

# Tea Tourism: Evaluating Prospects and Problems of Tea Tourism in Assam, North East India

**Dr. Pradip Kumar<sup>a</sup>, Dr. Soumendra Nath Biswas<sup>b</sup>, Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Saxena<sup>c</sup>,  
Dr. K. N. Lokesh Kumar<sup>d</sup>**

*Assistant Professor*

*Associate professor*

*Associate Professor*

*Assistant professor*

*Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Assam University, Silchar-788011abcd*

**Abstract:** Tea Tourism is emerging as a new form of niche tourism in India, especially in the northeastern part of the country. A serene landscape in tea gardens is perhaps the most exotic and innovative way to enjoy nature. Tea tourism is emerging as a new type of sustainable cultural tourism where less research has been done. This study attempts to evaluate the prospects of tea gardens and their related products to attract inbound and domestic tourists in Assam, the largest tea-producing state of India. Problems of tea tourism in the study area are also discussed here and necessary suggestions have been given for maintaining its sustainability. Various activities associated with tea tourism destinations and their importance as tour components are also highlighted here. The findings of this study revealed that demographic factors, cultural backgrounds, amenities and activities available in the destinations, eco-friendly practices, etc. are important to understanding the prospects and problems of tea tourism in the form of SWOT analysis in study area.

**Keywords:** *Tea tourism, Tea culture, Tourist Expectation. Amenities, Activities, Sustainability.*

## 1. Introduction:

Tourism is a service sector that delivers experiences to people who go away from home for pleasure, recreation, or business. Tea tourism is a modern niche tourist idea that has been debated since the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is a fantastic leisure opportunity for visitors. Tea Tourists come to the tea gardens to learn about history, culture, and customs and drink tea. Tourists used to come here to see the tea gardens, the tea plucking process, and the tea tribes' traditional festivals, and stay in the distinctive tea bungalows.

A journey that is specifically focused on a tea plantation and other unique aspects of the industry is known as tea tourism. Assam, a prominent tea-growing state and one of the top tea-producing regions in the world, is home to an innovative new concept called tea tourism.

When the Joint Committee of the India Tea Association was founded in 1891, India started studying tea (ITA). "The Culture and Marketing of Tea", a famous tea book by the late Harler, a former scientific officer for the ITA, was first published in 1933 and served as a major introduction to the tea industry in Eastern Asia. Harler meant tea culture to be the science and technique of tea cultivation.

The leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* (var. *assamica*) plant are used to make the black tea variation known as Assam tea. North-east India's tea plantations, particularly those in Assam, have won praise from all over the world. The state of Assam in the northeast is rich in natural beauty. Visitors to this region of India are drawn there by the majestic Himalayan Mountains, the state's numerous hillocks, rivers, natural forests, waterfalls, natural caverns, and ecotourism sites. Additionally, Assam is well-known for its enormous, sprawling tea estates. Two British tourists, Robert and Charles Bruce discovered tea in Assam in 1828. Since that time, tea has been a crucial component of the economies of North Eastern states, particularly in Assam.

Assam tea has a long history of delighting consumers worldwide with its distinct flavor and taste, which can please both local and foreign tourists. The tea plantation bungalows in Assam, with their rows of shade trees and "Green Carpet" of lush vegetation, as well as the locals' distinct rhythmic music and dance, as well as the state's indigenous tribes, draw both domestic and foreign tourists and generate income for the region.

#### 1.1 Tea Tourism:

Tea tourism is a special type of leisure travel that enables travelers to explore and enjoy all things tea-related. Visitors can go hiking or on a nature stroll while enjoying the tea gardens' natural splendor. There is also the option of rafting and golfing. Exquisite tea bungalows cater to tourists, offering lodging and meals in nature. The products of ethnic tea tourism here include interacting with tea workers, taking part in leaf picking, and going to cultural activities.

