

Identification of Wonderment of Seven Heavens - A study to reveal a few new picnic spots in Idukki District of Kerala

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Abstract

A picnic can be defined as an outing to the countryside when a meal is eaten outdoors surrounded with freshness and natural serenity. Tourism scope of picnic spots is gradually increasing nowadays. Idukki district is a treasure of natural beauty. Munnar, Thekkady, Ramackalmedu etc. occupies pivotal position among the major tourism spots in the district.

This is the time for a rethinking about the elaboration of tourism possibilities in the district especially of the picnic spots. Visitors' taste is to be satisfied with at most care. It is a generally accepted opinion that most of the domestic travelers from Kerala who opt occasional picnics select places with a harmonious blend of privacy, landscape, air, remoteness, panoramic view and accessibility. To maintain consistency of the arrival of travelers to Idukki district new picnic spots is to be identified. The researcher tries to identify a few places in Idukki districts with possibilities of a picnic spot. This paper explores Anakkara, Karikkinmedu, Kavantha, Kurishukuthy, Moongappara, Muttukadu, Palkulamedu, Thevaram Mettu and Kottakkampoor.

The researcher depended more on primary data obtained from direct visit. Even though secondary sources tried to apply wherever possible. SWOC analysis, extract from related tables, charts, diagrams, maps, averages, percentages from credible sources are the tools used the most.

Keywords: Picnic, Heritage, Sustainable Development, Responsible Tourism.

Introduction

“The spirit of travel has lived on down the ages. In recorded history there have been instances whereby one is able to know that man has been travelling throughout the ages. From the very early historic period, travel has had a fascination for man”ⁱ. “With the advent of mass tourism especially after the First World War, various attempts have been made to study as to why people wish to become tourists”ⁱⁱ. McIntosh has stated that basic travel motivators may be grouped into the following categories:

(i)**Physical Motivators**, which are related to physical relaxation and rest, sporting activities and specific medical treatment; all are connected with the individuals bodily health and well being.

(ii)**Cultural motivators**, which are connected with the individuals, desire to travel in order to learn about other countries and their people and their cultural heritage expressed in art, music, literature, folklore etc.

(iii) **Interpersonal motivators**, which are related to a desire to visit relatives, friends, or to escape from one's family, workmates or neighbors, or to meet new people and forge new friendships, or simply to escape from routine of everyday life.

(iv) **Status and Prestige motivators**, which are identified with the needs of personal esteem and personal development, these are related to travel for business or professional interests, for the purpose of education on the pursuit of hobbiesⁱⁱⁱ.

Hence travelling becomes a catalyst in human life. Promotion of tourism become inevitable as it plays a major role for the nation building^{iv}. "The declaration by the UN of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development is a unique opportunity to advance the contribution of the tourism sector to the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental, while raising awareness of the true dimensions of a sector which is often undervalued" said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai^v. In India especially in Kerala which state declared tourism as an industry first is undertaking a bunch of innovative and sophisticated measures to extend and expand tourism. The measures that Kerala Tourism Department started to convert tourist spots as disabled friendly is one among a few advanced steps^{vi}.

In midst of the rapid development too Kerala Tourism misses attention of tourists especially from the domestic travelers. Kerala Tourism positioned eighteenth among Indian states in domestic tourist attraction^{vii}. Hence wide measures are to be undertaken to seek attention of the domestic tourists especially of the local picnic seekers. Tourism scope of picnic spots thus gradually increasing nowadays. A picnic can be defined as an outing to the countryside when a meal is eaten outdoors surrounded with freshness and natural serenity. Based on this definition of a picnic, the researcher tries to identify a few new picnic spots in Idukki district of Kerala state where there is a wide scope for the same.

POSSIBLE SPOT 1 - ANAKKARA

Area Specific Description	-	Anakkara is the administrative capital of Chakkupallam Gram Panchayath.
Nearest Tourist Destination	-	Chellarkovil Mettu
Geography	-	Mountain plateau contains fertile soil and marshal land.
Vegetation	-	Paddy fields, Commercial crop Plantations.

SWOC Analysis of the possible spot^{viii}

Strength

- Anakkara can be included as a string in the Munnar – Ramackalmedu- Thekkady tourism chain.
- Gifted with a unique blend of paddy fields along with Cardamom and Coffee plantations.
- Presence of quiet wind from the eastern border of Idukki.
- Site for the proposed Anakkara Air Port.

Weakness

- Presence of Chellarkovil Mettu may diminish possibility of Anakkara as a Picnic spot.
- Diminishing cultivation of Paddy.

Opportunities

- Possibility for an amusement park along with farm tourism.

Challenges

- Madhav Gadgil – Kasthoori Rangan reports and its impacts.

POSSIBLE SPOT 2 – KARIKKINMEDU

Area Specific Description	:	A Hill station with serene natural beauty about 6 kms from Prakash.
Nearest Tourism Destination	:	Calvary mounts.
Geography	:	Mountainous and Rocky
Vegetation	:	Grassland, varying herbs.

SWOC Analysis^{ix}

Strength:

- ❖ Calm, quiet and remote hill station with heavenly wind.
- ❖ Presence of famous temple and church in the adjacent area.

