

Existing Tourism Infrastructure and Services in Lahaul Valley of Himachal Pradesh: A Case Study of Hotels / Guest Houses, Home Stays and Travel Agencies

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Abstract

Lahaul valley of Himachal Pradesh is one of the geographically restricted valleys of India. It remains blocked by Rohtang pass (*approx. 3979 metres*) during winters for almost six months. During remaining six months tourists make their passage to different tourist places in Lahaul up to Leh in Jammu and Kashmir. Their passage is assisted by tourist infrastructure and services available within the valley. The research study has utilized secondary information obtained from office of deputy director of tourism and civil aviation, Kullu at Manali to assess the existing tourism infrastructure and services within the valley. The study has revealed that there are 21 hotels and guest houses in Lahaul tourist area. Out of which 15 are located in Keylong (*district headquarter*) only and remaining 6 in different villages located within the valley. There are only 7 home stays in Lahaul valley in seven different villages. Further, there are 10 travel agencies in Lahaul, out of which 9 are situated in Keylong and one in Shooping. All the above hotels / guest houses, home stays and travel agencies are registered under Deputy Director tourism and civil aviation office, Kullu at Manali. The expected increase in tourist inflow after the construction of Rohtang tunnel would surely enhance the existing tourism infrastructure and services within the valley.

Keywords: *Tourism infrastructure, services, hotels, home stays and travel agencies.*

Introduction

Lahaul Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh has been the largest districts of Himachal Pradesh.

The district has occupied an area of approximately 3979 metres. The district has been divided into two division i.e. Lahaul and Spiti. The Lahaul valley is popular among adventure tourists during summers and monsoon season in India. Geographically, it is one of the beautiful valleys of the country. It is home to numerous tourist attractions like Chnadra and Bhaga rivers, their collision at a place namely Tandi, Udaipur, Miyar village, Trilokinath village, Keylong, Guru Ghantal Monastery, Jispa, Zanskar Sumdo, Shingola pass, Patseo, Baralacha pass, Sarchu, Sissu, Koksar and Lady of Keylong glacier etc. Due to Rohtang pass closure, the valley remains closed for almost six months and tourists have visited the place only during summers till November hardly. Numerous tourists make their passage through the valley up to Leh. Their passage is assisted by different tourism infrastructure and services available within the valley. Tourism infrastructure is comprised of different hotels / guest houses, home stays and travel agencies. Besides, hardcore tourist lodges, a major portion of tourists is assisted by different tents and camping sites. Adventure loving tourists not only get beautiful memories of staying in the lap of nature, but also promoted eco-friendly and temporary tourist establishments. Banking services, medical services, local restaurants and dhaba`s at district headquarter (*Keylong*) and many other tourist spots within the valley, equally supports tourists. Although, there is no hotel chains and modern restaurants but existing hotels and restaurants are catering tourists in satisfactory manners. The tourist traffic remains only for six months within the valley. However, in coming years, after the

construction of Rohtang tunnel the existing tourism infrastructure and services would surely increase.

Review of literature

The review of literature for the research study has been elaborated under various subdivisions as follows:

Tourism infrastructure

Infrastructure is basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society or enterprise or reproductive system as well as the services and facilities necessary for an economy to function. It is also the set of interconnected structural elements that provide framework supporting an entire structure of development. It is an important term for judgement of a country or region's development, (*Wikipedia.org, 2012*). Tourism infrastructure is the physical element that is created or made to cater for visitors (*Davidson, 1993*). Tourist infrastructure comprises of both 'soft' and 'hard' infrastructure. Tourism business encourages host government to make infrastructure improvements such as better roads, water, sewerage system etc. all of which improves the quality of life of local population, (*Manoj Jreat, 2004*). Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation has been making efforts to create necessary infrastructure for healthy growth of tourism in Himachal Pradesh. However, upper reaches of the state have been less developed due to geographical barriers, (*Manjit Singh, 2004*).

Tourism services

Tourism and travel-related services include services provided by hotels and restaurants (*including catering*), travel agencies and tour operator services, tourist guide services and other related services. One of the most crucial aspects of international tourism is the cross-border movement of consumers. This permits even unskilled workers in remote areas to become services exporters — for instance, by selling craft items, performing in cultural shows, or working in a tourism lodge,

(*wto.org, 2012*). One of the objectives of tourism introduction in upper reaches of Himachal Pradesh has been the generation of better employment opportunities, infrastructure and services to cater local residents as well as the visitors, (*Gopal K. Bhargawa and S.C. Bhatt, 2006*).

