



## **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH: A CASE STUDY OF GLOW LAKE**

Rajaram Riram <sup>1</sup> & Dr. Sukanta Kumar Pradhan <sup>2</sup>

### **RESEARCH ARTICLE**



#### **Author Details:**

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor in History,  
Indira Gandhi Government College,  
Tezu, Arunachal Pradesh, India;

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor in Education,  
Indira Gandhi Government College,  
Tezu, Arunachal Pradesh, India

#### **Corresponding Author:**

Dr. Sukanta Kumar Pradhan

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#### **Abstract**

Arunachal Pradesh- the land of rising sun is emerging as one of India's most promising destinations for eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and rural tourism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The natural beauty of the state attracts several tourists from different parts of India and even from abroad. There are many tourist destinations in Arunachal Pradesh like The ItaFort in Itanagar, Papum pare district, Malinithan, in Lower Siang district, Tawang Monastery in Tawang district, Golden Pagoda in Namsai District, Namdapha National Park in Changlang district, Stillwell Road, in Changlang district, Parshuram Kund and Glow Lake in Lohit District, Mayudia pass in Lower Dibang valley district, Mechuka in Si-yomi district etc that attract the tourists from India and abroad. Glow Lake stands out as an epitome of both the opportunities and challenges in developing tourism while preserving ecological and cultural integrity. The present paper finds out how Glow Lake strikes a balance between tourism development and conservation and what steps have been taken; what remains to be done; and what Glow Lake could mean for the future of sustainable tourism in Arunachal Pradesh.

**Keywords:** Glow Lake, Tourism Development, Sustainable tourism

### **Introduction**

Arunachal Pradesh – the land of rising sun is situated in the north-eastern corner of India. The state of Arunachal Pradesh, practically the gate way of the Indian Union from the East, came up in its present administrative and territorial form in 1957 when it Tuensang division was excluded and merged with the present Nagaland State. In ancient times it was known as "Seres" or "Serica" (Upper Assam) of the Kingdom of Pragjyotisha or Kamrupa (Assam). In medieval times, it was known as "Saumer" (Upper Assam) or "Uttarkul" (North Assam). Hence during the British period it was known as "a hidden land". Later on by 1913 Arunachal Pradesh was known as North East Frontier, by 1953, it was known as North-East frontier Agency. It was on January 10, 1972 that the Government of India renamed the erstwhile NEFA to Arunachal Pradesh and was given a Union Territory status. Later on with the changing socio-economic and political development in the country, Arunachal Pradesh was declared as a full fledged state on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987 by the Government of India having its capital at Itanagar in the Papumpare district. At present there are 27 districts in Arunachal Pradesh and Glow lake is situated in Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh.

### **Brief History about Lohit District**

The Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh lies in the eastern most tip of our country. It is an enchanting land having pristine scenic beauty that attracts the tourists and other people from rest of the country., Lohit district is named after the mighty river that meanders across the mountainous region from Tibet and enters India at DICHU village of KIBITHOO circle of ANJAW district and gushes down to meet the mighty BRAHMAPUTRA in the plains of Assam.

Lohit district lies in the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh between 95°45' and 96°45' East longitudes and 27°30' and 28°02' North latitudes with an approximate geographical area of 5212 sq. kms. It is bounded by China along the Mc-Mohan line and part of Dibang valley district in the north, Changlang district in the south, Anjaw district in the east, Assam and part of Lower Dibang valley district in the west.

The political and administrative history of Lohit district can be traced back to the year 1914 when there existed three administrative tracts such as:

- ❖ The Central and Eastern Section
- ❖ The Lakhimpur Frontier Tract
- ❖ The Western Section

A political officer was assigned in each section to look after the tracts. In 1919 the Central and Western Section was renewed as Sadiya Frontier Tract with its head quarter at Sadiya. In 1948, Sadiya Frontier Tracts was further bifurcated into two district namely Abhor Hills District comprising Adi inhabited areas and Mishmi Hills District comprising Mishmi inhabited areas. On 13th August 1952, Tezu became the headquarter of Mishmi Hills district. Two years later in 1954 Mishmi Hills district was further renamed as Lohit Frontier Division., In 1956 Dibang valley was created as a separate sub-division with its headquarter at Roing. In 1965, Lohit Frontier Division was declared as Lohit district. In 1980 Lohit district was carved out and Dibang Valley district with its headquarters at Anini was created. Again by another bifurcation of Lohit, Anjaw district with its headquarters at Hawai created in December 2003.

The topography of Lohit district covers a chain of hills and mountains, altitudes of which varies from 500 meters to 5000 meters (approx). The huge mountainous region of the northern boundary is extremely cold as a result large tracts remain snow bound almost throughout the year. The region at the foot hills are covered with dense tropical forests and are intersected by deep ravines and water courses. The district is named after the river Lohit which has immense impact on the socio-economic development of the people of this region. The climate of this district varies from the place to place. At the foot hills of the region it is quite hot during summer and moderately cold during winter.

