

# Rural Tourism in India: Prospects and Challenges

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## **Abstract:**

India has more tourist spots than any other country on the globe, which has made it a hub for travelers from all over the world. Year after year, the country's tourist population continues to grow. This is a result of the growth of infrastructure, communication, and transport facilities. It has a plethora of tourist spots around the globe that provide visitors with thrilling and unspoiled experiences. This is now a feature that draws people in. India's travel sector is expanding quickly. It suffered a great deal during COVID-19, but in the days that followed, it made a considerable comeback. It has become a significant source of foreign exchange and employment generation in India. The travel and tourism industry has seen substantial internal and external trend changes. It might be argued that by posting a large number of job opportunities and encouraging self-employment, it has lowered the rates of unemployment and poverty in India. India is a large country with a large population, rich cultural heritage, language and speech patterns, and natural surroundings. The central government, in particular, is showing a great deal of interest in the expansion and development of tourism, which has been credited with the sector's explosive rise. This article evaluates the potential and challenges associated with rural tourism in India, while also exploring the specific requirements for rural tourism within the Indian framework.

**Keywords:** Tourism industry, Rural, Indian tourism, Prospects, Challenges

## **I. Introduction**

India, a country renowned for its old civilizations, heritage, culture, and disguise, is one of unity among diversity. In addition to the land, water, air, forest reefs, coastal areas, mineral wealth, animal wealth, and numerous palaces, caves, and temples with carved stone inscriptions and coins used by the many kings and imperialists who ruled here centuries ago, their reality and uniqueness are still remarkable. Additionally, both Indian and international historians are covering fascinating research and findings concerning them, which is sufficient evidence that India is a wealthy country among the developing nations. Being a multifaceted business, tourism significantly boosts the country's overall gross domestic product. Tourism ranks as the second-largest revenue-generating sector, following the oil industry. The tourism sector in India has significantly profited from the interplay of various factors. India presents a distinctive opportunity in the realm of tourism, particularly in rural tourism. There exists a substantial market for rural tourism in India, especially among international visitors; however, this potential remains largely untapped due to the lack of governmental initiatives in this area<sup>1</sup>.

Globally, the tourism sector and market have experienced tremendous growth. India offers beautiful and appealing locations that can meet the needs of many types of visitors in order to improve their experiences. It is equally vital to assess the goals and objectives of each visitor for both the Department of Tourism and the Government of India. In this sense, it is our responsibility to create an environment that is favorable to growth by offering necessary services. A visitor may come for any of the following reasons: entertainment, study and research, and making the most of their free time.

## **II. Objectives**

Objectives of the current article are as follows:

1. Comprehending the principles of rural tourism.
2. Evaluating the significance and demand for rural tourism in India.
3. Analyzing the current problems faced by the rural tourism sector in India.
4. Shedding light on the current facts of rural tourism.

## **III. Methodology**

This article is descriptive in nature. This is mainly based on secondary data. Research articles, chapters, websites, newspapers and magazines, various policies and schemes related to tourism, and information from the websites of the departments have been collected, analyzed, and designed descriptively.

## **IV. Conceptual understanding**

India's villages are enriched by the environment and regional circumstances. We are drawn in by the village's natural beauty. For instance, rivers, forests, hills, etc. In addition to this scenic setting, rural Indians are widely known for their district hospitality. They have a strong enthusiasm for greeting and entertaining guests. A subset of eco tourism known as "rural tourism" draws travelers who are constantly eager to explore and take in the distinctive atmosphere. This is a common place of action that happens in rural regions. The villages have their own customs, heritage, art, and way of life. Activities that are popular in rural tourism include hiking, biking, fishing, camping, and visiting historical sites<sup>2</sup>.

It is a means to savor the depth of the traveler's singular experience. Villages, particularly in India, are known for their own traditions, customs, arts, and crafts, as well as the agricultural and handicraft industries and beautiful surroundings. Tourism is a socio-economic activity with the competence of creating large-scale employment without compromising the environment and ecology of a destination<sup>5</sup>. To obtain a greater understanding of this culture and the way of life of the people, tourists visit communities and participate in a variety of activities. It encourages innovative traditional jobs and activities in rural areas. It infuses the rural economy with a contemporary flare. Its purpose is to provide access to a range of new business and job opportunities. It will not only bring back old occupations but also create new ones, improving rural resident's quality of life.

## **V. Benefits of rural tourism**

There are numerous advantages for the nation, the rural community, and the individual. Because it is centered on the rural village, it will contribute to the overall growth of the rural area by offering a multitude of facilities and advantages to its residents. It keeps rural residents from migrating to the city in pursuit of work by generating numerous job possibilities in tourism-related industries. Rural tourism can generate employment for them and diversify the rural economy and regional employment<sup>4</sup>. It is also

referred to as vacation tourism; it provides travelers with fantastic vacation deals. Rural tourism offers enriching and personalized vacation experiences to city dwellers by guaranteeing a complete escape from the repetitive nature of urban life, including its traffic, noise, and pollution<sup>4</sup>.

