

TOURISM - SCENARIO IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Tourism sector is experiencing dynamic growth, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world, aided by changes in technology. Countries around the world are choosing tourism as a means of providing growth opportunities and social benefits to its residents. A strong tourism sector translates into skills and job opportunities across the value chain. The tourism sector contributes in earning foreign exchange revenues, creation of jobs and enterprises, relevant infrastructure development within the guidelines for sustainable tourism. It contributes directly to poverty reduction, notably among women and creates jobs across a spectrum of skill sets.

India ranks 42nd in Global Tourism Rankings and receives fewer than 7 million international tourists, whereas the size of domestic tourism market is at an astounding 1147 million in 2013. India has the potential to increase tourism revenues significantly according to the WTTC and grow at an annual rate of 10% compared to the global average of 5%.

Tourism is one of the growing industries in Andhra Pradesh. Its high growth and development rates, considerable amount of employment generation, infrastructure development actively affecting various sectors of economy which positively contributing to the social and economic development of the state. There are various issues to be taken into consideration regarding the sustainability of tourism in the state in the long term.

Andhra Pradesh Tourism has always been the frontrunner in attracting greatest number of tourists, inland and foreign, as it boasts of a naturally, ecologically, culturally and religiously rich and diverse variety of tourist destinations that are treasures of visual treat where one can continuously explore new experiences of delight.

Abounding in natural resources, the state of Andhra Pradesh having the longest eastern coastline and with a trail of Buddha Period glory, houses and holds many heritage sites adorned with pristine splendor, the forts, citadels and architectural masterpieces built by the past Royal and noble Emperors. The magnificent palaces and places, monuments, memorials, tombs and stately structures built by them reflect the art and craftsmanship, architecture and culture that originated on this land.

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There are beautiful dams, valleys, hills, tranquil lake waters, swirling beach waves, meadows, resorts, hill stations, caves, forests, sanctuaries and national parks which a visitor can

enjoy to his heart's content. In AP the coastline, backwaters and rivers do offer enormous potential for tourism. A very significant proportion of a tourist's spend is on shopping and food. Similarly funds can be mobilized to support the unique crafts and textiles of AP. Likewise the development of regional cuisine and more robust supply chain integration would extend the benefits of tourism.

Temples and shrines of pilgrimage are the important destinations of tourist traffic and are a big source of revenue flow. Museums and archaeological treasure houses with different galleries showcase historic and amazing collections of antiques, artifacts, weaponry and a wide range of objects that symbolize the history and culture and marvels of the territory.

The Andhra Cultural impression has been heightened by the architecturally attractive Buddhist stupas, Hindu as well as Jain temples, grand churches, wonderful mosque. The Hindu architectural manifestations as well as Islamic tombs bring in superb cultural architecture. The cities of Machilipatnam, Tirupati, and Vishakhapatnam have evolved over the years and maintained the charm of their old rich heritage. Developing tourist utility facilities and connectivity with nearby major cities will help to attract tourist to these heritage sites.

Andhra Pradesh is home to many pilgrim centers. Among the tourists who visit the state, a major chunk head to Tirupati for darshan of Lord Venkateshwara. Other Hindu pilgrim spots include the Sri Kalahasti temple, an ancient site of religious significance and the Kanaka Durga temple in Vijayawada; the Satyanarayana Swamy temple in Annavaram; and the Mallikarjuna Swamy, the Mahanandi, and Ahobilam temples located within the dense Nallamala forest in Kurnool district. The state has numerous Buddhist centers at Amaravati, Bhattiprolu and Nagarjuna Konda in Guntur district and Ghantasala in Krishna district. The Durgah in Kadapa and the Mary Matha Church in Vijayawada, are the well-known Muslim and Christian pilgrim centers in the state.

The area around Araku Valley is suitable for being promoted as a natural heritage zone for the Eastern Ghats. Walking trails, camping sites, home stay programs with tribal family, volunteerism, and scenic rail journeys could improve access, length of stay and benefits to locals. Similarly the nurseries around Rajahmundry could be integrated to create a Nanda Vana trail. A botanical garden, a resource center for indigenous species of plants could facilitate greater flow of tourists as well as conversion of pilgrim traffic to extend stay. The state has second longest

coastline in India and more than five untapped natural beaches and is home to popular Borra Caves, Amaravati Archaeology, and Undavalli Caves. The state in total has immense natural and historical resources which can captivate both domestic and international visitors.

Annamayya, Tyagaraja, Kuchipudi summarize the rich artistic traditions of Andhra Pradesh. Contributions of Annamacharya and Tyagaraja to the "grammar of sound" made Telugu language the preferred language of composition for Carnatic Music and made Andhra Pradesh the mother of all modern music. Their influence not only on Carnatic but global classical music and the organisation of sound as a medium of emotional resonance has no parallel in human history. Kuchipudi as a refinement of the ancient Tamil art of Bharathanatyam, and in the context of the unique religious and cultural traditions of Andhra Pradesh stands on par with all the great global traditions of Classical Dances.

