

THE RISE OF ADVENTURE TOURISM AND ITS FUTURE POTENTIAL



Adventure tourism has over the years evolved from a tiny niche market to become one of the nerve centers of growth and development within the travel industry. A study conducted by George Washington University, to establish the span and worth of adventure tourism, notes that this form of traveling is increasingly becoming popular amongst people who're in search of leisure or holiday destinations with vibrant environmental, cultural and natural experiences.

As a result of these trends, adventure tourism is rapidly sailing past other forms of leisure travel that once sat at the industry's apex. **As of 2009 for instance, the sector's global market value stood at \$142 billion** compared to the luxurious cruise lines' share of the market that grossed \$ 27 billion within the same period.

Defining Adventure Travel

Adventure tourism involves travel packages with a mix of cultural exchange, physical undertakings and interrelation with nature, says Adventure Travel Trade Association based in the United States. The travel sub-sector attracts people of all stripes as professionals, families, romantic couples and sporty individuals take part in this form of traveling to enjoy thrilling and dare devil activities that were once a reserve of unwashed backpackers traveling on shoestring budgets.

On average, this category of travelers is usually well educated individuals in their mid 30s, making them eligible passport holders as their travel expenditure, exclusive of airfare, lies in the range of \$450 and \$800 per trip. A study by the Travel Industry Association of America notes that about 98 million Americans have experienced adventurous trips of this kind since the tourism segment's growth has inspired luxurious resorts to offer various adventure related activities as well.

The Growth of the Adventurous Trend

Major international airlines have noted an upward jump in the number of flight bookings owing to the rise of adventure travel. By 2001 for example, adventure travelers made up 16 percent of the airlines' total bookings, a figure that has since then dived to 50 percent. New York Time's travel writer Kirk Johnson says that this shows how well the general global populace has received the new travel concept.

Entertainment spots that double up as major tourism hubs such as Disney have as well warmed up to the idea of attracting and accommodating adventure travelers by introducing adventurous family-centered excursions. **Marriot, Rosewood and Starwood and hotel and resort chains such as Hyatt have also extended their wings of hospitality to cater for adventure travelers.** This is a testimony that the tourism sub-sector is not a passing cloud but an emerging trend that has a place in the future of global tourism.

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