North, Bangladesh to the South West, Bhutan to the North West and Myanmar to the East, with a thin land corridor – the Siliguri Corridor linking it to the rest of India. Thus, 98 percent of its borders are international borders with only two percent being connected to mainland India. Therefore, the states of this region are viewed as one entity and are collectively referred to as the North-eastern region. There is a separate ministry called the Ministry of Development of North-east India (DONER) that was set up in September 2001 to deal with matters pertaining to socio-economic development of the states of the region. Then there is the North Eastern Council, which was constituted in 1971 by an act of Parliament. It is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of
Location of North-east India
North-east India. The region has been promoted as ‘paradise unexplored’ through the ‘Incredible India’ campaign.

In terms of biodiversity, this region is significant. After the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Western Ghats, North-east India forms the main region of tropical forests in India, especially the species-rich tropical rain forests. This region represents an important part of the Indo-Myanmar biodiversity hotspot, as mentioned in section 1.3. The region has diverse habitats, which support a variety of flora, fauna and avian life. Further, it is the abode of approximately 225 tribes out of the 450 in the country (Chatterjee et al., 2006). Thus, the vibrant culture of this region that has been shaped by a number of indigenous tribes each of which has its distinct identity, traditions and unique lifestyles adds to the allure of its varied and pristine surroundings. With such a broad array of offerings, this region has the potential for developing into a preferred destination for any discerning traveler. To provide a glimpse of the special attractions of this region, a brief description of each state (except Sikkim) followed by the major destinations in each is presented below. This description is drawn mainly from the promotional booklet ‘Traveler’s Companion’ published by the India Tourism Development Corporation, quoted in the beginning of this Chapter (ITDC, 2003).

1.4.1 Arunachal Pradesh

The remotest outpost of the north-eastern states, Arunachal (literally meaning, the land of the rising sun), shares borderlines with China (Tibet) in the north, Myanmar in the east, Bhutan in the west and the states of Nagaland and Assam in the south. Largest of all the north-eastern states (83,743 sq km), Arunachal is blessed with a delightfully variegated climate. Almost 80 per cent of the state is under forest cover, which varies from sub-tropical to the alpine in the upper regions of the northwest, where it is bordered by the Himalayan ranges. The state is a treasure trove of ethnic diversity being home to 26 major indigenous tribes primarily migrants of Tibeto-Burman stock. These simple, hospitable people are still moored to the traditional lifestyles. Its major Buddhist communities, which include the Monpas, Sherdukpens and Membas, are located along the northern and eastern perimeters. The Monpas are highly skilled in weaving and make some of the most brilliant carpets and shawls in the north-east.
The *Apatanis* too are known for their weaving. Arunachal is also famous for its colourful masks, agarbatti (joss sticks), the *tangkha* paintings (a beautiful religious art from whose primary subject is the Buddha) and leather items. Arunachal’s indigenous versions of Archery (Mla Than), wrestling (Glam Nyurri), shot put (Pung Gor), discus throw (Lem Gor) and new games such as Lai and Thipi can be witnessed at the local festivals.

1.4.1.1 **Major Destinations**

1.4.1 (a) **Itanagar**
The land of the dawnlit mountains, Itanagar, the state capital is also its biggest town. The Jawaharlal museum here has an interesting collection of arts and crafts, jewellery, textiles and a variety of tribal headgear, which gives an insight into Arunachal’s tribal culture. Just 6 kms away is the picturesque setting of Ganga lake (Gekar Sinyi).

1.4.1 (b) **Bhalukpong**
Dotted along the foothills dividing Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, Bhalukpong is reputed for its hot springs, orchid centre and the Nyethidow festival (in March). Nearby, Tipi is famed for its orchidarium and its cutflower experiments.

1.4.1 (c) **Bomdilla**
Bomdilla is a delightful stopover amidst apple orchards, lush forests and trekking trails. There are a couple of picturesque gompas here and the craft centre has a lovely range of hand-woven carpets, woven by the local Monpa tribe. This is also home to the gentle Sherdukpen tribes. Nearby, Dibang is famous for its pretty gompas and colourful Kalachakra celebrations.

1.4.1 (d) **Tawang**
The chief attraction here is the centuries-old Tawang monastery. It is set amidst the dramatic background of snow-mantled peaks. An 8 m high gilded statue of Buddha dominates the sanctum. This monastery is believed to be the biggest monastery after Lhasa’s Potala. It is the fountainhead of the spiritual life of the followers of the Gelugpa sect of the Mahayana school of Buddhism. The region is
home to the colorful people of the Monpa tribe. During the Torgya festival associated with the monastery, the Monpa tribes come from far and wide wearing their traditional costumes to participate in it. Also, the Urgelling monastery here is also associated with the birth of the 6th Dalai Lama. The sinuous road to Tawang passes through the dragon gates on the awesome heights of the great Sela Pass (13,714 ft). Jaswantgarh located here is a memorial to the brave soldier who single-handedly tried to hold the approaching Chinese from the pass during the 1962 Indo-Chinese war. Also located here is a stupa-like Tawang War Memorial which salutes the heroes of war.

1.4.1 (e) Ziro
Picturesque Ziro is situated on the Apatani Plateau and surrounded by pine-mantled hills all around. It is well connected to Daporijo - a tourist’s delight with its dazzling landscapes and tribal culture - and Along. Nearby Tarin has a high altitude fish farm. Other attractions in the area include the famous whispering pine grove, the craft centre and the Apatani tribal villages.

1.4.1 (f) Pasighat
It is Arunachal’s oldest town. A scenic area through which the turbulent Siang river races across before roaring into Assam as the mighty Brahmaputra. The region is the home of the Adi tribe. Pasighat is also ideal for adventure sports activities. Situated 13 kms away is the Daying Ering wildlife sanctuary. The archaeological site of Malinithan around here is linked to the legend of Lord Krishna and his wife Rukmini.

