



## TOURISM - GS III MAINS

**Q.** The Indian travel and tourism industry's role in fuelling the nation's economic resurgence stands out prominently. Discuss the role of tourism in reviving the Indian economy post pandemic. (15 marks, 250 words)

**News:** *India's travel and tourism sector: Steering towards a brighter future*

### What's in the news?

- The Indian travel and tourism industry's role in fuelling the nation's economic resurgence stands out prominently.

### Key takeaways:

- The sector's post-pandemic rebound was remarkable, not just in its pace but also in its contribution to the Indian economy.

### Tourism and Economic Development:

- According to WTTC, the industry's contribution to the GDP has seen a steady increase, with a projection of about **INR 16.5 trillion in 2023**, underlining its vital role in the country's economic fabric.
- This growth is a reflection of a sector that has not only recovered but also adapted and innovated to grow out of unprecedented challenges.
- The resilience of the travel and tourism industry is a beacon of hope and a benchmark for other sectors.
- This growth trajectory speaks volumes about the sector's untapped potential as a key driver for economic growth, employment generation, and infrastructural development.

### Tourism Industry in India:

- The tourism industry in India accounts for roughly **5% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP)**.
- In the financial year 2019-2020, the travel and tourism sector in India employed nearly 80 million people and accounted for about 15.3% of overall jobs in the country.
- In 2021, India was ranked 54th in the **World Economic Forum's (WEF) Travel and Tourism Development Index**, down from 46th in 2019, but still, India remains at the top within South Asia.

### Various types of tourism in India:

- **Eco-tourism** - Example: Thenamala (Kerala), Kaziranga National Park (Assam), Sundarbans.
- **Wildlife tourism** - Example: Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary (Rajasthan), Corbett National Park (Uttarakhand).



- **Religious and Cultural tourism** - Example: Ajanta & Ellora caves (Maharashtra), Mahabalipuram (TamilNadu), Hampi (Karnataka), Taj Mahal (Uttar Pradesh), Sanchi Stupa (Madhya Pradesh) etc.
- **Beach tourism** - Example: Blue flag beaches of Odisha, the backwaters of Kerala, Water sports in Goa, Scuba-diving in Andaman & Nicobar Islands and coral watching in Lakshadweep islands etc.
- **Adventure tourism** - Example: Trekking, Skiing facilities in the Himalayas, Paragliding, Ropeway, etc.
- **Medical tourism** - Example: Chennai (Tamil Nadu) attracts around 45% of medical tourists from foreign countries, Rishikesh (Yoga capital of World), Kerala (Ayurveda), etc.
- **Rural Tourism** - India offers a vast potential for rural tourism that focuses on exploring and experiencing the rural lifestyle and culture and participating in various activities such as farming, handicrafts, farm tourism and village walks etc.

## Multiplier Effects of Tourism Industry in India:

### 1. Pulls economic growth:

- Tourism can contribute significantly to the country's economic growth, as it generates earnings and creates employment opportunities for people in various sectors.

### 2. Development of infrastructure:

- Development of the tourism sector can lead to the construction and improvement of infrastructure, such as roads, airports, and other transportation facilities, which can benefit other sectors as well.

### 3. Supports livelihoods:

- Tourism leads to the development of local economies and improve the standard of living of the people.
- It also helps to renew the sense of pride and responsibility, especially among the local population.

### 4. Push to foreign exchange earnings:

- Tourism can be a major source of foreign exchange earnings for India, as it attracts a large number of foreign tourists who spend money on accommodations, food, transportation, and other travel-related expenses.

### 5. Soft power status:

- Tourism raises India's international profile and reputation, which can initiate a cultural exchange, increase soft power, promote cultural diplomacy and have positive effects on various other sectors of the economy.

### 6. Promotes Indian culture and heritage:

- Tourism can help preserve and promote the rich culture and heritage by encouraging the preservation of monuments, art, and traditions.

### 7. Ascetic learnings:

- Tourism helps to promote understanding and awareness of different cultures, traditions, and ways of life.



## Challenges of the Tourism Sector in India:

### 1. Environmental impacts:

- Rapid growth of tourism in India has put significant pressure on the country's natural resources and environment.
- **Lack of sustainable practices in the tourism industry has led to pollution (like plastic pollution in mountains), overuse of water resources, and damage to natural habitats.**

### 2. Lack of infrastructure facilities:

- Inadequate infrastructure and connectivity in terms of transportation, accommodation, and tourist facilities is a major challenge for India's tourism industry, especially for remote destinations and hilly areas.
- Example: Absence of basic amenities like clean drinking water, clean toilets, first aid and good public transport facilities.

### 3. Social and cultural differences:

- India's diverse cultural heritage is one of its greatest attractions for tourists. However, the lack of sensitivity and understanding of cultural differences among tourists can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts.

### 4. Seasonal nature:

- India's tourism sector is highly seasonal, with most tourists visiting the country between October and March.
- This seasonal nature of tourism creates a challenge for the industry to maintain stable employment throughout the year.

### 5. Safety issues:

- Tourists may face risks of theft, harassment and racial attacks in some parts of the country.
- Example: Recent harassment of foreign tourists in Goa.

### 6. Lack of skilled workforce:

- India's tourism sector faces a shortage of skilled workers, particularly in areas such as hospitality and tourism management which hampers quality service delivery to tourists.