Hotels

A hotel is an establishment that provides lodging, paid on a short-term basis. The provision of basic accommodation, in times past, consisting only of a room with a bed, a cupboard, a small table and a washstand has largely been replaced by rooms with modern facilities, including en-suite bathrooms and air conditioning or climate control. Additional common features found in hotel rooms are a telephone, an alarm clock, a television, a safe, a mini-bar with snack foods and drinks, and facilities for making tea and coffee. Luxury features includes bathrobes and slippers, a pillow menu, twin-sink vanities, and jacuzzi bathtubs. Larger hotels also provide additional guest facilities such as a swimming pool, fitness centre, business centre, childcare, conference facilities and social function services, (*Wikipedia.org, 2012*). HPTDC has been one of the premier body for tourism infrastructure development in Himachal Pradesh i.e. hotels, guest houses and resorts etc., (*David L. Gladstone, 2013*).

Guest Houses

A guest house (*also guesthouse*) is a kind of lodging. In some parts of the world a guest house is similar to a hostel, bed and breakfast, or inn, whereas in other parts of the world (*such as for example the Caribbean*), guest houses position themselves as a type of inexpensive hotel-like lodging. In still others, it is a private home which is converted for the exclusive use of guest accommodation. The owners usually live in an entirely separate area within the property and the guest houses are serving as a form of lodging business, (*Wikipedia.org, 2012*).

Home stays

Home stay is a form of tourism or study abroad that allows a visitor to rent a room from a local family in a homelike setting. It is sometimes used for improving language skills

and getting familiar with the local lifestyle. Home stays can occur anywhere in the world, but certain countries have been encouraging home stays as a means of developing their tourism industry. Hosting a home stay allows the local family to earn income. Students tend to arrange a home stay with their school or educational institution, but they can also informally arrange to stay with a family through social connections as well as through a variety of private agencies. There are a number of online home stays agencies that connect students with hosts families all over the world, usually for a nominal fee, (*Wikipedia.org, 2012*). Community based eco-tourism in Himachal Pradesh has been identified for the promotion and benefits of local communities at different tourist destinations. Active promotion of home-stays in rural areas as a mean of accommodation for tourists is the prime objective under the project, (*Equitable tourism options, 1985*).

Travel Agencies

The travel agency represents a commercial agency that deals in tour and travels. It also represents the client and the principal, providing a convenient location for the public to make travel arrangements, (Jane Archer and Gwenda Syraht, 2012). A travel agency is a private retailer or public service that provides travel and tourism related services to the public on behalf of suppliers such as airlines, car rentals, cruise lines, hotels, railways, and package tours. In addition to dealing with ordinary tourists most travel agencies have a separate department devoted to making travel arrangements for business travellers and some travel agencies specialize in commercial and business travel only. There are also some travel agencies that are serving as general sales agents for foreign travel companies, allowing them to operate offices in countries other than those, where their headquarters are located, (*Wikipedia.org, 2013*).

Tourism infrastructure and services in Himachal Pradesh have gone numerous reforms during recent ten years. However, upper reaches of Himachal Pradesh like

Lahaul & Spiti, Kinnaur and Chamba have remained derived from provisions of different updated tourism infrastructure and services. One main reason behind lesser tourism infrastructure and services has been limited tourist inflows towards upper reaches of the state.

Research design

The research study has utilized secondary information obtained through Right to Information Act, from Office of Deputy Director tourism and civil aviation office, Kullu at Manali. Further, the study has also utilized the information obtained from official website of Himachal tourism.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study was to find out the existing tourism infrastructure and services within the Lahaul tourist area.

Findings and discussion

The findings of the research study have been enumerated under two sub-headings i.e. tourism infrastructure and tourism services as follows:

Tourism infrastructure

Tourism infrastructure within Lahaul tourist area has been studied mainly under hotel / guest houses, home stays and travels agencies. There are 21 hotels and guest houses in Lahaul tourist area. Out of which 15 are located in Keylong (*district headquarter*) only and 2 in Jispa, 1 in Udaipur, 1 in Sissu, 1 in Gemur and 1 in Billing village near Keylong.