Andhra Pradesh craftsmen are at the center stage of enriching national heritage. They are adept at creating traditional artefacts with varied religious overtones including Hindu, Muslim and other religious manifestations. One cannot ignore the aesthetic appeal of attractive Kondapalli toys, Bronze carvings, Brassware, Durgi Stone Craft, Lacework Crochet, Lacquer Ware on wood, Kalamkari, Uppada sarees and Mangalgiri sarees created by the craftsman across Andhra Pradesh.

Tourism is also looked upon as a sector to enhance the economic status of poor by: Improving business opportunities for the poor, supporting rural enterprises, expansion of markets and development of complementary tourism enterprises, such as craft initiatives and cultural displays. Andhra Pradesh Tourism strongly believes in the industry potential in boosting the economy, in generating more employment, inter-sectoral development, throwing open myriad investment opportunities, discovering new historic facts and knowledge, contributing to the exchequer as well as in helping national integration, international fraternity and harmony and of course in showering divine blessings.

Rural tourism is given particular thrust to showcase arts, crafts, sculpture, handloom, textiles and other skills in village locations that have core competence to develop as distinct economic and tourist destinations exploiting local special talent and resources. Environmental sustainability having assumed larger importance eco-tourism projects are developed as per

mandate after assessment of ground situation and the interests of various stakeholders on a long term basis compatible with the local characteristics.

Tourism attributed to medical services, health, wellness, study and science centres for education purpose is growing significantly creating new centres of importance and focus of attention. AP Tourism consistently endeavours to embark on new and vibrant initiatives to make this people - centric industry realize its commitment to environment-conducive, eco-social development and bio- balance in diversity even while transforming the alluring spots and centres more and more appealing, of utility to mankind and visual - treat worthy.

However, it is necessary to develop strong, accountable and transparent community organizations to ensure that the collective income is not misused. The non-economic benefits can be increased by

1. Capacity building, training and empowerment;
2. Mitigating the environmental impact of tourism on the poor and
3. Addressing social and cultural impact of tourism

Andhra Pradesh is a dominant player for the domestic tourism traffic, with 5th position in 2014 in India. However the absence of good air connectivity has severely diluted the ability to attract overseas traffic. With Vishakhapatnam being the only airport connected to three international locations with one carrier, the state will be reliant on using gateways from neighboring states. In terms of international tourist arrivals, AP ranks 22nd in the country with close to seventy thousand international visits.

Initiatives

1. Higher education/Mainstream Tourism Education: AP as Tourism education hub) for India
2. Capacity building programs across entire Tourism value chain for each tourism themes
3. Promote skill development of local Communities for their effective community Vocational training and skill development across entire value chain.

Infrastructure Issues

- Ensure tourist areas are highly connected. Explore low cost terminal options for secondary airports
- Integrated planning with Infrastructure department and integrate with Tourist master plans.

- Establish leisure zones to integrate hotel, food, recreation, shopping and entertainment, interpretation, participative environment, dining options, recreation, shopping, entertainment
- Create a framework for quality service mapping for AP and
- Connectivity of Kerala, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu. Punjab, Rajasthan. UK. USA. China, Malaysia, Australia .

While the hygiene factors are a necessary element of the infrastructure, by no means are they sufficient to attract discerning high spending travelers to a destination unless there is a distinctive proposition which differentiates the place from other similar locations elsewhere. Women's safety, poor infrastructure and sanitation are the top concerns of international tourists planning a trip to India.

The state should focus to build a good interpretation facility to engage the visitor, a participative environment to generate additional revenues, and offer a high quality culinary experience, as well as offer shopping for mementos and regional crafts and textiles. Attractions will be put to adaptive use to host cultural events, showcase the music/dance/heritage of the site on an ongoing basis.

Keeping this in mind the state should develop support and additional recreational facilities around key tourist destinations. These facilities will depend on the number of tourist arrival, profile of tourists, nature of destination etc. Some of the key facilities and support infrastructure areas are identified as spiritual theme parks around religious area, water sports tourism, river based tourism resources, sports zones, leisure zones etc.

Tourism sector is one of the important pillars of inclusive economic development globally. The attractiveness of tourism as an economic activity is based on its strong growth, contribution to employment across a spectrum of skill sets, and ability to rejuvenate the economy of fragile and sensitive areas where other interventions would not be possible. Tourism's ability to generate revenues to preserve built & natural heritage, local cultures, crafts and textiles, as well as customs and traditions, fairs and festivals, vernacular architecture has also been well established.

India's tourism received a fillip with the dismantling of barriers, changes in policy, and a creative campaign strategy from the mid-nineties. There has also been a shift from a major focus

on traditional overseas markets to generate foreign exchange, to creating an enabling environment for domestic tourism.

Andhra Pradesh continues to be a dominant player for the domestic pilgrimage traffic in India. In addition there are impacts on population structure, transformation of forms and types of occupations, transformation of values, influence on traditional lifestyle, and modification of consumption patterns, and benefits to tourists. The structure of AP Tourism and its allied organizations would need to be modified and their priorities redefined to bring about a larger private participation, better skill development and capacity building, robust measurement and evaluation criteria, improved co-operation with other departments and central agencies Thus there is need to develop the sustainability of tourism in Andhra Pradesh.

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