

EXPLORING DISASTER TOURISM: PACKAGE DESIGN IN KARO REGENCY, NORTH SUMATRA

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the disaster tourist attractions in Karo Regency and develop an itinerary for a disaster-themed tour package in Karo Regency. Employing a qualitative research approach, data were collected through interviews with three tourism managers at various disaster tourism sites, alongside observations and literature reviews, utilizing qualitative data analysis tools. The findings reveal three prominent disaster tourist attractions: Sigarang-Garang Village, known for its stunning mountain views and activities such as trekking, photography, and educational explorations of volcanic eruption impacts; Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park, which features panoramic views of Mount Sinabung and diverse flora and fauna, offering opportunities for photography and camping; and Lake Lau Kwar, where visitors can enjoy lake views, camping, boating, fishing, and local Karo cuisine at an on-site store. The proposed itinerary spans approximately 10 hours, commencing at the Jamin Ginting Flyover gas station, visiting Sigarang-Garang Village, exploring Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park, and having lunch at Lau Kwar Lake before returning. En route, tourists can stop at Pajak Buah Tongkoh for souvenirs. Recommendations for enhancing disaster tourism include adding facilities such as fishing equipment rentals and additional recreational activities, along with an expanded range of souvenir options. For visitors traveling from Medan, the suggested route is Medan - Medan Zoo - Durin Pitu - Sibolangit - Berastagi - Sigarang Garang Village - Sinabung Vulkano Park - Lau Kwar Lake - Sigarang Garang Village - Naman Teran - Berastagi - Sibolangit - Durin Pitu - Medan Zoo - Medan, optimizing travel time.

Keywords: Disaster Tourism, Itinerary, Tourist Attractions

A. INTRODUCTION

Dark tourism has been significant growth in recent years. The trend shows that more tourists are interested in visiting places associated with death and disaster (Suryawanshi, 2024). According to (Gotham, 2007), dark tourism is the circulation of people to places characterized by distress, atrocity, or sadness and pain. Many dark tourism sites, in particular battlefields, memorials, and museums, are instrumental in constructing and reinforcing narratives of national identity. They serve as sites of secular pilgrimage and are central in denoting self and other. They also serve to identify key national moments and involve themes of sacrifice on behalf of the nation (Clancy, 2024). As a more specific component of dark tourism, "disaster tourism" denotes situations where the tourism product is generated within, and from, the aftermath of a major disaster or traumatic event (Gotham, 2007). Sites of disaster tourism are places such as the World Trade Center in New

York City and flooded neighborhoods in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina (Gotham, 2007). Disaster tourism is usually conflated with 'dark tourism' and also is often linked with disaster recovery (Tucker, Shelton, & Bae, 2017).

The practice of traveling to locations where a natural or man-made environmental disaster has occurred is known as disaster tourism. Although various tragedies are the focus of disaster tourism, volcanic eruptions are the most commonly visited disaster locations. Mount Sinabung is one of the most popular destinations for disaster tourists. This is surprising as evidence suggests that many disaster sites, such as New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and Ground Zero after 9/11, have become popular tourist attractions (Biran, Liu, Li, & Eichhorn, 2014). Though these disaster tourism places are fascinating to see, few tourists are aware of them because many of Karo Regency's tourism potential, particularly disaster tourism, has not been promoted. Furthermore, no trip packages have been developed or made accessible for the Karo Regency's disaster tourism destinations.

This might happen because there are differing views on the ethics and effects of disaster tourism. Basically, there are many positive impacts that can be produced by the development of tourism, one of which is increasing people's income. Apart from the positive impacts, there are of course negative impacts from tourism development. Therefore, tourism development must consider local communities and conditions so that tourism continues to benefit interested parties from an economic, socio-cultural, and environmental perspective (Elyanta, Hutahaean, & Kamal, 2023). While dark tourism can have several positive benefits for local communities, such as economic boost and social awareness, it also poses some challenges, such as insensitivity to the feelings of the local community and exploitation. It is essential for local communities to carefully consider the potential benefits and challenges of dark tourism before developing dark tourism attractions (Dhiraj, Kumar, & Rani, 2024).