Weakness:

- ❖ Lack of water during summer.

Opportunity:

- ❖ Possibility to construct cottages, rest places, trek paths and play area.

Challenges:

- ❖ Difficulty in assuring people's participation in tourism development.

POSSIBLE SPOT 3 – KAVANTHA

Area Specific Description	:	Mountainous grassland with versatile view near Uluppuni in Vagamon.
Nearest Tourism Destination	:	Vagamon
Geography	:	Grassland with water bodies.
Vegetation	:	Lemon grass, semi evergreen trees.

SWOC Analysis^x

Strength:

- ❖ Attractive presence of mist and dew.
- ❖ Remote area with suitable temperature.
- ❖ Natural beauty with attractive Ariel view.

Weakness:

- ❖ Water scarcity during summer.
- ❖ Unfavorable climate change occasionally.
- ❖ Challenges: Chance of forest fire during summer.

Opportunity:

- ❖ Possibility of a well equipped hill viewpoint with telescopic facilities.

Challenges:

- Presence of eminent tourism spots like Vagamon, Ulupponi, and Kolahalamedu etc. in the closer area.

POSSIBLE SPOT 4 – KURISUKUTHY

- Area Specific Description** : A mountain range near Kambilikandam in
Konnathady Grama Panchayath.
Nearest Tourism Destination : Ponmudy dam
Geograph : Rocky area with loose soil
Vegetation : Lemon grass, dwarf trees.

SWOC Analysis^{xi}

Strength:

- ❖ Lack of picnic spots in the adjacent areas

Weakness:

- ❖ Difficulty in adjoining local public in tourism development

Opportunity:

- ❖ Possibility of rock climbing, off road riding, hill view etc.

Challenges:

- ❖ Ensuring water supply.
- ❖ Need of having investment.

POSSIBLE SPOT 5 – MOONGAPPARA

- Area Specific Description** : A view point on a mountain range near Murickassery in
Vathikkudy Grama Panchayath.
Nearest Tourism Destination : Hill View Park, Cheruthony
Geography : Mountainous, rocky.
Vegetation : Usual crops in better density.

SWOC Analysis^{xii}

Strength:

- ❖ Possibility of adventurous tourism.

Weakness:

- ❖ Scarcity of water and harsh climate during summer.

Opportunity:

- ❖ Possibility both as an adventurous as well as leisure picnic spot.

Challenges:

- ❖ High population density.

POSSIBLE SPOT 6 – MUTTUKADU

- Area Specific Description** : An area with hilly surroundings
Nearest Tourism Destination : Munnar
Geography : Semi Mountainous.
Vegetation : Agricultural crops with high density of under
shrubs adorned by paddy fields.

SWOC Analysis^{xiii}

Strength:

- ❖ Nearest to Chokramudi, the second tallest mountain in Idukki.
- ❖ Nearest to the gap road which is an area of Historical importance.
- ❖ High population of tribes.

Weakness:

- ❖ Lack of pucca roads to certain remote areas.
- Opportunity:**
- ❖ Chance for a centre for experimenting tribal herbal medicines.
- Challenges:**
- ❖ Kasthoori Rangan Report, forest laws.

POSSIBLE SPOT 7 – PALKULAMEDU

- Area Specific Description** : A beautiful mound gifted with waterfalls and surrounded by wild life sanctuary and agricultural fields.
- Nearest Tourism Destination** : Visali view point.
- Geography** : Rocky with shoals.
- Vegetation** : Grasslands and forest trees.

SWOC Analysis^{xiv}

- Strength:**
- ❖ Apt geographical position near Idukki hydro electric project.
- Weakness:**
- ❖ Not enough public attention is secured even after many attempts.
- Opportunity:**
- ❖ Trekking, camping and rock climbing.
- Challenges:**
- ❖ Strict forest laws and its implications.
- Conclusion**

Idukki district is a treasure of natural beauty. Munnar, Thekkady, Ramackalmedu etc. occupies pivotal position among the major tourism spots in the district. This is the time for a rethinking about the elaboration of tourism possibilities in the district especially of the picnic spots. Visitors' taste is to be satisfied with at most care. It is a generally accepted opinion that most of the domestic travelers from Kerala who opt occasional picnics select places with a harmonious blend of privacy, landscape, air, remoteness, view and accessibility. To maintain consistency of the arrival of travelers to Idukki district new picnic spots are to be identified. The above mentioned spots will pave the way for the same at least to an extent.

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^{vi} *Tourist Spots to be disabled – Friendly*, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/Tourist-spots-to-be-disabled-friendly/article15003458.ece>, assessed on 4th February 2017.

^{vii} News paper report, *Mathrubhoomi daily*, 25th January 2017, p.9.

^{viii} Data collected from direct visit to the place, 3rd September 2015.

^{ix} Data collected from direct visit to the place, 3rd September 2015.

^x Data collected from direct visit to the place, 4th September 2015.

^{xi} Data collected from direct visit to the place, 10th September 2015.

^{xii} Data collected from direct visit to the place, 10th September 2015.

^{xiii} Data collected from direct visit to the place, 17th September 2015.

^{xiv} Data collected from direct visit to the place, 24th September 2015.