

## TRANSFORMING JAFFNA THROUGH ECOTOURISM: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

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*Jaffna is on the cusp of becoming a shining example of sustainable tourism. This enchanting district boasts a rich cultural heritage, breathtaking natural landscapes, and vibrant local communities. Our research reveals that ecotourism can be a game-changer for Jaffna, driving sustainable development, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage preservation. Our research proposes a holistic approach, blending ecocentrism (valuing all living organisms and ecosystems) with anthropocentrism (prioritizing human needs). By integrating these perspectives, we can create a sustainable and responsible tourism model that empowers local communities and preserves the environment. Strong legal frameworks are vital to supporting ecotourism in Jaffna. We need laws that protect natural ecosystems, prevent overdevelopment, and regulate tourist activities to minimize environmental degradation. These laws should prioritize transparency, stakeholder participation, and equitable benefit-sharing among local communities. By embracing community-based tourism initiatives, Jaffna can reap economic benefits while preserving its unique cultural and natural heritage. Our research underscores the importance of environmental conservation, community involvement, educational experiences, ethical travel, and sustainability in achieving ecotourism's full potential. As we delve into the opportunities and challenges of ecotourism in Jaffna, we uncover a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives. By harnessing the power of ecotourism, coupled with robust legal frameworks, Jaffna can forge a resilient and sustainable future one that honours the district's natural beauty, cultural richness, and community spirit.*

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Sustainable Development, Community-Based Tourism, Environmental Conservation, Cultural Heritage Preservation, Legal Frameworks