

A PROJECT REPORT
ON

**"PROSPECT OF TOURISM IN SIKKIM:
A GEOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC
PERSPECTIVE"**

SUBMITTED TO
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
B.P. CHALIHA COLLEGE
NAGARBERA

SUBMITTED BY
NAME: _____
GU ROLL NO: UA 003 No _____
G.U. REGISTRATION NO: _____
VI SEMESTER, 2025

DECLARATION

I, Mr./Ms. _____, a student of BA VI Semester, Department of Geography, B.P. Chaliha College, Nagarbera, have completed the Project entitled "Prospect of Tourism in Sikkim: A Geographical and Socio-Economic Perspective" under the supervision of Dr. Biman Lahkar, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, B.P. Chaliha College, Nagarbera. I have executed this project with my classmates, and no part of this report has been copied from any source without proper citation and referencing.

The above statement is true to the best of my knowledge.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Signature of Student

CERTIFICATE FROM THE SUPERVISOR

It is certified that Mr./Ms. _____, a student of BA VI Semester, Department of Geography, B.P. Chaliha College, Nagarbera, has successfully completed the Project report entitled "Prospect of Tourism in Sikkim: A Geographical and Socio-Economic Perspective" under my supervision. He/She has carried out this project with his/her classmates, and no part of this report has been plagiarized from any other source without appropriate referencing.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Dr. Biman Lahkar
Assistant Professor
Department of Geography

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: Introduction & Conceptual Framework	1
CHAPTER II: Geographical Profile & Strategic Location of Sikkim	4
CHAPTER III: Assessing the Strategic Prospects & Challenges of Tourism in Sikkim	6
CHAPTER IV: Summary, Policy Recommendations, and Conclusion	11

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Tourism has transformed into a dominant catalyst for global socioeconomic development, particularly within pristine and ecologically fragile mountain ecosystems. Nestled in the Eastern Himalayas, Sikkim serves as an iconic example of how nature-based, adventure, and cultural tourism can revitalize a regional economy. Flanked by high alpine boundaries and anchored by Mount Khangchendzonga, the state boasts remarkable geographic variety, cultural wealth, and ecological significance.

Historically, tourism in Sikkim has progressed from isolated pilgrimages to highly organized, eco-conscious leisure sectors. The region enjoys widespread international and domestic acclaim as an institutional model for green governance, famously designated as India's first 100% organic state. This strategic positioning creates an important intersection where spatial distribution, geographic variables, and socioeconomic dynamics meet. Yet, balancing environmental preservation with aggressive commercial expansion poses complex landscape challenges.

This research project aims to provide a comprehensive geographical evaluation of the tourism prospects in Sikkim for the calendar year 2025. By utilizing spatial frameworks and socioeconomic indicators, the study clarifies the capacity, growth drivers, structural bottlenecks, and structural challenges facing sustainable tourism operations within this vulnerable mountain domain.

Objectives of the Study

- To map and assess the spatial distribution of major tourism circuits, ecological hotspots, and seasonal tourist flows across Sikkim.
- To evaluate the key socio-economic and environmental drivers accelerating tourism growth, including state infrastructure projects, organic farming synergy, and home-stay schemes.
- To identify and evaluate the ecological, structural, and anthropogenic pressures on tourist destinations, focusing on plastic management, waste accumulation, and structural bottlenecks.
- To propose data-driven, sustainable management strategies and strategic policies to mitigate environmental degradation while optimizing regional livelihood security by 2025.

CHAPTER II: GEOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Sikkim, located in the northeastern wing of India, is characterized by its dramatic mountain topology, high-altitude water networks, and profound geo-strategic relevance. Sharing sovereign borders with Bhutan, Tibet (China), and Nepal, as well as a domestic boundary with West Bengal, Sikkim represents a unique landscape of physical and human geographic traits. The Teesta River acts as the geographic backbone of the state, carving expansive valleys and deep gorges that run from North to South.

Physical Geography & Ecological Foundations

- **Topography and Terrain:** The landscape is steeply undulating, transitioning abruptly from subtropical plains in the southern reaches (around 300 meters) to alpine summits exceeding 8,500 meters. The presence of monumental glaciers, high-altitude lakes like Tsomgo and Gurudongmar, and extensive valleys defines the physical landscape.
- **Climate and Hydrology:** Sikkim's climate features an annual sequence of humid subtropical monsoons in the lowlands to tundra conditions in the high peaks. Heavy precipitation during the monsoons causes major river changes, reshaping paths along the Teesta and Rangit tributaries.
- **Rich Biodiversity:** Representing a critical part of the Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot, the region supports hundreds of orchid species, rare medicinal flora, and endangered animals such as the Red Panda, Snow Leopard, and Musk Deer. Khangchendzonga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, serves as the core of this biological network.