The negative impact is controversy from disaster tourism which immediately arose, particularly as neighborhoods previously outside commercial tourist imaginaries now were on tourists' itineraries (Pezzullo, 2009). Critics of disaster tourism contend that it is exploitative, makes money out of the losses of others, and frequently misrepresents the disaster, while supporters assert that it increases public awareness, boosts local economies, and exposes local culture. (Pezzullo, 2009) argues that tourist practices at sites of disaster offer a compelling mode to negotiate the social drama of nationhood through challenging tourist imaginaries of space and belonging. Although exploitation, catharsis, and mourning can occur, touring extreme calamity also offers opportunities for education, civic identification, and cultural change (Pezzullo, 2009). According to (Estevão & Costa, 2020), effective tourism management after a natural disaster relies on resilience strategies, cooperation, and ethical tourism practices to balance economic recovery with community sensitivity. These considerations are essential in Karo Regency, where the development of disaster tourism could benefit from careful planning to ensure both economic and social well-being.

Recent studies on Mount Sinabung and its surrounding communities reveal both challenges and opportunities for integrating disaster tourism into the region's economy. Research indicates that while the eruptions have caused significant disruptions, particularly to agriculture and livelihoods, they also present a unique opportunity to attract disaster tourists. Community resilience and adaptability are crucial for transforming these sites into sustainable tourism destinations. This aligns with findings from Karo Regency's ongoing tourism efforts, where disaster sites like Lau Kawar Lake, despite challenges, remain popular (Liyushiana, Rizkiyah, & Herman,

2019). The development of well-planned disaster tourism packages, as shown in the current study, is a potential pathway to ensuring economic recovery without compromising the dignity of affected communities. Furthermore, (Hariani, Badaruddin, Ginting, & Irmayani, 2024) highlights the importance of community resilience and the need for comprehensive disaster mitigation strategies. The study emphasizes that disaster tourism can play a pivotal role in both recovery and education if managed responsibly.

Furthermore, (Aziz, Nawaz, & Hanif, 2022) examines how both natural disasters and terrorism can significantly impact tourism growth. By analyzing the effects on the world's top tourist destinations, the study provides empirical evidence that both natural disasters and acts of terrorism can diminish tourism demand in affected regions. However, it also highlights how destinations can recover over time, with the right management strategies in place. This research emphasizes the importance of destination management and tourism resilience when dealing with crises

According to the description given above, the author is eager to carry out study in order to identify the disaster tourist attractions in Karo Regency and develop an itinerary for a disaster-themed tour package in Karo Regency.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The author employed a qualitative research approach in this study. Interviewing tourism managers at three disaster tourist attractions in Karo Regency - Lake Lau Kavar, Sigarang Garang Village, and the Sabana Sinabung Volcano Park - to learn more about potential attractions in the area; observing three disaster tourist attractions in Karo Regency to identify the attractions, as well as the distance and travel time required to reach the tourist attractions; and conducting a literature review to gather data for the study. Purposive sampling was the method used for sampling in this research. A qualitative data analysis technique was employed in this research.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the author's research, which included documentation, interviews with the managers of the disaster tourist attraction, and observation of the dead village tourist attractions of Sigarang Garang Village, Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park, and Lau Kavar Lake, it can be said that the disaster tourist destination has satisfied the needs of those seeking something to see and do, but not those seeking something to buy, as neither of these locations offers anything for sale.

The following explains the disaster tourist attractions in Karo Regency:

1. There are just two things to view at Sigarang Garang Village, which are the remnants of ancient life and breathtaking natural beauty. Destroyed homes, deserted fields, and other abandoned infrastructure are visible to tourists. With the spectacular Mount Sinabung in the backdrop, this community offers breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains. Even with the damage, the views are still breathtaking. However, there are activities available at this tourist destination, like photography and exploration. Tourists can trek around the settlement and the slopes of Mount Sinabung for a challenging adventure, explore the abandoned village and snap unique images, and learn about the effects of volcanic eruptions and disaster prevention activities. Sigarang-garang Village, also referred to as the "Dead Village," is unique in that its residents left it due to frequent eruptions of Mount Sinabung, leaving behind an empty and

