



Case Study: Adventure Tourism Market Development in NE India

Situation

The Tourism Department, Government of Assam in NE India, recognizing the value of tourism as an economic development tool, wanted support in developing adventure tourism responsibly and sustainably.

With tourism to India growing at 13.5% per year, state policy-makers saw the opportunity to draw more visitors to Assam, but were concerned about preserving important cultural and natural resources.

They chose an adventure tourism development route, defined according to a consumer-based understanding of “adventure,” which called for the development of products and itineraries that would include:

- Nature and wildlife exploration
- Cultural interactions and learning — which may include regionally unique spiritual and religious experiences, and exposure to defining cultural aspects such as the production of tea in Assam
- Rural experiences
- Active, physical sports whether strenuous or easy — including but not limited to cycling, trekking and hiking, kayaking and other river exploration, hang-gliding, and horseback riding

Challenge

This beautiful NE Indian state, bounded by Himalayan foothills and cut through by the powerful currents of the Brahmaputra River, has little existing tourism infrastructure and low market awareness. The state’s tourism department leaders requested not only recommendations for product development, but also wanted to ensure that new products would reach an audience of tour operators and travelers to begin operating trips in the region.

In addition, the state’s leaders were very concerned that any new market development initiatives encourage sustainable, responsible tourism.

Solution

Assam’s tourism officials selected Xola as its partner in this important initiative because of its specialization in adventure tourism, the linkages to industry its approach brings, and its overriding emphasis on sustainable tourism development for the benefit of communities and the environment.

Xola completed a Feature Adventure Destination analysis for Assam using the Adventure Tourism Development Index approach developed by the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), The George Washington University (GW), and Xola Consulting, Inc.

Specifically, the goal of the project was two-fold:

- To support Assam in developing its adventure tourism market by providing specific market development guidance; and
- To provide access to markets and media through the consulting partners (ATTA, GW).

Results

As a result of this study:

- A responsible tourism development philosophy for the state was recommended
- Seven adventure tourism zones or “Hotspots” were defined
- A structure for organizing specific activities relative to product development, human resources development, infrastructure improvement, marketing, and impact monitoring was created
- Highlights of the research showcasing Assam’s unique assets will be revealed to more than 450 international adventure tour operators & adventure and mainstream travel media in a special report released through the Adventure Travel Trade Association (www.adventuretravel.biz), the largest trade organization for adventure tourism companies.

For More Information on ATDI Feature Adventure Destination studies, contact Christina Heyniger at info@xolaconsulting.com