Tea is the second most popular beverage drunk worldwide after water (JOLIFFE, 2003), and it ranks third behind coffee and cola as the most consumed beverage worldwide (Cheng et al., 2012). Tea tourism refers to thematic travel inspired by an interest in tea and how it is produced and cultivated (Jolliffe, 2007). According to the World Food Travel Association, 75% of leisure travelers choose a place so they may sample the local cuisine.

According to (Liu, 2019) interest in tea tourism has been on the rise since the start of the twenty-first century; it is even referred to as a newly developing trend in travel. Tea tourism is a relatively recent industry in the context of world tourism. In India, tea tourism is on the rise, and more and more visitors are drawn to the picturesque Assamese green tea fields.

Tea visitors are shown how to pick tea leaves in a tea garden before being transported to a tea plant to see how new green tea leaves are carried into the factory. Starting with withering and moving through rolling, drying, shifting, grading, and packing, there is a tea-tasting experience after each stage. After that, guests are welcome to take samples of some of the best tea grown in that garden area. Any tea estate will welcome visitors for tea sampling sessions. A professional will introduce guests to numerous tea varieties and provide some background information on each. Tourists may snap wonderful pictures on the natural green carpet while wearing the gorgeous traditional attire of the local people. Another distinguishing feature of these locations is the friendliness of the host towns and the local culture, way of life, etc.

## 2. Objectives:

The main objective of this study is to understand the potential of tea tourism for attracting tourists to Assam. Some of the other objectives are:

1. To understand the concept of tea tourism
2. To analyze the perspective of tea tourism in the study area
3. To evaluate prospects and problems of tea tourism in Assam
4. To do the SWOT analysis.

## 3. Research Design:

This study used a mixed approach in terms of quantitative and qualitative research methods with various data collection procedures. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire through various social media platforms. The secondary information is collected through a survey of the literature, relevant internet-based websites, journal articles, and academic books were used to conduct the study. Demographic analysis was performed to understand the respondents age, gender, educational qualifications and their employment status. Further, Factor analysis was used to get all the variables summed into 5 categories SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity & Strength) and Recommendations. To confirm the factors Scree plot was also drawn.

## 4. Literature Review:

Foreign visitors come to see the beaches, the visual grandeur of the region's lush greenery and web of rivers, tribal culture, religious rites, historical sites, woods, wildlife, and hill resorts. (Syed & Hasan, 2016). One of the different types of tourism that are offered in tea-growing locations across the world is tea tourism (Koththagoda & Thushara, 2016). Tea tourism, as described by (Jolliffe, 2007), is "tourism that is inspired by an interest in the history, customs, and use of tea." Zhang (2004) portrayed the growth of tea tourism as a

means of showcasing tea-growing regions with beautiful surroundings or distinctive historical backgrounds. A destination's tea culture is promoted through a variety of activities, including sightseeing, education, shopping, and other types of entertainment and tourism. According to Ji (2006), Tea tourism in China includes tea museums, tea gardens, tea-related events, tea stores, tea festivals, and tea-related merchandise. According to (Cheng et al., 2010), in research in Xining, China, Tea tourists are mostly between the ages of 31 and 40-year-old tea connoisseurs, and people's attitudes regarding tea tourism were significantly influenced by people's tea-drinking habits. According to (Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009), tea tourists in Sri Lanka had hoped for tranquility, cozy settings, and tea farm

In comparison to food, wine, and beer tourism, tea tourism is less common. According to (Fernando et al., 2017) and special interest tourism (SIT), it is said to be a new niche market that has evolved by tailoring a particular tourism product to fit the demands of a niche market (Jolliffe, 2007). SIT entails traveling to locations to fulfill one's personal requirements and unique interests in a certain area or location (Liu, 2019). Around the world, tea-related travel and tourism are flourishing in several nations, including Thailand and Sri Lanka (JOLLIFFE, 2003). India is renowned as the greatest country for producing tea, and in the past 50 years, the planted tea area has grown by 160 percent while production has climbed by 304 percent (Shah & Pate, 2016).

