



*The World's Premier Kingdom Destination*

## North Central Province (NCP) **TOURISM STRATEGY: 2026-2031**

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வட மத்திய மாகாண சுற்றுலா மூலோபாயத் திட்டம்



Heritage & Water  
Civilization Experience



Wellness & Mindfulness  
Heritage Sanctuary



Forest Therapy  
& Nature Healing Zone



Green Retreat  
& Agro-Wellness Valley



Community Life  
& Cultural Trails



Agro-Living &  
Floating Experiences



Water & Wildlife  
Harmony Corridor



Wildlife Adventure  
& Night-Life Zone



Chief Ministry

Provincial Council Administrative Building, North Central Provincial Council  
Harishchandra Mawatha, Anuradhapura, 50000, Sri Lanka

June 2026

## Vision and Direction

The “**Tourism Strategic Development Plan 2026 – 2031**,” formulated to carry the timeless legacy of the North Central Province, the cradle of Sri Lanka civilization, into the modern world, marks a landmark in our collective journey to position the province as “**the World’s Premier Kingdom Destination**.”

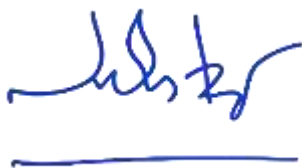
In this era of rapid transformation within the tourism industry, we have shifted our focus beyond traditional mass market travel toward an experiential tourism model rooted in heritage, nature, culture, and wellness. Our objective is to achieve community led sustainable development that brings direct economic benefits to local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises.

**Three key strategic areas have been identified within this framework:**

- Sustainable destination management – balancing visitor influx with the preservation of the province’s cultural and ecological assets.
- Community empowerment – creating dignified livelihoods by ensuring that the benefits of the tourism industry flow equitably to rural communities across both districts.
- Integrated infrastructure – fostering public private partnerships to enhance digital transformation, internet access, and overall connectivity.

This plan is strictly aligned with the national policy direction of the central government. As Governor, I am personally committed to providing all necessary administrative and financial facilitation to ensure its successful implementation. This is not merely a document; it will serve as a living framework that guides our decisions and investments over the coming years.

Our goal is to build a strong, authentic brand through the vital components of the tourism business—attraction, accessibility, accommodation, amenities, and activities—ensuring that by 2031, the North Central Province stands as an exemplary model of harmony between people, culture, and nature.



**Hon. Wasantha Jinadasa**  
*Governor, North Central Province*



## Goals and Strategic Framework

The *North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031* provides a unified policy framework to guide all ministries, departments, and development partners toward a common goal: building a **thriving, inclusive, and sustainable tourism economy**. It defines five strategic pillars—**heritage and culture, wellness and nature, community empowerment, sustainable infrastructure, and digital transformation**—each designed to deliver measurable outcomes.

Our focus is on coherence and collaboration. The strategy aligns provincial priorities with national development goals, ensuring that every initiative contributes to economic diversification, environmental protection, and social inclusion. The eight thematic clusters—ranging from wellness sanctuaries to agro-living experiences—represent the spatial and thematic foundation for balanced regional growth.

This document is not merely a plan; it is a roadmap for transformation and a living guide that belongs to all of us. Its strength lies in how it is used, adapted, and carried forward by every right-holder and stakeholder across the Province. Through structured governance, transparent monitoring, and active engagement, we will translate vision into tangible progress. It is therefore the duty and responsibility of all institutions, communities, and partners to take ownership of this strategy and keep it alive to ensure that tourism becomes a catalyst for shared prosperity throughout the North Central Province.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J.M.R.P. Jayasinghe', is located below the main text.

**Mr. J.M.R.P. Jayasinghe**

*Chief Secretary, North Central Provincial Council*



## Action Planning and Implementation Modality

The *Way Forward* of the *North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031* moves from vision to action. Implementation will be driven through **institutional activation, cluster-based planning, and investment facilitation**. Under the guidance of the Chief Ministry and Tourism Planning Committee, specialized committees and working groups will oversee the five pillars and coordinate across government, private sector, and community stakeholders.

Eight cluster development plans—covering wellness, forest therapy, community trails, agro-living, water and wildlife, heritage, adventure, and green retreats—will serve as practical blueprints for investment and experience design. The establishment of the **Investment Facilitation and Project Management Unit (IFPMU)** will ensure efficient project coordination, blended financing, and transparent monitoring through a digital dashboard.

This collaborative model transforms the strategy into a living framework—one that empowers communities, attracts investors, and delivers measurable results. Through disciplined implementation and annual reviews, the North Central Province will realize its 2031 vision: a tourism economy that honors heritage, nurtures nature, and uplifts every citizen.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J.M.H.H.J. Jayalath'.

**Mr. J.M.H.H.J. Jayalath**

*Secretary, Chief Ministry, North Central Provincial Council*



## CONCEPT > STRATEGY > ACTION

**The North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031** articulates a transformative vision to position Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa as world-class cultural and nature-based destinations—where heritage, innovation, and community prosperity converge. This strategy is not merely a plan; it is a blueprint for inclusive growth, designed to ensure that tourism becomes a genuine catalyst for local empowerment and sustainable enterprise. Developed through rigorous field research, stakeholder consultations, and participatory design, the strategy integrates lived experience with economic analysis to propose actionable, community-centered interventions. Evidence confirms that tourism is deeply welcomed across the Province and that its benefits are tangible and widely shared. Strategic investments—ranging from infrastructure and waste management to cultural interpretation, skills development, and digital transformation—will unlock equitable value and long-term resilience.

The framework champions diversified product development: wellness and meditation tourism, a strengthened Buddhist circuit, forest and nature healing trails, agro-living experiences, and water-based recreation. These clusters are further elevated through smart tourism innovations, including AR/VR/MR applications, digital ticketing systems, payment kiosks, smart waste management, and intelligent parking solutions, implemented collaboratively with Local Government Authorities (LGAs) and the private sector. Together, these advancements will deepen visitor engagement, extend stays, and distribute benefits across communities and MSMEs.

Conservation and access are harmonized through a balanced approach: safeguarding sacred sites and cultural assets while enhancing visitor services, interpretation, and digital connectivity. Strengthening local supply chains and improving product quality remain central to ensuring that small and family-run enterprises capture a greater share of tourism revenue. Environmental stewardship, particularly waste reduction, site maintenance, and visitor education—is positioned as an immediate operational imperative. This strategy is the outcome of a deeply participatory process. Multi-stakeholder workshops, district consultations, and focus group discussions brought together government officials, divisional administrators, private operators, tourism associations, and MSMEs. These engagements surfaced local priorities, mapped value chains, and co-designed interventions. Field verification visits further validated findings and operational realities, ensuring that each recommendation is grounded in both evidence and experience.

The North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031 stands as a testament to collaborative leadership and technical partnership. It embodies political vision, administrative stewardship, and community voice—supported by the Honorable Governor, the North Central Provincial Council, the Managing Together Project (MTP), the Ministry of Environment, and UNDP. The continued interest, commitment, and ownership demonstrated by senior officials of the Provincial Council, together with tourism MSMEs and tourism industry associations, will be vital in driving this strategy forward and ensuring its long-term success. This living document offers a practical, visionary, and achievable roadmap to build a thriving, inclusive, and digitally empowered tourism economy—one that honors heritage, embraces innovation, and uplifts every community across the Province.

**Dr. Samantha Pathirathna, PhD**

Lead Consultant – NCP Tourism Strategy 2026–2031 Advisory Committee



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Supported by



### GEF 6: MANAGING TOGETHER PROJECT

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY-CENTERED, ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACHES INTO FORESTRY, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM SECTORS

The **North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031** is the result of the collective expertise, commitment, and collaboration of many individuals and institutions who dedicated their time, insights, and professional guidance to shaping a unified vision for the Province. Their contributions—ranging from policy direction and administrative leadership to technical analysis, field validation, and community engagement—were essential in ensuring that this strategy reflects both the aspirations of the Province and the practical realities on the ground. The North Central Province acknowledges with gratitude the invaluable support of all contributors whose efforts helped bring this strategy to life.

#### Leadership and Senior Officials

- Hon. Wasantha Jinadasa - Hon. Governor, North Central Province
- Hon. Wasantha Samarasinghe, the Minister of Trade, Commerce, Food Security, and Cooperative Development, also serves as the Co-Chair of the Anuradhapura District Coordinating Committee
- Hon. T. B. Sarath, Deputy Minister of Housing Construction and Water Supply, serves as the Co-Chair of the Polonnaruwa District Coordinating Committee.
- Hon. Tilina Tharuka Samarakoon, Member of Parliament for the Anuradhapura District and Chair, Anuradhapura District Tourism Sub Committee
- Mr. J.M.R.P. Jayasinghe - Chief Secretary, North Central Province
- Mr. Nandana Galaboda - Governor's Secretary
- Mr. K.M.H.S.K. Jayalath - Secretary, Chief Ministry
- Mr. Ananda Rathnayake - Governor's Coordinating Secretary
- Mr. H.N.M.S. Herath - Governor's Personnel Secretary
- Mr. B.M.H.T.W. Bulathsinhala - Director (Planning), Chief Ministry
- Ms. A.P. Senanayake - Development Officer, Chief Ministry
- Mr. S.K.T.M.D.B. Ranawake - District Tourism Development Officer

The Province also extends its sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), and the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM) for their direct and indirect support throughout this process. The technical workshop and the support provided by SLTDA in issuing guidelines for developing provincial tourism development plans marked an important step forward. Their institutional guidance, sectoral expertise, and timely facilitation strengthened the planning effort and contributed meaningfully to the development of a coherent and future-focused tourism strategy for the North Central Province.

The Province extends its sincere gratitude and highest appreciation to Dr. Samantha Pathirathna for his voluntary leadership and exceptional contribution to the North Central Province Tourism Strategy planning process. Despite numerous challenges, Dr. Pathirathna demonstrated unwavering commitment, intellectual rigor, and professional dedication in his role as Lead



Consultant to the Tourism Planning Advisory Committee appointed by the Hon. Governor. His strategic vision, academic depth, and entrepreneurial mindset were instrumental in guiding the Province toward a coherent and future-ready tourism development framework. The Province extends its sincere appreciation to PASS Asian Pvt Ltd and ECO Treats Tourism Pvt Ltd for their valuable voluntary technical contributions under the business leadership of Dr. Samantha Pathirathna. Their expertise in data analysis, mobile-based data collection system development, and literature review significantly strengthened the evidence base and analytical rigor of this work.

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At the time of the beginning of the process, the support extended the Managing Together Project (MTP) provided essential strength, enabling Dr. Pathirathna to continue the required studies, stakeholder facilitation, and field-level explorations that enriched the quality and depth of this strategy. And special thanks for the Managing Together project (MTP), Ministry of Environment and UNDP for their support to facilitate this process.

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Special thanks to Mr. Krishantha Bopage, Former Director (Planning) of Anuradhapura and current Additional Director General of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), and Mr. Sampath Dharmadasa, Divisional Secretary of Nuwaragam Palatha, Anuradhapura, who served as members of the planning committee appointed by the Hon. Governor. Mr. Krishantha provided previously prepared tourism planning documents, contributed to initial planning meetings, and worked closely with the lead consultant during his time in the province.

The Province extends heartfelt appreciation to the private sector, tourism MSMEs, industry associations, and community-based organizations whose active participation and lived experiences played a pivotal role in shaping the practical direction of this strategy. Their insights—rooted in daily operations, market realities, and community interactions—ensured that the strategy remains grounded, inclusive, and implementable. The preparation of this report was strengthened by the direct and indirect contributions of tourism sector representatives across the North Central Province, whose active participation in consultation meetings and unwavering commitment to the functionality of the provincial tourism industry were invaluable. The Anuradhapura Tourist Hotel Owners Association, Anuradhapura Tour Operators Association, Tourist Guides Association, and the Tourist Three-Wheeler Drivers Association provided essential insights reflecting the operational realities of visitor services and enterprise needs. From Habarana, the Tourist Hotel Owners Association and the Mother Society – Jeep Safari Service – Habarana enriched the process with perspectives shaped by their experience in accommodation and wildlife-based tourism services. Likewise, the Tourist Guides Association and the Tourist Hotels and Service Providers Association in Polonnaruwa contributed grounded knowledge on heritage interpretation, visitor mobility, and service delivery. Their collective



engagement ensured that this strategy is both contextually relevant and aligned with the aspirations of tourism stakeholders across the province.

Special appreciation is extended to the District Secretaries of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, the Directors of Planning in both district secretariats, and the Divisional Secretaries. Their leadership, coordination, and dedicated support were instrumental in ensuring the accuracy, completeness, and timely collection of data required for the strategy development process. Special acknowledgment is extended to Ms. Chandi Irosha de Silva (Nuwaragam Palatha East), Ms. G.B.M. Iresha Kumari (Galnewa), Ms. W.G.G. Supushpi Neranja (Nochchiyagama), Ms. K.G.P. Manori Siriwardena (Palugaswewa), Ms. K.M.L.D.K. Karunasinghe (Kekirawa), Mr. L.B.R. Samantha (Nuwaragam Palatha Central), Ms. A.G. Wathsala Vindyani (Nuwaragam Palatha Central), Ms. J.H.P. Jayarathne (Mihintale), Ms. Wasanthi Manelwila (Thamankaduwa), Mr. H.M.C.L.H. Hewage (Higurakgoda), and Ms. K.P.G. Udayani (Dimbulagala), whose dedicated engagement ensured the reliability and depth of the data collected through resident, visitor and business & operator survey that informed this strategic plan.

Moreover, the dedicated team of staff in my division efficiently managed all communications, coordination, and liaison activities with provincial authorities, the lead consultant, and other stakeholders, ensuring smooth facilitation and uninterrupted progress throughout the planning process.

**Mr. D.M.J. Dissanayake**  
Director (Tourism), Chief Ministry



## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADPC	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
AR	Augmented Reality
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATM	Arabian Travel Market
BOI	Board Of Investment
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBT	Community Based Tourism
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DMO	Destination Management Organization
DS	Divisional Secretariat
GBCSL	Green Building Council of Sri Lanka
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GND	Grama Niladhari Division
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
IBA	Important Bird Areas
IFPMU	Investment Facilitation and Project Management Unit
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPOP	Indo-Pacific Opportunity Project
ITB Berlin	World's Leading Travel Trade Show in Berlin
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LGA	Local Government Authority
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions
MR	Mixed Reality
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
MTP	Managing Together Project
NAP	National Adaptation plan
NCC	National Craft Council
NCP	North Central Province
NCPA	National Cleaner Production Centre
NCSAIP	National Climate Smart Agriculture Investment Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEDA	National Enterprise Development Authority
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPP	National Physical Plan
NSTCS	National Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme
OTA	Online Travel Agency
PAP	Provincial Adaptation Plan
PC	Provincial Council



PFM	Public Finance Management
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
PT	Provincial Tourism
PTDI	Provincial Tourism Development Institution
PTIFU	Provincial Tourism Investment Facilitation Unit
PTTF	Provincial Tourism Task Force
PWD	Persons With Disabilities
QR	Quick Response
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SLCB	Sri Lanka Convention Bureau
SLITHM	Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management
SLSEA	Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority
SLTDA	Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority
SLTPB	Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau
SME	Small And Medium Enterprises
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TIPU	Tourism Investment Promotion Unit
TMU	Tourism Marketing Unit
UDA	Urban Development Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VR	Virtual Reality
WTM	World Travel Market



## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>1. NORTH CENTRAL PROVINCE</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Tourism Attractions	2
<b>2. TOURISM OVERVIEW</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Global Tourism Overview 2025	3
2.2 Sri Lanka Tourism Overview 2025	4
2.3 Strategic implications for North Central Province	4
2.4 Key Considerations for Strategy Formulation	5
2.5 Purpose Nature and Scope	5
2.6 Funding Alignment and Financing Principles	6
2.7 Stakeholders Roles and Next Steps	6
2.8 Recommended Immediate Actions	7
<b>3. VISION AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Philosophy	8
3.2 Vision 2031	8
3.3 Mission	8
<b>4. NCP TOURISM DREAM 2031</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1 Achieving 1 million+ International Tourist Arrivals by 2031	10
4.2 Justification for Key 2031 Strategic Targets	11
4.3 Additional Forecasts for 2031	13
4.4 NCP Tourism 2031 Main Targets	13
<b>5. NCP CONTRIBUTION TO SDGs</b>	<b>15</b>
SDG 1: No Poverty – Community Income Growth and MSME Empowerment	15
SDG 2: Zero Hunger – Climate-Smart Agrotourism and Local Food Systems	15
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being – Wellness, Nature Healing, and Spiritual Tourism	16
SDG 4: Quality Education – Skills Development and Tourism Training	16
SDG 5: Gender Equality – Women-Led Tourism Enterprises	16
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation – Water Security and Wastewater Management	16
SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy – Renewable Energy in Tourism	17
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth – Tourism as an Engine of Inclusive Growth	17
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure – Smart and Regenerative Tourism Infrastructure	17
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities – Inclusive Tourism and Rural Empowerment	17
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities – Heritage Protection and Urban Regeneration	17
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production – Sustainable Tourism Standards	18
SDG 13: Climate Action – Climate-Smart Tourism and Adaptation	18



SDG 14: Life Below Water – Wetland and Reservoir Conservation .....	18
SDG 15: Life on Land – Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration.....	18
SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – Governance and Social Harmony .....	18
SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals – Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration.....	19
<b>6. STRATEGIC PILLARS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
6.1 Heritage, Culture & Spiritual Tourism Excellence .....	20
6.2 Wellness, Nature & Outdoor Experience Development .....	20
6.3 Community-Centered Economic Empowerment.....	20
6.4 Sustainable Infrastructure, Cleanliness & Visitor Management .....	21
6.5 Governance, Coordination & Digital Transformation.....	21
6.6 Private Sector-Led Tourism MSME Strengthening .....	21
6.7 Tourism Skills Development .....	21
<b>7. NCP TOURISM CLUSTERS .....</b>	<b>23</b>
7.1 The Eight Thematic Tourism Clusters .....	24
7.1.1 Cluster I: Wellness & Mindfulness Heritage Sanctuary .....	25
7.1.2 Cluster II: Forest Therapy & Nature Healing Zone .....	26
7.1.3 Cluster III: Community Life & Cultural Trails .....	26
7.1.4 Cluster IV: Agro-Living & Floating Experiences .....	27
7.1.5 Cluster V: Water & Wildlife Harmony Corridor .....	27
7.1.6 Cluster VI: Heritage & Water Civilization Experience .....	28
7.1.7 Cluster VII: Wildlife Adventure & Night-Life Zone .....	28
7.1.8 Cluster VIII: Green Retreat & Agro-Wellness Valley .....	29
<b>8. CLIMATE RESILIENCE, BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>9. STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Strategic Goal 1: Heritage-Led Destination Branding and Immersive Cultural Experiences .....	34
Strategic Goal 2: Climate-Smart, Green, and Biodiversity-Sensitive Tourism Infrastructure .....	34
Strategic Goal 3: Community-Centered Tourism and MSME Empowerment.....	34
Strategic Goal 4: Integrated Planning, Policy Alignment, and Digital Governance .....	35
Strategic Goal 5: Institutional Governance and Private Sector Empowerment .....	35
Strategic Goal 6: Infrastructure, Experience Diversification, and High-Value Tourism Products.....	36
Strategic Goal 7: Human Resource Development & Future Ready Tourism Workforce .....	36
<b>10. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>11. ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Goal 1: Strengthen Governance, Coordination & Institutional Capacity .....	40
Goal 2: Develop Regenerative, Green & Inclusive Tourism Infrastructure .....	40
Goal 3: Facilitate National & International Tourism Investment.....	41
Goal 4: Build Skills, Knowledge & Professional Competencies .....	42



