



Tourism in India

Why in News?

Growth of 5.6% in Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during the period January-November 2018, as compared to the same period of the previous year.

Tourism in India (in brief)

- **India attracted lot of travelers** in the past due to its fabled wealth. Visit of Hieun-tsang, a devout Chinese Buddhist is an example of this.
- **Pilgrim Travel** got a boost when Emperors like Ashoka and Harsha started building rest houses for pilgrims.
- **'The Arthashastra'** pointing out the **importance of the travel** infrastructure for the state, played important role in the past.
- Post-Independence, **Tourism continuously remained part of the Five Year Plans.**
- **Different forms of Tourism** like Business Tourism, Health Tourism, and Wildlife Tourism etc. **were introduced in India after seventh FYP.**

Latest Stats

- India's Tourism is ranked at 7th position in terms of its contribution to World GDP in World Travel and Tourism Council's report in 2017.
- India as of now in 2018 has 37 sites listed under 'World Heritage List', 6th most highest (29 cultural, 7 natural and 1 mixed site) in the world. Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai were the latest to be added in 2018.
- Growth of 2.3% in the number of Domestic Tourist Visits in 2017 as compared to 2016.
- Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from tourism registered a growth of 11.9% during the period January-October 2018 as compared to the same period of the previous year.

Importance of 'Tourism' in India

- **Generates Income and Employment:** In 2017, Tourism Industry accounted for **8% of the total employment.** An increase has been witnessed in the sale of handlooms, handicrafts etc.
- **Service Sector:** It gives a push to service sector. A large number of businesses engaged in service sector such as airlines, hotel, surface transportation, etc. grows with the growth of tourism industry.
- Foreign Travelers help India in getting **Foreign Exchange.**
- Tourism helps in **preservation of National Heritage and Environment** by bringing in focus the importance of sites and need to preserve them.
- **Renewal of Cultural Pride:** Tourist spots being appreciated globally instills a sense of pride among Indian residents gets reinforced.
- **Infrastructural Development:** Now-a-days, it is ensured that Travelers do not face any problem; multiple use infrastructures are getting developed at several tourist places. **Uttarakhand's plan to start mobile caravans is a latest example.**
- It helps in bringing India on global map of tourism, earning appreciation, recognition and initiates cultural exchange.
- Tourism as a **form of soft power,** helps in promoting cultural diplomacy, people to people

connect and thereby promotes friendship and cooperation between India and other countries.

Challenges to the Growth of Tourism in India

- Tourists in India still face **many infrastructure related problems** like inadequate roads, water, sewer, hotels and telecommunications etc.
- **Safety and security of tourists**, especially of the foreign tourists, is a major hurdle to the tourism development. Attacks on foreign nationals raise questions about India's ability to welcome tourists from far away countries. **Among the 130 countries surveyed, India was placed at the 114th position in terms of safety and security aspect in the WEF Index 2017.**
- **Lack of skilled manpower** is another challenge to Tourism Industry in India.
- **Absence of basic amenities** like drinking water, well maintained toilets, first aid, cafeteria etc. at tourist places.
- **Seasonality in Tourism**, with the busy season being limited to six months from October to March and heavy rush in November and December.
- **Non-acceptance of International Cards** at small outlets.

Recent Steps

- Indian Government has taken following steps to overcome the challenges:
- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** Under it, the Ministry of Tourism provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for **infrastructure development** of 13 identified theme based circuits.
 - **13 Circuits are:** North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit.
- Integrated development of identified pilgrimage destinations (includes employment generation) has been undertaken under the '**National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive**' (**PRASHAD**) Scheme.
- "**Adopt a Heritage Project**" plans to entrust heritage sites/monuments and other tourist sites to private sector companies, public sector companies and individuals for the development of various tourist amenities.
- **Celebration of Paryatan Parv** from 16th to 27th September, 2018, to encourage Indians to visit tourist destination in India.
- **Incredible India Website** to promote to and engage with travelers.
- **Online Learning Management System** for **creating skilled manpower** to work as tourist facilitators.

Way Forward

- **Faster development of all sort of infrastructure** (physical, social and digital) is a need of hour.
- Safety of tourists is a priority. An **official guide system** can be launched for tourists.
- **Indian Residents should be motivated to treat tourists well**, so that tourists don't face any type of fraud.
- **Promotion of other forms of Tourism** like Medical Tourism, Adventure Tourism etc. to solve the problem of seasonality. **Off-season concession** is another solution.
- India's size and massive natural, geographic, cultural and artistic diversity offers enormous opportunities. Indian Tourism industry should play on that.