

## Travel Tourism in India is Booming. So Why is Everyone So Worried?

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### ABSTRACT

The travel habits of people are changing the world. Taking about 145 million overseas trips a year, the Middle Kingdom's middle class is moving—and spending—more than that of any other nation: In 2016 they accounted for \$261 billion overseas, a fifth of all sales by international tourists, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

To the south, India's own swelling, monies middle class—250 million smart phone-toting young professionals out of a population of 1.3 billion—is starting to emulate its regional rival. In less than 10 years, the World Travel & Tourism Council expects India to become the fourth-largest travel and tourism economy behind China, the U.S., and Germany.

Key Words:- Tourism Organization, World Travel & Tourism Council , Tourism Economy etc

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### INTRODUCTION

Although more people are visiting India than ever before—two decades ago about 2.4 million international tourists came to India a year; in 2017 there were five times that—the real boost is coming from domestic travel. Almost 90 percent of travelers in India are Indians. For the last three years, their most popular destination has been the southernmost state of Tamil Nadu, thanks to pilgrims eager to visit its many temples.

Tourism in the subcontinent generated more than \$230 billion in 2017, up from almost \$209 billion in 2016. The vast country offers myriad options: 36 world heritage sites and 103 national parks, plus the Taj Mahal in Agra, Rajasthan's hill forts, the holy city of Varanasi, and everything else in between the mountains of the Himalayas and the beaches of Goa. Add in its jungles with tigers, elephants, and the last of Asia's lions, and no other country is better suited to take advantage of an adventure travel market that's expected to grow to \$1.3 billion by 2023.

“Indians are discovering their own country,” says Ahmed Chamanwala, the founder of the Fringe Ford, a five-room lodge in Kerala state, which sits on a 527-acre forest home to more than 400 kinds of animals. “In our initial years, most of our tourists were inbound travelers. But over the years we have seen an increase in the domestic weekend travelers from the major cities in India. Now the business is more dependent on the Indian market.”

Not many people know that January 25 is celebrated as National Tourism Day in India. It is a day that has been marked by the Indian government in order to promote tourism within the country. It's a day dedicated to educating people about the importance of tourism and the role it plays in the Indian

economy. It is perhaps the best day to know how amazing a country India is when it comes to travel and tourism. Many of us dream of visiting alluring destinations abroad without considering how much there is to see in our own country. Year after year, India has captured the fascination of many foreign travelers. People from Israel, USA, England, Australia, New Zealand flock India for its historical, cultural and spiritual heritage. Here are some interesting facts about Indian tourism that you must not miss!

## **Tourism's contribution to GDP**

Tourism plays a huge role in boosting India's economy. According to reports, the travel and tourism industry contributed a total of \$124.8 billion to GDP in India in 2015. That means close to 6 per cent of India's total GDP was from travel and tourism. It reiterates the fact that tourism needs to be taken seriously. It makes sense that the government is taking great efforts to make sure that the country gets cleaner, more amenities and facilities are introduced at railway stations and public places, and general safety measures are undertaken at popular spots.

## **One of the fastest-growing tourism sectors worldwide**

In comparison to the rest of the world, India's tourism sector is growing at a very impressive rate. According to a study conducted in 2014, India was one of the fastest-growing tourism destinations worldwide. It featured eleventh in the list but what is most promising is that the direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in India was expected to grow an average of 6.4 per cent annually between 2014 and 2024. Now, that is quite something, isn't it? India has been a popular tourist spot for many western travelers and the number of tourists is growing every year. With great attractions like the Taj Mahal in Agra, Qutub Minar in Delhi, the ancient stupas at Sanchi and the party hub of Goa, India is a delight for vacationers.

## **Jobs in Tourism**

Jobs is a major factor in the economy of any country. In India, tourism is responsible for a large number of jobs. Statistically, tourism in India provides 40 million jobs. That makes it one of the biggest job-providers of the country. Be it major pilgrim spots like Kedarnath or party destinations like Goa, there are ample employment opportunities in the travel and tourism industry in India. From workers in restaurants and hotels to guides at historical monuments and vehicle operators to souvenir shop owners, a number of people rely on tourism for their bread and butter. The tourism sector is expected to grow at an annual average rate of 7.9 per cent till 2023. This makes India the third fastest-growing tourism destination over the coming decade. Employee percentage in tourism

In the year 2015, the tourism industry provided more than 23.5 million jobs in India. This means that over 7.7 per cent of Indian employees work in the tourism industry. That means a considerable portion of India's workforce is in the tourism sector. This makes travel and tourism an extremely important sector since it absorbs such a huge number of young Indians. With the growth in tourism and the number of employment opportunities in the sector, this workforce percentage is bound to increase.



## **Kumbh Mela**

One of the events that are synonymous with India is the great Kumbh Mela. It is known to be the largest religious gathering of people. In 2011, the Kumbh Mela witnessed over 75 million pilgrims. The gathering was so huge that the crowd was actually even visible from space. Not only is the Kumbh Mela of great religious significance, but it is also one of the most commercial events of India's tourism sector as it involves a huge amount of money and people.