Goal 5: Develop High-Quality, Climate-Resilient Tourism Products .....	42
Goal 6: Strengthen Market Access, Branding & Digital Visibility .....	43
Goal 7: Enhance Community Livelihoods, Enterprise Growth & Financial Inclusion.....	43
Goal 8: Strengthen Project Management, Digital Monitoring & Technical Capacity.....	43
<b>12. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>45</b>
12.1 Access & Connectivity.....	45
12.2 Sanitation & Public Amenities .....	45
12.3 Water-Based Recreation Facilities.....	46
12.4 Viewpoints & Scenic Platforms .....	46
12.5 Parking & Transport Facilities .....	46
12.6 Lighting & Energy Systems .....	46
12.7 Waste & Environmental Management.....	47
12.8 Commercial & SME Facilities.....	47
12.9 Digital & Smart Tourism Systems .....	47
12.10 Cultural & Heritage Facilities.....	47
12.11 Landscaping & Beautification .....	47
<b>13. MARKETING AND BRANDING .....</b>	<b>49</b>
13.1 Introduction: Why Branding Matters for NCP .....	49
13.2 Brand Positioning: “The World’s Premier Kingdom Destination” .....	49
13.3 Brand Architecture: The Eight Tourism Clusters as Sub-Brands.....	50
13.4 Target Markets and Segmentation.....	50
13.5 Strategic Marketing Pillars (2026–2031) .....	50
13.6 Branding Assets and Creative Outputs .....	52
13.7 Governance for Marketing and Branding.....	53
13.8 Monitoring, Evaluation, and KPIs.....	53
<b>14. LOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND KPIS .....</b>	<b>54</b>
14.1 Brief on the Logical Framework.....	54
14.2 Updated Logical Framework Matrix (2026–2031) .....	54
14.3 KPIs by Strategic Pillar & Goal .....	55
Goal 1: Heritage-Led Destination Branding & Immersive Cultural Experiences.....	55
Goal 2: Climate-Smart, Green & Biodiversity-Sensitive Tourism Infrastructure .....	56
Goal 3: Community Tourism & MSME Empowerment.....	56
Goal 4: Regenerative, Green & Inclusive Tourism Infrastructure .....	56
Goal 5: Integrated Planning, Policy Alignment & Digital Governance .....	57
Goal 6: Investment Facilitation & Private Sector Growth .....	57
Goal 7: Skills, Knowledge & Professional Competencies .....	57
Goal 8: Project Management, Digital Monitoring & Technical Capacity .....	57



14.4 Monitoring & Evaluation Framework .....	58
14.5 Implementation Timeline (2026–2031).....	58
14.6 Summary of 2031 KPI Targets .....	58
<b>15. WAY FORWARD .....</b>	<b>59</b>
15.1 Institutional Activation and Governance .....	59
15.2 Cluster-Based Tourism Development Plans.....	59
15.3 Investment Facilitation and Project Management.....	59
15.4 Branding, Marketing, and Investor Engagement.....	60
15.5 Implementation Roadmap .....	60
15.6 Twelve Months Action Plan .....	61
<b>LIST OF MAIN REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>62</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1: 2031 NCP Tourism Revenue Forecast .....	14
Table 2: Cluster Wise Infrastructure Development.....	48
Table 3: Logical Framework Matrix .....	55
Table 4: Goal 1 KPIs.....	55
Table 5: Goal 2 KPIs.....	56
Table 6: Goal 3 KPIs.....	56
Table 7: Goal 4 KPIs.....	56
Table 8: Goal 5 KPIs.....	57
Table 9: Goal 6 KPIs.....	57
Table 10: Goal 7 KPIs.....	57
Table 11: Goal 8 KPIs.....	57
Table 12: Implementation Schedule .....	60
Table 13: Twelve Months Action Plan .....	61

## List of Figures

Figure 1: NCP Tourism 2031 Dream .....	9
Figure 2: NCP Contribution to SDGs.....	15
Figure 3: NCP Province in the Sri Lanka Map.....	23
Figure 4: NCP Tourism Clusters.....	24
Figure 5: NCP Tourism Cluster Names and the Map.....	25
Figure 6: NCP Tourism Strategy Goals.....	33



## List of Annexes

Annex 1: NCP Tourism Operators and Business Survey Report

Annex 2: NCP Local Resident's Survey Report

Annex 3: NCP Visitor Survey Report

Annex 4: Working Draft Report (Introduction to the Province, NCP demographic details, SWOT analysis findings, Tourism Assets and Destinations, Socio-economic analysis, Climate risk and Vulnerability analysis, Infrastructure gap analysis, Biodiversity, and sustainability analysis)

Annex 5: Ecological-Carrying-Capacity-Report-Anuradhapura



*Click the link below or the above QR Code to access all annexed supporting documents:*

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pwtRd87ZaoprMo7RDI-cY0WkOAi0pzZu?usp=sharing>



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# 1. NORTH CENTRAL PROVINCE

## 1.1 Introduction

The North Central Province (NCP), the largest province in Sri Lanka with a land area of 10,472 km<sup>2</sup> including 883 km<sup>2</sup> of inland water, comprises the historically significant districts of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. Together, they form the cradle of the island's ancient hydraulic civilization and are home to approximately 1,395,483 people. The province is predominantly rural, with communities deeply rooted in agriculture, traditional livelihoods, and cultural heritage. This demographic character—shaped by centuries of settlement, irrigation-based farming, and religious significance—provides a strong foundation for community-driven, culturally rich, and environmentally sensitive tourism development. The province contributes 4.8% to the national GDP.

Administratively, NCP is organized into 29 Divisional Secretariat (DS) Divisions, 29 Local Government Authorities (LGAs) and 989 Grama Niladhari Divisions (DNDs), enabling decentralized governance and localized planning. This structure supports effective implementation of tourism initiatives across diverse landscapes, from heritage cities and forested zones to agrarian villages and reservoir-based settlements. The province's administrative network ensures that tourism benefits can be equitably distributed across communities while maintaining strong coordination with provincial and national institutions.

The Anuradhapura District, with a population of nearly 950,059, is the largest district in Sri Lanka and contains 22 DS Divisions. These include Thalawa, Thambuttegama, Nochchiyagama, Rajanganaya, Galnewa, Ipalogama, Kekirawa, Palagala, Palugaswewa, Horowpothana, Kahatagasdigiliya, Rambewa, Mihintale, Nuwaragam Palatha Central, Nuwaragam Palatha East, Anuradhapura Four Gravets, Anuradhapura North, Anuradhapura South, Medawachchiya, Padaviya, Mahavilachchiya, and Nachchaduwa. The district is further governed by 17 Local Government Authorities, consisting of the Anuradhapura Municipal Council, the Kekirawa Urban Council, and fifteen Pradeshiya Sabhas that administer the rural and semi-urban areas. This extensive administrative footprint supports tourism development across sacred heritage sites, forested landscapes, agrarian villages, and reservoir environments.

The Polonnaruwa District, with a population of around 445,424, is the second district of the province and contains 7 DS Divisions: Thamankaduwa, Hingurakgoda, Medirigiriya, Lankapura, Dimbulagala, Welikanda, and Elahera. The district is administered through 12 Local Government Authorities, including the Polonnaruwa Urban Council and eleven Pradeshiya Sabhas that oversee the surrounding rural regions. Polonnaruwa's administrative structure supports tourism development across archaeological zones, wildlife corridors, forest reserves, and agrarian landscapes, making it a key contributor to the province's tourism potential.

Overall, the demographic and administrative profile of the North Central Province—characterized by strong community networks, cultural diversity, and deep historical identity—positions the region as an ideal landscape for community-based tourism, heritage interpretation, agro-tourism, wellness tourism, and nature-based experiences. Its wide distribution of DS divisions and local authorities ensures that tourism growth can be inclusive, equitable, and closely aligned with local development priorities, strengthening both livelihoods and cultural preservation across the province.



## 1.2 Tourism Attractions

The North Central Province of Sri Lanka, encompassing Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, is a cornerstone of the island's cultural, religious, and ecological heritage. As the heart of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle, it features UNESCO World Heritage Sites, ancient capitals, and advanced hydraulic systems that reflect the ingenuity of the ancient Sinhalese civilization.

Key historical sites include Anuradhapura, with its monumental stupas and sacred Bodhi tree, and Polonnaruwa, known for its medieval architecture and the Gal Vihara Buddha statues. Sigiriya Rock Fortress and Dambulla Cave Temple showcase artistic and engineering brilliance, while Mihintale marks the birthplace of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The region also offers rich biodiversity through national parks like Minneriya, Kaudulla, Wilpattu, and Hurulu Eco Park, renowned for elephant gatherings, birdlife, and safaris. Sites like Ritigala Forest Monastery and Somawathiya Chaitya blend archaeological significance with ecological value.

Tourism infrastructure is available with improved transport links, diverse accommodations, and guided tours. In 2025, Sri Lanka welcomed over 2.3 million tourists, with the NCP playing a central role. Seasonal festivals such as Poson Poya and Esala Perahera enhance cultural experience.

Sustainable tourism is emphasized through community-based initiatives, ethical wildlife viewing, and conservation funding. However, challenges persist, including human-wildlife conflict and habitat degradation. Agencies like the Department of Archaeology and Department of Wildlife Conservation oversee heritage and ecological preservation. In sum, the NCP offers a unique convergence of history, spirituality, and nature. Its continued appeal depends on balancing tourism growth with cultural integrity and environmental stewardship.

Despite its rich history and cultural depth, the North Central Province still holds many untouched and untapped heritage and nature-based assets with significant potential for tourism development. Its diverse ecosystems, biodiversity-rich landscapes, traditional village environments, and lesser-known archaeological sites remain largely unexplored. These resources create strong opportunities to develop novel tourism products—ranging from community-based experiences to sports, adventure, and wellness tourism—that are authentic, sustainable, and aligned with the Province's cultural and environmental character.



## 2. TOURISM OVERVIEW

The Government of Sri Lanka is presently finalizing its new National Tourism Policy and formulating the National Tourism Strategic Plan (2026–2031), alongside the rollout of a global tourism marketing campaign and a suite of tourism infrastructure development projects supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank through technical and credit facilities. This national momentum provides an ideal window for the North Central Province to formulate its own provincial tourism strategy that aligns with emerging global and national trends. By synchronizing with the national policy framework and international financing priorities, the NCP can strengthen its role in inclusive, sustainable tourism growth, enhance investment readiness, and significantly increase its contribution to Sri Lanka's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through regenerative, biodiversity-positive tourism and green infrastructure initiatives.

The North Central Province stands at a decisive moment to position tourism as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth, cultural preservation, and sustainable place-making—anchored in landscape investment and regenerative biodiversity conservation. This report presents an investment-oriented framework that prioritizes nature-based solutions, green infrastructure, and low-carbon applications—such as ecosystem restoration, community-led conservation tourism, agroecological linkages, renewable energy for visitor facilities, and sustainable mobility—to ensure tourism development restores and enhances ecological function while generating livelihoods. The framework guides provincial planning, public and private investment, and coordinated action across government, communities, and the private sector; it embeds principles for biodiversity-positive projects, community stewardship, climate resilience, and digital readiness so that new investments deliver measurable conservation outcomes, equitable local benefits, and long-term financial returns.

### 2.1 Global Tourism Overview 2025

Global international tourism continued its robust recovery and reached a new high in 2025. International tourist arrivals grew to an estimated 1.52 billion in 2025, driven by stronger air connectivity, visa facilitation, and broad regional rebounds. Arrivals rose about 4% in 2025 versus 2024 and set a new post-pandemic record, with Europe and Asia-Pacific among the strongest performing regions. Spending trends outpaced volume growth in many destinations, with tourism earnings rising faster than arrivals in 2025, reflecting higher per-trip spending in several markets and strong demand for premium experiences. These dynamics reflect pent-up demand, improved connectivity, and resilient consumer appetite despite inflationary pressures.

#### Global Tourism Outlook and 2026 Target

Global tourism momentum is expected to continue into 2026. Analysts forecast international visitor growth of around 8% in 2026, driven by improving connectivity, event calendars and recovering long-haul markets.

Implication: if 2025 volumes remain near recent post-pandemic peaks, an 8% uplift in 2026 would translate into a materially larger global market for higher-value and niche products—creating opportunity for destinations that can offer sustainability-aligned, digitally enabled experiences.



## 2.2 Sri Lanka Tourism Overview 2025

Sri Lanka recorded a landmark year in 2025. Total international arrivals reached approximately 2.36 million in 2025, a 15% increase over 2024 and slightly above the pre-pandemic 2018 peak. Tourism earnings for 2025 are estimated at about USD 3.2 billion, though average per-visitor expenditure moderated as volume growth included a larger share of budget and independent travelers. India remained the largest source market with over 531,000 visitors ( $\approx 27\%$  of arrivals). The performance underscores renewed market confidence, improved promotions, and connectivity, while also highlighting the need to convert volume into higher-value, sustainable revenue streams.

### Sri Lanka Tourism Targets: 2026 and 2030

Sri Lanka's authorities have set near-term and medium-term targets to consolidate recovery and raise sector value: the official 2026 target is approximately 3 million international arrivals and an associated revenue target of about USD 5 billion, reflecting a renewed marketing push and revenue optimization emphasis. For 2030, senior tourism leadership has articulated a more ambitious vision: a target of up to 4 million visitors and tourism receipts in the order of USD 8.5 billion by 2030, with a parallel objective to raise average daily spend and strengthen human-capital capacity in the sector.

## 2.3 Strategic implications for North Central Province

- **Align product development with demand:** Prioritize *cultural circuits, regenerative nature-based tourism and biodiversity-positive landscape investments* that capture higher-value segments targeted by national strategy.
- **Finance and project readiness:** Use provincial and central public funds to prepare bankable, conservation-positive projects that can attract blended finance and private capital.
- **SDG and sustainability alignment:** Embed Sustainable Development Goals and biodiversity-positive metrics into project selection and monitoring to meet national policy direction and international investor expectations.

### Key recommendations

1. **Adopt the national targets** into provincial planning and set provincial sub-targets for arrivals, receipts, and conservation outcomes.
2. **Prioritize regenerative investments** (ecosystem restoration, green infrastructure, renewable energy for tourism facilities) that deliver measurable biodiversity gains and revenue uplift.
3. **Mobilize blended finance** to de-risk early projects and provide MSMEs with access to concessional credit tied to sustainability performance.

### Risks and monitoring

- **Risks:** over-reliance on a few source markets, carrying-capacity breaches at sensitive sites, and failure to convert volume into higher per-visitor revenue.
- **Monitoring:** establish quarterly tracking of arrivals, receipts, source-market mix, and biodiversity indicators; link budget disbursements to performance milestones and safeguards.



## 2.4 Key Considerations for Strategy Formulation

The development of the NCP Tourism Strategy was guided by a comprehensive set of national, international, sectoral, and cross-sectoral frameworks, ensuring that the plan is globally aligned, nationally compliant, and locally relevant. At the international level, the strategy draws on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Agreements, World Bank Agreements, UN Tourism (UN-WTO) Guidelines, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), alongside global tourism and investment facilitation principles promoted by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), UNDP, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Special emphasis was placed on ADB's Integrated Climate-Responsive Investment Plan (working draft) for the province, UNDP's tourism support programs, and global sustainability frameworks including green and sustainable certification systems. Regional benchmarking was conducted using the performance and best practices of leading tourism destinations such as India, Malaysia, China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Australia, ensuring NCP remains competitive within the Asia-Pacific region.

Nationally, the strategy is anchored in the Government's Development Mandate "A Thriving Nation, A Beautiful Life," the Public Finance Management (PFM) Act, the **National Tourism Policy**, and the macroeconomic reforms shaping Sri Lanka's development trajectory. It also integrates guidance from the Climate Change Secretariat, Biodiversity Division of the Ministry of Environment, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Provincial Adaptation Plan (PAP), and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). National Physical Plan (NPP) and Urban Development Authority (UDA) Development Plans informed urban and spatial considerations, while cross-sectoral alignment was ensured with the mandates of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Education and Vocational Training, and other relevant ministries.

Sector-specific technical inputs were incorporated from the National Climate-Smart Agriculture Investment Plan (NCSAIP), National Cleaner Production Centre (NCPC), National Enterprise Development Authority (NEDA), National Craft Council (NCC), Green Building Council of Sri Lanka (GBCSL), and the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA). Together, these references provide a robust foundation for a strategy that is climate-responsive, investment-ready, socially inclusive, environmentally responsible, and economically transformative, positioning NCP as a model for sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka.

## 2.5 Purpose Nature and Scope

### Purpose

- **Strategic roadmap:** Provide a clear, investment-oriented roadmap for tourism development in the North Central Province.
- **Decision support:** Inform provincial planning, public investment priorities, and private project selection.
- **Coordination tool:** Align actions across central government, provincial authorities, and local stakeholders.
- **Investment signal:** Clarify priority sectors and enabling conditions for domestic and international investors, banks, and development partners.



## Nature and Scope

- **Directional framework:** The report sets strategic objectives, priority interventions, and implementation principles rather than exhaustive technical detail. It is intended to guide planning and investment decisions at the provincial level.
- **Annexed technical analyses:** Carrying capacity assessment, SWOT analysis, demographic profiles, inventory of tourism attractions, field assessments and other technical study findings are included in the annexes. These annexes form the evidence base for site-level feasibility, permitting, and safeguards.
- **Limitations:** The main body does not replace site-specific feasibility studies, environmental and social impact assessments or statutory approvals required for project implementation. Project proponents must consult annexed studies and commission detailed technical work where necessary.
- **Intended use:** Use this chapter and the strategic framework to prioritize investments, design a project pipeline, mobilize finance and coordinate multi-stakeholder implementation.