1.4.1 (g) Namdapha Wildlife Sanctuary
Namdapha’s vast bio-diversity supports a fabulous range of endangered flora, fauna and avian life. This unique sanctuary is the natural habitat of all four great cats – the tiger, the leopard, the clouded leopard and the snow leopard. The sanctuary has 150 species of trees and has a fabulous wealth of medicinal and ornamental plant life.
1.4.1 (h) Parasuram Kund

This is not just beautifully located, it is also steeped in tribal legend and is much venerated by the Hindus. This sleepy hollow on the Arunachal-Assam border, becomes a hive of activity during the Makar Sankranti festival. Not very far way is the Lohit district, which is home to the Mishmi, Singpos and Khampti tribes and Roing, whose original inhabitants are the Idu Mishmi tribe.

1.4.2 Assam

Dominated by the mighty Brahmaputra river, Assam is the second largest state in the north-east. Flanked by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh in the north and the east, its southern periphery is bordered by Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. Meghalaya lies in the southwest and it shares its western border with West Bengal and Bangladesh. Assam is blessed with vast alluvial plains rich in forests and rolling tracts of paddy and tea. Its rich biodiversity supports an immense range of rare and endangered creatures such as the one-horned rhinoceros, the golden langur, the Gangetic dolphin and the clouded leopard. Assam is one of the highest timber producers of the country. Her tea estates established by the British, produce over half of India’s tea. Digboi has India’s oldest and Asia’s first oil refinery. For six hundred years, the Ahoms (conquerors belonging to the Shan tribe of Burma) ruled Assam from their state capital of Charaideo near present-day Sibsagar, before the arrival of the British. The traditional crafts of Assam are also very special. These include hand-made toys (made from clay, cork, wood, bamboo etc), a range of decorative items available in cane and bamboo and bell metal and brass. Assam is reputed for its silk and the most prominent variety is muga, the golden silk exclusive only to this state. Apart from muga, there is paat and eri. Assam is a land of many festivals and the most important one is Bihu.

1.4.2.1 Major Destinations

1.4.2 (a) Guwahati

The state capital of Assam, located on the banks of the Brahmaputra, is the gateway to Assam and to the entire north-east region (except Sikkim). It is a crowded, busy town and a major commercial hub for the region. Surrounded by paddy fields and ancient rain forests, Guwahati is home to many temples that date
back to Vedic and Puranic times (the Vedas and Puranas are ancient Indian texts). The Kamakhya temple, located on Neelachal Hill, is one of the most revered shrines of the Hindu faith. A rush of devotees throngs the temple during the Ambubachi mela every year in July. Amongst some of the other holy places in Guwahati is the Bashishta Ashram, the Nabagraha temple, Ugratara temple, Dirgheshwari temple and Ashvaklanta temple. Located about 32 kms from Guwahati is Sualkuchi, one of the world’s largest weaving villages, where the dazzling world of Assam silk can be explored. Also 32 kms from Guwahati is a site of syncretic faith where three religions meet – Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. Hajo has Hindu temples, is also considered sacred by the Buddhists, and is an important pilgrimage site for Muslims.

1.4.2 (b) Tezpur
‘The city of blood’ (as a result of the mythological war fought here between Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva), Tezpur is 174 kms from Guwahati. The gateway to the Arunachal hills, Tezpur lies on the banks of the Brahmaputra. It has interesting myths woven around it. The remains of 5th and 6th century stone temples have been discovered in nearby Da Parbatia.

1.4.2 (c) Sibsagar
Located in the eastern part of Assam, Sibsagar is one of the state’s oldest cities and the erstwhile capital of the Ahoms. There are several monuments of historical interest here. A huge artificial tank, constructed by a queen in 1734, dominates the city. The 32 metre high Shivadol is believed to be the highest Shiva temple in North-east India. Other monuments of note include the Rang Ghar, and the ruined 18th century palaces of Karen Ghar and Talatal Ghar.

1.4.2 (d) Haflong
The scenic town of Haflong is Assam’s only hill station. Apart from its picturesque setting, Haflong is also notable for being the harmonious settlement of several ethnic tribal groups as well as people belonging to different religious communities. Jatinga, close by is reputed for the bizarre phenomenon of the annual mass suicide by birds.
1.4.2 (e) Majuli
Majuli is believed to be the world’s largest riverine island. It is also renowned for its important satras (Vaishnava monasteries). Islanders include Mishing tribals, Ahoms, Kacharis, Deoris and Kumars. Besides, various migratory birds can be found here as it is part of a major migratory path for ducks, geese and other birds. It has been proposed as the 21st UNESCO world heritage site.

1.4.2 (f) Kaziranga National Park
The oldest park and most famous attraction in Assam, Kaziranga (spread over 430 sq km) is world famous for its great one-homed rhinoceros. Among the tall elephant grass, tough reeds, and shallow pools of the park live a whole host of other animals: elephants, Indian bison, hog deer, jungle cat, tigers, leopards, and a number of other species. Migratory birds join this wild congregation at different parts of the year.

1.4.2 (g) Manas National Park
Covering an area of 519.77 sq km, Manas National Park is a project Tiger Reserve and a World Heritage site. It is located near the sub-himalayan hills. Some of the rare wildlife species found here are the golden langur, the hispid hare and the pigmy hog. It is a paradise for birdwatchers for it has a stunning selection of avian life. Manas also has excellent angling opportunities.

1.4.2 (h) Nameri National Park
Straddling the lush vistas of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, Nameri National Park is ideal for a leisurely angling vacation. The golden mahseer of this region is particularly famous. River rafting opportunities are also available. It is also home to the clouded leopard, tiger, Indian bison and capped langur. There is the Potasali Eco Camp near the Jia Bhoroli river.

1.4.2 (i) Orang National Park
With conditions as ideal as Kaziranga, Orang National Park, its miniature edition, is also home to the one-horned rhinoceros.
1.4.2 (j) Pabitora Sanctuary
Located close to Guwahati, this sanctuary is also inhabited by the one-horned rhinoceros.

1.4.2 (k) Dibru-Sikhowa National Park
This is famous for its semi-wild horses and other wildlife like the white-winged duck, tiger, leopard, elephant, asiatic buffalo, slow loris, clouded leopard, hoolock gibbon and different varieties of birds.

