

UP to award best tourism village, champs behind home, farm stays

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Lucknow: In a bid to promote community-led and experience-based travel, the UP tourism department announced the State Tourism Awards 2026. To be conferred on National Tourism Day, the effort would be recognising villages, rural homestays and farm stays that are strengthening tourism through culture, sustainability and local participation.

Entries were invited under three categories — best tourism village, best homestay (rural) and best farm stay — with awards to be given in gold, silver and bronze segments. Registrations are open till Jan 20, officials said.

Tourism and culture minister Jaiveer Singh said UP was steadily emerging as a national model for agri and rural tourism, driven by growing interest in authentic village-based experiences. "We already registered over 800 rural homestays with the tourism department. Our effort now is to bring many more villages, families and farm stay operators into the tourism ecosystem," he said.

Singh said regions such as Gorakhpur, Awadh and Braj are witnessing a surge in rural tourism, with visitors arriving not only from across India but also from countries including

Campaign to promote homestays, B&Bs

Lucknow: To expand facilities and boost local employment, UP tourism department will conduct a statewide awareness campaign for homestay and bed and breakfast (B&B) scheme from Jan 14-30. The campaign will focus on major tourist destinations across districts, promoting the scheme while reviewing pending proposals and issuing registration certificates to eligible applicants. The initiative seeks to strengthen the state's tourism infrastructure and create employment opportunities for residents. Under the programme, district teams will educate locals about the benefits of the scheme and facilitate registration for those interested in hosting tourists. The department has allocated Rs 2 lakh per district to fund awareness activities and promotional materials. Launched under the UP Tourism Homestay and B&B Scheme-2025, the initiative allows residents to convert their homes into homestays, offering visitors home-cooked meals, local culture, and personalised hospitality. The scheme provides an affordable alternative to hotels while generating additional income for host families. **TNN**

Sri Lanka, Spain and Germany. "Through these awards, we aim to recognise those who are preserving local culture, generating livelihoods and offering meaningful hospitality," he added.

Principal secretary, tourism, Amrit Abhijat said the nature of tourism was undergoing a shift. "Tourism today is not just about sightseeing, it is about 'soul seeing'. Rural tourism is India's soft power, where travellers connect deeply with culture, simplicity and everyday rural life," he said, adding that the focus was on encouraging longer stays beyond monument-centric visits.

Under the best tourism village category, villages will be evaluated on heritage, natural

and cultural assets, festivals, community participation, sustainability practices, visitor facilities and overall readiness to host tourists. The best rural homestay category will assess authenticity of experience, guest comfort, transparency of operations and actual tourist footfall. The best farm stay category will focus on farm-based experiences integrating agriculture, local produce, nature and professionally managed rural hospitality.

Stakeholders who are not registered with UP tourism are also eligible to apply. Applications can be submitted online through category-wise forms or by scanning QR codes available on the official tourism website.