## 2.6 Funding Alignment and Financing Principles

All public and private funding should be channeled through the strategic framework to achieve the province's tourism objectives. This includes annual central government allocations, provincial budget lines, and private sector investments. Channeling funds through the framework ensures coherence, maximizes impact, and reduces duplication. Key principles for financing alignment are:

- **Strategic budgeting:** Annual central and provincial budget allocations should be prioritized against the strategic objectives and investment criteria set out in this report.
- **Project readiness:** Public funds should be used to prepare bankable projects through feasibility studies, carrying capacity verification and environmental and social safeguards so that private capital can be mobilized efficiently.
- **Blended finance:** Use a mix of public grants, concessional finance and private capital to de-risk early investments and improve access to credit for MSMEs.
- **Private sector engagement:** Encourage private investments that align with sustainability, community benefit, and digital readiness criteria. Incentives and streamlined approvals should be tied to compliance with the framework.
- **Transparent allocation:** Establish clear, transparent criteria and monitoring mechanisms for how annual and project-level funds are allocated and reported.
- **Capacity building:** Allocate funding for skills development, digital adoption, and destination management to ensure local actors can capture value.
- **Performance based disbursement:** Link tranche releases to measurable milestones such as completed feasibility studies, environmental clearances and demonstrated community engagement.

Aligning annual government funding, provincial allocations and private investments with the strategic framework will create an investment-ready pipeline, attract higher quality capital, and ensure that public resources deliver measurable, sustainable outcomes.

## 2.7 Stakeholders Roles and Next Steps

### Primary and Supporting Actors

- **Primary actors:** Central government; Provincial Council; local government bodies.



- **Supporting actors:** Academic institutions; private sector developers; tourism MSMEs; banks and financial institutions; domestic and international investors; digital platforms and booking engines; community organizations and civil society.

## 2.8 Recommended Immediate Actions

1. **Adopt the framework:** Integrate the strategic priorities and investment criteria into provincial development plans and annual budget cycles.
2. **Prioritize quick wins:** Identify and fast-track a small set of high-impact, low-risk projects that demonstrate the framework's value and attract early investment.
3. **Commission level studies:** For priority projects, commission feasibility studies, carrying capacity verification and environmental and social assessments using annexed data as the starting point.
4. **Mobilize blended finance:** Structure financing packages that combine public grants, concessional finance, and private capital to reduce risk for early investors and support MSME access to credit.
5. **Establish coordination mechanisms:** Create a multi-stakeholder implementation forum to oversee project pipelines, monitor impacts, and coordinate marketing and skills development.
6. **Strengthen digital readiness:** Support MSMEs and destination managers to adopt digital booking, marketing, and revenue management tools to capture higher-value markets.
7. **Monitor and report:** Implement transparent monitoring and reporting systems to track financial flows, project milestones, and socio-environmental outcomes.

Tourism has the power to gently dissolve barriers between people, fostering inner peace, empathy, and harmony among different ethnicities both in Sri Lanka and globally. When travelers and host communities interact, share traditions, and experience each other's cultures, it builds understanding and reduces prejudice. In Sri Lanka's multi-ethnic context, tourism becomes a bridge that reconnects communities and strengthens unity through shared heritage, spirituality, and nature. The North Central Province, with its sacred sites, serene landscapes, and community-based experiences, offers exceptional opportunities for such peace-building encounters, helping cultivate mutual respect, emotional connection, and a deeper sense of harmony among all who visit.

This chapter frames the strategic context and practical purpose of the North Central Province Tourism Strategy Report. It emphasizes that the province can align with global market trends and national priorities by adopting a directional framework that guides planning, investment, and implementation. Annual government funding, provincial allocations, and private sector investments must be channeled through this framework to achieve the province's tourism objectives. Detailed technical work and site-specific assessments are annexed and must inform project design. By adopting the framework and following the recommended next steps, provincial authorities and partners can catalyze sustainable, inclusive tourism investment that strengthens the North Central Province's competitiveness and delivers measurable benefits to communities and investors alike.



## 3. VISION AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### 3.1 Philosophy

The North Central Province (NCP) Tourism Strategy is grounded in a people-centered, heritage-led approach that balances cultural stewardship, community prosperity, and environmental resilience. It recognizes tourism as a tool for preserving the Buddhist circuit and sacred landscapes, for expanding wellness and meditation tourism, and for activating nature trails and water-based experiences that connect visitors to the province's living heritage. The philosophy commits to inclusive value-sharing—ensuring benefits flow to micro, small and medium enterprises, artisans, guides, and local suppliers—while embedding sustainability, cultural sensitivity, and safety into every product and service.

### 3.2 Vision 2031

*The World's Premier Kingdom Destination—where heritage, wellness, and nature thrive together for the benefit of all.*

To establish the North Central Province as the World's Premier Kingdom Destination—where sacred Buddhist heritage, restorative wellness journeys, and immersive nature and water-based experiences come together to create authentic, meaningful, and sustainable benefits for all communities.

### 3.3 Mission

**To develop, promote, and manage a resilient, inclusive, and community-centered tourism economy across Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa by 2026–2031—one that protects sacred heritage, expands wellness and nature-based experiences, strengthens local livelihoods, and delivers sustainable value for present and future generations.**

This mission will be achieved by:

- **Safeguarding and interpreting cultural and sacred sites** within the Buddhist Circuit, ensuring respectful visitor behaviour, enhanced storytelling, and high-quality interpretation.
- **Expanding wellness tourism**, including meditation retreats, spiritual pilgrimages, Ayurveda and healing journeys, and health-oriented stays rooted in local traditions and certified service standards.
- **Developing nature-based and water-based experiences**, such as well-designed nature trails, guided biodiversity walks, birding routes, and safe recreational activities across rivers, lakes, and ancient tank systems.
- **Strengthening local livelihoods** by prioritizing MSME capacity building, improving local supply chains, and ensuring equitable revenue-sharing mechanisms that uplift communities.
- **Investing in essential infrastructure and environmental management**, including waste systems, signage, access roads, sanitation, and visitor-flow management to sustain high-quality, low-impact visitor experiences.
- **Fostering strong partnerships** across government institutions, private sector actors, community groups, academia, and development partners to deliver measurable social, cultural, environmental, and economic outcomes.



## 4. NCP TOURISM DREAM 2031



Figure 1: NCP Tourism 2031 Dream



The North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031 sets out a bold yet achievable vision to position the province as *The World's Premier Kingdom Destination*—a globally competitive heritage, wellness, and nature-based tourism region. The 2031 targets reflect both the province's unique competitive advantages and the emerging global and national tourism landscape. This chapter provides a comprehensive justification for these targets, supported by market trends, provincial strengths, infrastructure improvements, and the strategic interventions outlined in the plan.

The targets are not aspirational statements; they are grounded in evidence, demand projections, and the province's capacity to scale tourism sustainably. They also serve as a **directional framework**, guiding investment, policy alignment, and coordinated action across government, private sector, and community stakeholders. As tourism dynamics evolve, **this framework will be reviewed annually**, enabling stakeholders to refine targets, adjust strategies, and ensure continued relevance and impact.

## 4.1 Achieving 1 million+ International Tourist Arrivals by 2031

### 4.1.1 Alignment with National Tourism Growth Trajectory

Sri Lanka's national tourism targets project four million international arrivals by 2030. Historically, the North Central Province has attracted 20–25% of all international visitors, owing to its UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Buddhist pilgrimage routes, and rich cultural circuits. With enhanced infrastructure, diversified tourism clusters, and improved digital readiness, NCP is poised to increase its share to 28–32% of national arrivals by 2031.

#### Projected NCP arrivals:

4 million national arrivals × 25% = **1 million visitors**

This projection is realistic given the province's centrality to Sri Lanka's cultural identity and its alignment with global demand for heritage and wellness tourism.

### 4.1.2 Global Demand for Heritage, Wellness, and Nature Tourism

Global tourism is undergoing a structural shift toward:

- **Cultural and heritage tourism** (40% of global travel)
- **Wellness tourism** (growing at 7–9% annually)
- **Nature-based and regenerative tourism** (fastest-growing segment)

NCP's product portfolio—Buddhist circuits, meditation retreats, forest therapy, agro-living, wildlife corridors, and water-based experiences—directly aligns with these high-value segments.

### 4.1.3 Infrastructure and Connectivity Improvements

National and provincial investments supported by ADB, World Bank, and PPPs will deliver:

- Upgraded access roads to destinations in the province
- Smart ticketing and visitor flow management
- Enhanced sanitation and waste systems
- Digital tourism platforms and QR-based interpretation
- Improved accommodation capacity

These improvements significantly increase destination readiness and visitor carrying capacity.



#### 4.1.4 Diversified Tourism Clusters and Year-Round Demand

The eight thematic clusters—wellness sanctuaries, forest therapy zones, agro-living experiences, wildlife corridors, cultural trails, and green retreats—create **year-round tourism demand**, reduce seasonality, and encourage longer stays.

#### 4.1.5 Strong Regional and Domestic Markets

India, China, ASEAN, and Middle Eastern markets show rising demand for:

- Pilgrimage tourism
- Short-haul wellness breaks
- Family-oriented nature travel

NCP is uniquely positioned to capture these segments due to its spiritual significance and accessibility.

#### Conclusion:

With national momentum, global demand alignment, and diversified product development, **1 million+ international tourists by 2031 is both realistic and strategically sound.**

## 4.2 Justification for Key 2031 Strategic Targets

### 4.2.1 30% Increase in Visitor Expenditure and Length of Stay

NCP's current average stay is **1.8–2.2 nights**. With the introduction of:

- 10 thematic routes
- Night-time economy (markets, performances, wellness evenings)
- Floating villas, forest retreats, and agro-living stays
- VR/AR/MR heritage experiences
- Enhanced interpretation and guided experiences

The average stay can increase to **3.5–4.2 nights**, raising per-visitor expenditure by **30–40%**.

### 4.2.2 4,000+ Climate-Smart SLTDA Certified Rooms

The province currently has ~2,200 formal rooms. With:

- Two new 5-star hotels (300–500 rooms each)
- Expansion of ecolodges, glamping, and floating villas
- Green certification incentives
- Private sector investment growth

NCP can reach **4,000–4,500 climate-smart rooms** by 2031.

### 4.2.3 20+ Community-Based Tourism Enterprises

Given the strength of rural culture, crafts, and agro-living:

- Each tourism cluster can support **2–3 CBT enterprises**
  - MSME financing and training programs will accelerate growth
  - Community cooperatives will strengthen local ownership
- This makes **25-30 CBT enterprises** achievable.

### 4.2.4 30% Female Workforce Participation

With targeted training, safety standards, and flexible employment models (homestays, wellness, crafts), women's participation can rise from ~18% to **30%** by 2031.



#### 4.2.5 10 Thematic Routes Operational

The eight clusters already provide the foundation. Additional routes—such as:

- The Ancient Hydraulic Civilization Route
  - The Forest Therapy and Healing Route
- will bring the total to **10–12 operational routes**.

#### 4.2.6 50% Increase in Private Sector Investment

With improved governance, blended finance, and investor-ready project pipelines, private investment can grow through:

- New hotels
- Wellness centers
- Adventure and nature-based operators
- Digital tourism platforms

A **50–60% increase** is consistent with national investment trends.

#### 4.2.7 25% Increase in Household Tourism Income

Community-centered tourism, MSME support, and CBT enterprises will:

- Increase local supply chain participation
- Expand homestays and craft markets
- Improve rural employment

This will raise household tourism income by **25–30%**.

#### 4.2.8 Two New 5-Star Hotels (300–500 Rooms)

Investor interest in:

- Cultural capitals
- Wellness destinations
- Heritage cities

Combined with improved infrastructure makes **two major hotel investments** feasible.

#### 4.2.9 Zero-Plastic Zones in Sacred Cities

With strong provincial leadership and community support, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa can:

- Ban single-use plastics
- Introducing refill stations
- Implement green procurement

Achieving **zero-plastic sacred zones** by 2031 is realistic.

#### 4.2.10 VR/AR/MR Experiences in Major Heritage Sites

Digital transformation is a core pillar.

By 2030:

- 3D mapping
- Virtual reconstructions
- AR-guided tours Can be implemented at:
  - Ruwanweliseya
  - Jethawanaramaya
  - Polonnaruwa Quadrangle

This enhances interpretation and increases revenue.



### 4.3 Additional Forecasts for 2031

#### 4.3.1 Average Length of Stay

**Current:** 1.8–2.2 nights

**2031 Forecast:** 3.5–4.2 nights

**Drivers:** thematic routes, wellness retreats, night-time economy.

#### 4.3.2 Average Expenditure per Visitor

**Current:** USD 110–140 per day

**2031 Forecast:** USD 160–200 per day

**Drivers:** premium wellness, digital experiences, improved hospitality.

#### 4.3.3 Provincial Contribution to National GDP

**Current:** ~4% of national tourism GDP

**2031 Forecast:** 8–10%

**Drivers:** 1 million arrivals, higher spending, private investment, CBT growth.

### 4.4 NCP Tourism 2031 Main Targets

- **1 million+ international tourist arrivals**
- **30–40% increase in visitor expenditure and length of stay**
- **4,000–4,500 climate-smart certified rooms**
- **25–30 community-based tourism enterprises**
- **20-30 Innovative Tourism Products**
- **30% female workforce participation**
- **10–12 thematic routes operational**
- **50–60% increase in private sector investment**
- **25–30% increase in household tourism income**
- **Two new 5-star hotels (with total 500 rooms)**
- **Zero-plastic sacred cities**
- **VR/AR/MR experiences in all major heritage sites**
- **Digital ticketing and visitor management in 100% of key sites**
- **Carbon-neutral operations in at least 5 flagship attractions**
- **Minimum of 8% NCP Contribution to the national tourism GDP**

The 2031 targets are ambitious yet grounded in evidence, market trends, and the province's unique competitive advantages. With coordinated governance, strong private sector engagement, community empowerment, and sustained investment in green infrastructure and digital transformation, the North Central Province can realistically achieve these milestones and emerge as Sri Lanka's leading model for regenerative, inclusive, and heritage-driven tourism development. These targets will serve as the initial guide, and stakeholders will review and refine them annually, ensuring that the strategy remains adaptive, relevant, and aligned with evolving opportunities and challenges.

By 2031, the North Central Province is positioned to generate unprecedented tourism revenue driven by its targets of 1 million international tourists, 3 million domestic tourists, and a 30–40% increase in visitor spending and length of stay. With enhanced infrastructure, diversified thematic routes, climate-smart accommodation, and digital visitor management systems, the province is forecasted to earn between USD 740 million and USD 1.2 billion in direct tourism



revenue, translating into USD 1.25–2.1 billion in total economic impact when multiplier effects are included.

The expansion of 4,000 climate-smart rooms, 500 five-star hotel rooms, 25–30 community-based tourism enterprises, and carbon-neutral flagship attractions will strengthen the province’s competitiveness, while VR/AR/MR heritage experiences and zero-plastic sacred cities elevate its global brand. With these interventions, NCP is projected to contribute 8–10% of Sri Lanka’s national tourism GDP, marking it as a leading engine of sustainable, inclusive, and high-value tourism growth.

**Table 1: 2031 NCP Tourism Revenue Forecast**

Category	2031 Target / Forecast	Revenue / Economic Impact
<b>International Tourists</b>	1,000,000+	USD 560M – 840M
<b>Domestic Tourists</b>	3,000,000	USD 180M – 360M
<b>Total Direct Tourism Revenue</b>	—	<b>USD 740M – 1.2B</b>
<b>Total Economic Impact (Multiplier 1.6–2.1×)</b>	—	<b>USD 1.25B – 2.1B</b>
<b>Increase in Visitor Spending &amp; Stay</b>	+30–40%	Raises per-visitor spend to USD 160–200/day
<b>Accommodation Capacity</b>	4,000 climate-smart rooms + 500 five-star rooms	Higher premium-segment revenue
<b>Community-Based Tourism</b>	25–30 enterprises	Increased household income by 25–30%
<b>Female Workforce Participation</b>	30%	Expanded inclusive employment
<b>Thematic Routes</b>	10–12 operational	Longer stays, diversified spending
<b>Private Sector Investment</b>	+50–60%	New hotels, wellness, digital products
<b>Environmental Targets</b>	Zero-plastic sacred cities; 5 carbon-neutral sites	Strong global branding & premium pricing
<b>Digital Transformation</b>	VR/AR/MR at key sites; 100% digital ticketing	Higher yield per visitor
<b>Provincial GDP Contribution</b>	8–10% of national tourism GDP	USD 640M – 900M (direct)



## 5. NCP CONTRIBUTION TO SDGs

The North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031 is fundamentally aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflecting Sri Lanka's national commitment to inclusive growth, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable economic transformation. The strategy integrates global frameworks—including the UN Tourism (UNWTO) Guidelines, World Bank and ADB tourism initiatives, IMF and World Bank agreements, and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to ensure that tourism development in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa contributes directly to the SDGs through regenerative, community-centered, and climate-responsive interventions. The SDG contributions of the NCP Tourism Strategy are multidimensional, spanning economic empowerment, environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, gender equality, and institutional strengthening. The following sections outline how the strategy advances specific SDGs through its pillars, clusters, governance reforms, and investment priorities.



Figure 2: NCP Contribution to SDGs

### SDG 1: No Poverty – Community Income Growth and MSME Empowerment

The strategy places community prosperity at its core, emphasizing inclusive value-sharing and rural economic upliftment. It aims to increase household tourism income by **25–30%** through community-based tourism (CBT), MSME development, and local supply chain integration.

Key contributions include:

- Establishing **25-30 CBT enterprises** across clusters.
- Creating **2,000+ micro, small, and medium enterprises** through the Community Tourism Enterprise Fund.
- Strengthening rural livelihoods through agrotourism, craft tourism, and homestays.

These interventions directly reduce rural poverty and expand income opportunities across both districts.

### SDG 2: Zero Hunger – Climate-Smart Agrotourism and Local Food Systems

The strategy integrates **agro-living experiences**, agriprenueurship, farm-to-table tourism, and culinary innovation, strengthening local food systems and farmer incomes.



Contributions include:

- Promoting climate-smart agriculture through the **National Climate-Smart Agriculture Investment Plan (NCSAIP)**.
- Supporting local farmers through direct market access via tourism.
- Encouraging organic farming, water-efficient agriculture, and sustainable food production.

### **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being – Wellness, Nature Healing, and Spiritual Tourism**

NCP's wellness and nature-based clusters directly advance SDG 3 by promoting physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. The strategy emphasizes meditation retreats, Ayurveda, forest therapy, and nature healing experiences.

Key contributions:

- Development of **forest therapy zones**, wellness retreats, and meditation sanctuaries.
- Promotion of Ayurveda and herbal healing traditions.
- Creation of serene, low-stress environments that support mental health.

### **SDG 4: Quality Education – Skills Development and Tourism Training**

The strategy commits to building a **future-ready tourism workforce**, aligning with SDG 4 through education, training, and lifelong learning.

Key contributions:

- Training **10,000+ youth** in tourism skills by 2031.
- Establishing provincial tourism training centers with SLITHM and TVET institutes.
- Introducing digital learning platforms with **20+ modules**.
- Certification pathways for guides, hospitality workers, and community hosts.

These initiatives strengthen human capital and expand employment opportunities.

### **SDG 5: Gender Equality – Women-Led Tourism Enterprises**

The strategy strongly promotes women's leadership in tourism, directly contributing to SDG 5.

