

**POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES, ISSUES AND
CHALLENGES IN RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
[WITH REFERENCE TO ANURADHAPURA AREA]**

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Potential Opportunities Issues and Challenges to Develop Rural Tourism in
Anuradhapura Area

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ABSTRACT

The concept of rural tourism, which emerged before several decades, is no longer a new jargon to Sri Lanka and it acts as a vehicle for the rapid economic and social development in most destinations. Anuradhapura is situated in the north central province of Sri Lanka a place with cross culture, religious value, and better rural setting but in tourism industry not in adequate level.

Rural Tourism is,

“A multi-faceted activity that takes place in an environment outside an urbanized area and represents to the traveler the essence of country life”- Australia both National and State tourism bodies (DOT, 1993:2, DOT, 1994)

Therefore Rural Tourism is a best way to develop the area. But there is low level of development in Rural Tourism in Anuradhapura area

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Via this research I wish to identify the potential opportunities, issues and challenges to develop rural tourism in Anuradhapura area, and the problems and obstacles faced by the tourism professionals and to identify subjects to overcome those problems in order to promote Anuradhapura as the niche market for rural tourism.

To conduct this research the methodology that followed was interview to collect primary data from government and private sector tourism professionals.

Data analysis methods were SWOT analysis, graphs and charts.

Rural tourism is a good opportunity for agricultural based and rural communities but the setting of objectives and the final tourism development plan needs caution. According to research findings there is a low level of improvement in Rural Tourism in Anuradhapura area.

According to the potentials in the study I identified several Rural Tourism activities. even though there are number of challenges such as The economy, Transport, Government legislation, General costs, etc. Possible solutions were identified for these issues and challenges to make a better development in rural tourism development in Anuradhapura area.

The government should do master plan about the potential opportunities in Anuradhapura area to improve tourism. Governments have to provide necessary guidelines for the rural tourism operators.

There should be effective promotion in Anuradhapura as a destination and the country via internet marketing and international media.

Infrastructure facilities of Anuradhapura area is not in a satisfactory level. Government should improve the infrastructure facilities by getting support from private investors.

There should be proper training and development programs. In each tourism related institute or organization there should be tourism professionals.

Key Words: Rural Tourism, SWOT analysis