demolished village that powerfully conveys the devastation caused by this natural disaster. The remnants of abandoned homes, infrastructure, and buildings are visible to visitors. This perspective offers a profound understanding of how natural disasters profoundly altered the lives of local inhabitants. A distinctive and significant view is produced by the contrast between the surroundings' natural beauty and the devastation caused by the eruption. The results of this research support previous research, namely Pezzullo's research. Gray Line's Katrina tours help remind tourists that the rebuilding necessity will continue to require federal aid, volunteer labor, and tourist revenue. The controversy surrounding Katrina tours also provides an opportunity to consider the ethics and the efficacy of commercial and noncommercial tourist practices in the aftermath of an unjust environmental disaster (Pezzullo, 2009).



Figure 1. Sigarang-Garang Village

Source : Author documentation, 2024

2. The Village of Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park's tourist attractions are limited to two things: something to see, such as the majestic Mount Sinabung, which offers breathtaking views. Beautiful views of the mountains are visible to tourists, particularly in clear weather. Views of expansive, verdant grasslands can be seen by tourists in the savanna region surrounding Mount Sinabung. A sense of peace and freedom that is uncommon in other places is conveyed by this expansive and open natural landscape. Additionally, visitors can observe the fascinating variety of the Sinabung Savanna's vegetation and animals. Views of typical savanna vegetation, as well as different kinds of birds and other creatures that inhabit this area, are available to visitors. One activity to perform at this tourist destination is nature photography, which allows visitors to capture images of the grasslands, mountains, and unusual plants and animals. Because there are places in this savanna that are suited for camping, tourists can also camp there. An experience that will never be forgotten is spending time outside while taking in the nighttime ambiance and the starry sky. The Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park is beautiful because it provides views of expansive, verdant meadows. Compared to most Indonesian highland settings, the magnificence of this savanna creates a different impression. Sabana Sinabung Volcano Park boasts a striking scenic appeal with the spectacular Mount Sinabung in the

backdrop. This active volcano offers a view that is constantly shifting in accordance with its volcanic activity and adds a dramatic aspect. Sabana Sinabung Volcano Park is the ideal place for photography because of its breathtaking views. Traces of cold lava from Mount Sinabung's eruption are also visible to visitors.



Figure 2. Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park

Source : Author documentation, 2024

3. Lake Lau Kavar is a tourist attraction that experienced the worst impact from the eruption of Mount Sinabung because its location is in the red zone, right at the foot of Mount Sinabung (Liyushiana, Rizkiyah, & Herman, 2019). There are already three elements to Lake Lau Kavar's tourism attractions: something to see, such a peaceful lake view, which is surrounded by green mountains and tropical trees. A calm and revitalizing mood is created by the lake's natural beauty and tranquility. Camping, photography, boat or speed boat rides, and fishing are some of the things to do (activities) on Lake Lau Kavar in the meantime. Local Karo cuisine is something to buy (shop for) in the Lake Lau Kavar area. Visitors can purchase and enjoy traditional cuisine that captures the distinctiveness of a place through the ingredients and cooking methods. Through neighborhood eateries, traditional marketplaces, or street food, tourists can frequently sample regional cuisine with ease. Situated on the slopes of Mount Sinabung, this tourist destination offers breathtaking views against a gorgeous mountain backdrop. A peaceful lake and striking mountain views combine to create a truly enchanting setting. The lake is bordered by historic Karo villages that have preserved their culture and customs in addition to its natural beauty. The vegetation and wildlife of the Lake Lau Kavar area are abundant. Nature enthusiasts and bird watchers find this area appealing since the woodland surrounding the lake serves as a home for a variety of plant and animal species. locations for camping and outdoor pursuits like speed boating, fishing, and photography. Visitors can spend the night in the center of nature in a peaceful environment thanks to the camping amenities that are offered. Its isolated location, away from the bustle of the city, creates an air of exclusivity and tranquility. Because of this, it's the perfect spot to unwind and get away from the everyday grind.