Key contributions:

- Targeting **30% female workforce participation** in tourism.
- Supporting women-led MSMEs, homestays, wellness services, and craft enterprises.
- Providing leadership programs, grants, and preferential access to finance.

Tourism has become a platform for transforming gender norms and expanding women's economic agency.

### **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation – Water Security and Wastewater Management**

Given NCP's dependence on ancient tank systems, the strategy integrates water conservation and sanitation improvements.

Contributions include:

- Greywater recycling, rainwater harvesting, and water-efficient visitor facilities.



- Restoration of tank cascade systems as climate-adaptive assets.
- Modern sanitation facilities across clusters.

These actions support SDG 6 by improving water security and reducing pollution.

### **SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy – Renewable Energy in Tourism**

The strategy mandates renewable energy adoption in tourism infrastructure.

Key contributions:

- **100% renewable energy** in all new tourism facilities by 2028.
- Solar-powered lighting, microgrids, and energy-efficient systems.
- Green building standards promoted through GBCSL and SLSEA.

This aligns with SDG 7 and reduces the sector's carbon footprint.

### **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth – Tourism as an Engine of Inclusive Growth**

Tourism is positioned as a major economic driver, contributing to SDG 8 through job creation, MSME development, and investment facilitation.

Key contributions:

- Creating thousands of jobs through hospitality, guiding, crafts, wellness, and digital services.
- Attracting **USD 300 million** in private investment.
- Expanding the nighttime economy and year-round tourism demand.

### **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure – Smart and Regenerative Tourism Infrastructure**

The strategy invests in modern, climate-resilient, and digital infrastructure.

Contributions include:

- Smart ticketing, QR-based interpretation, and digital visitor management.
- Regenerative landscape corridors and green infrastructure.
- Digital dashboards for governance and monitoring.

These innovations strengthen tourism competitiveness and align with SDG 9.

### **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities – Inclusive Tourism and Rural Empowerment**

The strategy reduces inequalities by ensuring tourism benefits reach rural communities, women, youth, and marginalized groups.

Key contributions:

- Community benefit agreements and revenue-sharing models.
- MSME support funds and concessional financing.
- Tourism development in underserved rural DS divisions.

### **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities – Heritage Protection and Urban Regeneration**

The strategy directly supports SDG 11 through heritage conservation, urban beautification, and sustainable visitor management.



#### Key contributions:

- Zero-plastic sacred cities in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.
- Restoration of heritage trails, monuments, and cultural landscapes.
- Urban beautification, green spaces, and pedestrian-friendly zones.

### **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production – Sustainable Tourism Standards**

The strategy promotes responsible tourism through certification, waste reduction, and sustainable supply chains.

#### Contributions:

- Adoption of SLTDA's Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme.
- Waste-to-resource systems and recycling hubs.
- Promotion of local crafts, food, and ethical products.

### **SDG 13: Climate Action – Climate-Smart Tourism and Adaptation**

Climate resilience is a central pillar of strategy.

#### Key contributions:

- Climate risk screening for all tourism projects.
- Heat-resilient architecture, shaded pathways, and seasonal visitor management.
- Ecosystem-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

### **SDG 14: Life Below Water – Wetland and Reservoir Conservation**

Contextualize with inland water bodies and water civilization tank cascade system in the NCP.

#### Contributions:

- Wetland conservation and water-based tourism guidelines.
- Water quality monitoring and eco-zoning.
- Floating accommodations designed with minimal ecological impact.

### **SDG 15: Life on Land – Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration**

The strategy strongly supports SDG 15 through biodiversity-positive tourism.

#### Key contributions:

- Restoration of dry-zone forests and wildlife habitats.
- Human–elephant conflict mitigation through corridors and early warning systems.
- Community-based conservation tourism.

### **SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – Governance and Social Harmony**

The strategy strengthens institutions and promotes social cohesion.

#### Contributions:

- Establishment of PTDI, PTTF, PTIFU, and PMU for transparent governance.
- Tourism as a bridge for ethnic harmony and cultural understanding.
- Digital governance systems for accountability.



### **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals – Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration**

The strategy is built on partnerships with:

- National ministries and provincial councils
- Private sector, MSMEs, and community organizations
- Global digital payment partners such as Visa Worldwide
- other international development partners

The NCP Tourism Strategy 2026–2031 is a comprehensive, SDG-aligned framework that transforms tourism into a driver of inclusive prosperity, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, gender equality, and institutional strengthening. By embedding sustainability, community empowerment, and regenerative development into every pillar, the strategy positions NCP as a national and global model for SDG-driven tourism transformation.



## 6. STRATEGIC PILLARS

The North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031 is anchored on seven interdependent strategic pillars designed to transform Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa into globally competitive, community-centered, and sustainability-driven destinations. These pillars reflect the lived experiences of residents, the aspirations of tourism businesses, the expectations of visitors, and the unique cultural, spiritual, and natural assets of the province.

### 6.1 Heritage, Culture & Spiritual Tourism Excellence

**Objective:** Position NCP as the world's foremost living heritage landscape.

**Focus Areas:**

- Elevate the Buddhist Sacred Cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa as global pilgrimage and heritage destinations.
- Strengthen the Buddhist Circuit, meditation and spiritual retreat offerings, and cultural interpretation centres.
- Implement structured conservation of archaeological sites and ancient hydraulic systems.
- Introduce immersive storytelling and digital heritage experiences to connect visitors with the province's spiritual legacy.

**Outcome:** A globally recognized heritage destination that preserves authenticity while enriching visitor experiences.

### 6.2 Wellness, Nature & Outdoor Experience Development

**Objective:** Diversify NCP's tourism portfolio through nature-based and wellness experiences.

**Focus Areas:**

- Develop wellness retreats, forest walks, birding routes, and agro-tourism experiences across tanks and reservoirs.
- Promote climate-resilient outdoor tourism with eco-friendly infrastructure and low-impact visitor management.
- Establish nature interpretation centres and community-run eco-lodges.
- Integrate wellness tourism with indigenous healing traditions and Ayurveda.

**Outcome:** A serene, restorative, and environmentally responsible destination offering holistic well-being and nature immersion.

### 6.3 Community-Centered Economic Empowerment

**Objective:** Ensure tourism directly benefits local communities and MSMEs.

**Focus Areas:**

- Strengthening local entrepreneurship through tourism start-up and incubator system, agripreneurship, craftpreneurship, artisan networks, and rural homestay programmes.
- Facilitate fair market access and local supply chain integration for farmers, guides, and service providers.
- Establish community tourism business incubators and micro-finance support schemes.
- Promote women and youth participation through targeted training and grants.



**Outcome:** Inclusive tourism growth that enhances household income, social equity, and community pride.

#### **6.4 Sustainable Infrastructure, Cleanliness & Visitor Management**

**Objective:** Build resilient, clean, and accessible tourism infrastructure.

**Focus Areas:**

- Upgrade roads, signage, sanitation, and waste management systems at key sites.
- Introduce digital ticketing, visitor-flow management, and eco-mobility solutions.
- Implement green building standards and renewable energy adoption in tourism facilities.
- Establish destination safety and cleanliness certification programmes.

**Outcome:** A well-managed, environmentally responsible tourism environment that ensures comfort, safety, and sustainability.

#### **6.5 Governance, Coordination & Digital Transformation**

**Objective:** Strengthen institutional leadership and data-driven decision-making.

**Focus Areas:**

- Establish a unified provincial tourism governance mechanism with clear mandates.
- Enhance coordination among SLTDA, provincial councils, and local authorities.
- Deploy digital tourism systems, smart destination dashboards, and real-time analytics.
- Foster partnerships with private sector, academia, and development agencies for innovation.

**Outcome:** Transparent, efficient, and technology-enabled governance that drives strategic tourism development.

#### **6.6 Private Sector-Led Tourism MSME Strengthening**

**Objective:** Create a seamless, business-friendly environment for tourism operators.

**Focus Areas:**

- Streamline registration, licensing, renewal, and compliance processes through integrated digital platforms.
- Strengthening coordination among the Tourism Ministry, SLTDA, SLITHM, SLTPB, SLCB, provincial councils, and local authorities.
- Empower the NCP hotels, guides and experience providers through regular win-win strategic relations and coordination with respective industry associations and NGO and CBO representative.
- Establish joint service desks and feedback mechanisms to improve responsiveness and reduce administrative delays.

**Outcome:** Harmonized institutional services and empowered private-sector participation in efficient tourism operations.

#### **6.7 Tourism Skills Development**

**Objective:** Build a skilled, future-ready tourism workforce.

**Focus Areas:**



- Establish provincial tourism education and training facilities in collaboration with SLITHM and vocational institutes.
- Introduce competency-based training modules for hospitality, guiding, digital marketing, and sustainability.
- Develop certification pathways and continuous professional development programmes.
- Partner with tourism associations and private sector to align training with industry needs and employment opportunities.

**Outcome:** A professional, service-oriented workforce that enhances NCP's competitiveness and visitor satisfaction.



## 7. NCP TOURISM CLUSTERS



The North Central Province is a landscape shaped by ancient civilizations, forest sanctuaries, expansive reservoirs, and vibrant rural communities. Its natural and cultural assets position it as Sri Lanka's most promising region for experiential tourism—a model that prioritizes wellness, nature immersion, cultural authenticity, adventure, and community-driven experiences. To unlock this potential, the province is organized into **eight thematic tourism clusters**, each designed to diversify experiences, extend visitor stays, stimulate night-time economic activity, and strengthen community-based tourism enterprises. The cluster approach is grounded in **scientific, spatial, and socio-economic logic** that ensures balanced tourism growth while safeguarding the province's ecological and cultural integrity.

Figure 3: NCP Province in the Sri Lanka Map

Each cluster represents a distinct ecological and cultural zone, enabling **carrying capacity management, biodiversity conservation, and targeted infrastructure planning**. By delineating tourism zones according to natural, physical, and man-made assets, the strategy allows for precise **need analysis, investment prioritization, and impact monitoring**. This structure also facilitates **community empowerment**, as residents, MSMEs, and tourism operators can participate in cluster-specific value chains—maximizing local economic benefits while minimizing environmental stress. The cluster model supports **destination branding and marketing** at two levels: first, positioning **NCP as a unified provincial brand**, and second, promoting each cluster as a **unique tourism destination** with its own identity and product mix. This dual branding approach enhances visibility, investor confidence, and visitor recognition.

Furthermore, the cluster system simplifies **policy coordination, investment facilitation, and tourism MSME development**, enabling government agencies, private investors, and development partners to align interventions with spatial priorities. It provides a logical framework for **infrastructure development, conservation planning, and tourism education**, ensuring that growth remains sustainable, inclusive, and scientifically managed.

The implementation of this strategy within each cluster also provides the North Central Province and its stakeholders with a **flexible, scalable, and future-oriented framework**. As tourism products evolve and new opportunities emerge, the province will be able to **further elaborate existing clusters or introduce sub-clusters** to capture niche markets, respond to visitor trends, and strengthen community-based value chains. This macro-level provincial framework is therefore not a limitation but a **strategic foundation**—enabling the systematic crafting of new tourism products, targeted infrastructure development, and refined conservation planning. It supports more efficient **investment facilitation**, clearer **need assessments**, and stronger **tourism MSME empowerment**, ensuring that tourism becomes a powerful tool for community development, environmental stewardship, and economic transformation. By allowing adaptive



sub-cluster development, the strategy ensures long-term relevance, innovation, and competitiveness for NCP as a dynamic tourism province.

### 7.1 The Eight Thematic Tourism Clusters

The eight thematic clusters collectively transform the North Central Province into a holistic experiential destination—where wellness, adventure, agro-culture, heritage, wildlife, and night-life blend seamlessly. Each cluster offers a distinct identity and product mix, supported by non-conventional accommodations such as treehouses, mud houses, floating stays, and living-willow retreats, alongside conventional hotels, homestays, eco-lodges, apartments, and hostels. The inclusion of boat safaris, food festivals, religious and cultural celebrations, and deep heritage interpretation programs ensures that visitors experience the province's spiritual depth, ecological richness, and cultural authenticity. These clusters are simple, thematic, and globally marketable, designed to support longer stays, higher visitor spending, and deeper engagement—positioning the North Central Province as Sri Lanka's flagship region for experiential tourism and sustainable development.

**Eight tourism clusters are listed below.**



Figure 4: NCP Tourism Clusters

#### Anuradhapura District

**Cluster 1.** Wellness & Mindfulness Heritage Sanctuary

**Cluster 2.** Forest Therapy & Nature Healing Zone

**Cluster 3.** Community Life & Cultural Trails

**Cluster 4.** Agro-Living & Floating Experiences

**Cluster 5.** Water & Wildlife Harmony Corridor

#### Polonnaruwa District

**Cluster 6.** Heritage & Water Civilization Experience

**Cluster 7.** Wildlife Adventure & Night-Life Zone

**Cluster 8.** Green Retreat & Agro-Wellness Valley

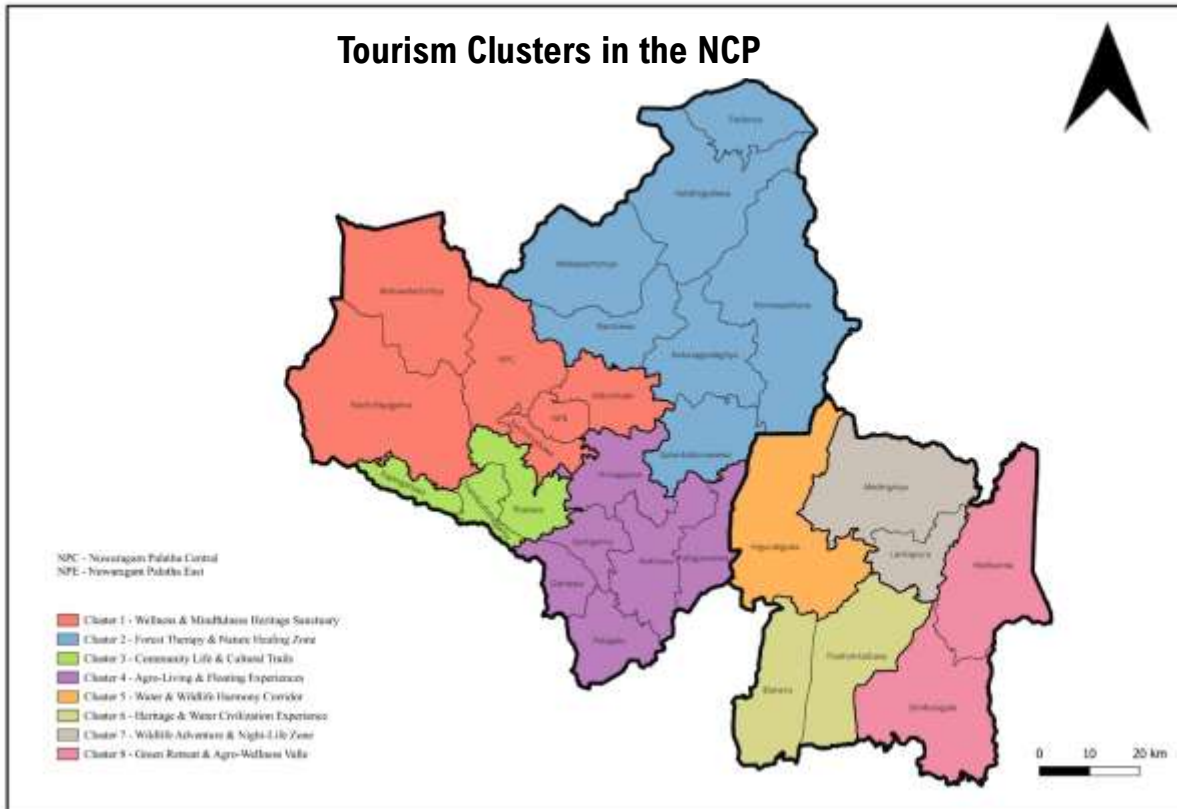


Figure 5: NCP Tourism Cluster Names and the Map

### 7.1.1 Cluster I: Wellness & Mindfulness Heritage Sanctuary

**Meditation • Spirituality • Heritage Wellness**

**Anuradhapura District**

**Cluster Essence:**

A serene environment dedicated to **mindfulness, meditation, Buddhist spirituality, and heritage wellness**. This cluster attracts travelers seeking **inner healing, silence, and cultural depth**, blending ancient monastic traditions with modern wellness practices.

**Experiences & Activities:**

- Meditation retreats and mindfulness programs in forest hermitages
- Sunrise yoga and breathing sessions near ancient stupas
- Cycling pilgrim routes connecting sacred sites
- Vegetarian wellness cuisine workshops and herbal cooking classes
- Deep heritage interpretation walks with local monks and guides
- Night-time temple illuminations and chanting sessions
- Spiritual storytelling and guided reflection walks

**Extended Stay & Night-Life Enhancers:**

- Wellness cafés and herbal tea lounges
- Night meditation circles and devotional music evenings
- Cultural light shows and spiritual theatre

**Belonging DS Divisions:**

Nuwaragam Palatha East | Nuwaragam Palatha Central | Mihintale | Nachchaduwa | Mahavillachchiya



### 7.1.2 Cluster II: Forest Therapy & Nature Healing Zone

#### Forest Bathing • Eco Retreats • Nature Trails Anuradhapura District

##### Cluster Essence:

A deep-nature wellness environment offering **forest therapy, eco-retreats, nature trails, and herbal healing**. Ideal for **slow travel and nature-based rejuvenation**, this cluster promotes **living willow retreats and forest-integrated stays**.

##### Experiences & Activities:

- Forest bathing and guided nature meditation
- Eco-lodges, treehouses, and forest glamping
- Cycling and hiking through forest corridors
- Birdwatching and nature photography
- Herbal therapy and Ayurveda detox programs
- Night-time firefly walks and forest sound baths
- Boat safaris through forest-lined reservoirs

##### Extended Stay & Night-Life Enhancers:

- Forest-themed night cafés and wellness bonfire gatherings
- Night-time nature concerts with natural soundscapes

##### Belonging DS Divisions:

Padaviya | Kebithigollewa | Medawachchiya | Rambewa | Kahatagasdigiliya | Horoupathana | Gale nbindunuwewa

### 7.1.3 Cluster III: Community Life & Cultural Trails

#### Homestays • Craft Tourism • Rural Experiences Anuradhapura District

##### Cluster Essence:

A vibrant community-based tourism zone celebrating **local culture, crafts, food, and rural hospitality**. It promotes **authentic village life and creative engagement with artisans**.