1.4.3 Manipur
One of the oldest states in the north-east, this erstwhile princely state of Manipur, is set in an oval valley amongst smoky blue hills. Almost 70 per cent of this land is under forest cover. The stunning combination of wet forests, temperate forests and pine forests sustain a host of rare and endemic plant and animal life. Some of the world’s rarest orchids spring from its fertile soil. Among the wildlife found in these forests are the rare hoolock gibbon, the snow leopard and slow loris amongst other rare fauna. Indigenous to Manipur’s rich natural heritage is the sangai – the dancing deer, a rare creature that is facing extinction. The Meiteis (of Tibeto-Burman provenance), Manipur’s primary populace, inhabit the fertile Imphal valley whose eastern periphery lies in the Chindwin-Irrawaddy basin. In the surrounding hills reside the Nagas in the north and its Kuki-Mizo populace to the south. Manipur is reputed for its tradition of the arts. Weaving is a time-honoured occupation, fine tuned to an art form with its intricate designs. Two of Manipur’s very popular ritualistic martial arts are the Thang-ta and Sarit-Sarak. This playful, sports loving community is reputed for its indigenous version of Sagol Kangjei or Polo (it was the first place in India to have evolved this sport of kings), the Mukna Kangjei (wrestling hockey) and Yubi-Lakpi, a form of rugby played with a greased coconut. Manipur has gifted to India’s classical dance repertoire her lyrical Ras Leela dance that re-enacts the love story of Radha and Lord Krishna.
1.4.3.1 **Major Destinations**

1.4.3 (a) **Imphal**
Manipur’s capital city, Imphal, is the very heart of the commercial and cultural activities of the state. Imphal’s historic Vaishnavite centre, Shri Govindaji Temple is located close to the Royal Palace. The city’s Khwairaamband Bazar or IMA market is quite an unusual market – almost 3000 Imas or mothers, man the stalls in this unique bazaar. A memorial monument called Shaheed Minar, pays homage to the indomitable spirit of the Meitei and tribal martyrs who sacrificed their lives fighting against the British. The Central Khonghampat Orchidarium, just 7 km from Imphal, showcases at least 110 species of orchids. The graceful Sangai deer can be seen at the Manipur Zoological Gardens.

1.4.3 (b) **Langthabal**
Set amidst stands of jackfruit and pine, Langthabal is dotted with relics of an old, historic palace, temples of architectural importance and ceremonial houses.

1.4.3 (c) **Kangchup**
The health resort of Kangchup, offers lovely views of the Manipur valley from its lofty perch at a height of 921m.

1.4.3 (d) **Kaina**
On the lofty heights of the Kaina hills lies a legendary temple where the famous Ras Leela dance is performed on particular days.

1.4.3 (e) **Moirang**
Moirang used to be the focal point of Manipur’s early Meitei culture. The town has an ancient temple of the pre-Hindu deity Lord Thangjing. Every May, the Lai Haraoba ritual dance festival is celebrated here to honor the deity. Moirang played an important role during India’s freedom struggle. The flag of the Indian National Army (INA) was first raised at Moirang. There is an INA museum here.
1.4.3 (f) Loktak lake
One of the most enchanting and biggest freshwater lakes in the north-east is Manipur's Loktak lake. The Sendra Island tourist bungalow (situated in the middle of the lake), offers dazzling views of the lake, its rich plant and avian life and the intriguing floating weed, shallow bowl-like islands (Phumdi) and the fishermen who live on them harvesting water chestnuts. Also on the southern part of the lake is the world's only floating National Park, the Keibul Lamjao National Park, the unique habitat of the rare sangai, the brow antlered deer.

1.4.3 (g) Bishnupur
Famed for its stoneware, Bishnupur, has the brick Bishnu temple of the 15th century.

1.4.3 (h) Ukhrul
Manipur's popular and highest hill station is Ukhrul. It is famous for the lovely 'Siroi' lilies, which grow here in abundance. The nearby lime caves of Kangkhui are also delightful.

1.4.4 Meghalaya
One of the prettiest and youngest states (21st) of India, Meghalaya, is aptly called the abode of the clouds. Inhabited by the Khasis, Jaintia and Garos, it is best known for the pretty hill station Shillong, the capital city. Meghalaya shares borders with Assam and Bangladesh. Standing out amongst the other states, not just for its traditional and natural beauty, Meghalaya is also known for its unique matrilineal society, which governs lineage and ancestral inheritance through the female line. Meghalaya is also known for its orchids. It has about 300 of the world's species growing in its rich forestland, gardens and nurseries. These rare specimens include the insect-eating Pitcher Plant, Wild Citrus and Pygmy Lily. Meghalaya has two national parks Nokrek and Balpakram, which are home to some rare species of flora and fauna (such as the golden cat). The gentle hills of Meghalaya are interspersed with rich meadows and pine forests. Amongst these is that intriguing phenomenon - the traditional Sacred Forests (such as the Mawphlang Sacred Forest near Shillong) that are steeped in spiritual belief and held in great veneration. For those who enjoy caving, Meghalaya is just the place
for it has about 780 caves in the state, many of them untapped and unexplored. Five among those surveyed, are amongst the longest in the Indian sub-continent.

1.4.4.1 Major Destinations

1.4.4 (a) Shillong
Shillong, sometimes referred as the ‘Scotland of the east’, is set amidst smoky blue hills thick with pine and orchards, singing brooks and crashing waterfalls. Leisurely days can be spent at the serene Ward’s lake and the landscaped Lady Hydari Park, which also has a mini zoo. The Lewduh market, the biggest in the north-east, is wonderful for a bit of local flavour. Shillong Peak, about 10 km from town, offers breathtaking views of the city spread out against its glorious hill slopes. Amongst the popular waterfalls close to town are Spread Eagle falls, Sweet falls, Beadon falls and the Elephant falls. Shillong’s popular 18-hole golf course (referred to as the Gleneagles of the East) holds its annual tournament in October, when these Khasi hills are at their prettiest. The Butterfly Museum has an excellent collection of these winged beauties, many of which are facing extinction.

1.4.4 (b) Umiam Lake
Located about 17 km from Shillong, Umium Lake is highly popular for a relaxing time. The Orchid Lake Resort here has water sports facilities and the nearby Lum Nehru Park has an aviary and orchidarium.