## 5. Tea Tourism in Assam:

Visits to tea gardens in this country also involved, if at all feasible, overnight stays. Visitors come to see how the tea gardens operate and to learn about the tea business. Jorhat, the largest tea-producing district in India, is the first place that springs to mind when discussing tea tourism in Assam. For the Assam tea tourist event in Jorhat, hundreds of people travel there every year. The "Tea Capital of the World" is the city of Jorhat, which is situated in the valley's central section. In the state, there are more than 800 tea plantations where visitors may unwind in luxury and peace while reliving the opulent colonial aristocracy's bygone era.

The biggest tea estate in both Assam and Asia is called Monabari Tea Estate, and it is situated in Assam's Biswanath district. It is around 1400 hectares in size, 1158 hectares of which are used for tea plants. The largest tea estate in the world is located there. Other Tea estates in Assam include the following: the Halmari Tea Estate in the Moran District; the Mangalam Tea Estate in Sibsagar; the Corramore Tea Estate in the Udalguri, District Darrang; the Amchong Tea Estate in the Kamrup District; the Sapoi Tea Estate in the Sonitpur District; the Nagrijuli Tea Estate in the Baksa District; and the Nonoi Tea Estate in the Nagaon District.

The tea festival takes place in Jorhat every winter from November to January. Since a lot of tea is grown throughout the winter, this is the greatest time to organize a trip to see the state at its most picturesque. The Jorhat Tea Festival is another name for the celebration. The renowned Assam tea festival is celebrated with fun, joy, music, and lots of tea. Visitors may partake in a variety of activities, such as wandering through tea gardens, playing golf, taking safaris through the state's woods, and experiencing the mouthwatering regional food. There are also many opportunities for shopping and engaging in cultural events.

For a great combination of Tea and golf tourism in Assam, the cultural day trip is combined with another activity, like golf. One of the oldest golf courses in the world, the Jorhat Gymkhana, allows guests to give the game a try. The twin districts of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia in Upper Assam, which cultivate tea, include ten traditional golf courses. Despite its small size, Assam is home to over 22 top-notch golf courses. These are prevalent in a lot of tea estates. Tea tourism is a fantastic chance to experience colonial life while learning about the tea-making process.

### 5.1 Tea estate bungalows in Assam:

The Chang Bungalow, a distinctive feature of Assamese tea bungalows, is an elevated wooden slat with roomy surroundings and a sizable veranda. A bungalow is a small, one- or two-story house with a fireplace and a visible chimney, as well as a yard with a variety of flowers, plants, and trees. The main building is typically two floors and supported by enormous Teak wood pillars. The planters, who were mostly English, Scottish, and Irish at the time, worked to create a miniature representation of their ideal society using materials and structures found nearby. Most of the bungalows have been transformed into resorts with contemporary amenities. Chameli Memsab house, Kaziranga Golf Resort, Koliabor Mansion, Mancotta Historical Tea Bungalow, and Wathai Heritage are some of the tourist favorites.

### 5.2 Tea Auction Centre:

Guwahati is home to the biggest CTC Tea Auction Center in India. Assam tea is the primary product at the Guwahati Tea Auction Center, one of the busiest tea trading hubs in the world. For garden-fresh, genuine Assam tea, this lounge is a one-stop shop. The lounge offers several different types of tea, including CTC, Orthodox, Green, White, Purple, Yellow, Oolong, certified Organic, and soon. The center offers information about Assam's tea and is a fantastic place to go.

### 5.3 Tea Museum:

In early 2023, the "Tea City of India," Dibrugarh, will construct the region's first tea museum, which will be accessible to the general public. The Assam tea farm will be the subject of a fragrant tour offered by the tea museum. The museum aims to become a well-liked tourist attraction for both local and international visitors, fostering the growth of Assam's tea tourism industry. The history of tea will be brought to life for visitors. In the long run, those wanting to advance "tea tourism in Assam" anticipate that this museum will assist visitors in learning more about Assam Tea and its variety.

