

MOUNTAIN BIKING IN INDIA: A NEW DEFINITION TO ADVENTURE SPORT

Shweta TANWAR*

Abstract: Mountain biking is one of most prominent and widely used adventure tourism. It is a way for challenging ones' own self and testing in times of great danger. When we talk in terms of India, this mountain biking tourism becomes all the more important. As India is a land of diverse geographical area. It provides a lot of different experiences in the terrain of Himalayas. This tourism is a feast for eyes and at the same time a test for the physical fitness. It is very dangerous as the hilly region is very slippery and there are no proper roads. The drive is also on elevated slopes where a lot of energy is needed to drag the machine of steel to higher altitudes. But the result of this is very memorable and the overtaking of energy and tiredness is gone away the moment when one find himself in the lap of nature which is so divine. In this paper, we are trying to deal with mountain biking tourism in India and what all uniqueness are associated with it in India.

Key words: Adventure, natural beauty, physical fitness, high altitude, cultural diversity, India

Introduction

India is a land of diversity. This diversity is on grounds of both culture as well as geography. We can have many forms of tourism or it will be more appropriate to say we have a package that will suit to the aspirations of everyone. Among them there is one category of adventure tourism. This comprises of so many extreme sports like mountain rafting, tracking, climbing and biking to name a few. Nowadays, a great stress is given on mountain biking expeditions in India. People from far off are coming to satisfy their hunger for challenging ones own self in extreme conditions.

In this paper, we are trying to deal with mountain biking tourism in India and at the same time how it is different from other countries. But first of all, we look in the details adventure tourism.

Adventure tourism

Adventure as Oxford dictionary says is "unusual, exciting or dangerous experience or undertaking". It is the feeling of excitement associated with danger, risk taking. To sum up, it is testing one's own self in extreme adversity.

* Amity Business School, Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur, India.

And when it is associated with tourism, which as per oxford dictionary is a stay in journey for pleasure. So when these two are combined, we come to know about a new race of people who seeks pleasure in testing them in adversity that is having a passion to face danger. Adventure sport is meant for those who have confidence in themselves and at the same time are willing to take any risk in order to have the ultimate happiness and a feeling of satisfaction.

Origin and development of bicycle

Human beings have made use of wheel since ancient times. The invention of wheel not only brought about a revolution in the realm of transportation but also gave rise to a number of sporting activities. Through the centuries, the wheel remained a faithful companion of man.

Three and four-wheeled horse drawn carriages became popular mode of transport during the medieval period. Though horse-drawn carriages could transport a number of people from one place to another, there was a need to create a vehicle, which could be powered by human muscle and was easy to handle. The first “bicycle” was invented in the early years of the 19th century; but it was not so sophisticated. This strange-looking two wheeler was also referred to as celeriferes and velociferes. The rider has to push his feet backward along the ground to push the vehicle forward. Along with this, the rider has to maintain his balance. In 1817, Baron Karl von Drais built a model with a handlebar attached to the front wheel. The handlebar helped the rider to maintain the balance.

Between 1817 and 1900 a number of development like steel tubes, ball bearings, stable handlebars, pedals, chain, wire spokes, pneumatic tires, etc., improved the bike. At the beginning of the 20th century, bicycles became lighter, faster, comfortable and easier to handle. The low cost of maintenance made bicycle the most popular means of transport in the world. In the mean time, bicycles are also started using for sport activity. Better and lighter models of bicycles were made for traversing hilly countryside and steep mountain roads. The sport of mountain biking has gained a lot of popularity among adventure seekers in countries having hilly tracts and mountain ranges.

Mountain Biking

Mountain biking is a land based adventure sport. It is one of the most challenging and physically demanding adventure sport. Even the fittest have trouble in bigging their bikes up the hill. They have to ride amid hilly regions which are very rough and uneven. Sometimes it results in many ailments like muscular pain, cramps etc but the most common is aching backs. But despite

of this fact, one truth which motivates everyone is seeing the natural beauty in its full glory. They are on the way which is very less toddled and can enjoy the calm serenity away from hustle and bustle. This serve two purpose, one fulfilling their desire to do something very wild and extreme. Second, having some memorable time in the lap of nature which is a great distressing and a rejuvenating force.

