

**Developing Archaeological tourism in prehistoric cave sites of Sri Lanka:
potentials and pitfalls**

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The aim of this paper is to present a preliminary discussion of the potentials and pitfalls of developing archaeological tourism in prehistoric cave sites in Sri Lanka. It is evident that there were prehistoric settlements in Sri Lanka by ca. 125,000 BP. Evidence of the island's prehistoric past are apparent from the coastal deposits such as the Iranamadu formation, the gem bearing alluvial gravels of the Ratnapura district as well as cave sites or rock shelters located throughout the country. Prehistoric sites such Fa-hien cave, Batadombalena, Kitulagala (lowland wet zone in South-western Sri Lanka), Aligala, Pothana (Dry Zone North Central Province), Vettambugala, Hulannuge, Rajagala (Dry Zone, Eastern Province), Alawala and Varana (Wet Zone, Western Province) are some cave/ rock shelters which have provided significant evidence of prehistoric activities.

In terms of archaeological tourism attractions, these prehistoric cave sites present a vast untapped potential. As Sri Lanka is set on achieving a target of 2.5 million tourists by the year 2016, the island is faced with a great need to diversify its tourism products. Therefore, there is a great potential to develop these prehistoric cave sites into archaeological tourism products. The study has utilized data derived from field visits to selected cave sites, interviews with relevant authorities in the fields of tourism and archaeology, as well as related literary sources.

Key words: *Prehistoric cave sites, Archaeological tourism, Cultural tourism, Tourism products*