### 7. Governance issues:

- Bureaucratic processes involved in obtaining permits, licenses, and other necessary paperwork can be time-consuming and challenging.
- Example: Despite the introduction of the e-visa facility, visitors find the process for application cumbersome.

## Measures taken by Government:

### 1. Budgetary support:

- In the Union Budget 2023, for the promotion of tourism into mission mode, the Ministry of Tourism was allocated **Rs 2,400 crore** and a slew of measures were announced.

### 2. Developing 50 new tourist destination:

- The government would develop 50 new tourist destinations to attract more tourists across India.
- The new destinations will be selected through '**challenge mode**' considering critical factors like connectivity to the destination, tourists' security, etc., and the focus will be on developing a complete package keeping in mind the needs of Indian and foreign tourists.





### 3. Tourism Development Strategy:

The Ministry of Tourism has launched a number of initiatives and implemented a **four-pronged development strategy** that focuses on

- **Improving the connectivity** - air, rail, and roads.
- **Enhancing the tourism infrastructure** and dependent services.
- Streamlining **branding and promotion**.
- **Showcasing the culture and heritage**.

### 4. Promoting domestic tourism:

- Initiatives like **‘Dekho Apna Desh,’ ‘Swadesh Darshan Scheme,’ and ‘Vibrant Villages Programme** to encourage tourism in border villages’ are launched to promote tourism within the country.
- These schemes focus on encouraging middle-class citizens to travel within the country instead of going overseas.
- Also, under these schemes, the government aims to develop theme-based tourist circuits and better tourism infrastructure in remote parts of India.

### 5. Visit India Year 2023:

- The government has launched Visit India Year 2023 as **India is heading G20 in 2023**.
- It is a programme which invites the world to explore India and gives impetus to the tourism sector.
- Under the initiative, more than one lakh foreign delegates who will visit India in 2023 will be showcased the entire gamut of India’s Culture, including monuments and festivals.

### 6. Dharamshala Declaration 2022:

- The **National Tourism Conference 2022** ended with the adoption of the “Dharamshala Declaration” which affirms commitment toward developing “sustainable and responsible tourism” and positions **India as a “global leader in the tourism sector by 2047”**.
- It states that all the major indices of tourism have started showing signs of recovery toward the pre-pandemic levels such as domestic air passenger traffic, hotel occupancy and tourist footfalls.
- It also says that the National Tourism Policy has been drafted with following objectives:
  - In the short term, to recover to pre-pandemic levels by mid-2024.
  - The country is estimated to **achieve USD 150 billion GDP contribution and 15 million foreign tourist arrivals** by that period.
  - In the **medium term** (that is 2030), tourism-related goals are USD 250 billion GDP contribution; 137 million jobs and 56 million foreign tourist arrivals.
  - In the **long term**, to revive India’s tourism and targets to achieve USD 1 Trillion by the sector in 2047.
- It says that the government will continue **to support MSMEs in the tourism** sector and capitalise on the employment generating potential of the industry.
- It announces necessary interventions including **visa reforms, ease of travel, travel-friendly immigration facilities** at airports and openness to international travel.



## 7. Unity Malls:

- Apart from promoting domestic tourism, to **promote local handcraft products**, all the states are encouraged to build 'Unity Malls' at all prominent locations. These malls will act as a place to display and sell the state's local specialty products manufactured and made by local artisans.

## 8. Improved connectivity:

- To promote and develop the Indian tourism industry further, Budget 2023 announced that India would develop **50 new airports, water aerodromes, and heliports** to improve connectivity within the cities and smaller towns. Also, a budget has been allocated to develop railways in India.

## 9. Mega-adventure tourism trails:

- The government observed that India's topography makes the country an ideal destination for **sustainable adventure tourism**.
- The Ministry is working with States and industries for the development of the two mega-adventure tourism trails that would be launched in the Himalayas and the Ganga in 2023.
- These trails would be followed by others like the Narmada trail from Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh to the Arabian sea, the Cauvery River trail, the West Coast trail from Kutch to Kanyakumari, and the East Coast trail from West Bengal to Kanyakumari.

## WAY FORWARD:

### 1. 6P Strategy:

- Unlocking India's immense tourism potential requires a comprehensive strategy that addresses the **six key pillars of planning, place, people, policy, process, and promotion**.
- The "6Ps" cover destination planning and management, infrastructure development, sustainability and safety, development of human capital, policy and process interventions to align the Centre and states as well as promoting the narrative of Indian tourism.

### 2. Partnership with states:

- Presently, **Tourism is a state subject**. The central tourism department has been batting for it to be moved to the concurrent list, which can allow policy-making both at the Central and the State level.

### 3. Infrastructure status to tourism industry:

- Granting tourism infrastructure status will provide further impetus to the growth of the sector.
- Some Indian states have already provided industry status to tourism, a key demand of the sector for decades now.

### 4. Use of technologies:

- **Artificial Reality/Virtual Reality** can help travellers explore destinations before they even arrive, providing virtual tours and simulations of famous landmarks, historical sites, and cultural experiences.
- **AI-powered chatbots and digital assistants** can help travellers plan their trips, recommend personalised activities, and offer real-time assistance while travelling.