Figure 3. The View of Lake Lau Kavar

Source : Author documentation, 2024

The result show that Lake Lau Kavar is famous for its beauty, its use as a camping location and its charm which is considered to contain mystical elements (Liyushiana, Rizkiyah, & Herman, 2019). As a comparison, the author will compare disaster tourist attractions in Karo Regency with Sichuan, China and New Orleans, USA.

Sichuan, China, renowned for its post-earthquake tourism, exemplifies how destinations can transform disaster sites into symbols of resilience and recovery. Following the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, the region emphasized rebuilding efforts and community resilience by offering guided tours of reconstructed towns and memorial sites. Karo Regency could adopt a similar approach by showcasing its community's recovery journey after Mount Sinabung's eruptions, incorporating narratives of hope and adaptation.

Sichuan also integrates educational components into its tourism, such as workshops on earthquake preparedness and geological phenomena. Similarly, Karo Regency could provide educational tours and interactive programs to enhance visitor understanding of volcanic disasters, fostering responsible tourism while boosting its attractiveness as a learning destination.

The next comparison is New Orleans, USA (cultural and disaster tourism). New Orleans's recovery-oriented tourism after Hurricane Katrina demonstrates how destinations can merge disaster narratives with cultural experiences. The city's guided tours emphasize resilience while celebrating its rich cultural heritage, including music, cuisine, and architecture. Karo Regency could similarly integrate its disaster tourism with local cultural elements, such as traditional Karo food, crafts, and storytelling, creating a multi-dimensional tourism experience.

Additionally, New Orleans has successfully addressed ethical concerns surrounding disaster tourism by prioritizing community involvement and ensuring that tourism revenue benefits local residents. Karo Regency can adopt similar strategies to balance tourism development with the needs of local communities.

While Karo Regency shares similarities with other disaster tourism destinations, emphasizing its unique blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage can help differentiate it. For instance, the "Dead Village" of Sigarang-Garang offers a poignant narrative that combines the devastation of natural disasters with the resilience of local communities. Besides that, collaborating with local communities to share authentic stories and traditions can provide a richer, more

meaningful experience for visitors, inspired by the cultural integration seen in New Orleans. Like Sichuan, incorporating educational workshops and interactive activities can appeal to responsible tourists and increase the region's appeal as a destination for learning and exploration. Ensuring that tourism development prioritizes local residents' welfare and includes their active participation will address ethical concerns and create a sustainable tourism model in Karo Regency. By learning from these comparative examples, Karo Regency has the potential to position itself as a leading disaster tourism destination that harmonizes natural, cultural, and educational experiences.

The following is the itinerary for the Full Day Tour of Mount Sinabung Disaster Tour, which is based on the study's findings, namely the author's time distribution after travel:

Table 1. An Itinerary For A Disaster-Themed Tour Package In Karo Regency

TIME	DESCRIPTION
08.00	Get together at the Jamin Ginting Flyover Petrol Station.
08.00 – 10.40	Travelling to Sigarang Garang Village
10.40 – 11.10	Explore Sigarang Garang Village, one of the villages most badly impacted by Mount Sinabung's eruption
11.10 – 11.20	From Sigarang Garang Village, proceed to Sabana Sinabung Vulcano Park.
11.20 – 11.50	Observe the Sabana Sinabung Vulcano Park.
11.50 – 12.10	Continue travelling to Lake Lau Kawar from Sabana Sinabung Vulcano Park.
12.10 – 13.10	Having lunch at a nearby restaurant
13.10 – 14.10	Explore Lake Lau Kawar
14.10 – 14.20	Getting ready to return to Medan
14.20 – 15.35	Continue travelling to Pajak Buah Tongkoh from Lake Lau Kawar.
15.35 – 16.00	Shop at Pajak Buah Tongkoh for gifts and souvenirs.
16.00 – 18.00	Proceed to return to the Jamin Ginting Flyover Petrol Station.
18.00	Tour finish.