1.4.4 (c) Cherrapunjee
Once world renowned for being the wettest place on earth, Cherrapunjee presents an impressive sight with its gushing waterfalls and deep gorges. It is famous for its oranges and honey. Close to town are the glorious Nohsngithiang Falls, Daintthlen Falls, Nohkailikai Falls (believed to be the world’s fourth highest), and many smaller falls. Mawsynram, 55 km from Cherrapunjee, is considered to be the wettest place on earth at present. It is also reputed for its stalactite and stalagmite caves.
1.4.4 (d) Mawphlang
Its vast floral wealth makes Mawphlang a great attraction for nature lovers. It has stunning orchids.

1.4.4 (e) Ranikor
Pretty as Kashmir’s Pahalgam, Ranikor is an angler’s delight as it is famous for its Mahseer.

1.4.4 (f) Tura
Tura is reputed for its picturesque environs and equable climate. Tura and its surroundings are a window to the ethnic lifestyle of the Garo people. The region is famous for its Wangala dance.

1.4.4 (g) Nartiang
The ancient seat of the Jaintia kings, Nartiang still has a number of stone memorials, which have survived the passage of time. The tallest is said to have been the walking stick of U Mar Phalyngki, the giant of Jaintia legend. Legend has it that Thadlaskein Lake was dug with arrowheads by subjects of Sajar Nangli, one of the foremost war leaders of the Jaintias.

1.4.5 Mizoram
This land of the blue mountain lies in the southernmost part of the northeastern states. Manipur, Assam and Tripura bound this tranquil little state, but a part of it slips down between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Evergreen, flush with blooms of exotic flora, its hilly expanses are criss-crossed by gushing rivers and their tributaries and a cobweb of silvery streams. The forested Mizo hills with their thick bamboo jungles running in north-south direction rise sharply from the Cachar plains in Assam. Highest amongst its several peaks is the Phawngpui – the Blue Mountain. Oral tradition reveals that the Mizo people migrated from China about 3 centuries ago in search of new pastureland and settled in these remote Mizo hills. Sociable, hospitable and fun loving – the Mizos are supposed to be one of the finest choir singers in the North-east. *Tlawmngaikna* is the code of ethics that guides the Mizos – it means everyone should be unselfish, hospitable and
helpful to each other. The joyous movements of their dances and spirited songs are a deep reflection of their passion for this cultural heritage. Mizoram has 10 important dances that celebrate life in all its richness. Mizoram’s crafts such as those in bamboo and cane are indigenously varied to meet modern needs but remain rooted to its tradition. The traditional repertoire of festivals and folk and community dances offer visitors a delightful insight into the tribal heritage of Mizo culture.

1.4.5.1 Major Destinations

1.4.5 (a) Aizawl
The capital city of Mizoram, Aizwal stands upon its lofty perch on a ridge overlooking the lush Tlawng River valley. To its north lie the rugged hills of Durtlang where there is an interesting zoological garden. Located close to each other, Bung and Paikhai are popular picnic spots, just 16 km from Aizawl.

1.4.5 (b) Tamdil
Tamdil is a natural lake that is famed for its fish and prawns. It is also a popular picnic place. The resort village of Saituai is just 10 km away.

1.4.5 (c) Vantawang
Close to Thenzawl hill station lie Mizoram’s highest waterfalls Vantawang. It is beautifully located amongst dense bamboo groves and tropical forests.

1.4.5 (d) Champai
From the fertile plains of Champai, one can get stunning views of the Myanmar hills.

1.4.5 (e) Phawngpui
A trekker’s paradise, Mizoram’s highest peak Phawngpui is located close to the Myanmar border. Often referred to as the Blue mountain, it is richly endowed with medicinal herbs and its famous species of orchids and rhododendrons, are part of the state government’s conservation programme.
1.4.5 (f) Saiha

Saiha, on the Chimtuipui river, is rich in fish and an angler’s delight. Just 45 km further away is the popular Palakdil famed for its varieties of wild duck, crabs and fish of massive proportions. The forests around the lake are home to tiger, bear, deer and wild pig.

1.4.5 (g) Dampa

The Dampa Sanctuary straddle, the borders of Mizoram, Tripura and Bangladesh. Tigers, bison, elephants, bears, and a vast number of Avian species inhabit it.

1.4.6 Nagaland

Sharing borderlines with Myanmar in the east, Assam in its western and northern periphery, the Tirap district of NEFA in Arunachal Pradesh in the north-east and Manipur in the south, Nagaland’s blue-hued mountains and emerald expanses comprise an intriguing world of ancient rituals and a proud people. Three great mountain ranges, running parallel to each other in a jagged line from north to south, comprise the backbone of Nagaland; these are the Patkai, Barail and Naga ranges from which flow numerous rivers of which the most significant are the Dikhu and the Doyang. Known for its salubrious climate, Nagaland has considerable rainfall during the monsoons. Tigers, leopards, elephants, sambars, wild buffaloes and bears inhabit its deep jungles while its vast expanses of paddy fields, fed by an elaborate indigenous irrigation system, are a veritable feast for the eyes. Spread over an area of 16, 527 sq km, its population resides mainly in the rural areas. Nagas have evolved into a generic term for many tribal communities in the North-east. Of the 32 such tribes, 16 major and numerous sub-tribes spread over Nagaland’s seven districts; primary amongst them are the Angamis, the Sema, Konyak, Aos and the Rengmas, each with their own distinct culture and lifestyle. Naga society is a well-knit and cohesive unit living by ancient tenets that play an important role in contemporary life. One of its interesting features is the tradition of the Morung, a dormitory exclusively for men, which is the focal point of the village. The feasts of Merit are another important feature of Naga society. The performance of a series of these feasts (genna), one more costly than the last, distinguishes the host’s position in society.
Weaving is one of the most colourful and dynamic traditions of the Nagas. Its finest renditions are in the beautiful hand-woven shawls of the various tribes. Each tribe has its own special patterns and motifs and even certain ceremonies are indicated in the weaving of these beautiful wraps.

