

Embracing Uttar Pradesh’s Tourism Potential for Global Leadership

By Nidhi Shail Kujur 15-April-2024



Take a moment and listen

While India perennially entices millions of tourists with its myriad attractions, the recent G20 Summit in 2023 showcased its global appeal on a grand scale, drawing over a hundred thousand delegates from across the globe for more than sixty meetings held throughout the country. Their immersion in India’s cultural tapestry, exploration of its World Heritage sites and indulgence in its rich artistic, musical, and culinary treasures have significantly contributed to the promotion of global tourism.

A LOOK AT UTTAR PRADESH’S RISING PROMINENCE

Uttar Pradesh is strengthening its foothold on the global tourism stage, reaching new milestones annually. In 2022, the state hosted 31.85 crore tourists, a number that surged in the first nine months of 2023, with over 32 crore visitors exploring its attractions, including a substantial influx of international travellers.

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In a significant announcement, the Uttar Pradesh government’s fiscal year 2024-25 budget, earmarked Rs 2,500 crore for the organization of Mahakumbh-2025. Additionally, plans were outlined for establishing an International Ramayana and Vedic Research Institute in Ayodhya, with a budget allocation of Rs 10 crore. The budget detailed specific allocations, including Rs 14.68 crore for the Nishad Raj Guha Cultural Centre in Shringverpur, Rs 11.79 crore for a music college in Hariharpur (Azamgarh district), and an extra Rs 10.53 crore for the Maharishi Valmiki Cultural Centre in Chitrakoot.

Furthermore, the State Finance Minister disclosed tourism statistics, revealing that Uttar Pradesh welcomed over 37.9 crore tourists from January to October 2023, with 37.77 crore being domestic tourists and 13.43 lakh international visitors. Khanna highlighted the successful organization of “Deepotsav” in Ayodhya, where a Guinness World Record was set by lighting 22 lakh 23 thousand lamps at Ram Ki Pauri.

The state’s focus remains on tourism development and beautification endeavours in key locales such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Chitrakoot, Lucknow, Vindhyachal, Prayagraj, Naimisharanya, Gorakhpur, Mathura, Bateshwar Dham, Garhmukteshwar, Shukirtha Dham, Maa Shakumbhari Devi, Sarnath, and others. Under the ‘Chief Minister Tourism Development Partnership Scheme,’ there is a strategic initiative to enhance one tourist destination in each assembly constituency of Uttar Pradesh. Khanna reiterated the commitment to developing cultural heritage sites under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Acknowledging the increased footfall of devotees, the Finance Minister mentioned the expansion and beautification of the route from Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple to the Ganges River. Infrastructure development projects are underway at six locations anticipating a surge in tourists and devotees visiting the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya district, including widening and beautification of access roads.

In a comprehensive approach, the Uttar Pradesh government’s budget reekets a dedication to cultural development and tourism enhancement, aligning with the vision of promoting the state’s rich heritage.

UTTAR PRADESH’S ECO-TOURISM GEMS

The state of Uttar Pradesh boasts a rich tapestry of eco-tourism destinations, offering travellers a chance to immerse themselves in the natural wonders of the region. From the dense forests of Dudhwa National Park to the serene landscapes of Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh presents a diverse array of ecosystems and habitats to explore.

Dudhwa National Park, nestled in the Terai region, is renowned for its population of tigers, elephants, and rhinoceroses, offering visitors a chance to witness these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat. Similarly, the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary is home to a variety of wildlife, including the elusive Gangetic dolphins, making it a haven for nature enthusiasts and wildlife photographers.

The Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, situated in the foothills of the Himalayas, is another gem of eco-tourism in Uttar Pradesh, providing sanctuary to the majestic Bengal tiger and a host of other endangered species. Meanwhile, the Okhla Bird Sanctuary, located on the outskirts of Delhi, attracts birdwatchers from far and wide with its diverse avian population and tranquil surroundings.

In addition, the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary, steeped in history and mythology, offers visitors a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural significance, with ancient ruins and temples dotting its landscape.

Overall, eco-tourism in **Uttar Pradesh** offers a perfect blend of adventure, conservation, and cultural exploration, inviting travellers to discover the state’s hidden treasures while contributing to the preservation of its natural heritage.

UTTAR PRADESH’S MONUMENTAL ODYSSEY

At the heart of this expedition lies Agra, home to the iconic Taj Mahal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a testament to timeless love. Delving deeper into the state’s cultural heritage, Lucknow emerges as a vibrant hub, boasting magnificent Mughal and colonial-era architecture, including the grand Bara Imambara and the regal Rumi Darwaza.

Venturing further, the Bundelkhand region unfolds with its share of historical marvels, spanning seven states. Here, ancient forts, palaces, and temples stand as silent witnesses to bygone eras, each narrating tales of valour and grandeur. Bundelkhand offers a glimpse into India’s rich past and architectural splendour.

Together, these destinations form a kaleidoscope of monument tourism in Uttar Pradesh, inviting travellers to embark on a captivating journey through history, heritage, and timeless beauty.