Lohit district carries historical heritage as the famous Parsuram Kund, Shiva Temple at Paya area, Glow Lake under Wakro Circle located in this district as tourist destination. Parsuram Kund is also steeped in tribal legend and is much venerated by Hindus. According to Kalika Purna, the holy Sage *Parsuram* is said to have wandered all over the world to atone for the sin of matricide initiated by his father, a fiery tempered sage, *Jamadagni*. On the advice of Lord Shiva and Vishnu, he came to bathe in Kund in this remote land in order to do away with the sin of matricide. The axe that was struck to his hand, fell away cleaving the mountain from which sprang the Lohit river and Parasuram ultimately redeemed from the terrible sin of Killing his mother. The major tribes of this district are the Mishmis, the Khampties and the Singphoes. The Mishmi are sub-divided into three major groups namely the Idus or Chulikatas, the Taroans or the Digarus and the Kamans or the Mijus. Among these three sub-groups the Idus are inhabiting in Dibang valley and Lower Dibang Valley districts. The main languages of the people of the district are Kamans, Taroan, Khampti and Singpho. Hindi is a link language for the daily communication between people from outside the region and English is the official language for communication.

### **Glow Lake: A Gem in the Wilderness**

Glow Lake is located in the Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary (sometimes referred to as Kamlang Tiger Reserve) under Wakro Circle in the Lohit district. It is situated at a high altitude of approximately 1168 meters above the sea level (5,000 ft) and covers a sizeable area approximately 8 kms. It is a remote, mostly trekking-accessible lake, not a developed tourist hotspot. The sanctuary's terrain spans a broad altitudinal range and supports different types of forest – from tropical wet-evergreen in lower reaches to temperate and subalpine in higher zones. Its beauty comes from natural scenery the hills, forest and snow-clad mountains making it popular among adventure tourists and other kinds of tourists. The remote, pristine nature of Glow Lake – forested surroundings, mountainous backdrop, and minimal development – gives it a rare appeal: a blend of wilderness, serenity, and adventure.

### **Access and Trekking**

The nearest human settlement is Wakro circle. From the region's road network (via Chongkham–Wakro road), the lake can be approached by trekking. The trekking route involves travel by road up to the last motorable point (near Sinai River / Sinai Berai), then a trek along the west bank of the Kamlang River, cross a hanging (suspension) bridge, followed by a hilly trek climbing up to around 1,380 m before descending to the lake.

The trail is challenging, surging hills, forest paths, and no major developed roads – making the trip more suited to experienced hikers and adventure-seeking travelers. This remoteness and difficulty create both appeal (untouched beauty) and obstacles (access, infrastructure) as well.

### **Tourism Potential and Government Policy Context**

In 2025, the state government of Arunachal Pradesh adopted a new tourism policy (2025–30) that seeks to transform the tourism landscape. The policy emphasizes eco-tourism, adventure tourism, spiritual and cultural tourism, rural and agro-tourism, and encourages community-based tourism models like home stays, handicrafts, and local entrepreneurship.

More specifically:

- The government aims to expand trekking, rafting, wildlife tourism, and adventure sports – segments in which Glow Lake and its sanctuary region naturally fit.
- There is a focus on building infrastructure and connectivity (roads, eco-friendly accommodations) while maintaining ecological sensitivity and sustainable practices.
- For wildlife-rich zones like the Kamlang Sanctuary, there is explicit emphasis on balancing tourism growth with conservation of biodiversity and habitat integrity. In light of this policy environment, Glow Lake becomes a strategic site: a natural resource that, if developed prudently, can drive adventure and eco-tourism, support local livelihoods, and showcase Arunachal as a global-class tourism destination. (Arunachal Times,2025)

## **Recent Developments in Infrastructure & Eco-Tourism**

Developments demonstrate that Glow Lake and the surrounding region are gradually being integrated into mainstream tourism planning:

- In early 2025, local authorities inaugurated a new road and steel bridge at Sena Brai – improving connectivity towards “Glaw / Glow Lake”.
- The same announcement highlighted plans to develop Glow Lake as a tourist hotspot, with the caveat that the natural vegetation and wildlife corridor should remain undisturbed.
- The recent policy push includes developing nature trails, angling spots, and eco-friendly tourism infrastructure within the sanctuary region – aligning with the ecological character of Glow Lake and surrounding forest zones.