1.4.6.1 Major Destinations

1.4.6 (a) Kohima
The state capital of Kohima is a pretty town that is endearingly unspoiled, tranquil and immersed in history. The World War II Memorial, listing the brave Nagas who laid down their lives, is the biggest attraction here. The state Museum showcases in dioramas, some of the most fascinating aspects of Naga tribal life in all its variety and wealth of tradition. Then there is the picturesque Kohima War Cemetery, a symbolic memorial. Kohima Village, called Barra Basti (Big village) is where Kohima began according to Naga legend. Said to be the second biggest village in Asia, it has one of the finest ceremonial gates, common to all Naga villages. The beautiful carvings of warriors and guns, and the symbol of prosperity, the mithun, heighten the importance of the Naga gateway.

1.4.6 (b) Khonoma village
The picturesque village of Khonoma offers delightful views of Nagaland’s natural beauty and ecological diversity. Passing through the traditional carved ceremonial gate, steep stone steps lead to the highest point in the village.

1.4.6 (c) Dimapur
Dimapur, Nagaland’s gateway town, is an important trade and commercial centre. It used to be the capital of the old Kachari rulers and one can still see the medieval remains of this ancient kingdom in the heart of the old town.

1.4.6 (d) Mokokchung
It is one of the great centres of Ao Naga tradition. The prowess of the Ao warriors is reflected in the white decorated band that signified their victory over their enemies. The two main festivals celebrated here are connected with sowing, Moatsu in early May, and harvesting, Tsungremmong in August.
1.4.6 (e) Wokha
The Wokha region is home to the Lotha tribe. Hilltop villages studded with monoliths (Longsu) erected by rich ancestors depicting their high status surround it. The Lothas are known for their colourful dances and folk songs. Wokha district is reputed for its excellent oranges and pineapples.

1.4.6 (f) Phek
Phek is home of the Chakhesang (a combination of three tribes), whose culture and customs are very different from other Nagas. Phek is famous for its colourful Tsukhenyie festival that takes place in March-April. Blythe Tragopan pheasants are found in abundance here, as are exotic varieties of orchids.

1.4.6 (g) Zunheboto
The Semas live in homes strung along a cluster of hillocks in Zunheboto. The martial race among the Naga tribes are renowned for their dazzling war dance, folk songs, and ceremonial war dresses. Tuluni is one of the most important festivals observed in the second week of July every year.

1.4.6 (h) Japfu peak
Rising 3048 m high above the verdure of the valley floor, Japfu Peak, 15 km south of Kohima, makes for a great trek especially from November to March. Behind it lies the Dzukou valley, watered by a meandering stream, which often freezes in winter. In spring, it is rich with wildflowers and pink and white rhododendrons.

1.4.6 (i) Intanki Wildlife Sanctuary
This sanctuary is home to the Hoolock Baboon, the only gibbon found in India. The sanctuary also has a sizeable number of animals such as elephant, tiger, mithun, sambar, wild dog and sloth bear.

1.4.7 Tripura
The beauty of the erstwhile princely state of Tripura stems from the splendor of its natural setting and its dazzling heritage. It finds mention in ancient Indian texts such as the Mahabharat. The history of this proud kingdom is
recorded in the Rajmala, the state chronicle maintained by Brahmin purohits (Hindu priests). Tripura has been greatly influenced by Bengal (parts of which were once an integral part of the kingdom) culturally and spiritually. It offers a plethora of delightful attractions in its cavalcade of historic palaces; rock cut carvings, stone sculptures, Buddhist and Hindu holy places, wildlife sanctuaries and tribal people. Poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore, found its pollution-free, eco-friendly environment, pleasant climate and tranquility the perfect retreat to compile some of his works here. Blending into the hills and the valleys, the villages are a tapestry of rich ethnic traditions. A series of low ranges running in a northwest to southeast direction dissect the state. Bangladesh with which the state had deep linkages before India’s partition is tucked around it from three sides. Of the 19 hill tribes who dominate its terrain, the Tripuris are the largest while the Reangs, who came in from Chittagong, are the second largest amongst the tribes living in the state. Though each ethnic community enjoys its own individual cultural strengths, this melting pot is often referred to as a laboratory of exotic cultural synthesis. Its vast tracts of natural beauty and its rich tradition of handicrafts make this state a special attraction.

1.4.7  **Major Destinations**

1.4.7 (a) **Agartala**
Agartala, the state capital, is set amidst vast expanses of tranquil beauty making it an ideal base for exploring the ancient palaces, temples, lakes and wildlife sanctuaries of this former princely state. Sitting astride great Mughal-inspired gardens, with a pool and gurgling fountains, the Ujjayanta Palace, has interiors embellished with magnificent tiled floors, delightfully curved wooden ceiling and beautifully crafted doors.

1.4.7 (b) **Kamalasagar**
There is a popular 16th century Kali Temple on the edge of the Kamalasagar lake. Pilgrims from around the country and nearby Bangladesh converge annually at the temple in the months of April and August.
1.4.7 (c) Udaipur
Located in Udaipur, Tripura’s lovely lake palace on Lake Rudrasagar, the beautiful and luxurious Neermahal, is eastern India’s only water palace. The tracts of green fields edging the lake come alive with birdsong during the annual arrival of the migratory birds. There’s a boat festival held at the lake annually. Another attraction here is the craft and heritage village. On the northern banks of the River Gomti (on whose banks Udaipur is situated), lie the remains of a dilapidated palace. Adjacent to the palace ruins lies the old Bhubaneshwari temple. Udaipur has a string of popular lakes such as Jagannath Dighi, Mahadev Dighi, Dhani Sagar, Amar Sagar and Kalyan Sagar, apart from Lake Rudrasagar.

1.4.7 (d) Matabari
One of the most important and much venerated attractions of Tripura is the ancient temple (500 years old) of Matabari or Tripurasundari located on a hilltop near Udaipur. It is regarded as one of the 51 piths (holy sites) of Hindu pilgrimage. Located close by is the Kalyansagar Pond, which is home to tortoises that are deeply revered by the devotees of the temple.

1.4.7 (e) Pilak
Pilak is famous for its great 8th-9th century archaeological remains. The site is one of an old civilization, representing both Hindu and Buddhist linkages. The main attractions here are the massive stone sculptures of Avolokiteswara and Narasimhan and numerous carvings in stone and terracotta plaques.