## 6. Tea Tourism in Barak Valley, Assam:

Some of the most beautiful places in the region may be found in Barak Valley, which has more than 80 large and small tea gardens. The valley is surrounded by rolling hills with good soil and the perfect temperature for growing tea, and it is abundant in natural beauty. Numerous plantations have sprouted up since the British allowed tea companies to rent land for tea growing in 1839. The use of modern technology and equipment for processing and packaging tea has demonstrated substantial advancement. Because of its robust flavor, vivid color, and scent, the majority of the tea plantation's produce is sent to all corners of the globe. In Assam's tea farms, it appears that 400 million kg of tea are produced annually, with Silchar producing a sizable portion of that total.

**Jalinga Tea Estate:** The Assamese Cachar district is where you may find the Jalinga Tea Estate. The tea garden has a total size of 1644.19 hectares. The tea garden has been around for more than a century. The estate is divided into three sections: Jalinga, Kalacherra, and Dwarbund.

**Dolu Tea Gardens:** Anyone searching for picturesque surroundings and leisure time must visit the Dolu tea estates and lakes. It is one of the most alluring tourist locations around Silchar and may completely envelop you in a lovely experience.

**Silcoorie Tea Gardens:** The splendor of the Silcoorie Tea Gardens is unsurpassed. Along the Silchar-Hailakandi route, the nearby little hillocks resemble a green carpet.

**Rosekandy Tea Estate:** Rosekandy Tea Estate is a different stretch of lovely tea gardens. It offers a glimpse of a tea garden as well as fresh air and a peaceful setting for relaxing. The Hailakandi Road and the Silchar Bypass are the two routes that lead to the charming Rosekandy Tea Estate.

## 7. Analysis:

### 7.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents:

Statistics					
		Gender	Age:	Employment status	Education Qualification
N	Valid	119	119	119	119
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	59	49.6	49.6	49.6
	Male	60	50.4	50.4	100.0
	Total	119	100.0	100.0	
Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25 years	81	68.1	68.1	68.1
	26-35 years	32	26.9	26.9	95.0
	46-55 years	4	3.4	3.4	98.3

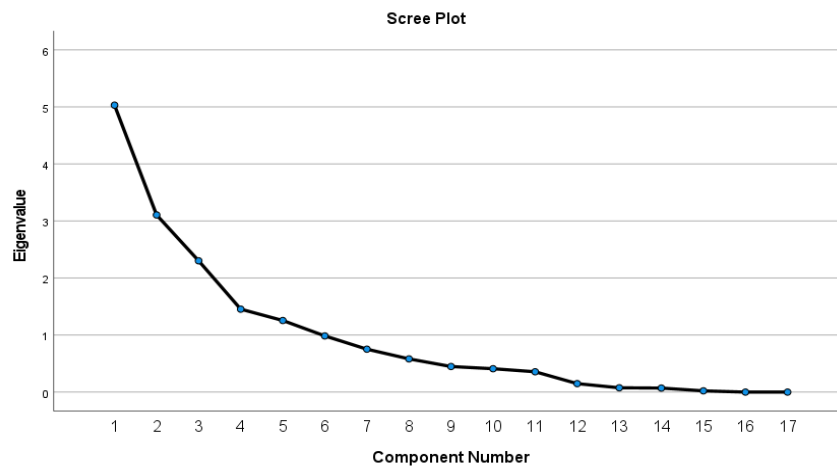
	Below 18 years	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	119	100.0	100.0	
<b>Education Qualification</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Graduation	61	51.3	51.3	51.3
	Higher Secondary	4	3.4	3.4	54.6
	Master degree	49	41.2	41.2	95.8
	Ph.D. Scholar	5	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	119	100.0	100.0	
<b>Employment status</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed	66	55.5	55.5	55.5
	Student	50	42.0	42.0	97.5
	Unemployed	3	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	119	100.0	100.0	