MAJOR INITIATIVES TAKEN BY TOURISM DEPARTMENT

- Setting up of the Eco-Tourism Board for holistic development and promotion of Eco-Tourism Projects in the State in close coordination with the Forest Department
- Development of Mathura-Vrindavan, Chitrakoot, Mirzapur through BTVP, CTPV and VDVP
- The World’s longest Cruise of 51 days from Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) to Dibrugarh (Assam) is being facilitated for the promotion of Cruise Tourism in the State
- Development of Heliports in the PPP model in five tourist destinations of the state
- Redevelopment of Rahi Properties through the PPP model
- Re-adaptive usage of Identified Heritage Properties such as Forts, Palaces and Other structures on the PPP model
- Tourism Destination Development of Bundelkhand, Garhmukteshwar, Shukratal and Naimisharanya as preferred Tourism Destinations
- A new and elaborate industry-friendly Tourism Policy 2022 has been launched to promote Investments in the Tourism Sector of the State.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF TOURISM POLICY

Policy Duration: The Tourism Policy 2022 will remain in force from 23rd November for the next five years.
Capital Investment Subsidy to Eligible Tourism Units: All eligible tourism units will be qualified for a capital subsidy under the Admissible Subsidy. 100% of the eligible Capital Investment subsidy amount shall be granted after the successful start of commercial operations of the eligible tourism units

ADDITIONAL CAPITAL SUBSIDY

- An additional 5% subsidy shall be provided to new tourism units in Focus Tourism Destinations – a Total Subsidy of 30%
- New Tourism Units owned and managed by women entrepreneurs (with minimum equity participation of 51% in the entity) will be entitled to an additional 5% subsidy over and above the ‘Admissible Subsidy’. Subsidy of 30% and in case where projects are registered /Constructed/ Operational under Tourism Policy 2022 in Focus Tourism Destinations, the subsidy will be capped at 35%
- New Tourism Units owned and managed by entrepreneurs belonging to SC/ST categories and the differently abled will be entitled to an additional 5% subsidy over and above the ‘Admissible Subsidy’. Subsidy of 30% and in case where projects are registered /Constructed/Operational under Tourism Policy 2022 in Focus Tourism Destinations, the subsidy will be capped at 35%.

INTEREST SUBSIDY

- 5% interest subsidy would be permissible to a maximum of INR 5 Crore loan and admissible subsidy to a maximum of INR 25 Lakh, for 5 years
- Unit can apply for either capital or interest subsidy.

SPECIAL INCENTIVES FOR HERITAGE HOTELS

- 25% subsidy on capital cost without disturbing the architecture of the building.
- Self-expenditure and loans are considered Eligible Capital Investments.
- 5% subsidy for 5 years on a bank loan up to INR 5 crore.
- 100% exemption on stamp duty and land use conversion.
- 50% reimbursement on Excise license fees for the first year.
- Offer signages along key routes and publicity and broadcasting.
- Avail of both capital subsidy and interest subsidy.

INDUSTRY STATUS OF HOTELS AND RESORTS

- Property tax and water sewerage tax at industry rates.
- Construction of tourism units permitted in notified industrial areas.

STAMP DUTY

100% exemption of stamp duty for the first transaction only.

LAND CONVERSION AND DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

100% waiver on all tourism units.

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION SUBSIDY

100% reimbursement of EPF expenditure for 5 years.

SPECIALLY-ABLED FRIENDLY UNITS

Payroll assistance of INR 1500 per month per worker.

REVIVAL OF SCARCE ART AND CULTURE

INR 5 lakh granted to an individual or group involved in art revival.

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ICT ENABLEMENT

- One-time assistance of 25% of the cost of procuring equipment.
- 25% subsidy to promotional content using technology, AI and metaverse.
- Financial assistance for the introduction of ICT in tourism.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

100% reimbursement of hospitality- related course fees, per person.

SUPPORT TO RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

- 75% reimbursement of the cost of carrying out an energy audit.
- 20% reimbursement of the capital cost of setting up a sewage plant.
- 50% reimbursement of green certification fee.
- 100% reimbursement on achieving Responsible Tourism Society of India certifications.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- 10% capital subsidy on ECI for procurement of e-vehicles.
- 20% reimbursement of road tax for 2 years on purchase of tour buses.

INNOVATION

One-time incentive for innovative projects on approval by the Directorate of Tourism Committee.

ASSISTANCE FOR RESEARCH IN THE TRAVEL/HOSPITALITY SECTOR

Financial assistance to 5 projects to recognized travel associations, management institutes and hospitality bodies.

LOOKING AHEAD

Investing in Uttar Pradesh’s tourism sector presents a lucrative opportunity for both domestic and international investors. With its rich cultural heritage, diverse natural landscapes, and historical landmarks, Uttar Pradesh offers a plethora of attractions that appeal to a wide range of travellers. The state’s strategic location, coupled with its robust infrastructure development plans, further enhances its appeal as a premier tourist destination. Additionally, the proactive measures taken by the Uttar Pradesh government, such as incentivizing tourism projects, offering subsidies, and streamlining regulations, create a conducive environment for investment. As tourism continues to emerge as a key driver of economic growth globally, investing in **Uttar Pradesh** opens doors to profitable ventures while contributing to the state’s sustainable development goals.