

With over 8.5cr visitors, Kashi is east UP's top religious destination

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: The surge in tourist footfall in Varanasi made the temple town the top religious and tourist destination of East UP, suggests a data set released by the state govt here on Wednesday.

According to the data, Varanasi saw 8,54,73,633 visitors in 2023, which was way ahead of the other destinations.

The second most visited destination of east UP was Vindhyachal, which had a footfall of 72,97,800, followed by Ashtabhuja (42,35,770), Sitamarhi (25,41,080), and Sonbhadra (22,26,310).

An official spokesperson credited the surge in to-

PHENOMENAL FOOTFALL



Tourists visiting Varanasi and nearby destinations (2023)

Varanasi	8,54,73,633
Vindhyachal	72,97,800
Ashtabhuja	52,35,770
Sitamarhi	25,41,080
Sonbhadra	22,26,310

urist footfall to a number of steps taken by the state govt in the past few years.

► **Connectivity, P7**

'Tourists explore more sites in less time'

►Continued from P 1

“The govt has successfully transformed Kashi's image on global stage, creating a ripple effect that has benefitted Varanasi and its neighbouring districts. Tourists visiting Varanasi are exploring the spiritual, religious, and natural attractions of nearby regions, drawn by the area's newfound appeal,” an official spokesperson said.

They added that in 2023, Varanasi emerged as the top religious and tourist destination in Purvanchal, with Vindhyachal in Mirzapur and the Ashtabhuj Temple, also in Mirzapur, securing the second and third spots, respectively.

Sitamarhi in Sant Ravidas Nagar (Bhadohi) ranked fourth, while Sonbhadra, known for its natural beauty, claimed the fifth position.

Stating that the BJP's double-engine govt has spearheaded numerous tourism development projects in these areas, officials also said that steps have been taken to enhance connectivity between Varanasi and its surrounding districts. These efforts have yielded positive results, allowing tourists to explore more destinations in less time. The development work has significantly boosted tourist interest in the region, making it a thriving hub for spiritual and cultural tourism. Citing deputy di-

rector UP Tourism, RK Rawat, the spokesperson said: “The development work in Varanasi, along with improvements in basic infrastructure, better connectivity, accessibility, and enhanced security, has led to a significant increase in tourist numbers. The enhanced infrastructure in Varanasi and development of tourism and religious sites in neighbouring districts, has sparked greater interest among tourists. Travel within a 100 to 200-km radius of Varanasi is much easier, allowing visitors to explore the religious sites, waterfalls, and natural beauty of Sant Ravidas Nagar (Bhadohi), Mirzapur, and Sonbhadra.”