The above table depicts that, in terms of gender, almost equal numbers of gender representations were there. Among the 119 respondents, 49.6 % were female and 50.4% were male. In terms of age group, the majority of the respondents were young people. Among all respondents, 68.1% were in the age group of 18-25 years and 26.9% were from 26-35 years. In terms of educational qualification, the majority of the respondents were graduate and postgraduate. Out of the total 119 respondents, 51.3% were graduates and 41.2% had done their post-graduation. Regarding the employment status, the largest number of respondents were employed and second largest number were students, and very negligible numbers were unemployed. As per the data, there were 55.5% of respondents mentioned that they were employed during the data collection period. 42.0% mentioned that they were studying and only 2.5% of respondents were given their unemployment status.

## 7.2 Factor Analysis:

<b>Total Variance Explained</b>						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.031	29.593	29.593	5.031	29.593	29.593
2	3.106	18.271	47.865	3.106	18.271	47.865
3	2.302	13.542	61.406	2.302	13.542	61.406
4	1.454	8.555	69.961	1.454	8.555	69.961
5	1.255	7.385	77.347	1.255	7.385	77.347
6	.985	5.794	83.141			
7	.752	4.426	87.567			
8	.582	3.425	90.992			
9	.449	2.638	93.630			
10	.410	2.411	96.041			
11	.356	2.097	98.138			
12	.148	.873	99.011			
13	.076	.445	99.456			
14	.071	.415	99.871			
15	.022	.129	100.000			
16	.018	.098	100.000			
17	.017	.091	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.



## 8. Tea Tourism in Assam: Prospects and Problems

<b>Strengths</b>	Assam is one of the Top Tourism Destinations in terms of Tea Tourism is concerned With the construction of feeder roads connecting tea gardens and national highways, Accessibility has improved. Tea estate bungalows and lush green lawns can be favorable for green Tourism. Tea Tourism can be amalgamated with Eco and Wildlife Tourism in Assam.
<b>Weakness</b>	The quality of the transportation service towards tea gardens is not up to the mark. Tea tourism in Assam suffers greatly from a lack of suitable infrastructure: Respectable hotels and tourist lodges, Clean and sanitary food and lodging, Lack of visitor information, and Untrained security personnel Due to the seasonality of the processes involved in growing, harvesting, drying, and producing tea, tea culture tourism has a certain time constraint. Lack of proper promotion of the Tea gardens of Assam is another weakness.
<b>Opportunities</b>	Tea tourism is a relatively new form of Tourism with a lot of untapped potential in Assam Several of these tea plantations have golf courses and polo grounds that can be promoted as augmented services. Many of the Tea Gardens have helipads and airstrips. These amenities may be packaged together to attract Tourists. To attract more central funds and assistance through Donner and look east policy of Government.
<b>Threats</b>	Lack of skilled and professional Service Providers in the Tea Estate of Assam Lack of maintaining Hygiene and Sanitation in the Tea Estate and bungalows. Lack of awareness about Natural and manmade catastrophes in the state. All seasonal connectivity to the major Tea Gardens is another treat in Assam

Source: Authors

## 9. Recommendations:

### a) Raise awareness and promotion:

The splendor of Assam's tea farms is unknown to tourists. They don't consider the possibility of everyone visiting these tea farms to relieve life's monotony. The promotion of these tea farms can thus employ additional promotional techniques including social media, magazines, and newspapers.

### b) Enhance accessibility:

These tea farms are not open to the public without authorization from the appropriate authorities because of potential security concerns. Therefore, accessibility may be improved by the effective implementation of security measures and methods for organizing tours of these tea farms.



**c) Develop infrastructure and superstructure:**

Construction and upgrades should be made to housing, roads, and other forms of transportation and information. Information centers, superstructures like top-notch hotels and tourist lodges, a system, sanitary food and lodging options, retail centers, banks, and police stations are all necessary to draw tourists.