Mountain Biking in India

India has some of the highest mountain ranges in the world. It also has some of the world's highest roads. In India Mountain biking is done in Himalayan region. Himalayan region is stretched to many states like Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttranchal, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Sikkim. And all these places provide a lot of diversity which provides the adventure tourist with ample opportunity to appreciate the natural beauty and the heterogeneous cultural vibrance. It is really a feast for both soul and mind. It transfers the tourist to a mystic land of calmness which is free from all sorts of worries. Himalayas offer a picturesque sight seeing. The Terrain forest, on the foothills of Nainital, a place in Uttranchal are very appropriate for mountain biking. The Himachal Pradesh has many beautiful stretches where biking can be a real joy and unforgettable experience.

Prominent destinations

Ladhak

The Leh-Manali Highway is the second highest motor able road in the world. the entire stretch of 458 km between Leh and Manali offers a challenge to mountain bikers who have the opportunity to cut across the majestic Himalayan ranges through four mountain passes. This highway reaches a height of 5,328 m at Taglang La pass. The other three passes along the highway are Lachlung La, The Baralacha La and the Rohtang pass. All these are very high – altitude trail and at the same time it s very dangerous as the path is very steep and uneven. This requires a lot of balance and a great efficiency in driving.

Himachal Pradesh

Sarchu is one of the prominent destinations which fall in Himachal Pradesh. It is connected to greater heights in Ladhak. Kullu and Manali also act as a great place for thrilling experience.

Uttar Pradesh

Thrilling experience of mountain biking can also be enjoyed in the foothills of Himalayan ranges in the towns of Haridwar, Rishikesh, Dehradun and Mussoorie.

Physical Requirements

As this is a sport which demands a lot of energy and at a great stamina so it is very obvious conclusion that all those who are physically fit can go for it. It is a game of endurance. It is a mechanism where one has to lift himself to higher altitudes and after so much of physical exertion it is heavily taxing on the human body. So, the individual suffering from heart diseases, high blood pressure, joints pains are not advised undertake such tour of adventure.

Necessary Equipments

A mountain bike is a very sophisticated vehicle. It is much more advanced form of the bicycle used in daily life. A lot of preparation needs to be undertaken before going on for this journey so that it will be remain an adventure full of good memory. One should have good helmet, eye gear, gloves, proper clothes and comfortable shoes. Along with this first aid kit, water bottles, bag. For the maintenance of bicycle one repair kit is a must.

But a proper care is needed in selecting all these as all the things should be of light weight so that they can be easily carried.

Unique features of mountain biking in India

Himalayan India is a vivid kaleidoscope of several tiny foothill villages, customs, traditions and folklore of the people. It is a great experience to visit and explore these places. The nature provides so many vivid beauties that one can not even think of having at one place. So much diversity is found not only in culture but also in nature. The fast changing colours of the landscapes and rising altitude provide a complete novel experience

There is no better way to experience the local culture of a place than by actually cycling through it. One has the opportunity to stop at the towns and villages to get a deep insight into their way of life. There can be no two thoughts about the fact that biking through a place is a unique way of experiencing the local tradition and culture of a place. Added to this, the astonishing scenic grandeur of the breathtaking Himalayan milieu will make adventure holiday worth remembering all through the life.

Along with this the beautiful Buddhist culture which can be seen at Ladakh stands a testimony that here the time is also in a still mode. These places introduce to a different world which is running parallel to our world where there is no place for calmness. Here we get a feast for eyes and it satisfies the hunger for peace and calmness which are nowadays extinct from our busy and hectic schedules.

Conclusion

Mountain biking is a tourism which is a combination of both sports and at the same time tourism, a trip for pleasure. Nowadays, there is great craze for this. More and more people in order to increase their stamina are going for this. This is a way where one can have a first hand experience of nature and culture which is far away from the entire hustle bustle. It gives an opportunity to go in the lap of nature and spend some time all alone in the company of one's own self and do some self analysis. This is a great way to examine one's energy level and at the same time it keeps the person agile and full of zeal. It makes an individual risk taking and at the same time sharpens the reflexes which can save the person from dangerous diseases like Parkinson. So we can conclude, this type of tourism, no doubt is very risky, as it is challenging the might of nature. A lot of precaution needs to be taken before undertaking it. A company of experienced guide is mandatory for this type of adventure. Over indulgence in adventure should be avoided as it sometimes results in fatal accidents. But overall, it is a great experience. And at the same time a new revenue generation model for the countries like India which are having such a beautiful and majestic mountain range, Himalayas.

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