##### Experiences & Activities:

- Homestays and community-run eco-lodges
- Craft workshops (weaving, pottery, woodcraft)
- Village cycling trails and agro-village tours
- Traditional cooking classes and food tasting
- Night food streets and cultural performances
- Wildlife coexistence experiences near rural edges
- Religious and cultural festivals highlighting local traditions

##### Extended Stay & Night-Life Enhancers:

- Community night markets and open-air folk music nights
- Craft bazaars and storytelling evenings



### Belonging DS Divisions:

Thambuththegama | Thalawa | Nochchiyagama | Rajanganaya

#### 7.1.4 Cluster IV: Agro-Living & Floating Experiences

**Agro Tourism • Floating Villas • Culinary Innovation**

**Anuradhapura District**

#### Cluster Essence:

A creative agro-tourism zone combining **floating accommodations, farm-to-table dining, irrigation heritage, and culinary tourism**. It highlights **Sri Lanka's agricultural ingenuity and reservoir-based lifestyles**.

#### Experiences & Activities:

- Floating villas and lakeside glamping
- Farm-to-table culinary journeys and harvest festivals
- Night-time food markets and agro-craft bazaars
- Cycling along irrigation canals and paddy landscapes
- Birdwatching and photography in agricultural wetlands
- Boat safaris and floating dining experiences

#### Extended Stay & Night-Life Enhancers:

- Floating night restaurants and culinary festivals
- Chef-led cooking shows and agro-music gatherings

### Belonging DS Divisions:

Galnewa | Palagala | Kekirawa | Ipalogama | Thirappane | Palugaswewa (part)

#### 7.1.5 Cluster V: Water & Wildlife Harmony Corridor

**Wetland Wellness • Birdwatching • Eco Lodging**

**Anuradhapura District**

#### Cluster Essence:

A tranquil water-based nature zone offering **floating spas, birdwatching cruises, eco-lodging, and wildlife harmony experiences**. It integrates **wetland conservation with wellness and recreation**.

#### Experiences & Activities:

- Floating spas and wellness cruises
- Birdwatching towers and wetland photography
- Night safaris and stargazing camps
- Kayaking, canoeing, and boat safaris
- Community-led conservation walks
- Sunset dining on floating decks

#### Extended Stay & Night-Life Enhancers:

- Night-time wetland cruises and stargazing lounges
- Floating cinema experiences and lakeside music events



### Belonging DS Divisions:

Hingurakgoda (part) | Palugaswewa (part)

### 7.1.6 Cluster VI: Heritage & Water Civilization Experience

Archaeology • Cycling Trails • Cultural Revival

Polonnaruwa District

#### Cluster Essence:

A heritage-rich zone celebrating **ancient water engineering, archaeology, cultural revival, and wellness by water**. It connects visitors to **Sri Lanka's hydraulic civilization and royal heritage**.

#### Experiences & Activities:

- Cycling and archaeology trails linking ancient ruins
- Floating meditation decks and heritage spa resorts
- Cultural storytelling and night-time light shows
- Water-based recreation and educational tours
- Ancient craft revival workshops and museum experiences
- Religious and cultural festivals celebrating royal heritage

#### Extended Stay & Night-Life Enhancers:

- Night-time heritage illumination shows
- Cultural theatre by the water
- Archaeology-themed night cafés

### Belonging DS Divisions:

Thamankaduwa | Elaheera | Hingurakgoda (part)

### 7.1.7 Cluster VII: Wildlife Adventure & Night-Life Zone

Adventure • Camping • Night Safaris

Polonnaruwa District

#### Cluster Essence:

A dynamic adventure zone offering **wildlife encounters, camping, glamping, night-life tourism, and outdoor recreation**. It promotes **active exploration and youth-oriented adventure experiences**, blending nature with entertainment and sustainable adventure tourism.

#### Experiences & Activities:

- Night safaris and wildlife photography expeditions
- Glamping and adventure camping in forest edges
- Cycling and kayaking trails through riverine landscapes
- Boat safaris and guided nature cruises
- Night food streets and music events
- Adventure obstacle courses and nature challenges
- Birdwatching and river exploration with local guides

#### Extended Stay & Night-Life Enhancers:

- Night adventure festivals and openair music carnivals
- Glow-in-the-dark cycling events and campfire storytelling



- Youth-oriented eco-music gatherings

### **Belonging DS Divisions:**

Medirigiriya | Lankapura

**Polonnaruwa District**

### **7.1.8 Cluster VIII: Green Retreat & Agro-Wellness Valley**

**Forest Meditation • Agro Wellness • Nature Trails**

#### **Cluster Essence:**

A peaceful green valley offering **archaeological and cultural** heritage, **forest meditation, agro-wellness, nature trails, and community glamping**. This cluster integrates **agro-ecological living with wellness tourism**, promoting sustainable lifestyles and immersive nature experiences.

#### **Experiences & Activities:**

- Archaeological tourist interpretation
- Forest meditation and yoga retreats
- Herbal therapy and agro-wellness programs
- Craft tourism and community glamping
- Birdwatching and nature trails
- Night-time cultural storytelling and bonfire gatherings
- Cycling through green valleys and agro-villages
- Boat safaris and eco-farm visits

#### **Extended Stay & Night-Life Enhancers:**

- Camping and Glamping stays
- Night-time wellness circles and green-valley cafés
- Cultural bonfire gatherings and agro-music nights

### **Belonging DS Divisions:**

Dimbulagala | Welikanda

Two Divisional Secretariat (DS) divisions act as vital cross-cluster connectors, enhancing multi-day tourism circuits and shared infrastructure. Palugaswewa links the Agro Living and Floating Experiences cluster with the Water and Wildlife Harmony Corridor, while Hingurakgoda connects the Water and Wildlife Harmony Corridor to the Heritage and Water Civilization Experience. Together, these connectors promote diversified visitor movement, integrated product development, and coordinated tourism management across administrative boundaries.



## 8. CLIMATE RESILIENCE, BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The North Central Province, historically celebrated as “*Wew Bendi Rajje*” due to its remarkable network of more than 3,000 medium and large-scale tanks, is a region where human settlement, agriculture, and nature have co-evolved for centuries. The province’s identity, economy, and cultural heritage are deeply rooted in its ancient hydraulic civilization and dry-zone ecosystems. With over 65 percent of the population engaged in agriculture and agricultural-related industries, the livelihoods of communities and the attractiveness of the tourism sector are inseparably linked to the health of the environment. As tourism continues to expand across heritage sites, forest reserves, agrarian landscapes, and rural villages, the integration of climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and sustainability becomes essential for safeguarding the long-term viability of the sector.

NCP lies within Sri Lanka’s dry zone and is therefore highly vulnerable to climate variability. Prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, and increasing frequency of extreme weather events pose significant risks to tourism assets and visitor experiences. Declining water levels in tanks reduce ecological value and scenic beauty, while extreme heat conditions diminish visitor comfort and increase health risks. Irregular rainfall and occasional flooding disrupt accessibility to heritage sites, damage infrastructure, and affect the reliability of tourism services. These climate-related challenges, highlighted in the National Adaptation Plan (2016), are expected to intensify, making climate resilience a critical pillar of tourism planning in the province.

The biodiversity of NCP is equally significant. The province hosts a rich mosaic of dry mixed evergreen forests, wetlands, tank cascade systems, and protected areas such as Ritigala, and Kalawewa. These ecosystems support elephants, endemic flora, migratory birds, and a wide range of fauna, making the region ideal for eco-tourism and nature-based tourism. The traditional tank cascade systems, recognized by IUCN as globally important agro-ecological landscapes, enhance biodiversity while supporting agriculture and rural livelihoods. However, increasing tourism pressure, land-use change, environmental pollution, and climate-induced ecosystem stress are contributing to habitat degradation and biodiversity loss. Unregulated tourism activities, waste accumulation, and disturbance to wildlife habitats remain major concerns, particularly in environmentally sensitive zones.

Agritourism presents a significant opportunity for sustainable tourism development in NCP. It is defined as an interactive activity between agricultural producers and visitors, where tourists engage with farming practices, rural lifestyles, and agricultural landscapes. Research shows that agritourism allows visitors to live with rural households, participate in farming activities, and experience agricultural systems such as terraced cultivation, fruit orchards, sugarcane fields, and livestock farms. Agritourism has been widely recognized as a strategy for diversifying rural economies and promoting sustainable rural development. However, because agritourism is highly climate-sensitive, droughts, heatwaves, and water scarcity can reduce agricultural productivity and diminish the visitor experience. Therefore, agritourism development must incorporate climate-smart agriculture, water-efficient technologies, drought-resilient crop varieties, and visitor-friendly adaptations such as shaded pathways and seasonal activity planning.



Sustainability in tourism requires a balanced approach that integrates environmental conservation, economic viability, and social inclusiveness. While national initiatives such as sustainable tourism certification promote environmentally responsible practices, their adoption at the provincial level remains limited. Many tourism operators, particularly in the informal sector, lack the awareness, capacity, and financial resources to implement sustainable practices. Waste management challenges, weak institutional coordination, and limited enforcement of environmental regulations further constrain progress. At the same time, community-based tourism offers an important opportunity to promote inclusive development by engaging local communities—especially women and youth—in tourism-related activities. However, limited training, weak market access, and inadequate institutional support continue to hinder the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Women-led tourism enterprises and start-ups play a critical role in demonstrating how restrictive, gendered, and discriminatory social norms can be transformed into positive, empowering, and economically meaningful realities. When women take leadership roles in tourism—as entrepreneurs, homestay operators, guides, craft producers, digital marketers, wellness practitioners, or community managers—they create visible examples of capability, confidence, and innovation that challenge long-held stereotypes about women’s roles in society. These enterprises not only generate income and strengthen household resilience but also shift community perceptions by proving that women can lead businesses, manage finances, negotiate with markets, and contribute significantly to local development. Over time, such success stories become powerful catalysts for social change, inspiring other women, and girls, influencing community attitudes, and helping reshape social norms toward greater equality, respect, and shared prosperity.

Climate risk and vulnerability assessments indicate that tourism in NCP is exposed to multiple hazards. Droughts remain the most frequent and severe hazard, affecting water availability, agriculture, wildlife, and visitor experiences. Rising temperatures and heatwaves reduce tourist satisfaction and increase health risks, while floods and flash floods damage infrastructure and restrict access to key sites. Forest fires threaten wildlife habitats and eco-tourism zones, and water scarcity affects both hospitality operations and community livelihoods. Biodiversity loss, exacerbated by climate stress, undermines the ecological foundations of nature-based tourism. Human–elephant conflict, intensified by habitat shifts and water scarcity, poses risks to both communities and visitors. These vulnerabilities are compounded by structural challenges such as weak institutional coordination, limited infrastructure resilience, high dependence on a narrow range of tourism products, and the dominance of informal sector activities that lack access to financial support, insurance, and risk management mechanisms.

From an industry perspective, strengthening the resilience of tourism enterprises is essential. Businesses must diversify tourism products to reduce dependence on a limited number of attractions, adopt digital technologies to improve market access and operational efficiency, and formalize small and medium enterprises to enhance access to financial services and government support. Capacity-building programs on sustainable practices, climate adaptation, and risk management are critical for improving service quality and resilience. Institutional strengthening is equally important. Effective risk management requires improved coordination among government agencies, private sector actors, and local communities. Tourism planning must be integrated with national frameworks such as the National Adaptation Plan, National



Tourism Policy, and Physical Planning Policy. Community engagement is vital, as local knowledge and participation contribute significantly to risk identification, resource management, and sustainable tourism practices.

Building climate resilience in NCP requires a combination of ecosystem-based adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and climate-smart infrastructure. Ecosystem-based adaptation measures include restoring tank cascade systems, rehabilitating forest buffers, conserving wetlands, managing invasive species, and protecting biodiversity corridors. These actions enhance ecological resilience while supporting tourism and agriculture. Disaster risk reduction measures, guided by the Disaster Management Centre, include climate risk mapping, early warning systems, emergency response protocols, and climate-resilient building standards. Water security measures such as rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling, and water-efficient landscaping are essential for tourism facilities. Heat and drought adaptation strategies include heat-resilient architecture, shaded pathways, cooling shelters, and seasonal visitor management.

Biodiversity conservation must remain a central priority. Protecting key ecosystems such as Ritigala and Kalawewa, restoring degraded habitats, strengthening protected area management, and implementing community-based wildlife tourism models are essential steps. Human–elephant conflict mitigation requires the establishment of elephant corridors, community-based early warning systems, elephant-friendly tourism guidelines, and livelihood support programs. Visitor education on wildlife behaviour and responsible tourism practices is also important.

Sustainability standards for tourism operators must be strengthened through mandatory environmental compliance, climate risk screening, water and energy efficiency, waste reduction, and biodiversity protection commitments. Voluntary certifications such as SLTDA Sustainable Tourism Certification, Green Globe, Travel Life, and the IUCN Green List can further promote responsible practices. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including annual climate and biodiversity impact assessments, GIS-based ecosystem monitoring, visitor impact assessments, and carbon footprint tracking, will ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

In conclusion, the integration of climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, sustainability, and risk management is essential for ensuring the long-term viability of tourism in the North Central Province. While the region possesses exceptional potential for sustainable tourism development, addressing existing vulnerabilities and implementing targeted mitigation strategies will be critical to achieving a resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible tourism sector. By protecting its natural and cultural assets, empowering communities, and strengthening institutional systems, NCP can position itself as a climate-resilient, biodiversity-positive tourism destination that contributes meaningfully to both the economy and the environment.



## 9. STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The strategic direction for tourism development in the North Central Province is anchored in the vision of positioning the region as **Sri Lanka's Premier Kingdom Destination**—a globally recognized heritage landscape where ancient civilizations, ecological wisdom, and community resilience converge to offer transformative, inclusive, and sustainable tourism experiences. This chapter outlines the strategic goals and objectives that will guide NCP's tourism transformation over the next five years, ensuring that development is heritage-led, climate-responsive, digitally enabled, community-centered, and institutionally coordinated. The seven strategic goals presented below are directly aligned with the **seven strategic pillars** of the NCP Tourism Strategy. Together, they provide a coherent framework for destination development, investment facilitation, conservation planning, and tourism MSME empowerment.

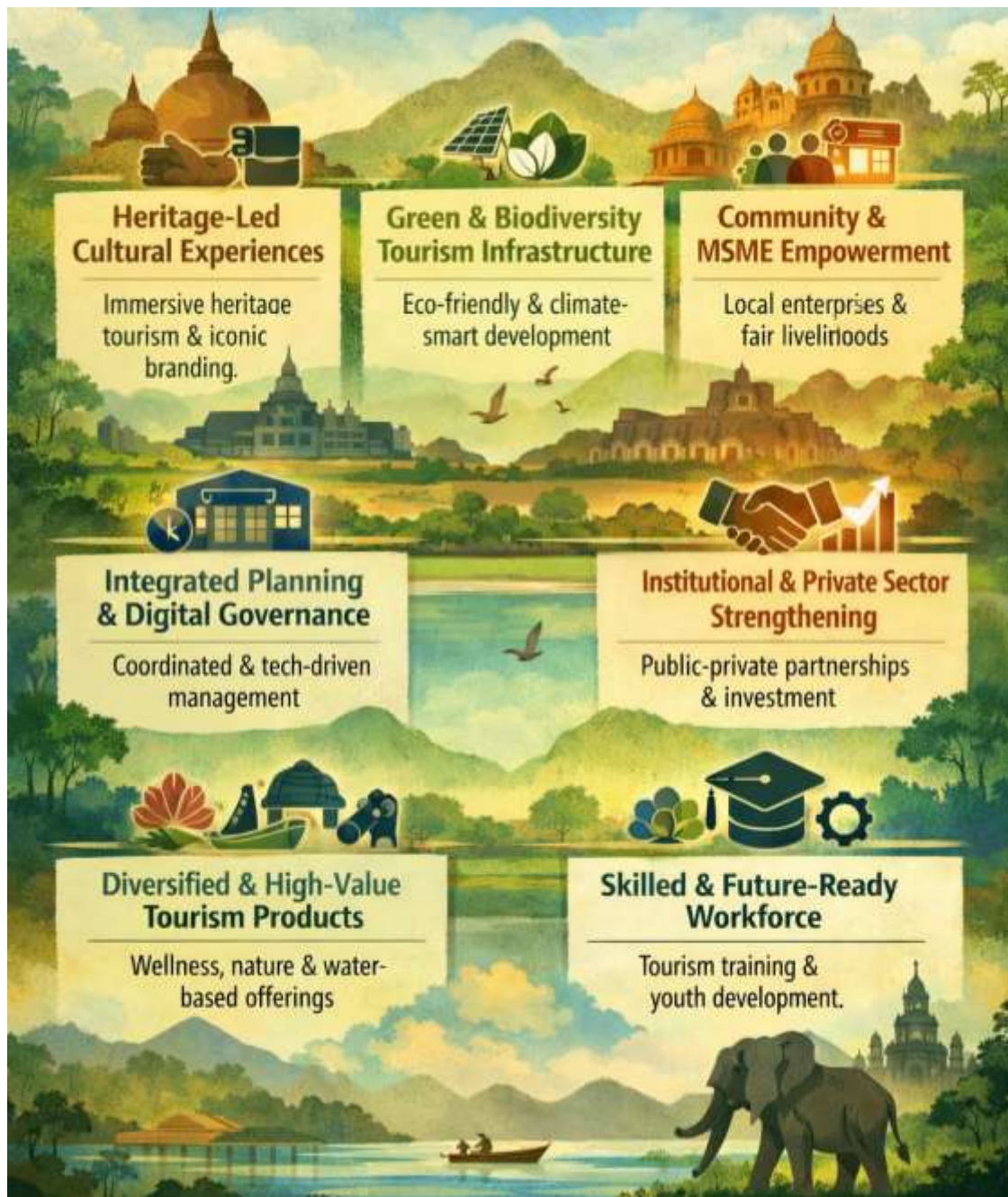


Figure 6: NCP Tourism Strategy Goals



## Strategic Goal 1: Heritage-Led Destination Branding and Immersive Cultural Experiences

### Aligned to Pillar 1: Heritage, Culture & Spiritual Tourism Excellence

NCP's identity is rooted in its unparalleled heritage—Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, the heart of Sri Lanka's ancient hydraulic civilization. This goal strengthens the province's global positioning through iconic branding, immersive storytelling, and digital interpretation that bring ancient kingdoms to life.

#### Objectives

- Protect, interpret, and elevate UNESCO-listed sacred cities and the Tank Cascade Systems.
- Introduce VR/AR/MR-enabled heritage experiences showcasing ancient rituals, irrigation engineering, and monastic life.
- Develop digital heritage trails with QR-based interpretation, holographic guides, and multilingual virtual tours.
- Launch the “**Kingdom Destination – Immersive Edition**” global campaign with cinematic VR content.
- Establish **10 thematic tourism routes** (heritage, water civilization, agro living, biodiversity, spiritual circuits).
- Increase international arrivals to **1 million+ visitors annually by 2031**.
- Achieve a **30% increase in visitor expenditure and length of stay** through premium, digitally enhanced experiences.

## Strategic Goal 2: Climate-Smart, Green, and Biodiversity-Sensitive Tourism Infrastructure

### Aligned to Pillar 2: Wellness, Nature & Outdoor Experience Development

NCP's ancient water civilization and ecological landscapes demand a development model that is climate adaptive, nature-based, and environmentally responsible.

