

Euromonitor International: Travel and Tourism in Bangladesh

Unstable Political Situation Deters Tourists

Political unrest and the adverse security situation within Bangladesh deterred both domestic as well as foreign tourists from exploring the country. International tourists feared going to a country with political uncertainty, and even local tourists found it safer to venture abroad for tourism, rather than explore Bangladesh.

Natural Disasters Add to Woes

Two spells of devastating floods in July and September 2007 were followed by the country's worst cyclone, Sidr, in November 2007. These caused extensive damage to the country and had an obvious negative effect on tourism, especially since most of the infrastructure in the coastal areas was destroyed in the cyclone.

Bangladesh Accommodation

Forecast

2008

2010

2012

Hotels

14,6

18,7

22,6

Other travel accommodation

4,5

5,9

7,2

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Poor International Image Dampens Prospects for Immediate Recovery

Unfortunately, tourism is one of the most neglected markets in Bangladesh. The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2009 of the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked Bangladesh as 129th amongst 133 countries. The lack of government support has resulted in poor infrastructure such as the poor condition of transport and power. The airline sector has also negatively affected tourism due to limited flights, inefficiency at the airports and flight delays. Local travel is hampered by lack of amenities on the highways, as well as poor road conditions.

Local Tourists Venture Outwards Instead of Exploring Their Own Country

Outbound travel far exceeds inbound travel in Bangladesh. Increasing disposable incomes led Bangladeshis to explore long haul destinations – both for leisure trips and business. Religious trips and medical tourism are also strong reasons for travel.

The prime tourist attractions in Bangladesh include the Sundarbans, Cox's Bazaar and the capital city Dhaka. Despite the presence of some premier Buddhist sites, as well as unexplored eco-tourism potential, the poor image of tourism has led to limited awareness of these unexplored tourist attractions. In addition, tourism is seasonal in Bangladesh, with about 25% of arrivals being in the months of December and January. There is also a lack of campaigns to encourage travel outside peak periods.

Bangladesh: Travel Online Sales

Forecast

2007

2008

2009

Travel accommodation

Internet

7,7

8,9

10,4

Others

92,3

91,1

89,6

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Eco-tourism Is a Buzzword

Eco-tourists are increasing exponentially worldwide. Therefore, the Bangladesh government has been seriously looking at exploring eco-tourism; taking advantage of the presence of the world's largest natural mangrove forest, the Sundarbans.

Adequate water transport and accommodation facilities in the forests are to be created to attract local and foreign tourists; with adequate facilities and opportunities, there is immense potential for the Sundarbans and other rural areas for earning through tourism. Tourism in Bangladesh has the potential to spur overall economic development of the country and result in: growth of the Gross Domestic Product; human resource development; poverty alleviation through development of rural livelihood and employment of women; even promotion of local cuisine.

It requires extensive preparation with a huge financial backup. It is possible for Bangladesh to use tourism development as an integral tool for economic progress, provided that the necessary infrastructure is put in place. With the realisation of tourism's multi-dimensional potential, including balance of payments, economy diversification, revenue expansion and direct and indirect employment opportunities, it makes perfect sense for Bangladesh to give its tourism industry top priority.

TOP 10 Source Countries for Bangladesh Tourism ('000 people)

	2008
Arrivals from India	105,9
Other countries of origin	32,6
Arrivals from United Kingdom	20,9
Arrivals from USA	11,5
Arrivals from China	6,8
Arrivals from Nepal	5,1
Arrivals from Japan	5,0
Arrivals from South Korea	3,1

Arrivals from Canada

2,6

Arrivals from Pakistan

2,0

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