

## **GIS for tourism development in Sri Lanka**

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Tourism is a major foreign exchange earner of the Sri Lankan economy. It is well-known that the country is enriched with natural ecosystems, biodiversity, beautiful beaches with sunshine throughout the year, pleasant climate, a long cultural and historical heritage, a friendly people and affordable tourist facilities. Nevertheless, tourism potential of the whole country has not been fully explored and marketed.

The conclusion of the civil war continued over two decades has given a unique opportunity for tourism development in Sri Lanka. If this opportunity can be exploited successfully, Sri Lanka has a great opportunity, to be the focal point of tourism in South Asia. To achieve this target Sri Lanka will have to fulfill several requirements in the industry.

At present, Sri Lanka tries to develop the tourism sector to increase tourist arrivals to the country in future. According to the emerging trend, there is no doubt this exciting industry will blossom out in near future. The success of the tourism sector in any country is based on the natural and cultural resource base of that country, facilities and activities for tourists, ability to develop, manage and market the tourism. It's clear that Sri Lanka has well enough resources and the ability to develop tourism. On the other hand the other criterions are needed for its rapid and sustainable development. This paper discusses the importance of GIS application for promote tourism in Sri Lanka.

Nowadays, using GIS has increased in many sectors worldwide. It has become a powerful tool to support decision making, planning and analyzing at various economic activities. Implementation of GIS technology along with multimedia tools would provide comprehensive information for both tourists and tourism development stakeholders. Tourism integrated with GIS (G-Tourism) has the capability to handle critical data and several kinds of information that can be related to a space or place. This spatial data bank or spatial data library can be updated easily and it will be answered all questions related to tourism such as What is that?, Where is it?, Why should I go there?, Which tourist activities are there?, Who are the facilitators? and How do I get there? etc. just on click. Though, the initial investment is somewhat high to form G-Tourism in Sri Lanka, it is suitable and timely needed to be competitive with the international tourism market.