1.4.7 (f) Mahamuni
Mahamuni is famous for its ancient Buddhist temple which draws Buddhist pilgrims from as far off as Thailand, Myanmar and Sri Lanka apart from those nearer home from Bangladesh.

1.4.7 (g) Dumboor
The great lake of Dumboor is surrounded by verdant hills and presents a beautiful sight.
1.5 Chief Attractions of North-east India

As is evident from the description above, North-east India is indeed a treasure house of diverse natural, cultural and historical attractions that have potential for attracting travelers of different types and having varied interests. Each state of the region has a distinct culture and a variety of scenic natural attractions. In one article regarding tourism in North-east India, it has been suggested that tourism in the region can be developed around the assets of Culture, Heritage and Festivals, Religion, Landscape, Wildlife, National Parks, and Adventure Tourism by focusing on the three pillars of Nature, Culture and Religion (“Tourism - engine”, n.d.). In the same vein, the discussion below highlights the chief attractions of the region based on the description of its major destinations presented in section 1.4 above. Considering the North-east region as a whole, the various tourist attractions that this region has to offer to the world, can be summed up into a few broad categories mentioned below (based on the discussion in section 1.4). The chief attractions of North-east India may be outlined as follows:

1.5.1 Pristine Environment

Most of the north-eastern states still remain in virgin isolation prompting the Ministry of Tourism to refer to this region as ‘paradise unexplored’. Lack of industrial development in the region has been a blessing in disguise as it still retains intact its pristine vistas, diverse tribal heritage and exotic geographical features. This in itself presents a special attraction for those discerning travelers who wish to imbibe the joys of being in a unique, unspoiled region hitherto untouched by the effects of excessive industrialization and pollution.

1.5.2 Nature and Wildlife

1.5.2 (a) Scenic Natural Attractions

Be it the gushing waterfalls and caves of Meghalaya, the grandeur of Assam’s dense tracts of tropical forests, or the verdant valleys and misty mountain peaks of Arunachal Pradesh – nature’s bounty and glory is visible in every part of the region. Endowed with dreamy mountains, lush green valleys, enchanting lakes and lovely waterfalls; North-east India is replete with scenic natural attractions
and is definitely a delight for all nature lovers. North-east India is also blessed
with a number of delightful hill stations, which include the picturesque Haflong in
Assam, the most popular, and highest hill station of Manipur – Ukhrul, and the
lovely Shillong. Besides, the magnificent river Brahmaputra, which is one of the
world’s largest river systems, offers good opportunities for river cruise. Wildlife
and wilderness are the main features of a Brahmaputra cruise.

1.5.2 (b) Variety of Flora, Fauna and Avian life

The unique bio-geographic situation of North-east India has created a
fabulous repertoire of faunal, floral and avian biodiversity. The striking feature of
the flora of North-east India is the presence of many primitive flowering plants
and about one third of the flora of North-east India is considered to be endemic to
this region. Orchids, believed to have evolved in this region, form a very
noticeable feature of the vegetation here. North-east India supports some of the
rarest, least known and most sought-after birds of the Oriental Region. More than
400 species of birds are recorded from Kaziranga National Park alone in Assam
and although not thoroughly explored, the State of Arunachal Pradesh has a record
of 665 species of birds (Chatterjee et al., 2006). Likewise a variety of fauna are
found in different parts of the region.

1.5.2 (c) Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks

There are many National Parks and wildlife sanctuaries of outstanding
natural beauty in the various states of the region. Of the 60 protected areas in the
region, 48 are wildlife sanctuaries and there are 12 national parks (Chatterjee et al.,
2006). The most famous among these is the Kaziranga National Park in
Assam, renowned for being one of the last frontiers of the one-horned rhinoceros.
The Manas National Park, also in Assam, is a project tiger reserve and a world
heritage site. Then, there is the Namdapha Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal
Pradesh, which is believed to be the only natural habitat where the four great cats
– the tiger, the leopard, the clouded leopard and the snow leopard, are found
together. Thus, this region offers ample scope for nature trips and safaris, for
observing wildlife and Birdwatching. A list of the existing protected areas in the
different states of North-east India is provided in Table 1A of Appendix I.
1.5.3 Culture/Heritage

1.5.3 (a) Indigenous Tribes and Their Unique Lifestyles

The ethnic diversity of the region with its numerous tribes and their unique traditions and lifestyles, adds to the allure and charm of this wonderful land. Each of the 26 indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh has their unique identities in terms of language, dress and customs. A visit to any tribal village such as the Apatani village provides an opportunity to catch a glimpse of the traditions and lifestyles of these simple people. Similarly, in Nagaland, there are numerous tribes and sub-tribes, which have their distinct culture and lifestyles. Some of the major tribes of Nagaland are the Angamis, the Sema, Konyak, Aos and the Rengmas. Likewise in Tripura, where 19 hill tribes dominate its terrain, the distinct lifestyle of the tribal people is clearly evident.

1.5.3 (b) Places of Historical and Cultural Significance

There are quite a few places of historical and archaeological significance that present an attraction for those with an interest in history. Several places in the region have relics of old historical palaces and temples of architectural importance as well museums and memorials. Located close to Sibsagar in Assam, is the former capital of erstwhile Ahom kings (1229 AD) who ruled Assam for six centuries. Temples, palaces and water tanks built during that period present a reminder of former glory. The beautifully kept War Cemeteries in Imphal commemorate the British and Indian soldiers who died in World War II. Similarly the World War II memorial, listing the brave Nagas who laid down their lives, is the biggest attraction in Kohima, Nagaland. Again, the magnificent Ujjayanta Palace, built in 1901, in Agartala, Tripura provides a beautiful example of the palaces and temples of this erstwhile princely state.