#### Objectives

- Integrate climate risk and vulnerability assessments into all tourism planning and zoning.
- Introduce green infrastructure: living willow structures, natural shading corridors, permeable surfaces, passive cooling systems.
- Promote **zero-plastic zones** in sacred cities and major attractions.
- Restore and promote **tank cascade systems** as climate-adaptive tourism assets and educational showcases.
- Develop eco-trails, wildlife corridors, birding routes, wetland experiences, and low-impact nature trails.
- Certify **4,000+ rooms** as climate-smart and biodiversity-sensitive by 2031.
- Ensure all new tourism facilities adopt **solar energy, rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling, and green building standards**.

## Strategic Goal 3: Community-Centered Tourism and MSME Empowerment

### Aligned to Pillar 3: Community-Centered Economic Empowerment

Tourism must improve local communities, strengthen livelihoods, and ensure equitable benefit sharing across the province.



## Objectives

- Establish **20+ community-based tourism enterprises** across NCP by 2031.
- Achieve **30% female workforce participation** in tourism value chains.
- Strengthen MSMEs through training in digital skills, VR/AR content creation, sustainable hospitality, and green tourism practices.
- Increase household-level tourism income by **25%** in participating communities.
- Promote local supply chains for food, crafts, wellness products, and agro-tourism experiences.
- Support community-run wellness retreats, meditation centers, spiritual journeys, and nature-based healing experiences.

## Strategic Goal 4: Integrated Planning, Policy Alignment, and Digital Governance

### Aligned to Pillar 5: Governance, Coordination & Digital Transformation

Effective tourism development requires strong institutional coordination, policy coherence, and modern governance systems.

## Objectives

- Establish the **NCP Tourism Department** and multi-level coordination mechanisms linking national ministries, provincial councils, and local authorities.
- Align all tourism zone plans with the **National Tourism Policy, National Physical Plan, and Provincial Adaptation Plan**.
- Develop annual operational plans for each tourism zone with clear KPIs, budgets, and monitoring frameworks.
- Introduce digital governance platforms for licensing, data collection, real-time visitor analytics, and stakeholder coordination.
- Implement transparent monitoring, reporting, and adaptive management systems for all tourism initiatives.

## Strategic Goal 5: Institutional Governance and Private Sector Empowerment

### Aligned to Pillar 6: Inter-Institutional Coordination & Service Harmonization

A strong, transparent governance system and an empowered private sector are essential for sustainable tourism growth.

## Objectives

- Strengthen **NCP Tourism Industry Associations** as the voice of the private sector across accommodation, experiences, and services.
- Host annual investment forums and develop tourism opportunity maps to attract domestic and international investors.
- Promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure, digital innovation, and product development.
- Increase private sector investment in sustainable tourism by **50%** by 2031.
- Facilitate the establishment of **two 5-star hotels** with 300–500 rooms, ensuring climate-responsive architecture and green certification.
- Build capacity among government officials in destination governance, digital tourism, climate-smart planning, and stakeholder engagement.



## Strategic Goal 6: Infrastructure, Experience Diversification, and High-Value Tourism Products

### Aligned to Pillar 4: Sustainable Infrastructure, Cleanliness & Visitor Management

NCP must offer a diverse, high-quality portfolio of tourism experiences that reflect its heritage, nature, wellness, and water-based assets.

#### Objectives

- Upgrade roads, signage, sanitation, digital connectivity, and public spaces in all tourism zones.
- Introduce and operationalize new strategies, technologies, and early-warning systems to support human–elephant coexistence.
- Develop premium wellness tourism offerings: Ayurveda, meditation retreats, yoga sanctuaries, healing trials.
- Expand water-based tourism: boating, kayaking, tank-based recreation, floating platforms, eco-friendly aquatic experiences.
- Introduce VR-enhanced museums, interactive learning centers, and digital visitor hubs.
- Increase high-quality tourism products by **40%** by 2031.
- Establish and operationalize designated night-life activities with extended operating hours, entertainment activities, and safety measures.
- Establish integrated multimodal transport hubs connecting railway stations, bus stands, and private car parks, with EV-charging and EV-bike docking facilities in at least five priority tourism zones by 2028.
- Ensure each tourism zone has a **Destination Management Organization (DMO)** with clear mandates and performance indicators.

## Strategic Goal 7: Human Resource Development & Future Ready Tourism Workforce

### Aligned to Pillar 7: Human Resource Development & Competency-Based Education

A skilled, service-oriented workforce is essential for NCP's competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

#### Objectives

- Establish provincial tourism training centers in partnership with **SLITHM**, TVET institutes, and universities.
- Introduce competency-based training for hospitality, guiding, digital marketing, wellness tourism, and sustainability practices.
- Develop certification pathways and continuous professional development programs for the existing workforce.
- Train **10,000+ youth** in tourism-related skills by 2031.
- Strengthen industry-academia partnerships to align training with market needs and emerging tourism trends.
- Promote youth entrepreneurship in digital tourism, wellness, agro-tourism, and adventure tourism.
- Develop language proficiency among site guides, transport service providers, and micro- and small-scale accommodation operators.



## 10. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The North Central Province possesses an extraordinary foundation for tourism development, shaped by its rich cultural heritage, historical depth, and ecological diversity. As the heartland of Sri Lanka's ancient civilization, the province is home to globally significant heritage capitals—Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa—along with sacred collectively anchor a strong cultural and pilgrimage tourism base. The province's hospitable multi-ethnic communities, traditional festivals, indigenous food culture, and diverse tourism products—including eco-tourism, agro-tourism, religious tourism, and adventure tourism—further enhance its appeal. Its strategic location within the Cultural Triangle, spillover benefits from Sigiriya and Dambulla, and excellent railway connectivity strengthen its competitiveness and position NCP as a natural hub for both domestic and international tourism.

Despite these strengths, the province faces significant institutional and operational weaknesses that constrain its ability to fully leverage its tourism potential. Many sites lack adequate infrastructure, sanitation, waste management, and facilities for differently abled visitors. Digital presence remains weak, and the absence of a centralized tourism information system limits global visibility. Local cultural industries struggle with supply chain issues and limited marketing capacity, while the lack of an evening economy and language barriers reduce visitor satisfaction and length of stay. High seasonality, limited healthcare access for tourists, and inconsistent data systems further weaken destination competitiveness. These challenges are compounded by fragmented governance structures and the absence of a dedicated provincial tourism institution.

The roots of these institutional limitations lie in the constitutional and administrative framework governing tourism. Although the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution (1987) devolved powers to nine provincial councils and classified “tourism” as a subject under the Concurrent List, the North Central Provincial Council has **not yet formally assumed legislative authority** over tourism. Consequently, all tourism-related functions are carried out by the provincial ministry under whose purview tourism currently falls, without a dedicated institutional structure to plan, regulate, or manage the sector. At the district level, the District Secretary traditionally leads coordination of line ministries; however, national tourism agencies such as SLTDA, SLTPB, SLITHM, and SLCB do not have integrated regional operational structures. Their activities are implemented through national channels, with district-level reporting handled informally by administrative authorities. This has resulted in **fragmented development, duplication of efforts, overlapping functions, and limited accountability**, weakening the province's ability to respond to emerging opportunities and threats.

At the same time, the province is presented with significant opportunities for sustainable tourism growth. There is strong potential to diversify into eco-tourism, wellness, adventure, and experiential tourism, supported by the province's natural landscapes, traditional livelihoods, and cultural depth. The growing global market for digital nomads creates opportunities for long-stay “workation” products, particularly around serene environments such as Ritigala and rural tank cascade systems. The province can also tap into green and climate financing, carbon credit mechanisms, and regenerative tourism models. Rail-based tourism, community-based experiences, and youth-driven entrepreneurship offer additional avenues for inclusive growth.



However, these opportunities are counterbalanced by threats such as macroeconomic instability, climate change, biodiversity loss, human-elephant conflict, weak regulatory enforcement, and competition from other destinations. Addressing these threats requires strong governance, climate-resilient planning, and institutional accountability.

To overcome these challenges and harness emerging opportunities, the NCP Tourism Strategy proposes a **comprehensive institutional development framework** that strengthens governance, coordination, investment facilitation, and project management. Central to this framework is the establishment of a **Provincial Tourism Task Force (PTTF)**, a high-level, multi-stakeholder body that will provide strategic oversight, ensure alignment with national tourism reforms, and coordinate inter-agency collaboration. Complementing this is the creation of a **Provincial Tourism Development Institution (PTDI)**, like those in other provinces, which will serve as the dedicated operational arm for destination management, product development, standards enforcement, community tourism coordination, and tourism information systems. The PTDI will fill the long-standing institutional vacuum and provide a permanent structure for tourism development.

To ensure effective implementation of tourism projects, the province will establish a **Project Management Unit (PMU)** equipped with multidisciplinary expertise in project design, appraisal, monitoring, safeguards, and digital reporting. The PMU will introduce a digital dashboard for real-time monitoring of tourism investments and cluster performance, while also developing simple, practical guides for landscape investments, tourism project development, and appraisal processes. A multidisciplinary project appraisal committee will operate under the PMU from 2026 onward to ensure that all tourism projects meet environmental, social, cultural, financial, and technical standards.

Recognizing the importance of investment attraction, the strategy also proposes a **Tourism Investment Promotion Unit (TIPU)** to position NCP as an investor-ready destination. This unit will prepare investor-ready project profiles, coordinate with BOI and SLTDA, fast-track approvals for green and regenerative investments, and promote opportunities for 5-star hotels, wellness resorts, and landscape-based tourism ventures. Together, these institutional mechanisms will create a coherent governance ecosystem capable of driving sustainable, inclusive, and investment-ready tourism growth.

Institutional development must be supported by a comprehensive capacity-building agenda targeting government officers, tourism MSMEs, and industry associations. Provincial and local officers require training in cluster-based tourism planning, project appraisal, environmental safeguards, digital monitoring, and visitor management. Tourism MSMEs need structured programs on business formalization, digital literacy, digital payments, financial literacy, customer service, sustainability standards, and compliance with SLTDA regulations. Strengthening tourism associations will enhance service quality, collective bargaining power, and participation in policy processes. These capacity-building initiatives must be delivered through a **multi-stakeholder integrated approach**, involving government agencies, private sector partners, academia, development partners, and community organizations to ensure synergy and avoid duplication.

Digital transformation is a foundational pillar of the institutional development framework. The introduction of digital dashboards, e-permits, online licensing, QR-based visitor information,



smart ticketing, and digital payments will enhance transparency, efficiency, and visitor experience. These tools will also support evidence-based decision-making and strengthen accountability across institutions. In this regard, building strong partnerships with national and global digital payment leaders—such as Visa Worldwide—is strategically important for strengthening Sri Lanka’s tourism sector. Such collaborations go far beyond payment processing; they enhance traveler convenience, increase foreign exchange inflows, and position the country as a modern, cashless-friendly destination. Through improved digital payment acceptance, joint global marketing campaigns, SME digital onboarding, secure transaction systems, and data-driven insights, partnerships with companies like Visa can significantly elevate the visitor experience while supporting national goals for digital transformation, financial inclusion, and tourism competitiveness.

For the North Central Province, these collaborations can further enable seamless travel experiences across heritage sites, community tourism enterprises, and emerging tourism clusters, ensuring that local businesses and communities benefit more directly from tourism growth.

Ensuring quality, standards, and sustainable destination management is essential for achieving the province’s 2031 tourism goals. The PTDI, in collaboration with SLTDA, will introduce certification systems for community tourism, conduct regular audits, enforce safety and environmental standards, and promote biodiversity-positive and climate-resilient tourism models. This will strengthen the province’s brand, improve visitor satisfaction, and enhance competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

In summary, the North Central Province has the cultural depth, natural assets, and strategic location to become a leading tourism destination in Sri Lanka. However, unlocking this potential requires **strong institutions, coordinated governance, investment facilitation, digital transformation, and capacity building**. By addressing the weaknesses and threats identified in the SWOT analysis and implementing the proposed institutional development framework, the province can build a resilient, inclusive, and regenerative tourism economy that contributes significantly to national GDP and delivers long-term benefits to communities, investors, and visitors.



## 11. ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

### Operational Framework for Implementing the Eight Strategic Goals

The Strategic Actions chapter translates the vision and goals of the NCP Tourism Strategy into actionable steps. Each goal is supported by targeted strategies and measurable objectives that collectively strengthen governance, infrastructure, investment, skills, product development, branding, and community empowerment. This framework ensures that tourism development in NCP remains **coordinated, inclusive, climate-responsive, and economically transformative**.

### Goal 1: Strengthen Governance, Coordination & Institutional Capacity

**Purpose:** Establish a unified, accountable, and transparent governance system for NCP tourism development.

#### Strategic Actions

- **S1.1:** Establish a **Provincial Tourism Task Force (PTTF)** with representation from all key stakeholders, government agencies, private sector, community organizations, and development partners.
- **S1.2:** Create a **dedicated provincial tourism development institution** responsible for planning, implementation, and monitoring.
- **S1.3:** Introduce **standards, certification, and compliance mechanisms** for community tourism enterprises in collaboration with SLTDA and Local Government Authorities (LGAs).
- **S1.4:** Strengthen **provincial and local government capacity** for cluster-based planning, monitoring, and tourism management.
- **S1.5:** Integrate **climate risk, safety, and visitor management protocols** into all tourism operations.
- **S1.6:** Maintain regular coordination with **district tourism subcommittees, Praja Shakthi committees, industry associations, and tourism MSMEs** to ensure participatory governance.

#### Objectives & Targets

- **1.1:** Establish the PTTF by **2026**.
- **1.2:** Operationalize the provincial tourism development institution by **2027**.
- **1.3:** Implement national community tourism standards by **2027**.
- **1.4:** Train **500+ provincial and local officers** in cluster-based tourism planning by **2030**.
- **1.5:** Ensure **100% of clusters** adopt climate resilience and safety protocols by **2031**.
- **1.6:** Maintain consistent stakeholder engagement and achieve **above-average satisfaction ratings** from 2026 onward.

### Goal 2: Develop Regenerative, Green & Inclusive Tourism Infrastructure

**Purpose:** Strengthen tourism-enabling infrastructure through coordinated action across central, provincial, and local authorities, prioritizing regenerative, low-carbon, and culturally sensitive development.

#### Strategic Actions



- **S2.1:** Coordinate with central and local authorities to **upgrade access roads, signage, sanitation, and visitor facilities including safe drinking water, green canopies, and shading walkways.**
- **S2.2:** Prioritize **green infrastructure**—solar-powered facilities, waste-to-resource systems, water-efficient visitor services, and eco-mobility.
- **S2.3:** Develop **regenerative landscape infrastructure** such as nature trails, wetland restoration zones, cultural heritage corridors, and agro-tourism landscapes.
- **S2.4:** Implement **universal accessibility standards** across major tourism sites.
- **S2.5:** Integrate **digital infrastructure** (Wi-Fi zones, smart ticketing, digital interpretation) into priority tourism clusters.

### Objectives & Targets

- **2.1:** Upgrade **15 priority tourism sites** with regenerative infrastructure by **2030.**
- **2.2:** Achieve **100% renewable energy adoption** in all new provincial tourism facilities by **2028.**
- **2.3:** Establish **three regenerative landscape corridors** (heritage, nature, agro-cultural) by **2031.**
- **2.4:** Ensure full **accessibility compliance** in all major sites by **2030.**
- **2.5:** Implement **digital visitor systems** in all priority clusters by **2029.**

### Goal 3: Facilitate National & International Tourism Investment

**Purpose:** Position NCP as a competitive, investor-ready destination for high-value tourism, including 5-star hotels, eco-lodges, and regenerative landscape investments.

### Strategic Actions

- **S3.1:** Establish a **Provincial Tourism Investment Facilitation Unit (PTIFU)** to coordinate with BOI, SLTDA, and investors.
- **S3.2:** Identify and zone **priority investment areas** for hotels, wellness retreats, and biodiversity-positive developments.
- **S3.3:** Develop **project profiles** aligned with national policy, NCP strategy, and global sustainability standards.
- **S3.4:** Promote NCP investment opportunities through **national campaigns, embassies, and international forums.**
- **S3.5:** Introduce **fast-track approval mechanisms** for green and regenerative investments.

### Objectives & Targets

- **3.1:** Establish PTIFU by **2026.**
- **3.2:** Secure **two 5-star hotel investments** and **three major landscape-based projects** by **2030.**
- **3.3:** Publish **10+ project profiles** by **2026.**
- **3.4:** Achieve **USD 300 million** in private-sector investment commitments by **2031.**
- **3.5:** Ensure all major investments meet **biodiversity-positive and climate-resilient standards** by **2030.**



## Goal 4: Build Skills, Knowledge & Professional Competencies

**Purpose:** Equip communities and tourism professionals with the skills required for high-quality, market-ready services.

### Strategic Actions

- **S4.1:** Implement a **provincial capacity-building framework** for community tourism aligned with national guidelines.
- **S4.2:** Establish a **Community Tourism Training Network** through SLITHM, universities, and NGOs.
- **S4.3:** Introduce a **digital learning platform** for continuous upskilling and certification.
- **S4.4:** Develop a **provincial pool of certified trainers and mentors** to support MSMEs and community enterprises.
- **S4.5:** Provide culture and language training for three-wheel drivers, informal tour guides, and community ambassadors.

### Objectives & Targets

- **4.1:** Train **10,000 community members** (including three-wheel drivers, informal tour guides, and community ambassadors) across all clusters by **2031**.
- **4.2:** Certify **1,000 community tourism service providers** by **2030**.
- **4.3:** Launch the digital learning platform by **2027** with **20+ modules**.
- **4.4:** Establish **100 certified community trainers** by **2028**.

## Goal 5: Develop High-Quality, Climate-Resilient Tourism Products

**Purpose:** Create diversified, authentic, and sustainable tourism experiences across clusters.

### Strategic Actions

- **S5.1:** Develop **cluster-based product portfolios** (nature, culture, agro, wellness, adventure, heritage).
- **S5.2:** Upgrade **community infrastructure**—signage, trails, sanitation, and safety systems.
- **S5.3:** Promote **climate-resilient and low-impact tourism models**.
- **S5.4:** Support **innovation in experience design**, including storytelling, digital interpretation, and immersive experiences.
- **S5.5:** Develop and promote new night-time tourism products such as night-sky watching, night floating glamping, and cultural night walks.

### Objectives & Targets

- **5.1:** Develop **150 new community-based tourism products** by **2031**.
- **5.2:** Upgrade infrastructure in **50 priority community sites** by **2030**.
- **5.3:** Ensure **70% of new products** meet climate-resilient design standards.
- **5.4:** Introduce **30 digital interpretation tools** by **2031**.
- **5.5:** Introduce 10 new nighttime tourism products by 2028



## Goal 6: Strengthen Market Access, Branding & Digital Visibility

**Purpose:** Position NCP tourism as a globally competitive, high-value offering.

### Strategic Actions

- **S6.1:** Develop the **NCP tourism brand** under the national Sri Lanka Tourism umbrella.
- **S6.2:** Create a **digital marketplace** for NCP tourism experiences.
- **S6.3:** Build partnerships with **tour operators, OTAs, social media platforms, and influencers.**
- **S6.4:** Implement **target marketing campaigns** for each cluster and niche segment.

