



## Rural Tourism

**Prelims:** Rural Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Indian Heritage Sites, Village Clusters, Visit India Year 2023.

**Mains:** Rural Tourism, Significance and Challenges.

### Why in News?

Rural Tourism and Rural Homestays (CNA - RT and RH) under the Ministry of Tourism has identified **six niche experiences for tourists wanting to visit rural India**, including agritourism, art and culture, [ecotourism](#), wildlife, tribal tourism, and homestays.

- The Ministry of Tourism is also **working on launching the State assessment and ranking criteria** to help foster competition and reach the overarching objectives of promoting sustainable and responsible tourism.

### What are the Key Points of the Move?

- **Objective:**
  - The push aims at sustainability, avoiding large-scale infrastructure development.
  - It aims to rope in **local resources and communities to provide a unique organic experience and** bolster employment opportunities in villages.
  - The Ministry of Tourism is in the **process of formulating a budget, with certain training modules** at district levels being 100% centrally financed, and other aspects being 60% Centre and 40% State financed.
- **Village Clusters:**
  - Clusters of five to seven villages will be **identified in close proximity**.
  - A cluster will offer **more tourist attractions than rural tourism projects** of individual villages separated by long distances.
  - It can also aid in the marketing of local products of a group of villages through craft bazaars.

### What is the Concept of Rural Tourism?

- **About:**
  - Rural tourism in India is a form of tourism that **focuses on exploring and experiencing the rural lifestyle and culture**.
  - It involves **traveling to rural areas and participating in various activities** such as farming, handicrafts, and village walks, to gain a deeper understanding of the local culture and way of life.
    - For instance, Tamil Nadu's **Kolukkumalai is the highest tea plantation** in the world; Kerala's Dewalokam is a yoga centre on the banks of a river; **Nagaland's Konyak Tea** retreat takes visitors on a trip through tribal culture etc.
- **Scope:**
  - India's rural tourism potential lies in its **diverse and vibrant culture, handicrafts, folk**

### **arts, festivals, and fairs.**

- U.S.-based market research firm Grand View Research estimates that agritourism alone will develop at a **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 11.4% from 2022 to 2030.**
- **Significance:**
  - Not only **can rural tourism revitalize local art and crafts and prevent viable traditional occupations** from being displaced, it will also help redevelop rural areas and rejuvenate rural life, create jobs and new business opportunities.
- **Benefits:**
  - Reduce out-migration, Increase alternative business opportunities
  - Increase entrepreneurial scopes
  - Helps in poverty alleviation.
  - Community empowerment
  - Art and Crafts sale
  - Heritage Preservation

## **What are the Challenges for Rural Tourism in India**

- **Lack of Infrastructure:**
  - Rural areas often lack basic amenities such as **good roads, electricity, and healthcare facilities**, which can deter tourists from visiting.
  - Inadequate infrastructure **can also make it difficult for local communities** to provide quality services to visitors.
- **Limited Awareness:**
  - Lack of awareness about rural tourism among tourists and **local communities can hinder its growth.**
  - Many people are **unaware of the potential of rural areas** as tourist destinations and the benefits that tourism can bring to local communities.
- **Low Income and Unemployment:**
  - Rural areas often suffer from **low-income levels and high unemployment rates.**
  - This can make it difficult for local communities to invest in tourism infrastructure and provide quality services to visitors.
- **Threat to Ecology:**
  - Rural tourism has the potential to have a negative impact on the **environment and local communities** if not managed properly.
  - Overcrowding, pollution, and **destruction of natural habitats can harm the local ecology and culture**, which can deter visitors in the long run.
- **Safety Concerns:**
  - Rural areas can be perceived as unsafe by tourists due to a **lack of proper security arrangements**, which can make it difficult for them to enjoy their experience and create a negative image of the destination.

## **What are the Related Initiatives?**

- The Government is exploring organic agriculture areas developed under the [Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana \(PKVY\)](#) and [Mission Organic Value Chain Development in North East Region \(MOVCD-NER\)](#) for development as rural tourist spots.
- **Best Tourism Village Competition Portal** was launched recently to select the best tourism village from across the country, and also to promote rural tourism in the country
  - The 'Best Tourism Village Competition' will be held in three stages, and will seek entries at district level, state level and finally at the national level.
- The Ministry of Tourism has launched **Visit India Year 2023**, focusing on inbound travel to India, to highlight **varied tourism offerings of our country and showcase them to the global tourists.**
- [PRASHAD \(National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual and Heritage Augmentation Drive\) scheme](#) was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in 2015.
  - Till date, under PRASHAD scheme, a total of 45 projects for an amount of Rs.1586.10 Crore have been sanctioned.
- [Swadesh Darshan scheme](#) in 2014-15 with focus on integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country.

- 76 projects were sanctioned for an amount of Rs.5315.59 Crore under various themes such as eco, heritage, Himalayan, coastal theme etc.

## Way Forward

- The rural tourist destinations should be **specific and near to places where people usually visit.**
- Accessibility to destinations should be the **first criteria for selection of destinations to be developed for rural tourism.**
- Advertising the destinations **will help artisans to sell their products better and proper marketing** of the project is required to increase tourists.
- The income generated from tourism can be utilized in preserving ethnic forms of art, dance and folk songs. It will safeguard **rural people's interests and will reduce the pressure to earn a living miles** away from their homes.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.1 How can the mountain ecosystem be restored from the negative impact of development initiatives and tourism? (2019)**

**Q.2 The states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are reaching the limits of their ecological carrying capacity due to tourism. Critically evaluate. (2015)**

[Source: TH](#)

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