

Chinthaka, H. B. U.,
Senarathna, S. P. D. R.,
PAPER

The Opportunities for Development of Spiritual Tourism in Sri Lanka

H. B. U. Chinthaka, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

S. P. D. R. Senarathna, Department of Geography, University of Kelaniya

Spiritual tourism involves people who are desirous of seeking inner peace during their vacation and gaining spiritual development within. Meditation, yoga and pilgrimage tours are vital in spiritual tourism in Sri Lanka. There are about 18 meditation centers identified by Sri Lanka Tourism, situated outside Colombo, which can provide opportunity for the travelers who are on an expedition to see the reality of life. The opportunity for development of spiritual tourism in Sri Lanka will further translate into two way benefits, only with the fulfillment of two prerequisites: firstly, the improvement of infrastructure in places where such Buddhist meditation programs are offered, particularly the locations outside the capital city. Secondly, once the basic facilities are assured and the program being offered is differentiated from just yoga, spiritual development or even the general use of the term meditation, we would see the increase of arrivals of so called 'up market tourists' not only in terms of money, but also the values they represent.

The main objective of this research is to identify the opportunities that exist to develop spiritual tourism in Sri Lanka. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires given to travel agencies, centers where the facilities are provided for yoga and meditation while the secondary data were gathered by publications and internet websites. Sri Lanka has made some gains through pilgrim tourism: e.g. visits to the Temple of the Tooth and Sri Pada. Hindus from South India worship at the Temple of Kataragama and more recently, Hindus from Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh are enjoying the Ramayana sites in Sri Lanka. As a multi ethnic nation Sri Lanka is rich with resources such as Buddhist and Hindu religions, and also with culture to promote spiritual tourism. This research was carried out with the prime intention of exploring the future possibilities of developing spiritual tourism in Sri Lanka. Findings of the research will be useful for persons interested in spiritual tourism development.