

## **Unlocking the Potential of Biodiversity for Promotion of Sustainable Tourism: Case of Indian Tourist Arrival to Knuckles Wildlife Conservations Region**

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Biodiversity plays a crucial role in attracting tourists and fostering an understanding of the value of natural resources. However, the rapid expansion of development activities has compromised biodiversity conservation and strained natural resources. Sustainable tourism seeks to operate without harming nature, the environment, biodiversity, and society. India and Sri Lanka, both emerging tourism destinations with rich biodiversity, have indigenous communities residing near natural reserves and relying on natural resources for their livelihoods. These communities hold a strong cultural connection to nature, shaping their identities. Some regions remain untapped due to inaccessibility, missing out on the benefits of tourism development. Leveraging communities and biodiversity presents significant potential for both countries. Given their proximity and shared cultural heritage, they are major tourism markets for each other, further increasing tourism activities. This paper proposes sustainable tourism management practices that integrate environmental, social, and cultural dimensions of biodiversity and tourism. The research aims to unlock the potential of biodiversity for promoting sustainable tourism in the region. By prioritizing indigenous livelihoods and biodiversity conservation through community-based management and cultural heritage promotion, a sustainable tourism model can be established. Primary data from stakeholders and secondary research from government and academic publications will inform the study.

**Keywords:** *Biodiversity, India and Sri Lanka, Sustainable Tourism*

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