Human and Economic Geography

Sikkim features a diverse human demographic consisting of the indigenous Lepchas, Bhutias, and Nepalese ethnic communities. Settlement patterns are primarily rural, built along mountain ridges, terrace agricultural fields, and valley rivers. However, urban centers like Gangtok, Namchi, Mangan, and Geyzing have grown rapidly as administrative and commercial hubs. Driven by the state's pioneering organic agriculture policy, traditional farming blends seamlessly with rural hospitality. This synergy underpins the structural foundation of Sikkim's fast-expanding homestay tourism network.

CHAPTER III: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF TOURISM

Sikkim's specialized focus on green tourism has led to a major rise in visitor arrivals. Estimates for 2025 indicate a robust population of over 1.2 million domestic and international travelers entering the state annually. Tourism activities are organized along four primary spatial circuits, as detailed below:

Sl. No.	Tourism Sighted District	Key Geographical Attractions	Primary Theme	Est. 2025 Share (%)
1	East Sikkim (Gangtok)	Tsomgo Lake, Nathu La, Baba Mandir	Urban & Border Leisure	45%
2	West Sikkim (Geyzing)	Pelling, Pemayangtse, Yuksom	Heritage & Trekking	25%
3	North Sikkim (Mangan)	Lachung, Yumthang Valley, Lachen	Alpine & Eco-Tourism	20%
4	South Sikkim (Namchi)	Char Dham, Ravangla Buddha Park	Pilgrimage & Culture	10%
Total	-	Comprehensive State Coverage	Integrated Circuits	100%

Classification of Regional Stresses and Constraints

To ensure structured planning, the complex environmental, physical, and socio-economic disturbances facing Sikkim's tourism sector can be systematically classified into natural and anthropogenic factors:

Sl. No.	Nature of Disturbances	Types of Disturbances	Geographical Code
1	Natural	Landslides and Terrain Fragility	LST
2	Natural	Seasonal Flash Floods & River Changes	SFF
3	Anthropogenic	Plastic Accumulation & Waste Management	PWM
4	Anthropogenic	Unregulated Commercial Construction	UCC

5	Anthropogenic	Overcrowding in Fragile Carrying Capacities	OCC
6	Anthropogenic	Traffic Congestion along NH-10 Corridor	TCC
7	Anthropogenic	Water Deficits in High-Altitude Towns	WDT
8	Anthropogenic	Siltation of River Valleys from Roadworks	SRV
9	Anthropogenic	Loss of Vernacular Architectural Style	LVA
10	Anthropogenic	Introduction of Non-biodegradable Consumer Goods	NBC
11	Anthropogenic	Encroachment on Community Forest Buffers	CFB
12	Anthropogenic	Heavy Pesticide Runoff from Peripheral Fields	PRF

Landslides and Fragile Terrain (LST): Sikkim's geographical location makes it highly prone to seismic events and heavy monsoon downslope movements. Severe slope failures break road connectivity along the vital NH-10 lifeline, cutting off economic links and blocking visitor passage to remote alpine zones.

Plastic Accumulation and Waste Management (PWM): Despite rigorous legislative bans on single-use plastics, the massive volume of packed mineral bottles introduced by rapid tourist flows strains local municipal frameworks. High-altitude lakes and valleys struggle under the load of illegal dumping.

Overcrowding Beyond Carrying Capacity (OCC): Famous eco-tourism spots like Tsomgo Lake, Yumthang Valley, and Pelling witness intense congestion during spring and autumn peaks. Exceeding local capacity overloads sanitation systems, depletes ground resources, and degrades the wilderness experience.

Water Deficits in High-Altitude Towns (WDT): Rapid hotel expansion in steep administrative towns like Gangtok and Namchi has caused severe local water shortages during dry operational windows. Natural springs are frequently altered or depleted by extensive real estate footprints.

CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY, POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The 2025 assessment highlights that while tourism remains an indispensable pillar of Sikkim's socioeconomic framework, its current trajectory faces severe geographical and environmental challenges. Unregulated construction, severe landslide blockages, and high-altitude waste generation require immediate, structural changes to safeguard the Eastern Himalayan ecosystem.

Strategic Policy Recommendations

- **Implementation of Dynamic Carrying Capacity Thresholds:** Enforce numeric caps on vehicles and permits entering fragile ecological areas like North Sikkim and high lakes based on seasonal resource availability.
- **Decentralization of Tourism Circuits:** Actively build and fund alternative homestay networks in South and West Sikkim to distribute economic benefits and relieve pressure on Gangtok.
- **Transition to Zero-Waste Circular Economy:** Introduce mandatory, technology-backed reverse-vending machines for PET bottles at entry checkpoints and support local, bamboo-based traditional bottling alternatives.
- **Infrastructure Optimization and Green Engineering:** Apply bio-engineering solutions and retaining structures along the NH-10 corridor to minimize landslide disruptions and check downvalley siltation.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the future of tourism in Sikkim depends on its ability to balance economic expansion with ecological integrity. Adopting a rigorous geographical perspective allows planners to design interventions that protect the state's rare biodiversity while building community resilience. By implementing these green strategies, Sikkim can cement its global status as a pioneer in sustainable, high-altitude mountain tourism.