



## Iconic Tourist Sites

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The government will develop **17 “Iconic Tourist Sites”** in the country as a world **class tourist destinations** which in turn would serve as a model for other tourism sites.

### “Iconic Tourist Sites” Initiative

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- **The Tourism Ministry is the nodal ministry** for the implementation of the initiative.
- The **17 sites** identified by the Ministry are:
  - **Taj Mahal** and Fatehpur Sikri (Uttar Pradesh),
  - Ajanta & Ellora (Maharashtra),
  - Humayun’s Tomb, Red Fort and Qutub Minar (Delhi),
  - Colva (Goa),
  - Amer Fort (Rajasthan),
  - Somnath and **Dholavira** (Gujarat),
  - **Khajuraho** (Madhya Pradesh),
  - **Hampi** (Karnataka),
  - Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu),
  - **Kaziranga** (Assam),
  - Kumarakom (Kerala) and
  - The Mahabodhi Temple (Bihar)
- The initiative is aimed at **enhancing India’s soft power.**
- **Vision:** The Ministry shall be developing the sites in a holistic manner with a focus on issues concerning connectivity to the destination, better facilities/experience for the tourists at the site, skill development, involvement of local community, promotion & branding and by **bringing in private investment.**

- **Execution:** The monuments taken up for development under the initiative fall under the jurisdiction of **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** and State Archaeology Departments. The Ministry will carry out interventions at these monuments in collaboration with the ASI and State Government, and all development plans will have elements of universal accessibility, cleanliness at the monuments, use of Green Technology and enhanced security for the tourists.

## Need of the Initiative

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- As per the **latest Economic Survey**, the **tourism** sector witnessed a **sharp slowdown in the year 2018**.

The growth rate of Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTA) declined from 14.2% in 2017-18 to 2.1% in 2018-19, year on year basis.

- The Survey also showed that the Foreign Direct Investment (**FDI in hotel and tourism declined** from \$1,132 million in 2017-18 to \$1,076 million in 2018-19.
- **Low momentum under ‘Adopt a Heritage’ scheme:** Many of the identified monuments were opened up for adoption in late 2017 under the Ministry of Tourism’s **Adopt a Heritage scheme**. It seems that the momentum of the scheme has slowed down as only 11 MoUs have been signed so far.

The Red Fort was adopted by the Dalmia Group, while the Qutub Minar and the Ajanta Caves were adopted by YatraOnline.

- **Financial Issue:** The Tourism Ministry has been allocated Rs 1,378 crore for 2019-20 for the development of tourism infrastructure. This is only marginally more than the allocations in 2017-18 (Rs 1,151 crore) and 2018-19 (Rs 1,330 crore).

## Way Forward

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- There is a need to **strengthen the coordination mechanism** of various Ministries and stakeholders to resolve issues in the promotion of tourism in the country.
- The **State governments also need to be sensitized** about tourism being a major driver of employment and poverty alleviation in the country.

**Source: IE**