Source: Author's data processing, 2024

Table 1 shows the itinerary for a disaster-themed tour package in Karo Regency. Beginning at the Jamin Ginting Flyover Petrol Station, which serves as the meeting place, tour participants will be picked up and taken to the first tourist destination, the Sigarang Garang Village, which is the dead village. It takes about two hours and forty minutes to travel the 80 kilometers from the Jamin Ginting Flyover Petrol Station to the dead settlement of Sigarang Garang settlement. Following their arrival at the dead hamlet of Sigarang Garang hamlet, tour participants will go on a 30-minute guided tour of the village, which has been left uninhabitable as a result of Mount Sinabung's eruption.

Following that, tour participants will continue their journey in a pickup vehicle to the next tourist destination, Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park. Since the distance is close to the dead village of Sigarang Garang Village, the trip should only take ten minutes. Following their arrival at Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park, tour participants will spend approximately half an hour taking in the Karo Regency landscape from this tourist destination and taking pictures because it is a really lovely location. Snacks prepared by the tour organizer will be served to attendees here. The trip will then continue to Lake Lau Kawar, which is 4.1 km away and takes roughly 20 minutes.

Before taking a tour of Lake Lau Kawar, tour participants will first eat lunch at one of the neighborhood eateries after arriving at the lake. Participants in the program will explore Lake Lau Kawar after lunch. Tour participants can engage in a variety of tourist activities in Lake Lau Kawar, including taking interesting pictures at the location's many photo sites and speed boating around Lake Toba for roughly twenty-five minutes. Following their tour of Lake Lau Kawar, participants will have ten minutes to get ready before returning to the meeting location. However, tour

participants will make a stop in Pajak Buah Tongkoh to purchase gifts and souvenirs before returning home.

The trip from Lake Lau Kavar to Pajak Buah Tongkoh, which is 31 kilometers away, takes roughly one hour and fifteen minutes. Participants in the tour will have 25 minutes to purchase presents and souvenirs. Following that, we will travel 56 km and return to the Jamin Ginting Flyover petrol station, where the tour will conclude after around two hours of travel.

To sum up, this tour activity lasted for ten hours. This tour is a full-day tour of the Mount Sinabung disaster site due to the considerable distance between the meeting place and the destination.

This tour package demonstrates how both commercial and non-commercial tourism behaviors following a tragedy can present compelling chances for political critique, more sustainable memories, and reconstruction (Pezzullo, 2010). It shows volcanic eruptions tourism narratives can transition from narratives of destruction and loss to narratives of renewal and hope (Tucker, Shelton, & Bae, 2017).

D. CONCLUSION

The findings reveal three prominent disaster tourist attractions in Karo Regency: Sigarang-Garang Village, known for its stunning mountain views and activities such as trekking, photography, and educational explorations of volcanic eruption impacts; Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park, which features panoramic views of Mount Sinabung and diverse flora and fauna, offering opportunities for photography and camping; and Lake Lau Kavar, where visitors can enjoy lake views, camping, boating, fishing, and local Karo cuisine at an on-site store. The proposed itinerary spans approximately 10 hours, commencing at the Jamin Ginting Flyover gas station, visiting Sigarang-Garang Village, exploring Sabana Sinabung Vulkano Park, and having lunch at Lau Kavar Lake before returning. En route, tourists can stop at Pajak Buah Tongkoh for souvenirs.

Recommendations for enhancing disaster tourism include adding facilities such as fishing equipment rentals and additional recreational activities, along with an expanded range of souvenir options. For visitors traveling from Medan, the suggested route is Medan - Medan Zoo - Durin Pitu - Sibolangit - Berastagi - Sigarang Garang Village - Sinabung Vulkano Park - Lau Kavar Lake - Sigarang Garang Village - Naman Teran - Berastagi - Sibolangit - Durin Pitu - Medan Zoo - Medan, optimizing travel time.

While this study successfully addresses its objectives of identifying attractions and designing an itinerary, it also opens avenues for further exploration. Future research could examine the socio-economic impacts of disaster tourism on local communities, including its potential to generate income and foster cultural preservation while mitigating ethical concerns and exploitation risks. Additionally, studies could focus on developing frameworks to balance the commercialization of disaster tourism with respect for affected communities, as well as investigating the psychological effects on both tourists and residents.

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