These steps reflect growing recognition that remote lakes like Glow can become viable tourism hubs – provided development is carried out responsibly. (The New Indian Express, 2024)

## **Challenges & Risks: Ecology, Access, and Sustainable Tourism Realities**

Despite the promise, there are non-trivial challenges that complicate tourism development at Glow Lake. Some of these are structural, others ecological or social:

- 1. Remoteness & Difficult Access:** The trek to Glow Lake remains arduous. For many prospective visitors – especially casual travellers or families – the lack of proper roads, long trekking hours, and rough terrain pose a major deterrent.
- 2. Lack of Developed Tourism Infrastructure:** There was little to offer in terms of comfortable stay – no proper resorts, limited rest-houses, and paucity of amenities such as toilets, eating outlets, marked trails, and safety support. Such lack not only reduces tourist inflow but also makes it difficult to integrate the site into broader tourism circuits that often cater to comfort/experience-oriented travellers.
- 3. Ecological Sensitivity & Conservation Risks:** Glow Lake lies within Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary, a biodiversity-rich zone hosting tigers, clouded leopards, hoolock gibbons, and other rare flora/fauna. Overdevelopment, unregulated tourism, or infrastructure expansion could jeopardize habitat integrity, disturb wildlife corridors, and harm the fragile ecosystem. This is especially true if tourist numbers increase without corresponding conservation planning. Recognizing this concern, the sanctuary was declared an eco-sensitive zone – signaling the need for careful regulation of human activity. (The New Indian Express, 2024)
- 4. Community Involvement, Livelihood & Cultural Sensitivity:** While tourism promises economic benefits (through homestays, guides, crafts, local services), such benefit must flow to local tribes (e.g. the Mishmi communities) in ways that respect their culture, land rights, and environment. Poorly managed tourism could lead to cultural dilution, resource overuse (deforestation, waste, pollution), or social disruption. Without active community participation, tourism development might not be sustainable.

## **Glow Lake as a Potential Model for Sustainable & Community-Led Tourism**

Given the natural beauty, biodiversity, remoteness, cultural richness, Glow Lake has the potential to become a model for sustainable tourism in Arunachal. The following are the strategies:

- **Eco-tourism and Adventure Tourism Hub:** With trekking, nature trails, bird- and wildlife-watching, Glow Lake can attract adventure seekers and nature lovers.
- **Community-Based Tourism & Livelihoods:** Through homestays, guided treks, local handicrafts, and services (guides, food, logistics), local tribal communities can have sustainable income.
- **Conservation-Led Tourism:** Since the lake is within a protected sanctuary, tourism can be regulated to minimize ecological footprint – an example of “high-value, low-impact” tourism.
- **Integration with State Policy:** As the new tourism policy for 2025–30 prioritizes eco-tourism, adventure tourism and rural tourism, Glow Lake fits well with the state’s broader vision. (GOAP, 2025)

If managed well – improving access, building minimal eco-friendly infrastructure, involving local communities, enforcing conservation norms, Glow Lake could become a flagship destination demonstrating how Arunachal balances development and nature.

## **Recommendations: Key Steps to Realize the Potential**

Based on the current scenario and challenges, here are some recommendations for stakeholders (government, forest department, local communities, tourism planners):

- 1. Improvement in Access & Basic Infrastructure:**
  - Maintain and upgrade trekking routes and suspension bridges to ensure safety.
  - Build minimal, eco-friendly accommodations (homestays, forest rest houses) rather than large resorts.
  - Provide basic amenities: sanitation, waste disposal, marked trails, signage, first-aid.
- 2. Promote Responsible & Regulated Tourism:**
  - Limit number of visitors per season to avoid ecological stress.
  - Impose strict “no-plastic”, “leave no trace” rules; encourage use of reusable items.
  - Create a visitor-management plan with forest department oversight.

**3. Empower Local Communities:**

- Involve tribal and local communities directly – as guides, hosts, porters, craft sellers.
- Promote local handicrafts, traditional food, cultural exchange.
- Use part of tourism revenue for community development (education, health, infrastructure).

**4. Eco-sensitive Conservation Measures:**

- Strengthen protection of wildlife corridors; monitor human impact.
- Designate buffer zones around the lake where human activity is limited.
- Regular ecological assessments to ensure biodiversity aren't harmed.

**5. Sustainable Tourism Planning & Promotion:**

- Package Glow Lake as part of a broader sustainable tourism circuit (with other nearby attractions: pilgrimage sites, village-stays, forest trails).
- Market to niche travellers interested in ecology, adventure, offbeat travel – not mass tourism.
- Use digital tourism platforms to provide information, e-permits, maps, guidelines.

**Conclusion:**

Glow Lake is a synergy of adventure, nature, community livelihoods, and conservation. As part of Arunachal Pradesh's new tourism vision (2025–30), Glow Lake offers great avenues for sustainable tourism. If developed thoughtfully, it can showcase how rural, protected, and remote areas can be opened up for tourism without sacrificing ecological or social integrity. However, realizing this potential requires careful planning, community engagement, conservation-first mindset, and long-term commitment. Without these, the risks of ecological damage, social disruption or unsustainable tourism growth remain real. The real challenge is to build a tourism model that respects nature, uplifts communities, and offers authentic, sustainable experiences to travellers from across India and beyond.

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