**d) Ensure support from concerned authority:**

To create a positive destination image for tea tourism, the relevant authorities, such as the owners of the tea plantations, should be helpful and cooperative. They may come up with a variety of plans to maintain the environmental harmony and tourist potential of these properties.

**e) Involvement of host community and government:**

To make the area a prospective tea tourist destination, various NGOs and other stakeholders, including tour operators, travel agencies, suppliers, and locals, may cooperate and be informed. This new location should receive some government attention.

**Product:**

Companies that conduct tea tourism may put more emphasis on the history of tea and regional goods. There could also be other tea-house structures built next to or around tea farms. The manufacture of more tea goods as gifts might improve tea tourism even further. It would be possible to develop educational programs about the history of tea, tea products, and tea enjoyment further. The study area's significant distinguishing characteristic of tea culture might be further developed as part of a long-term tourist sector plan. According to their target audiences, businesses could categorize their tea tourism projects.

**Price:**

Competitive pricing might help tea tourism businesses draw customers. They might base their pricing on the markets they were trying to reach, and they could use various pricing strategies for various tourist types. Certain travelers may prefer a brief and inexpensive journey. Other visitors might anticipate that their trip would be of a higher caliber and consequently cost more than a typical excursion. The pricing structure must be in line with what visitors anticipate.

**Promotion:**

Tea tourism businesses might support specialist skills and raise salesperson exposure. They might expand their use of Internet commerce by incorporating links to other websites, employing online reviews, email advertising, and regular newsletters. To raise awareness of their business, they may plan particular events with tea experts, including gatherings or parties for tea tasting.

**Place:**

Tea tourism businesses may market their goods through a variety of methods. Travelers who are interested in tea tourism should be able to buy a tea tourism product straight from the Internet. Influential travel businesses may promote tea tourism services and packages more aggressively. They would likely need to be motivated by offering the cooperating agencies unique benefits. Other incentives might be investigated, and commission rates could be negotiated.

**10.Conclusion:**

A new market that is gaining popularity is tea tourism. Tea lovers decide to learn more about tea culture and consumption while they are there to deepen their understanding of the beverage. By generating jobs and improving lives, tea tourism in Assam will benefit the state by lowering instability and other socioeconomic problems. Tea tourism is beneficial for preserving culture and customs as well as environmental quality. Tea tourism may help the state government earn cash and provide Assam with a new perspective on the world tourism scene if it is marketed with care. This tea tourism includes visiting tea gardens, picking tea, producing tea, attending tea tribe cultural events, and staying in tea bungalows. This sort of distinctive trip involves interacting with nature. Tea tourism is made more accessible by planned thematic tours that take visitors to tea sights, allow them to enjoy tea services, sample various types of tea, and teach them more about the fascinating history and culture of tea.

Although Assam offers distinct benefits when it comes to promoting tea culture tourism, there are also some drawbacks, such as hazy product qualities and pronounced seasonality. Assam must thus take advantage of

prospects for the growth of tea culture tourism while simultaneously focusing on the development of relevant expertise, the invention of connected goods, and the expansion of tea culture tourist marketing. To ensure the healthy and sustainable growth of tea culture tourism, keep up with the trends and continually change your promotional techniques.

The Assam government has concentrated on promoting tea tourism to draw in tourists. It has abundant natural beauty, including mountains, lush forests, rivers, waterfalls, and caves, all of which draw tourists in. The tea garden gives Assam's natural beauty new depths. The following are the areas that DMO must concentrate on to create a successful tea tourism destination: In PPP mode, destinations may be promoted. Promoting tea tourism in the state should be fostered by private businesses. The state should strengthen its transportation services, especially to the tea estates. Basic hygiene amenities may be provided and tourist bungalows and lodges could be improved. More information centers should be created by the state government in tourist hotspots, and tea tourism places should be promoted. Along with the primary Tea Tourism items, other pursuits including picking tea leaves, doing nature hikes, rafting, and golfing, among others, may be marketed.

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