

Uttar Pradesh leads country in domestic tourism

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As India strides toward becoming a global economic powerhouse, tourism is rapidly emerging as a key pillar of growth—especially in Uttar Pradesh.

While tourism contributes around 10% to the GDP in developed nations, its share in India remains at just 2–3%. However, with the concerted focus of the double-engine government—led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath—this scenario is poised for a transformative shift. According to the Ministry of Tourism, India welcomed 1.88 crore foreign tourists in 2023, while domestic travel soared to a staggering 250 crore visits. Events like the Kumbh Mela demonstrated the massive potential of reli-



gious and cultural tourism, particularly in North India. Among the biggest beneficiaries is Uttar Pradesh, home to revered spiritual centers linked to Lord Ram, Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva, Gautam Buddha, and Guru Gorakhnath.

Uttar Pradesh has already cemented its position as the top destination for domestic tourists in recent years. The trend is expected to accelerate

with increasing government investment in infrastructure, connectivity, and heritage preservation across religious and historical sites.

A 2024 report by the Association of India predicts that, over the next five to seven years, the hospitality sector will account for nearly 10% of all new jobs created in India. Consequently, the sector's GDP contribution is projected to rise to around 8%. In just

two years, recruitment in this domain has more than doubled—largely driven by the growth in religious tourism.

Reports by the Chambers of Commerce in Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi highlight that over 60% of all travel in India is to religious places. The global religious tourism market is expected to cross \$2 billion by 2032. Since India is a deeply religious country and Uttar Pradesh has the highest

number of religious sites, India—especially Uttar Pradesh—is likely to benefit the most from this growing sector. Officials here on Saturday said UP is already seeing the positive impact of growing religious tourism. Over 66 crore people from across India and the world visited the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj. In Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's parliamentary constituency, footfall at the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor has seen a massive rise—from just 50 lakh annual visitors before the corridor was built to 6 crore now.

Ayodhya has witnessed a phenomenal surge in tourism and pilgrim footfall. While only 2.83 lakh people visited the city in 2016, the number skyrocketed to 13.44 crore by September 2024. The post-Mahakumbh influx shattered previous records.