

Religious Tourism Sees a Surge in Uttar Pradesh

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The religious tourism in **Uttar Pradesh—Varanasi, Mathura, and Ayodhya**—are witnessing an influx of millions of devotees. Varanasi alone saw a record-breaking influx of **95.63 lakhs pilgrims** in the month of March, flocking to seek the blessings of Kashi Vishwanath.

Preparations are in full swing to transform the inaugural Navratri festival at the Ayodhya temple, following the consecration of the Ram Lalla idol earlier this year, into a grand and momentous occasion. The event is expected to draw a significant influx of religious tourists from all corners of the country.

Typically, the month of Sawan witnesses such massive gatherings at Kashi Vishwanath. Similarly, in Ayodhya, more than two lakh visitors each day visited the newly constructed Ram Mandir and Hanumangarhi during the month of March. In Mathura-Vrindavan, the surge in crowds began 15 days before the festival of Holi and has shown no signs of abating yet, with pilgrims even seeking accommodation in Agra due to the lack of space in hotels, ashrams, and guesthouses.

Observing the heavy footfall for darshan at Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, there has been a notable increase in the number of flights operating from the recently operational airport. Presently, there are 24 daily flights operating from Ayodhya, with some routes being serviced twice a week and others four times a week, including services to Hyderabad initiated this week. Flights to **Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, and Ahmedabad** have been operational since earlier.



At present, Varanasi's Kashi Vishwanath Temple is experiencing the highest footfall among religious tourism sites in Uttar Pradesh. Since the construction of the new corridor, there has been a significant surge in tourists visiting Varanasi. Additionally, donations to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple have seen a considerable rise. On March 31, donations amounted to **Rs. 83.34 crores** for the fiscal year, marking a **42.43% increase** compared to the 2022-23 fiscal year when donations totaled **Rs. 58.51 crores**. Prior to the construction of the corridor, donations were approximately Rs. 26 crores up to the fiscal year 2019-20. The surge in donations during March alone has broken all previous records, with contributions amounting to **Rs. 11.14 crores**, the highest for any single month according to temple management.

The state's religious tourism sites are experiencing an unprecedented surge, indicating a revival in pilgrimage travel post-pandemic and an enduring spiritual fervor among devotees.

Prakhar Mishra, Director Tourism has expressed high expectations regarding the impact of recent developments, including the newly constructed **Ram Lalla Temple**, the **Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi**, and the **Mathura-Vrindavan Corridor**. Anticipating that these infrastructural marvels will not only attract tourists from all corners of the country but also significantly boost local markets, particularly those associated with the **One District One Product (ODOP)** initiative.

The official said, that these projects will set new records in terms of tourist footfall, drawing visitors eager to explore the rich cultural and religious heritage of Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, the enhanced connectivity and amenities provided by these developments are expected to create a ripple effect in the local economy, leading to increased demand for locally produced goods and services. This, in turn, is projected to generate a surge in employment opportunities, providing indirect livelihoods to the local populace.

In essence, the official envisions a holistic transformation brought about by these initiatives, wherein tourism not only serves as a means of cultural exchange and economic growth but also as a catalyst for community development and empowerment.