

# Religious tourism picks pace in Uttar Pradesh ahead of festival season

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. Varanasi alone saw a record-breaking influx of 95.63 lakhs pilgrims in the month of March.



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With the onset of summer vacations and well before the festivals of Ram Navami and Navratri, cities crucial for 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.

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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.

The official envisions a holistic transformation through these initiatives, where tourism not only facilitates cultural exchange and economic growth but also fosters community development and empowerment.

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 INR 83.34 crores for the fiscal year, marking a 42.43 per cent increase compared to the 2022-23 fiscal year when donations totaled INR 58.51 crores. Prior to the construction of the corridor, donations were approximately INR 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 INR 11.14 crores, the highest for any single month according to temple management. This indicates a revival in pilgrimage travel post-pandemic and an enduring spiritual fervor among devotees.

## Ayodhya administration establishes quarantine wards for foreign visitors ahead of Ram Navami

Chief Medical Superintendent of the Ayodhya district hospital Dr Arun Prakash Shrivastava said, "We have been asked to be ready to deal with Covid-19. So we...



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, Government of UP 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.

"We are expecting a significant surge of tourists prior to the festive season begins. The newly constructed Ram Lalla Temple, the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi, and the Mathura-Vrindavan Corridor 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," he said.

The official further 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," he added.