### Objectives & Targets

- **6.1:** Launch the national brand and digital marketplace by **2028.**
- **6.2:** Integrate **500 community experiences** into digital platforms by **2031.**
- **6.3:** Establish **50 partnerships** with tour operators by **2030.**
- **6.4:** Increase community tourism arrivals by **40%** by **2031.**

## Goal 7: Enhance Community Livelihoods, Enterprise Growth & Financial Inclusion

**Purpose:** Ensure equitable economic benefits and sustainable community enterprises that strengthen local resilience and prosperity.

### Strategic Actions

- **S7.1:** Establish a **Community Tourism Enterprise Support Fund** offering grants, micro-loans, and equity financing for small and medium-sized tourism ventures.
- **S7.2:** Strengthen MSME development through **incubation, mentoring, and business planning support**, enabling local entrepreneurs to scale operations.
- **S7.3:** Promote **women- and youth-led enterprises** through targeted training, leadership programs, and preferential access to finance.
- **S7.4:** Introduce **revenue-sharing models and community benefit agreements** to ensure fair distribution of tourism income.
- **S7.5:** Facilitate partnerships between community enterprises and private investors to expand market access and product innovation.
- **S7.6:** Promote cooperative business models among homestay operators, live-craft villages, and agro-tourism providers to strengthen tourism experience products through collective bargaining and enhanced market visibility.

### Objectives & Targets

- **7.1:** Support **2,000 community enterprises** across all clusters by **2031.**
- **7.2:** Ensure **40% of enterprises are women-led** and **30% youth-led.**
- **7.3:** Establish **20 community benefit agreements** by **2030.**
- **7.4:** Increase average household tourism income by **25%** by **2031.**
- **7.5:** Facilitate **50 cooperative partnerships** between MSMEs and private investors by **2031.**

## Goal 8: Strengthen Project Management, Digital Monitoring & Technical Capacity

**Purpose:** Build a modern, efficient, and transparent project management ecosystem that supports high-quality tourism development and ensures accountability.



### Strategic Actions

- **S8.1:** Establish a **Provincial Tourism Project Management Unit (PT-PMU)** with multidisciplinary expertise in engineering, environment, finance, and community development.
- **S8.2:** Introduce a **digital monitoring dashboard** for real-time tracking of tourism projects, investments, and cluster performance.
- **S8.3:** Develop **practical guides and toolkits** for landscape investments, project design, appraisal, and approval processes.
- **S8.4:** Form a **multidisciplinary project appraisal committee** (engineering, environment, finance, tourism, community) to ensure transparent evaluation.
- **S8.5:** Build capacity in **project design, procurement, safeguards, and financial management** for provincial and local officers.
- **S8.6:** Establish a **knowledge repository and learning exchange platform** for sharing best practices and lessons learned across clusters.

### Objectives & Targets

- **8.1:** Establish the PT-PMU by **2026**.
- **8.2:** Launch the **digital tourism project monitoring system** by **2027**.
- **8.3:** Publish **four provincial tourism project development guides** by **2027**.
- **8.4:** Ensure all new tourism projects undergo **multidisciplinary appraisal** from **2026 onward**.
- **8.5:** Train **300+ officers** in project management, safeguards, and digital monitoring by **2030**.
- **8.6:** Maintain a **publicly accessible project dashboard** to enhance transparency and accountability.

### Implementation of Framework and Strategic Alignment

The eight strategic action areas collectively operationalize the **eight strategic goals** of the NCP Tourism Strategy. They provide a clear roadmap for transforming NCP into a **heritage-led, climate-smart, community-empowered, and digitally connected tourism province**. Each goal is interlinked—governance reforms enable investment facilitation; infrastructure upgrades support product diversification; skill development drives enterprise growth; and digital systems ensure transparency and accountability.

The implementation framework will be guided by:

- **Provincial Tourism Task Force (PTTF):** Oversight and coordination of all strategic actions.
- **Provincial Tourism Development Institution:** Technical and operational leadership.
- **Cluster-based Destination Management Organizations (DMOs):** Local implementation and monitoring.
- **NCP Tourism Industry Associations:** Private-sector engagement and advocacy.
- **Development Partners and Donors:** Technical assistance and co-financing support.

Together, these mechanisms will ensure that tourism becomes a **driver of inclusive growth, environmental stewardship, and cultural pride**—anchoring NCP's transformation into Sri Lanka's **Premier Kingdom Destination** by 2031.



## 12. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Infrastructure development is the backbone of the NCP Tourism Strategy 2026–2031. It ensures that each cluster—**Nature, Culture, Agro, Heritage, Wellness, Adventure, inland water, and Urban and semi-urban Gateway**—is equipped with the facilities necessary to deliver safe, accessible, and sustainable visitor experiences. The following framework outlines the essential infrastructure categories and their specific applications across clusters, inspired by the integrated model illustrated in the reference image. The infrastructure development plan for the eight clusters ensures **balanced growth, inclusivity, and sustainability**. Each component—from access roads to digital systems—contributes to a unified national framework that strengthens Sri Lanka's position as a **resilient, community-driven tourism destination** under the NCP Strategy 2026–2031.

Once the **cluster development plans** are finalized, this section will serve as a guiding framework for identifying and prioritizing **infrastructure investments** within each cluster. Effective implementation will require strong **inter-institutional coordination** among national, provincial, and local authorities, supported by **development partners and private-sector collaboration**. The role of the North Central Province is to focus primarily on **strategic infrastructure development** that attracts and facilitates private investment—such as access roads, utilities, and public amenities—while the **private sector and development partners** will lead the broader tourism product development, service delivery, and operational management. This approach ensures sustainability, efficiency, and shared responsibility in advancing NCP's tourism transformation.

### 12.1 Access & Connectivity

**Purpose:** Enable seamless movement of visitors and goods while connecting communities to national tourism circuits.

**Requirements:**

- Upgrading rural and feeder roads to tourism sites.
- Establishing eco-friendly transport links (electric shuttles, bicycles, walking trails).
- Developing wayfinding systems and multilingual signage.
- Integrating digital navigation and QR-coded route maps.
- Establish green fencing infrastructure to improve human-elephant co-existence
- **Cluster Focus:**
  - *Nature & Adventure:* Trail access, mountain roads, eco-bridges.
  - *Culture & Heritage:* Pedestrian corridors, heritage route connectivity.
  - *Agro & Wellness:* Farm-to-village access roads.
  - *River basin and inland water:* Jetty and pier access improvements.

### 12.2 Sanitation & Public Amenities

**Purpose:** Ensure hygiene, comfort, and inclusivity for visitors and residents.

**Requirements:**

- Modern public restrooms with water-saving systems.
- Waste-water treatment and greywater recycling.
- Accessible facilities for differently-abled visitors.
- Rest shelters, changing rooms, and first-aid stations.
- Reverse Osmosis (RO) Safe drinking water facilities



- Cooling pathways to manage heat stress

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Adventure & Nature:* Eco-toilets and portable sanitation units.
- *Inland water & Wellness:* Shower and changing facilities near lakes and Era wellness and Ayurveda treatments.
- *Heritage & Culture:* Rest areas integrated with architectural aesthetics.

### 12.3 Water-Based Recreation Facilities

**Purpose:** Promote safe and sustainable aquatic tourism.

**Requirements:**

- Floating docks, boating stations, and safety gear depots.
- Lifeguard posts and emergency response systems.
- Emergency service support facility for evacuation
- Water-quality monitoring and eco-zoning.

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Inland water:* Diving, snorkeling, and boating infrastructure.
- *Nature & Adventure:* Lakeside kayaking and rafting facilities.

### 12.4 Viewpoints & Scenic Platforms

**Purpose:** Enhance visitor experience and landscape appreciation.

**Requirements:**

- Elevated viewing decks and eco-friendly platforms.
- Interpretive signage and digital storytelling panels.
- Safety railings and shaded rest areas.

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Nature & Heritage:* Panoramic viewpoints and cultural interpretation zones.
- *Agro & Wellness:* Farm observation decks and meditation pavilions.

### 12.5 Parking & Transport Facilities

**Purpose:** Support visitor mobility and reduce congestion.

**Requirements:**

- Designated parking zones for buses, cars, and bicycles.
- Electric vehicle charging stations.
- Shuttle hubs and latest mile connectivity systems.

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Urban Gateway & Heritage:* Structured Parking with smart ticketing.
- *Nature & Adventure:* Low-impact parking integrated with landscape design.

### 12.6 Lighting & Energy Systems

**Purpose:** Ensure safety, aesthetics, and sustainability through renewable energy.

**Requirements:**

- Solar-powered streetlights and micro-grids.
- Smart lighting controls energy efficiency.
- Backup systems for remote clusters.

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Nature & Tank bunds:* Solar lighting along trails and lakes.
- *Urban & Heritage:* Architectural illumination for landmarks.



## 12.7 Waste & Environmental Management

**Purpose:** Maintain ecological integrity and cleanliness.

**Requirements:**

- Segregated waste collection and recycling centers.
- Composting units for organic waste.
- Hazardous waste protocols and eco-audit systems.

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Agro & Nature:* Organic waste composting.
- *Urban and Semi-urban:* Tank and River basin waste collection and recycling hubs.

## 12.8 Commercial & SME Facilities

**Purpose:** Empower local entrepreneurs and enhance visitor services.

**Requirements:**

- Community markets and craft centers.
- Food courts and local product outlets.
- SME incubation hubs and cooperative kiosks.

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Culture & Heritage:* Artisan villages and souvenir shops.
- *Agro & Wellness:* Farm-to-table outlets and herbal product stalls.

## 12.9 Digital & Smart Tourism Systems

**Purpose:** Integrate technology for visitor engagement and management.

**Requirements:**

- Interactive kiosks and digital information boards.
- QR-coded interpretation systems.
- Cluster-level data dashboards for visitor analytics.
- GPS based wild elephant early warning system
- **Cluster Focus:**
- *Urban & Heritage:* Smart ticketing and virtual tours.
- *Nature & Adventure:* GPS-based trail monitoring and safety alerts.

## 12.10 Cultural & Heritage Facilities

**Purpose:** Preserve and interpret Sri Lanka's tangible and intangible heritage.

**Requirements:**

- Restoration of monuments and heritage trails.
- Cultural performance spaces and museums.
- Interpretation centers and archives.
- Establish facilities for "The King's Harvest Table," featuring traditional rice varieties, tank fish, and other heritage food elements.

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Heritage & Culture:* Restoration of temples, forts, and colonial sites.
- *Urban Gateway:* Cultural hubs and art galleries.

## 12.11 Landscaping & Beautification

**Purpose:** Enhance aesthetic appeal and environmental harmony.

**Requirements:**



- Native plant landscaping and biodiversity corridors.
- Public gardens and green buffers.
- Artistic installations and cultural motifs.

**Cluster Focus:**

- *Wellness & Inland water:* Meditation gardens and tank landscaping.
- *Urban & Heritage:* Streetscape beautification and green walls.

**Table 2: Cluster Wise Infrastructure Development**

Cluster	Priority Infrastructure Components
<b>Nature</b>	Access roads, eco-trails, sanitation units, viewpoints, solar lighting, waste management, digital trail maps
<b>Culture</b>	Heritage restoration, artisan markets, cultural centers, smart interpretation systems, landscaping
<b>Agro</b>	Farm access roads, sanitation, SME outlets, composting, agro-tourism signage, training centers
<b>Heritage</b>	Monument restoration, structured parking, lighting systems, cultural performance spaces, digital kiosks
<b>Wellness</b>	Spa facilities, sanitation, landscaping, renewable energy systems, digital booking platforms
<b>Adventure</b>	Trail infrastructure, safety systems, transport hubs, eco-lighting, waste management
<b>Inland Water</b>	Jetties, water recreation facilities, waste management, sanitation, scenic platforms, landscaping
<b>Urban Gateway</b>	Parking complexes, digital tourism hubs, SME zones, cultural galleries, beautification projects



## 13. MARKETING AND BRANDING

### 13.1 Introduction: Why Branding Matters for NCP

North Central Province holds a unique position in Sri Lanka's tourism landscape. It is the cradle of the island's ancient hydraulic civilization, home to the UNESCO-listed Sacred Cities, and a living cultural landscape where spirituality, wellness, nature, and rural life coexist. As the draft strategy notes, the province is poised to become *“Sri Lanka's most promising region for experiential tourism—a model that prioritizes wellness, nature immersion, cultural authenticity, adventure, and community-driven experiences.”*

To unlock this potential, NCP requires a **distinct, globally recognizable brand** and a **coordinated marketing system** that elevates its identity, strengthens market access, and positions it competitively within Sri Lanka's national tourism framework. This chapter outlines the marketing and branding strategy that will guide NCP's transformation into a high-value, sustainability-driven, and community-centered destination from 2026 to 2031.

### 13.2 Brand Positioning: “The World's Premier Kingdom Destination”

#### 13.2.1 Core Brand Identity

The brand identity is anchored in the provincial vision: **“The World's Premier Kingdom Destination—where heritage, wellness, and nature thrive together for the benefit of all.”**

This identity positions NCP as:

- **The spiritual heart of Sri Lanka** – home to the Buddhist Sacred Cities, meditation traditions, and monastic landscapes.
- **The living museum of ancient engineering** – highlighting the world-renowned tank cascade systems and hydraulic civilization.
- **A sanctuary for wellness and nature** – offering forest therapy, agro-wellness, water-based healing, and biodiversity-rich landscapes.
- **A community-powered experiential destination** – where rural life, crafts, food culture, and local hospitality shape authentic experiences.

#### 13.2.2 Brand Promise

**“Transformative journeys through ancient kingdoms, sacred landscapes, and regenerative nature.”**

This promise reflects the strategy's emphasis on **heritage leadership, wellness, nature immersion, and community empowerment.**

#### 13.2.3 Brand Values

1. **Authenticity** – rooted in living heritage and local culture.
2. **Spirituality** – honoring sacred sites and Buddhist traditions.
3. **Regeneration** – restoring ecosystems and supporting biodiversity-positive tourism.
4. **Community Prosperity** – ensuring equitable benefit-sharing.
5. **Sustainability** – low-impact, climate-resilient tourism development.
6. **Innovation** – digital interpretation, VR/AR storytelling, and smart destination tools.



### 13.3 Brand Architecture: The Eight Tourism Clusters as Sub-Brands

The eight clusters serve as **sub-brands** under the overarching Kingdom Destination identity. Each cluster has a distinct thematic appeal and market segment.

#### Cluster Sub-Brand Themes

1. **Wellness & Mindfulness Heritage Sanctuary** – Spirituality, meditation, pilgrim cycling.
2. **Forest Therapy & Nature Healing Zone** – Forest bathing, eco-retreats, nature trails.
3. **Community Life & Cultural Trails** – Homestays, crafts, rural food culture.
4. **Agro-Living & Floating Experiences** – Floating villas, farm-to-table dining, irrigation heritage.
5. **Water & Wildlife Harmony Corridor** – Wetland wellness, birding, floating spas.
6. **Heritage & Water Civilization Experience** – Archaeology, ancient engineering, cultural revival.
7. **Wildlife Adventure & Night-Life Zone** – Night safaris, youth adventure, eco-music.
8. **Green Retreat & Agro-Wellness Valley** – Forest meditation, agro-wellness, community glamping.

These clusters allow NCP to market **diverse, high-value experiences** while maintaining a unified brand narrative.

### 13.4 Target Markets and Segmentation

#### 13.4.1 International Markets

Aligned with national trends and NCP's strengths:

- **Spiritual and Pilgrimage Travelers** – India, East Asia, Buddhist diaspora.
- **Wellness Seekers** – Europe, Australia, Middle East.
- **Cultural Explorers** – Europe, North America.
- **Nature and Birding Enthusiasts** – Europe, Japan.
- **Adventure Youth Markets** – India, China, ASEAN.
- **Digital Nomads and Long-Stay Travelers** – Europe, North America.

#### 13.4.2 Domestic Markets

- Pilgrims and temple visitors
- Families and educational groups
- Wellness and Ayurveda travelers
- Youth adventure and camping groups
- Corporate retreats and MICE spillover from Colombo

### 13.5 Strategic Marketing Pillars (2026–2031)

#### Pillar 1: Build a Strong, Distinctive Destination Brand

##### Key Actions

- Develop the **NCP Master Brand Guide** (logo, color palette, typography, tone).
- Create cluster-specific sub-brand toolkits.
- Produce a **cinematic film** highlighting heritage, wellness, and nature.
- Launch the **“Kingdom Destination – Immersive Edition”** VR/AR campaign, as recommended in the strategy.



- Introduce a unified “**NCP Tourism Seal**” for certified MSMEs and community enterprises.

## Pillar 2: Digital-First Marketing and Smart Destination Visibility

### Key Actions

- Develop the **NCP Digital Tourism Portal** integrating:
  - booking engines
  - cluster maps
  - VR/AR heritage tours
  - community experience marketplace
  - digital payments
- Introduce **QR-based interpretation** at all major sites (aligned with the strategy’s digital readiness emphasis).
- Deploy **social media influencer campaigns** targeting wellness, culture, and adventure niches.
- Create **360° virtual trails** for heritage, nature, and agro-living circuits.
- Implement **real-time visitor analytics dashboards** for marketing optimization.

## Pillar 3: Experience-Led Storytelling and Content Development

### Key Actions

- Develop **10 thematic storytelling routes**, as outlined in the strategy.
- Produce multilingual content: Sinhala, Tamil, English, Mandarin, Hindi, Japanese.
- Train local guides and monks in **interpretive storytelling**.
- Create **heritage podcasts, audio guides, and immersive night-time experiences**.
- Document community stories, crafts, rituals, and food traditions.

## Pillar 4: Strengthen Market Access and Trade Partnerships

### Key Actions

- Build partnerships with:
  - international tour operators
  - online travel agencies (OTAs)
  - wellness and spiritual travel networks
  - birding and nature associations
- Host annual **NCP Tourism Roadshows** in Colombo, Chennai, Mumbai, Bangkok, and Tokyo.
- Participate in global fairs (ITB Berlin, WTM London, ATM Dubai).
- Develop **cluster-based travel itineraries** for tour operators.

## Pillar 5: Promote Community-Based Tourism and MSME Visibility

### Key Actions

- Integrate 500+ community experiences into digital platforms (aligned with strategy targets).
- Launch the “**NCP Community Tourism Marketplace**.”
- Provide branding toolkits for homestays, craft shops, and agro-experiences.
- Promote **women-led and youth-led enterprises** through targeted campaigns.
- Introduce a “**Meet the Community**” monthly event series.



