

Religious Tourism spots like Varanasi and Ayodhya may soon outshine Goa and Agra

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Synopsis

India experiences a surge in religious tourism post-COVID. Kashi Vishwanath corridor boosts UP tourism with 10 crore tourists in 2023. The golden triangle of Ayodhya, Prayagraj, Varanasi emerges as popular destinations.



Recent data shows that post COVID religious inclinations of Indians have become stronger resulting in an accelerated momentum towards [religious tourism](#).

According to the [Ministry of Tourism](#) data, last year 8.5 crores of tourists visited Varanasi(Kashi), around 4.5 crore people visited Prayagraj and more than 1.5 crores of people have visited [Ayodhya](#) Ram temple since the consecration ceremony. Many experts feel [Varanasi](#) will outdo [Goa](#), [Agra](#), and Shimla.

"During the COVID period when the temples were closed down, our Prime Minister thought let's make the temples a place where everybody would like to visit. So we came up with the idea of having the [Kashi Vishwanath corridor](#). It has changed the entire tourism scenario of the state and in year 2023 we had more than 10 crore tourists" said Preeti Srivastava, Deputy Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh to ANI.

Government of Uttar Pradesh is promoting the new golden triangle of Prayagraj, Kashi and Ayodhya as a golden triangle of religious tourism.

"Now everybody is benefiting. Even the small washerman, he's also getting business because he's washing the linen of the hotels. The vegetable seller, everybody is benefiting. The rickshaw pullers, the flower sellers and local Prasad shops. Now the new golden triangle is coming up that is Ayodhya, Prayagraj and Varanasi" said Preeti.

The transformative impact of projects like the Kashi Vishwanath corridor, has revitalized Varanasi's tourism sector, leading to a substantial increase in tourist footfall and allied economic activities. The surge in tourism has not only boosted local businesses but also generated substantial revenue for the state.

As per the data by the Ministry of Tourism 1,439 million people participated in religious tourism in India during 2022, it is more than double from 677 million in 2021. In 2022, religious tourism destinations earned Rs1.34 lakh crore in revenue, up from Rs65,070 crore in 2021.

In 2022, Varanasi had 82 million visitors, which is almost four times the number of visitors in 2019. This number accounted for almost 26% of all arrivals in 2022, compared to less than 4 per cent in 2019. Varanasi's tourist footfall has

surpassed Agra, which is home to the Taj Mahal, and has made it the most visited city in Uttar Pradesh.

PM Narendra Modi also mentioned in his address on the 103rd episode of radio program 'Mann Ki Baat' that "Now more than 10 crore tourists are reaching Kashi every year. The number of devotees visiting pilgrimages like Ayodhya, Mathura, Ujjain is also increasing rapidly. Due to this lakhs of poor are getting employment".

According to the industry experts the religious tourism sector is expected to generate a revenue of Rs 59 billion by 2028 and create 140 million temporary and permanent jobs by 2030.

Under central government's Swadesh Darshan Scheme, an outlay of Rs 5294 crore has been allocated for the development of theme-based tourist circuits. A total of 76 projects have been sanctioned under the project which covers popular religious destinations across different states of India. These includes Buddhist circuit, Ramayana circuit and Krishna circuit.

The Ministry of tourism has also started the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) scheme to improve the religious tourism experience by identifying and developing pilgrimage sites across India.

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