According to Kuldeep Singh and Goldi Puri et al.<sup>6</sup> the benefits of rural tourism are as follows:

1. Offers a means of generating new, alternative, or additional income and job opportunities in rural regions.
2. Rural tourism stimulates the enhancement of infrastructure in these areas.
3. Contributes to the mitigation of gender disparities and other social inequalities.
4. Fosters a sense of community collaboration.
5. Revitalizes local cultural practices.
6. Preserved local traditions for future generations
7. Unpolluted soil, water and air provide for an amazing experience

## VI. Scope

Tourism is a popular industry that is facing challenges along with many expectations. Several sectors are having significant impacts on the tourism sector. It is one of the most promising areas. Rural tourism has become an effective means for fostering economic growth and development in any nation. Several organizations and academicians have acknowledged the tourism sector. Rural tourism provides superior entertainment to consumers. Apart from this, the creation of jobs will reduce the rate of unemployment and foster a new entrepreneurial spirit. It is helpful to develop new ideas among people according to the local context of the business.

The potential for rural tourism is enormous, particularly in India. Seventy percent of people in India reside in villages. The communities are populated by people of many languages, races, and cultural backgrounds and they are encircled by a natural setting. Indian ancestry and culture are well-known worldwide. It is particularly prevalent in the villages. Travelers are weary of the daily grind, demands of their jobs, cramped spaces, and agitation. They get a one-of-a-kind and unforgettable experience when they combine mind-blowing entertainment within the middle of nature. As a result, many travelers place a high value on visiting villages. In India, the potential for rural tourism is growing. These visitors adore the customs, cuisine, attire, traditions, and culture of the village. They get a one-of-a-kind and unforgettable experience when they combine mind-blowing entertainment with strolling in the middle of nature. As a result, many travelers place a high value on visiting villages. In India, the potential for rural tourism is growing. These visitors adore the village's customs, cuisine, attire, and legacy. From this vantage point, travelers consider rural tourism to be beneficial, making it one of their favored options or improvements. In order for structured learning to be feasible. Most people create this kind of vacation itinerary during their holidays and work breaks. In response to requests from other family members, it is a wonderful chance to take in the quaint local attractions and the unspoiled surroundings. The unique experience that tourists get prompts them to meet repeatedly.

## VII. Prospects and Challenges

India is renowned for its varied communities, races, and heritage, as well as its own topography and natural attractions. It also has its own distinct culture and heritage. Naturally, it has now developed into a popular travel destination, drawing visitors from both local and international travel. As a result, travelers flock to Indian villages in order to make better use of their leisure time. Rural tourism involves offering tourists

satisfying services that suit their preferences. For instance, farming, religious and cultural practices, adventure, sports, etc. The goal of rural tourism is to give guests vibrant experiences. Building a special link or connection between people and nature can be achieved through rural tourism. India is quickly rising to the top of the global tourism destination list for a number of reasons. India aspires to offer a wide range of services to various global clients. For instance, tourism has made a significant economic contribution to India. Since many people live in rural areas, a lot of activities related to rural tourism are concentrated in these locations. It has brought about structural, social, and economic development in rural areas. Tourists are drawn to the villages because of their rich social and cultural variety. The goal of rural tourism is to provide rural residents with new economic and social opportunities, in addition to holistic development.

One effective strategy for addressing the issue of poverty is through the promotion of rural tourism. It will support the local community's economic development in addition to giving its residents a new way to earn a living. By using the most efficient roots and strategies, rural tourism aids the local population's efforts to overcome issues of poverty and unemployment. In order to thrive without harming the environment, rural tourism should implement specific plans that promote good ties or interactions with the local populace. Because the ecosystem loses its allure once it is damaged. India's rural areas are growing and preserving their social, economic, religious, cultural, and natural resources, thanks in part to rural tourism. To educate rural residents about the value of their surroundings and nearby resources. One kind of tourism that significantly improves rural communities is known as "rural tourism." By creating a variety of revenue streams for the local population, it contributes to the eradication of poverty, unemployment, economic and regional inequality. Sustainable development, rural development, and environmental development are all aided by rural tourism. Through the management of local challenges, rural tourism fosters the growth of the rural community. By eliminating regional inequalities, it promotes regional growth.

It never gave high priority to the rural tourism sector, even though it had great potential for exceptional growth. It is facing a lot of challenges.