1.5.3 (c) Traditional Arts and Crafts

The North-eastern region occupies a place of pride in the traditional arts and crafts scenario by virtue of the unmatched craftsmanship and splendor of the various handicrafts and handloom products developed here. Primarily, the handicrafts of this region include cane furniture, basketwork, mats, woodcarvings, pottery, artistic textiles, bell metal artwork, brass metal craft and so on. Each state has a specialty of its own. For instance, Assam is reputed for its handloom and
handicraft products. It is specially known for its silk, particularly the golden colored *muga* silk. Also, the various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are skilled in weaving and mask making. In Manipur too, weaving is a time-honored occupation and Manipuri hand woven textiles are indeed special. However Manipur is best known for its classical dance form of Ras Leela that re-enacts the love story of Lord Krishna and Radha. Mizoram is known for its folk music and dances. It has been referred to as the ‘songbird of the North-east.’ Nagaland is famous for its unique dress and traditional weapons. Particularly, the Naga shawl is reputed for its workmanship and sheer warmth. Tripura too has an excellent tradition in cane and bamboo craft, textile and woodcarving.

1.5.3 (d) Fairs and Festivals

This region is characterized by a vibrancy of culture and festivities that gives a unique identity to its lively people. Each state has its own share of fairs and festivals that are celebrated with great enthusiasm. For example, the Losar festival in Arunachal Pradesh held in January/February marks the beginning of the Monpa calendar. Another important festival is the Makar Sankranti festival held in Parasuram Kund during January, which draws Hindu devotees from far and wide. Likewise, marking the beginning of the agricultural season is Assam’s most important festival Bihu, celebrated with much pomp and gaiety during mid-April. An important festival of Nagaland that attracts a lot of visitors is the Hornbill festival, celebrated every year at its capital city Kohima during December. Likewise, the traditional repertoire of festivals and folk and community dances of Mizoram offer visitors a delightful insight into the tribal heritage of Mizo culture in all its richness and variety. Numerous other fairs and festivals are held at different times in the various states of the region, each of which adds to its distinctive charm. A list of the various fairs and festivals of North-east India is provided in Table 1B of Appendix II.

1.5.4 Opportunities for Adventure Sports

The stunning variety of it terrain, splendid landscapes and challenging rivers offer adventure sports lovers a vast choice of activities. Amongst the popular adventure activities are angling, river rafting, mountaineering, trekking, mountain biking, parasailing, hang-gliding, and golf. For instance, the snow fed
rivers offer opportunities for angling and white-water rafting while its rugged terrain makes it’s the ideal place for trekking, hiking and rock-climbing. Likewise in Assam, the Brahmaputra and its tributaries offer immense scope for river rafting. Then, there are angling opportunities. The Jia Bhoroli river is home to the fierce game fish ‘golden mahseer’ and provides excellent facilities for angling. Then, one may indulge in the delightful experience of exploring the numerous cave in the hills of Meghalaya. The other states of the region also provide good scope for participating in adventure sports.

1.5.5 Opportunities for Pilgrimage

(a) Places of Religious Significance

The influence of different religions such as Buddhism, Vaishnavism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam can be found in North-east India. Thus, the true essence of Indian culture may be found here. A number of temples and monasteries are spread across various locations of the region. The Kamakhya temple, one of the most revered shrines of the Hindu faith is located on Neelachal hill in Guwahati, Assam. Again, the river island Majuli in Assam is the focal point of Vaishnava culture and is renowned for its important satras (Vaishnava monasteries). Also, one of the most important and venerated attractions of Tripura is the ancient temple of Matabari or Tripurasundari in Udaipur. Likewise, one important place of Buddhist pilgrimage is the centuries-old Tawang monastery in Arunachal Pradesh, located against the dramatic setting of snow-mantled peaks. Another interesting place is Hajo near Guwahati in Assam, a meeting point of Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu faiths. The Hayagrib Madhab temple there is said to contain a relic of Buddha. It also has a twelfth century mosque often referred to as Poa Mecca – being fourth in the line of sanctity to the shrine at Mecca. Thus, for those interested in visiting places of religious significance, the region has a lot to offer.

(b) The Aura of Ancient Legends

Though physically isolated from mainland India to an extent, yet, this region has deep-rooted connections with the rest of the country that dates back to thousands of years and finds mention in ancient Indian texts. Steeped in legend various places of the region present a connection with the past that may be a
distinct attraction to many. The city of Guwahati in Assam (its ancient name was Pragjyotishpur meaning 'light of the east') is home to many temples that date back to Vedic and Puranic times (the Vedas and Puranas are ancient Indian texts). Legend has it that the body of Sati (consort of Lord Shiva) was dismembered and it is believed that one of the pieces of her body fell on the place where the Kamakhya temple stands today. The Parasuram Kund in Arunachal Pradesh is believed to be the place where the holy sage Parasuram is said to have bathed in order to atone for his sin of matricide and is therefore revered by Hindus who throng to the place during Makar Sankranti in January. Also in Arunachal Pradesh, close to Roing is the believed to be the home of Rukmini, Lord Krishna’s wife at the archaeological remains at Vismaknagar. The archaeological site of Malinithan, close to Pasighat, is also linked to the legend of Lord Krishna and Rukmini. Tezpur in Assam is also imbued with an aura of legend. Known as Sonitpur or the ‘city of blood’ in olden days, Tezpur is believed to be the place where a great mythological war was fought between Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva. The ancient myths and legends woven around these and various other places of the region may present an attraction to interested travelers.

1.6 Tourism and Development

As has been noted previously, tourism has emerged as one of the most promising sectors of the global economy in recent years. It has been pointed out that tourism can contribute to the prosperity of regions through economic benefits such as foreign exchange earnings, contribution to government revenues, generation of employment and income, and stimulation of regional development (Jithendran, 2002). The developing world is also giving increased attention to this phenomenon. According to Michael Peters, there are at least five potential benefits from tourism for any developing country: (i) a contribution to the balance of payments as an earner of hard currency, (ii) the dispersion of development to non-industrial regions, (iii) the creation of employment opportunities, (iv) the effect on general economic development through the multiplier effect, and (v) the social benefits arising from a widening of people’s interests generally in world affairs and to a new understanding of ‘foreigners’ and foreigner’s tastes (Dhar, 2000). In recognition of the importance of tourism and its contribution to the economy, India too has been laying emphasis on developing the tourism sector as
noted in section 1.3. However, in doing so due consideration has to be given to sustainable development in order to offset the possible negative impact of increased tourist traffic. This has been necessitated with the rapid expansion of the tourism sector, which has led to increased pressures on the natural, cultural and socio-economic environments of emerging tourism destinations. Though tourism can be attractive for developing countries, yet there are negative social, economic and environmental impacts such as undermining social standards, cost of importing special amenities like vehicles, impacts on environment by building tourist infrastructure such as hotels and polluting the natural environment (Lea, 1988). Therefore, increasingly there is recognition that uncontrolled growth in tourism aiming at short-term benefits often results in negative impacts, harming the environment and societies, and destroying the very basis on which tourism is built and thrives. Hence, there has been a growing emphasis on sustainability.

