



## Rethinking and Reimagining Tourism

This editorial is based on [“Pitching India as a signature destination”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 27/09/2022. It talks about the recent Dharamshala Declaration and future of the Tourism Sector in India.

For Prelims: Tourism in India, UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), UNESCO World Heritage List, Swadesh Darshan Scheme, Dharamshala Declaration, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

For Mains: Status of the Tourism Sector in India, Challenges Related to the Tourism Sector in India, Recent Initiatives Related to Tourism.

**Tourism** has emerged as a **key driver of economic growth**. It is one of the fastest growing economic sectors and has significant impact on **trade, job creation, investment, infrastructure development and social inclusion**.

Tourism has been the most affected sector by the **Covid-19 pandemic**. According to the **UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)**, this is by far the worst crisis international tourism has faced since records began in 1950.

**Post Covid-19**, it is a **challenge for the tourism sector in India** to return to business as usual while maintaining safety and hygiene. The crisis is an **opportunity to consider the long-term implications of the crisis and reimagine the future of tourism** and take coordinated action across governments at all levels and the private sector.

### What is the Status of the Tourism Sector in India?

- The **World Travel and Tourism Council's 2019** report ranks India's tourism at **10<sup>th</sup>** in terms of its **contribution to World GDP (Gross Domestic Product)**.
- **India has 40 sites listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List** (32 cultural, 7 natural, and 1 mixed) as of 2021.
  - **Dholavira** and **Ramappa Temple** are the latest ones.
- A total of **39 million jobs** were created in the tourism sector in FY20, which represented 8% of the country's employment. **By 2029, it will account for 53 million jobs.**

### What are the Recent Initiatives Related to Tourism in India?

- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**
- **Draft National Tourism Policy 2022**
- **Dekho Apna Desh Initiative**
- **National Green Tourism Mission**

## What are the Challenges Related to the Tourism Sector in India?

- **Lack of Training and Skill Development:** Given that the tourism industry is a **labour-intensive sector**, it is undeniable that practical training plays an important role. Over the years, **availability of trained manpower has not kept pace with growth of the tourism sector** in India.
  - The sector's growth is constrained by the **limited number of multilingual trained guides** and the **inadequate understanding of the benefits and responsibilities involved in tourism** among locals.
- **Underutilization of Tourism Potential:** India has an abundance of places that are left unexplored due to **lack of surveys, infrastructure, and connectivity**, which also results in lukewarm attitudes toward domestic tourism.
  - For instance, **despite the [Northeast's breathtaking natural beauty](#), it is not often seen in the travel itineraries** of either domestic or international tourists in the country because of **lack of connectivity with the rest of the country** as well as a lack of infrastructure and necessary facilities.
- **Overexploitation of Resources:** [Unsustainable Tourism](#) often puts **pressure on natural resources through overconsumption** especially in [Himalayan regions](#) of India, where resources are already scarce.
  - Unsustainable tourism also affects local land use, resulting in **soil erosion, increased [pollution](#), and loss of natural habitats** of endangered species.
- **Lack of Infrastructure and Security:** It is a major challenge for the Indian tourism sector. It includes a **lack of multi cuisine restaurants, basic health facilities, [public transport](#)** and hygiene and safety & security of tourists.
  - **Attacks on foreign tourists**, especially on women tourists have raised the security concern as India is placed at 114<sup>th</sup> position in terms of safety( [WEF Index 2017](#)).

## What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Global Opportunity for India:** India's philosophy of '**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**' sees the world as one family. It gives India an **unwavering belief in multilateralism**.
  - Considering India's **rich heritage and culture**, an **unmatched variety of cuisine** tourism can be a **vehicle for enhancing [India's soft power](#)** and attracting foreign revenue.
  - Recent [Dharamshala Declaration](#) that aims to **recognise India's potential in supporting global tourism and also promote domestic tourism** is a good step in this direction.
- **Responsible, Inclusive, Green and Hospitable Tourism (RIGHT):** To ensure **better accountability**, all stakeholders involved in [tourism management](#) need to be governed by a common umbrella of regulations.
  - There is a need to focus on **inclusive growth of tourism** by creating **opportunities for marginalised sections** of society including people living in remote areas.
  - Also, from **Gautama to Gandhi**, our **Indian culture has always stressed the importance of living harmoniously with nature and within our means**.
    - It is important to promote [green tourism](#) with minimal disturbance to the natural ecosystem and maintain **sustainable infrastructure** so that **warm hospitality can thrive**.
- **Unified Tourism System:** An **extensive market research and evaluation exercise** can be undertaken in order to **identify desired tourist destinations** across the country and major markets and segments.
  - It can be followed by developing a **digital unified system (promoting the essence of [Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat](#))**, to map these places and promote them through [social media](#).
- **Tourism Impact Assessment:** The impact of tourism on local resources, atmosphere, and residents needs to be assessed regularly.
  - Also, tourism regulations can be revised from time to time to **address the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities**, taking into account current and future economic, social and environmental impacts.

- **One State One Tourism Mascot: State animals** can be used as advertising mascots for Tourism Departments of different states as an innovative tool to **promote tourism education, especially among children.**
- **Presidency of G20:** India has an opportunity to position itself as a major tourism destination during India's presidency of the **G20 (December 2022- November 2023).**
  - India's age-old dictum of '**Atithi Devo Bhava**' will come to the fore as it welcomes delegates from different countries.

### ***Drishti Mains Question***

Covid crisis is an opportunity to reimagine the future of tourism in India. Discuss.

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

### ***Mains***

**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)**

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