



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)

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