According to Shiladitya Verma and Dr. Sanjay Jain<sup>1</sup>, the challenges below are discussed.

**Lack of trained manpower:** It is clear that there is a shortage of qualified labor in the tourism industry. The general career force will not be able to properly handle the problems in the sector of rural tourism; only professionals with education and training in the tourist industry will be able to handle them professionally and delicately. For Example, BBA in tourism management, Bachelor of Tourism Administration (BTA), advanced diploma in tourism and travel management, MBA in tourism and hospitality management, etc.

**Insufficient financial support:** Any company needs a financial year to function well, but the rural tourism sector needs a significant amount of both capital and financial support to function well. The concerned tourism departments, as well as the ministry, are not promptly or sufficiently providing the necessary financial assistance. Due to this, projects in this industry are delayed.

**Lack of local involvement:** Due to the fact that rural tourism is centered in these locations, community members must fully participate and cooperate. A large portion of the population is uneducated, unaware of the many advantages of rural tourism, and working in traditional, low-paying jobs. The active participation of the local population will enable the development of rural tourism.

**Underdeveloped people:** Rural community residents place little value on education, which prevents them from learning much. In addition, they lack political, social, and economic advancement and make their

living through traditional occupations such as carpentry, pottery, weaving, converting, etc. Rural tourism businesses have struggled to create and grow because of these circumstances and mentalities.

**Lack of basic education:** As was previously noted, education is not highly valued by residents of rural areas. While some have only received a regular education (learning to read and write), the majority of residents are illiterate, incapable of signing documents, and without even a basic education. Rural tourism now faces difficulties as a result of these circumstances.

**Lack of business planning skills:** The success of rural tourism from the outset depends on sound strategy and planning abilities at every level; therefore, a key issue today is the lack of industrial planning expertise.

**A trained tourist guide:** One of the industries with the most job opportunities is tour tourism; working as a tour guide is a major possibility. It is typically not a career that is appropriate for everyone because it necessitates a high level of communication and local knowledge. This worker gives tourists—especially those from overseas—guidance on local tourist attractions, temples, artwork, and architecture, as well as all the information and services they require. However, there are currently not enough qualified tour guides in this industry.

**Absence of infrastructure:** Infrastructure and banking facilities are essential to any industry. Each of them causes an industry to flourish quickly. In a similar vein, the absence of them is causing rural tourism in India to falter. There is a conspicuous dearth of essential tourist-friendly amenities. It is getting harder for travelers to visit their favorite locations. Furthermore, many find it challenging to remain there due to a lack of essential services.

**Systematic rural tourism management:** Management is the orderly handling of all internal, external, and associated activities and aspects of this industry. This refers to the appropriate handling of rural tourism without endangering the environment, wildlife, or local population.

## VIII. Discussion

A significant and direct factor in the expansion of the national economy is rural tourism. As a result, there is an increase in foreign income and a variety of new job prospects for residents of the affected communities as well as those nearby. Young people and aspiring new business owners who are unemployed will now have the chance to start and run their own businesses. Rural tourism has a significant impact on the residents of local communities. Sustainable development and rural tourism are directly related. Several experts have stated in their research articles that the rural tourism business supports sustainable development. Component of rural tourism is environmental protection. One type of rural tourism is eco-tourism, as was previously discussed. The focus here is on nature-based activities and sustainable practices.

India's rural areas are home to a diverse array of customs, occupations, languages, traditions, rituals, and pastimes. In rural India, agriculture is an inversely recognized profession. One key sector that has recently grown is rural tourism. It used to manifest itself as eco-tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, and agricultural tourism, among other forms. With a wide range of opportunities for extension, rural tourism has become a significant business in its current setting. It has given rural India its own special advantages and contributions. Despite a number of obstacles, rural tourism in India has developed on its own. This has made it possible for rural development, sustainable development, and efficient resource use. As a result, there have been massive inflows of foreign capital as well as investment. Both domestic and foreign tourist's interest in rural tourism activities has contributed to the sector's complementary expansion. The central government and tourism departments must develop and implement

appropriate policies and plans, as well as provide and nurture appropriate financial assistance. A great deal of research must be done in this sector in order for sustainable growth of rural tourism to occur, realizing the inside and outside of rural tourism.

### **IX. Conclusion**

In conclusion, rural tourism in India presents vast potential for economic growth, job creation, and cultural preservation, despite facing several challenges. Promoting sustainable practices and enhancing infrastructure can help leverage this sector to improve the quality of life in rural communities while preserving their unique heritage.

India's tourism sector, particularly rural tourism, holds significant potential for economic growth and job creation, driven by the country's rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes. The government's increasing focus on developing this sector aims to enhance local economies while preserving the unique traditions and environments of rural communities

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