## Pillar 6: Develop a Year-Round Events and Festivals Calendar

### Key Actions

- Heritage Illumination Festivals (Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa)
- Agro-Culinary Festivals (harvest seasons, farm-to-table events)
- Wetland Birding Festival
- Forest Wellness Week
- Night Life and Adventure Carnival (Cluster VII)
- Community Craft and Food Nights (Cluster III)
- Develop and promote light and illumination events to enhance night-time tourism experiences.

These events stimulate the **night-time economy**, a gap identified in the draft report.

## Pillar 7: Strengthen Multi-Channel Marketing and Global Visibility

### Key Actions

- Leverage word-of-mouth marketing from existing guests through curated guest-sharing campaigns and referral incentives
- Align provincial promotions with **Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB)** global campaigns to ensure consistent branding and international reach
- Strengthen partnerships with **local and international travel agencies** to promote curated itineraries and cluster-based experiences
- Expand **B2B marketing** through collaborations with international local governments, city councils, and destination management networks
- Develop digital storytelling content—short films, virtual tours, influencer collaborations—to position the Province as a unique cultural and nature-based destination
- The global online travel marketplace is led by a small group of dominant booking platforms, with Booking.com holding the largest share of global traffic, followed by Tripadvisor, Airbnb, Expedia, Agoda, Trip.com, Hilton.com, Hotels.com, Traveloka, and Tiket.com. These platforms shape international travel decisions and remain essential channels for accommodation visibility and conversion. Complementing them is a rapidly expanding ecosystem of experience-booking platforms—such as GetYourGuide, Viator, Musement, FareHarbor, Rezdy, Regiondo, Checkfront, SimplyBook.me, Bookeo, and Tock—which specialize in tours, activities, and immersive cultural experiences. Together, these accommodation and experience marketplaces form a powerful multi-channel digital ecosystem that North Central Province can leverage to enhance global visibility, diversify tourism offerings, and strengthen its competitiveness in international markets.

This pillar ensures that the Province's tourism offerings are consistently visible across global markets, while building strong trade partnerships and amplifying authentic guest experiences as a powerful marketing asset.

## 13.6 Branding Assets and Creative Outputs

### 13.6.1 Core Assets

- Brand film and photography library
- VR/AR heritage reconstructions
- Cluster-specific visual identities
- Digital maps and navigation tools



- Social media content packs
- Visitor information kiosks and signage
- Branded merchandise (ethical, locally produced)

### 13.6.2 Messaging Framework

#### Primary Message:

*NCP is the World's Premier Kingdom Destination—where ancient wisdom, sacred landscapes, and regenerative nature create transformative journeys.*

#### Supporting Messages:

- “Walk through living kingdoms.”
- “Heal in the world’s oldest wellness landscapes.”
- “Experience nature shaped by ancient engineering.”
- “Meet communities who keep heritage alive.”
- “Travel regeneratively—leave the land better than you found it.”

### 13.7 Governance for Marketing and Branding

Marketing success requires strong institutional coordination. This aligns with the strategy’s emphasis on **digital governance, coordination mechanisms, and destination management organizations (DMOs)**.

#### Key Structures

- **NCP Tourism Marketing Unit (NCP-TMU)** under the Provincial Tourism Development Institution (PTDI).
- **Cluster-level DMOs** are responsible for local branding and content.
- **Private sector advisory group** (hotels, MSMEs, tour operators).
- **Community Tourism Branding Council** for inclusive representation.

### 13.8 Monitoring, Evaluation, and KPIs

#### Key Performance Indicators (2031)

- 1 million+ international arrivals to NCP
- 30% increase in visitor expenditure
- 40% increase in community tourism arrivals
- 500+ community experiences listed online
- 10 thematic routes operational
- 50+ global trade partnerships
- 100% of the major sites with QR-based interpretation
- 80% digital visibility score (SEO, social media, content reach)

The North Central Province has cultural depth, spiritual significance, ecological richness, and community strength to become one of Asia’s most distinctive tourism destinations. As the draft strategy emphasizes, the province is ready to embrace “**regenerative, biodiversity-positive tourism and green infrastructure initiatives**” that deliver “**authentic, meaningful, and sustainable benefits for all communities.**” This marketing and branding strategy provides the roadmap to elevate NCP’s identity, expand its global reach, and ensure that tourism becomes a powerful engine of prosperity, pride, and preservation for the people of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.



## 14. LOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND KPIS

### 14.1 Brief on the Logical Framework

The **Logical Framework (Log Frame)** for the North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031 provides a structured, results-based methodology that links the province's long-term tourism vision with measurable outcomes, strategic interventions, and clear accountability mechanisms. It translates the overarching ambition—to *position NCP as the World's Premier Kingdom Destination*—into a coherent hierarchy of goals, outcomes, outputs, and activities supported by specific indicators, timelines, and verification methods.

The Log Frame ensures that the strategy is **actionable, measurable, and aligned** with national tourism policy, global sustainability standards, and community-centered development priorities. It integrates the province's core thematic areas—heritage conservation, wellness and nature-based tourism, community empowerment, sustainable infrastructure, and digital transformation—into a unified implementation and monitoring structure.

Importantly, **this Log Frame serves as an initial guide**, providing the foundational structure for coordinated action across government agencies, private sector partners, MSMEs, community groups, and development organizations. As tourism dynamics, market conditions, and local priorities evolve, the Log Frame is designed to be adaptive. **Stakeholders must review it annually**, assess progress, identify gaps, and make the necessary adjustments to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with emerging opportunities and challenges. In essence, the Logical Framework is both a roadmap and a governance tool—ensuring that the NCP Tourism Strategy remains focused, evidence-driven, and capable of delivering sustainable, inclusive, and measurable outcomes for the province and its communities.

This LogFrame is designed to:

- Translate the **2031 Tourism Dream** into measurable outcomes.
- Align provincial actions with national physical plan, **national tourism policy**, the **National Adaptation Plan**, provincial adaptation plan, and national and international bio-diversity conservation and sustainability standards.
- Provide a unified monitoring system for government, private sector, MSMEs, and development partners.
- Ensure accountability, transparency, and adaptive management.

The LogFrame is a **living framework** and will be reviewed annually by the Provincial Tourism Task Force (PTTF), as emphasized in the strategy:

### 14.2 Updated Logical Framework Matrix (2026–2031)

#### Overall Goal

**Position NCP as *The World's Premier Kingdom Destination*—a globally competitive heritage, wellness, and nature-based tourism region delivering inclusive prosperity, climate resilience, and community empowerment.**



**Table 3: Logical Framework Matrix**

Hierarchy of Results	Key Indicators (KPIs)	Means of Verification	Assumptions / Risks
<b>Impact (2031)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1,000,000+ international arrivals</li> <li>- 3,000,000 domestic visitors</li> <li>- Tourism contribution to provincial GDP increases from 4% → <b>8–10%</b> (2031)</li> <li>- USD 740M–1.2B direct tourism revenue</li> </ul>	SLTDA statistics; Provincial Tourism Dashboard; CBSL reports	Stable macroeconomic conditions; climate shocks manageable; national tourism reforms sustained
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 30–40% increase in visitor expenditure &amp; length of stay</li> <li>- 4,000–4,500 climate-smart certified rooms</li> <li>- 25–30 CBT enterprises operational</li> <li>- 30% female workforce participation</li> </ul>	Tourism registry; SLITHM records; CBT certification reports	MSME access to finance; community participation; private sector investment
<b>Outputs (7 Pillars / 8 Goals)</b>	See detailed tables below	Cluster DMO reports; digital dashboard; annual audits	Institutional coordination; funding availability; environmental safeguards

### 14.3 KPIs by Strategic Pillar & Goal

#### PILLAR 1: Heritage, Culture & Spiritual Tourism Excellence

#### Goal 1: Heritage-Led Destination Branding & Immersive Cultural Experiences

**Table 4: Goal 1 KPIs**

Objective	KPIs	Target	Key Activities
Protect, interpret, and elevate UNESCO heritage & Buddhist Sacred Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10 interpretation centres</li> <li>- 5 digital pilgrim routes</li> <li>- 100% QR-coded heritage sites</li> </ul>	2028	Digital storytelling, VR/AR/MR content, multilingual signage
Strengthen Buddhist Circuit & cultural revival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10 thematic routes operational</li> <li>- 85% visitor satisfaction</li> </ul>	2029	Route design, guide training, nighttime heritage illumination
Enhancing digital heritage experiences	- 3 VR/AR/MR heritage experiences at major sites	2027	3D mapping, holographic guides
Night life promotions for visitors	- 10 nighttime tourism activities / products	2028	Street food, night sky watching, night floating stays
The King's harvest table	- 5 agro-tourism and traditional culinary experience events / products	2028	Traditional food festival and exclusive experience



**PILLAR 2: Wellness, Nature & Outdoor Experience Development**  
**Goal 2: Climate-Smart, Green & Biodiversity-Sensitive Tourism Infrastructure**

**Table 5: Goal 2 KPIs**

Objective	KPIs	Target	Key Activities
Develop wellness & nature-based products	- 15 wellness/nature products - 3 forest therapy zones	2029	Eco-lodges, forest bathing trails, Ayurveda certification
Promote regenerative, low-impact tourism	- 5 carbon-neutral flagship sites - 100% new facilities with solar & rainwater systems	2030	Green building standards, climate-risk screening
Strengthen biodiversity conservation	- 3 restored tank cascade systems integrated into tourism	2031	Ecosystem restoration, wetland conservation
Human elephant co-existence	- Elephant monitoring early warning GPS system established - Eco-fencing to create natural barriers created	2030	GPS tracking system development and eco-fencing cultivation
Safe drinking water	- Establish 10 RO safe drinking water facilities - Cultivated 20 green canopies, walkways paths and other live willow nature creations	2030	Scientific standards and design for nature based green constructions

**PILLAR 3: Community-Centered Economic Empowerment**  
**Goal 3: Community Tourism & MSME Empowerment**

**Table 6: Goal 3 KPIs**

Objective	KPIs	Target	Key Activities
Strengthen MSMEs & local livelihoods	- Trained 2,000 MSMEs - 50 cooperatives formed	2031	MSME fund, incubation, mentoring
Promote inclusive participation	- 30% female workforce - 30% youth-led enterprises	2031	Women/youth grants, leadership programs
Expand CBT enterprises	- 25-30 CBT enterprises	2030	Homestays, craft hubs, community trails

**PILLAR 4: Sustainable Infrastructure, Cleanliness & Visitor Management**  
**Goal 4: Regenerative, Green & Inclusive Tourism Infrastructure**

**Table 7: Goal 4 KPIs**

Objective	KPIs	Target	Key Activities
Improve access & sanitation	- 100 km upgraded roads - 50 eco-sanitation units	2030	Road upgrades, universal access
Strengthening waste & environmental management	- Zero-plastic sacred cities - 100% of the major sites with recycling	2029	Waste-to-resource systems, green procurement
Enhance visitor management	- Smart ticketing in 100% key sites	2030	Digital ticketing, crowd management



**PILLAR 5: Governance, Coordination & Digital Transformation**  
**Goal 5: Integrated Planning, Policy Alignment & Digital Governance**

**Table 8: Goal 5 KPIs**

Objective	KPIs	Target	Key Activities
Strengthen governance	- Provincial Tourism Department operational	2026	PTTF, PTDI establishment
Improve digital readiness	- Digital dashboard live - 100 MSMEs onboarded	2027	Data integration, e-licensing
Enhance policy alignment	- Annual provincial tourism report	Annual	Inter-agency MoUs, policy harmonization

**PILLAR 6: Institutional Governance & Private Sector Empowerment**  
**Goal 6: Investment Facilitation & Private Sector Growth**

**Table 9: Goal 6 KPIs**

Objective	KPIs	Target	Key Activities
Attract high-value investment	- USD 300M investment commitments	2031	PTIFU, investor forums
Facilitate major hotel & wellness investments	- Two 5-star hotels (300–500 rooms each)	2030	Fast-track approvals
Strengthen private sector voice	- NCPTIA fully operational	2026	Industry coordination

**PILLAR 7: Human Resource Development & Future-Ready Workforce**  
**Goal 7: Skills, Knowledge & Professional Competencies**

**Table 10: Goal 7 KPIs**

Objective	KPIs	Target	Key Activities
Build tourism workforce capacity	- 10,000 trained youth	2031	SLITHM partnerships, TVET
Strengthening certification & standards	- 1,000 certified service providers	2030	Competency-based training
Promote digital & sustainability skills	- 20 digital learning modules	2027	E-learning platform

**CROSS-CUTTING GOAL**

**Goal 8: Project Management, Digital Monitoring & Technical Capacity**

**Table 11: Goal 8 KPIs**

Objective	KPIs	Target	Key Activities
Strengthening project management	- PTPMU operational	2026	PMU staffing, training
Improve monitoring & transparency	- Public dashboard updated quarterly	2027	Digital M&E
Build technical capacity	- 300 officers trained	2030	Safeguards, procurement



### 14.4 Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Level	Frequency	Responsible Entity	Tools
Provincial Tourism Task Force	Quarterly	PTDI + PTPMU	KPI dashboard, cluster reports
Cluster DMOs	Monthly	Cluster Managers	Field verification, GIS monitoring
MSMEs & CBT groups	Annual	Community Cooperatives	Income tracking, satisfaction surveys
External Evaluation	Mid-term (2028) & Final (2031)	Independent Evaluator	Impact assessment, safeguards audit

### 14.5 Implementation Timeline (2026–2031)

Year	Milestones
2026	Establish PTDI, PTTF, PTIFU; launch governance reforms
2027	Digital dashboard; VR/AR pilots; cluster plans completed
2028	Forest therapy zones; eco-sanitation rollout
2029	Smart ticketing; regenerative landscape corridors
2030	80% sustainability compliance; major hotel investments
2031	Final evaluation; strategy renewal

### 14.6 Summary of 2031 KPI Targets

- 1,000,000+ international tourists
- 3,000,000 domestic tourists
- USD 740M–1.2B direct revenue
- 4,000–4,500 climate-smart rooms
- 25–30 CBT enterprises
- 10 thematic routes
- 30–40% increase in visitor spending
- Zero-plastic sacred cities
- VR/AR/MR in all major heritage sites
- Digital ticketing in 100% key sites
- Tourism contribution to provincial GDP increases from 4% → 8–10%
- 8–10% contribution to national tourism GDP



## 15. WAY FORWARD

The North Central Province Tourism Strategy 2026–2031 establishes a unified vision and actionable framework to position the province as *The World's Premier Kingdom Destination*—a model of heritage, wellness, and nature-based tourism excellence. The next phase is to translate this strategic vision into coordinated implementation across all levels of government, private sector, and community stakeholders.

This strategy shall now serve as the **official policy framework for provincial tourism development**. All ministries, departments, local authorities, private investors, and development partners are invited to **align their existing and emerging tourism development plans** with this framework to ensure coherence, sustainability, and measurable impact. The North Central Provincial Council will take leadership in operationalizing this framework through structured governance, investment facilitation, and stakeholder collaboration.

### 15.1 Institutional Activation and Governance

As the first step, the Provincial Council shall **appoint the required committees and working groups** under the guidance of the Chief Ministry and the Tourism Planning Committee. These bodies will oversee implementation, coordination, and monitoring of the strategy's eight pillars—heritage and culture, wellness and nature, community empowerment, sustainable infrastructure, and digital transformation.

Each committee will include representatives from:

- Central government institutional representatives
- Provincial and local government institutions
- Private sector tourism operators and investors
- Community-based organizations and MSMEs
- Academic and technical experts
- Development partners and financial institutions

### 15.2 Cluster-Based Tourism Development Plans

Following the establishment of governance structures, **tourism development plans shall be prepared for each of the eight thematic clusters** identified in the strategy. These cluster plans will serve as **practical action plans**, detailing:

- Priority investments and financing mechanisms
- Accommodation and service development
- Experience in design and product diversification
- Infrastructure and environmental management
- Skills development and community participation

Each plan will be developed collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure inclusivity, feasibility, and alignment with the provincial vision.

### 15.3 Investment Facilitation and Project Management

The Provincial Council shall **establish an Investment Facilitation and Project Management Unit (IFPMU)** to coordinate project pipelines, investor relations, and implementation tracking. This unit will:

- Serve as the single window for tourism investment proposals
- Manage project approvals, feasibility studies, and safeguards



- Facilitate blended financing and public-private partnerships
- Monitor progress against key performance indicators (KPIs)

The IFPMU will also maintain a **digital project dashboard** to ensure transparency and timely reporting.

### 15.4 Branding, Marketing, and Investor Engagement

A strong and unified identity is essential to position NCP as a global destination. The Provincial Council shall **finalize the master logo, marketing strategy, and branding plan** for the NCP Tourism Strategy. This will include:

- Visual identity and brand guidelines
- Provincial tourism website and digital platforms
- Promotional campaigns and investor outreach
- Integration with national and international tourism marketing initiatives

Once finalized, the branding plan will be launched alongside the **investor forms, guidelines, and facilitation tools** to attract and manage new investments.

### 15.5 Implementation Roadmap

The implementation of this Way Forward will follow a phased approach:

**Table 12: Implementation Schedule**

Phase	Timeline	Key Actions
<b>Phase 1: Institutional Setup</b>	2026–2027	Appoint committees and working groups; establish IFPMU; finalize branding and logo.
<b>Phase 2: Cluster Planning</b>	2026–2027	Develop cluster-based tourism plans with stakeholders; identify priority investments.
<b>Phase 3: Investment Mobilization</b>	2027–2028	Launch investor facilitation mechanisms; initiate infrastructure and service projects.
<b>Phase 4: Implementation and Monitoring</b>	2028–2031	Execute cluster plans; monitor KPIs; publish annual progress reports.

The Way Forward transforms the NCP Tourism Strategy from a visionary document into a **living policy framework**—one that guides coordinated action, investment, and innovation. Through annual stakeholder reviews, adaptive planning, and transparent governance, the North Central Province will realize its 2031 dream: a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable tourism economy that honors its heritage, empowers its people, and inspires the world.



### 15.6 Twelve Months Action Plan

*Covering the first year of implementation across all four phases*

This is a preliminary draft action plan. The NCP will develop a comprehensive action plan with its stakeholders.

**Table 13: Twelve Months Action Plan**

Phase	Activity	Months											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Phase 1: Institutional Setup (Months 1–12)</b>	Appoint committees & working groups												
	Establish PMU												
	Finalize branding & logo												
<b>Phase 2: Cluster Planning (Months 1–12)</b>	Stakeholder consultations												
	Identify priority investments & infrastructure developments												
	Validation workshops												
<b>Phase 3: Investment Mobilization (Months 4–12)</b>	Investor facilitation mechanisms												
	Investment briefs & prospectuses												
	Start infrastructure & service projects												
<b>Phase 4: Implementation &amp; Monitoring (Months 6–12)</b>	Execute cluster plans												
	Monitor KPIs												
	Annual progress report												



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