The principle of sustainable tourism was proposed as early as 1988 by the World Tourism Organization, with sustainable tourism "envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems" (WTO, 2002). It has also been defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Sinha, 1998). The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the Rio Earth Summit, identified Travel and Tourism as one of the key sectors of the economy, which could make a positive contribution to achieving sustainable development. It has been pointed out that Travel and Tourism is able to contribute to development which is economically, ecologically and socially sustainable, because it (a) has less impact on natural resources and the environment than most other industries, (b) is based on enjoyment and appreciation of local culture, built heritage, and natural environment, as such that the industry has a direct and powerful motivation to protect these assets; (c) can play a positive part in increasing consumer commitment to sustainable development principles through its unparalleled consumer distribution channels; and (d) provides an economic incentive to conserve natural environments and
habitats which might otherwise be allocated to more environmentally damaging land uses, thereby, helping to maintain bio-diversity (WTTC and IH&RA, 1999). In the same vein, it has been argued that tourism may lead to an increased appreciation of the value of nature, which will encourage public support for the protection of biodiversity (Duim and Caalders, 2002). Further, by providing income and employment opportunities to the local people, the economic viability of nature reserves may be fostered by the development of tourism. Moreover, by crowding out more damaging activities such as slash and burn agriculture, cattle farming, hunting, wood collection, mining and the like; it may provide an economically and ecologically viable alternative. It has been argued that the contribution of tourism towards poverty alleviation, natural and cultural heritage, and to overall sustainable development, is regarded as especially significant in developing countries where natural resources and landscapes are still relatively untouched and where few other economic activities have a sustainable development potential, from an economic or environmental perspective (WTO, 2002). In fact, tourism and ecotourism in particular, is viewed as a promising means of advancing economic and environmental objectives in developing countries with its ability to provide income and employment opportunities, and conservation of the country’s biological heritage. Increasingly, wildlife and its habitats in the biologically rich areas of the developing world are becoming popular tourist destinations with growing numbers of people flocking to the mountains of Nepal and Madagascar, the tropical forests of Costa Rica and Thailand and the beaches of Belize and Sri Lanka. Notably, in countries like Nepal, Madagascar and Thailand, attempts have been made to encourage new livelihoods including nature tourism based employment to discourage encroachment into protected national parks for hunting, logging and farming; as part of the USAID supported integrated conservation and development activities (USAID, 2002).

### 1.7 Tourism Development and North-east India

Considering the rich traditions and biodiversity of North-east India, which are valuable tourism resources, it may be pertinent to consider paying increased attention to the development of tourism in this region. It may be mentioned here
that North-east India is one of the least developed regions in the country. The economy of the region is primarily agrarian. Industrially, this continues to be the most backward region in the country, and the states in the region hardly have any industrial base, except perhaps Assam, because of its traditional tea, oil and wood based industries. To some extent Meghalaya has made some headway in setting up of small and medium industries. It is felt by many that labor-intensive industries such as tourism should be encouraged in the region, which would contribute to the development of the region's economy. Another argument that may be put forward in favor of tourism development in this region is that few regions have such diversity of offerings in terms of natural and cultural attractions as described in Section 1.5. Therefore, tourism development in the region may provide the much-needed thrust to its economy. Besides, due to its geographical situation, India's Look East policy establishes it as a gateway to South East Asia. It has been observed by Bezbaruah, (2000) that by the year 2020 the Asia Pacific region will be the second largest tourist generating market in the world. He further notes that these countries have geographical, cultural and historical links with the North-east. Therefore, its locational advantage may present a significant opportunity in taking advantage of this attractive outbound market. In the light of such discussions, one may infer that tourism development in North-east India will augur well for the region providing a thrust to the overall economy. However, in doing this, a balanced approach has to be adopted so as to offset the possible negative impacts of increased tourist activities and to benefit from the potential positive impacts. This calls for a sustainable approach to tourism. Therefore, care has to be taken to ensure that tourism promotion makes a positive contribution to both the economies and the ecologies of the states of this region.

1.8 Status of Tourism in North-east India

Having dwelled on the importance of tourism development for North-east India as well as its ample tourism resources, it would be relevant to examine the current status of tourism in the region. With such tremendous potential for development of tourism in the region (as discussed in section 1.5), it would seem probable that the tourist inflow into the region is fairly good. However, according to available figures, the North-eastern region (excluding Sikkim) accounted for a less than 1 percent of domestic tourist arrivals during the years 2002 through 2004.
(as shown in Table 1.1). In terms of foreign tourist arrivals the region accounted for around 0.7 percent during the years 2003 and 2004 (as shown in Table 1.1). This does not present a very encouraging scenario.

Table 1.1: State Wise Domestic and Foreign Tourist Arrivals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State*</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>4372</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>2195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1953915</td>
<td>6409</td>
<td>2156675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>89633</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>92923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>268609</td>
<td>3146</td>
<td>371953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>29417</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>35129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>14256</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>5605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>260586</td>
<td>2602</td>
<td>257331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE Total</td>
<td>2620795</td>
<td>13481</td>
<td>2921811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of National</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excluding Sikkim


It may be observed that the state of Assam has been the main hub of tourist activity in the region. Though each of the other states have an abundance of tourism resources, as discussed in the previous section, yet the tourist inflow to these states has not been adequate. Considering that tourism development appears to be significant from the perspective of the region's overall development, it would be worthwhile to take appropriate measures for the successful promotion of the region (with due consideration to sustainable development). This calls for focused, concerted marketing efforts. Thus, the destinations of the region will have to be marketed effectively through adoption of appropriate marketing strategies. One of the strategies adopted by destination marketers is the concept of market segmentation. This concept is discussed at length in the next chapter regarding the theoretical framework of the study.
References