There are only 7 home stays in Lahaul valley in seven different villages, out of which 1 in Sumnam village, 1 in Jispa village, 1 in Sissu village, 1 in Keylong, 1 in Rupsand village, 1 in Jahalma and 1 in Shashin village. The tabulation has been done as follows:

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Sr. No.	Name of tourism unit	Location
1.	Hotel Ibex	Village Jispa
2.	Hotel Tashi Delog	Keylong
3.	Yongpha Guest House, Udaipur	Village Udaipur
4.	Hotel Gyespa	Keylong
5.	Hotel Lamayuru	Keylong
6.	Hotel Dekid	Keylong
7.	Hotel Snow Land	Keylong
8.	Hoel Dupchin	Keylong
9.	Neel Kanth Nalwa Paying Guest House	Keylong
10.	Mantokling Guest House	Keylong
11.	Hotel Valley View	Keylong
12.	Triveni Guest House	Village Sissu
13.	Gemoor Khar Guest House	Village Gemur
14.	Hotel Chandrbhaga (HPTDC)	Keylong
15.	Nordaing Paying Guest House	Keylong
16.	Khadrolling Guest House	Keylong
17.	Hotel New Gyespa	Keylong
18.	Sumrilla Guest House	Keylong
19.	Hotel Tashi Ghatsal	Village Billing, near Keylong
20.	Hotel Dupchin Inn	Keylong
21.	Padma Lodge	Village Jispa

Table No. 1: List of Hotels / Guest Houses registered in Lahaul Tourist Area.

Source: Office of Deputy Director tourism and civil aviation office, Kullu at Manali.

Sr. No.	Name of Home Stay Unit	Location
1.	Lahaul Home Stay	Village Sumnam
2.	Thakur House Home Stay	Village Jispa
3.	Tashi Yanglik Home Stay	Village Sissu
4.	Lingup Home Stay	Keylong
5.	Yoterpa Home Stay	Village Rupsand
6.	DL Home Stay	Jahalma
7.	Cheery Home Stay	Village Shashin

Table No. 2: List of Home Stays registered in Lahaul Tourist Area.

Source: Office of Deputy Director tourism and civil aviation office, Kullu at Manali.

Further, there are **10 travel agencies** in Lahaul, out of which 9 are situated in Keylong

and one in Shooling. The tabulation has been done as follows:

Sr. No.	Name of Travel Agency	Location
1.	Tashi Delek Tours	Keylong
2.	Shashur Travels	Keylong
3.	Drilbu adventure	Keylong
4.	Snow Cock Adventure	Keylong
5.	Ganjal Tour and Travels	Keylong
6.	Brokpa Adventures Tours	Keylong
7.	Adventure Tour and Travels	Keylong
8.	Yargyas Adventures Town End	Keylong
9.	Shakia Tour and Travels	Keylong
10.	Shoora Adventures	Shooling

Table No. 3: *List of Travel Agencies registered in Lahaul Tourist Area.*

Source: *Office of Deputy Director tourism and civil aviation office, Kullu at Manali.*

All the above hotels / guest houses, home stays and travel agencies have been registered under Deputy Director tourism and civil aviation office, Kullu at Manali. The major infrastructure division i.e. Roads have been maintained by Border Roads Organization and Centre Public Works Department in collaboration with H.P.P.W.D. (Himachal Pradesh Public Works Department).

Tourism services

The above mentioned hotels, home stays and travel agencies have been providing the accommodation as well as other ancillary services required by different tourists. However, banking services have mainly relied upon State Bank of India branches and medical services have been provided by divisional hospital at Keylong. The local police have well provided the security services, which have been least required, because of honest and cool behaviour of local people. Remaining tourism services requirements have been supplemented by different local travel agents as well as travel agencies in Manali.

The tourism statistics obtained from official website of Himachal tourism has also revealed

that the tourist inflow to Lahaul & Spiti district in 2012 was 4,44,075 (3,96,662 Indian and 47,413 foreigners) and in 2013, it was 1,19,713 (1,14,726 Indian and 4,897 foreigners). Only 28 hotels, guest houses and home stays have not been enough to deal with such numbers of tourists. As majority of the tourists are adventure tourists, thus they opt for tented accommodations instead of hotels etc. provided by different travel agencies within the valley.

Conclusion

From the above information and discussion, it has been quite evident that different hotels, guest houses, home stays and travel agencies have been provided tourism infrastructural and service needs to numerous tourists. However, adventure tourists have also been supplemented by tented accommodations provided by different travel agents, as majority of tourists have visited the place for adventure activities. The tourist traffic remains only for six months within the valley. However, in coming years, after the construction of Rohtang tunnel the existing tourism infrastructure and services would surely increase.

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