## **Largest Postal Network**

It is worth noting that India has the largest postal network in the world. Take a guess at the number of post offices India is home to! There are over 1, 55,015 of them! One post office serves around 7,175 people on an average. This kind of efficiency is quite unparalleled.



## **USA is the largest market**

While India attracts tourists from all over the world, there are some countries that have a special affection towards the country. The largest source market for visitors to India was the United States of America, followed by Bangladesh and the UK. Reports forecast outbound travel from India to reach 1.41 million in 2020 which is quite impressive given that travel has not been part of India's culture as much as it has been in the west. Slowly, more and more backpackers, honeymooners and family vacationers from India are taking trips abroad even as the number of foreign tourists to India keeps increasing.

## **Tourist arrivals at an all-time high**

India has always been a hot destination for people across the globe. With successful films like Lagaan, Slumdog Millionaire, and Eat Pray Love, more and more people from all over the world have taken a liking towards India and have started planning trips to this lovely destination which makes for an amazing budget trip for them. Tourist arrival in India increased to 8,91,000 in November from 7,54,000 in October 2016. From 2000 until 2016, it averaged 4,26,846.43. This number reached an all-time high of 9,13,000 in December 2015 from a record low of 1,29,286 in May 2001. It is an exciting time for tourism in India and it only seems to be getting better.

## **The Paradox**

As Venice, Barcelona, and Dubrovnik have learned, however, unchecked growth can threaten stakeholders in the fragile places supported by the surge in visitors. In India, steered by government subsidies and tax incentives, five regional budget airlines debuted 100 far-flung routes last year, helping fuel citizens' desire to explore.

The country's natural beauty is part of its marketing campaign, and wildlife is a huge draw. But one concern being discussed in hushed tones, Chamanwala says, is that the country's weak infrastructure and stretched bureaucracy could allow certain areas to lose what makes them special before they ever reach their potential. In some areas, tiger reserves no longer have tigers, and nature safaris can feel like crowded parking lots where there are more shutterbugs than subjects to shoot.

Fringe Ford is already taking steps to limit tourism's impact. The resort, sitting on an old tea plantation that's been reclaimed by the forest, is staffed with locals to keep the community involved as stakeholders. Chamanwala plans to invest in adjacent plots to create a buffer that will encourage forest growth and conservation. "Keeping the footprint to a bare minimum" is a must, he says, and he invests a portion of his profits into conservation on the property.

These worries are most pronounced in the high-altitude Himalaya desert of Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir, a region on the extreme northern side of the country where dramatic peaks and native snow leopards have created a tourism explosion. For years, the presence of the Indian army kept this region protected, but now almost 2.5 million visit annually, eager to see landscapes featured in Bollywood films.

Road construction here, in a region long cut off from the rest of the continent, is a defiant message to neighboring China. As the one major broken link in China's Belt and Road Initiative, the new roads are a directive to citizens: travel. Throughout the Himalayas, the glaciers walling off the world's tallest

mountains from human encroachment are melting, opening more land for development. So far, much of the market has been from Indians, which presents enormous potential for international travelers.

Right now, there are about 650 hotels and homestays in a district with 4,300 households—too many for the land to support. There's talk of capping visitors, but no standard regulations, and no one wants to turn off the money machine. "I really hope they don't expand their capacity," says Misty Dhillon, the founder of the Himalayan Outback, who leads tours throughout Ladakh and greater India

## **The Other Catch**

Tourism in places such as Ladakh hinges on a pristine environmental image, but visitors produce thousands of pounds of trash each year. More than 30,000 plastic water bottles are dumped in open-air landfills in Ladakh each summer. On Mt. Everest, in neighboring Nepal, there's an estimated 8 to 10 metric tonnes of everything from empty oxygen canisters to tents and even bodies on the mountain.

Waste is a problem throughout the Himalayas, and much of it is made by domestic travelers. "The trash problem is a big concern, because our domestic tourism is a huge part of it," Dhillon says. "People are seeing all these tourists coming for snow leopards, and locals are thinking, Why shouldn't we do it?"

In the meantime, wildlife is getting harder to spot. Glacial melt is speeding up the desertification of the Western Himalayas and increasing erosion, and trekkers hiking the mountains don't give alpine valleys a chance to recover.

David Sonam, a co-owner of the Snow Leopard Lodge in the Ladakhi village of Ulley, has been instrumental in implementing a resident program that levies a portion of each visitor fee to conservation, helping get locals involved. Ulley, where the Snow Leopard Lodge is located, has been fanatical about maintaining a low impact, limiting guests to 22 at the most. But even here, the relationship with the environment is tenuous.

The lodge is run by Tsewang Norboo, who once hunted snow leopards with his grandfather before turning his home into a hotel that's earned an outside reputation. But no leopards means no tourists, a worry dictated by those same tourists. It's the same issue that could happen in Varanasi, where gallons of untreated sewage flow into the Ganges every day. The thing keeping the industry going threatens to crash it down.

***"The land is changing," 'and it's changing because there's just too many people.'***