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Himachal Pradesh Tourism Policy, 2019

Himachal Pradesh is a hill state adorned with the majestic Himalayan range, forests, wildlife, rivers and traditional communities. All these assets of the state provide a variety of tourism opportunities.

Status of Tourism:

- **Contribution to State GDP** - Tourism contributes approximately 7% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Himachal Pradesh, indicating its significant role in the state's economy.
- **Employment Contribution** - The tourism sector accounts for around 14.42% of direct and indirect employment in the state, demonstrating its importance in providing jobs and livelihoods to the local population.
- **Tourists Arrival** - As per a Times of India report, *the state welcomed a total of 1.6 crore visitors as of June, comprising 99,78,504 domestic tourists and 28,239 foreign tourists.*

To harness the potential of these opportunities, the state government came up with the Himachal Pradesh State Tourism Policy of 2019.

❖ Vision of the Policy:

- “Positioning Himachal Pradesh as a leading global sustainable tourism destination for inclusive economic growth”.

❖ Objectives of the Policy:

- To *promote Tourism Diversification* through theme-based development.

- To *safeguard the state's tourist destinations* through sustainable interventions.
- To *ensure that sustainable tourism* primarily benefits host communities.
- To *build capacity and develop quality human resources* for the tourism industry.
- To *provide safe, secure and unique “Tourism for all”*.
- To *create an enabling environment for investments* in sustainable tourism.

Tourism Themes to be promoted in Himachal Pradesh under Tourism Policy:

- **Ecotourism** - All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature, as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in the natural areas (UNWTO), having minimized negative impacts, come under eco-tourism.
 - The advantages of promoting ecotourism include benefits to local communities, generation of revenue, support to the local economy and preservation of ecosystem and biodiversity.
- **Agro/Organic tourism** - Agro/Organic tourism involves any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm, orchard or ranch.
 - Agro Tourism is undertaken to experience real rural life, taste authentic local food and get familiar with the various farming tasks.
 - The State has many organic farms, stone fruit orchards, etc. to offer under Agro Tourism.

- **Snow Tourism** - Himachal Pradesh experiences extreme winters. Despite the harsh dip in temperatures, winter and snow tourism in the region is extremely magnetic, attracting tourists in huge numbers.
 - Activities like snow trekking and camping, skiing, gondola rides, heli-skiing or simply playing in the snow are popular during this time.
- **Lake Tourism** - Himachal Pradesh houses several natural and man-made lakes like *Prashar Lake, Chandra Tal, Deepak Tal, Mani Mahesh Lake, Maharana Pratap Sagar, and Gobind Sagar Lake* which offer numerous opportunities.
 - The state is also looking forward to providing access to man-made reservoirs for conducting water sports adventure activities.
- **Adventure tourism** - It is a type of niche tourism, involving exploration or travel with a certain degree of risk (real or perceived), or physical danger which may require special skills and physical exertion.
- **Pilgrimage Tourism** – Pilgrimage tourism can be described as travel undertaken to visit a place, building or shrine that is sacred. This travel can take place either for observing or participating in religious aspects in accordance with an individual's trust and faith.
 - *E.g., Bijli Mahadev, Hidimba Temple, Trilokinath, Kullu Dashehra, Mandi's Shivartri fair etc.*
- **Health and Wellness tourism** - Wellness tourism is travel associated with the pursuit of managing or enhancing one's personal well-being through physical, psychological, or spiritual activities. Wellness tourists are proactive in seeking to improve or maintain health and quality of life, often focusing on prevention.
 - *E.g., Hot springs of Vashisht and Manikaran, various herbal plants, yoga, etc.*
- **Cultural and Heritage Tourism** - Cultural tourism involves travellers exploring the customs, history, art, architecture, and religion that shape local ways of life in different places.
 - The advantages of promoting cultural/eco products are: that it helps uplift backward communities, is less demanding in terms of technological innovations, and finally, acts as a lifeline for dying art forms.
- **Film Tourism** - Film tourism helps promote travel destinations and can lead to new business and local development.
 - The movie industry's creativity and excitement can boost tourism and service industries quickly.
- **MICE Tourism** - The MICE market refers to a specialized niche of group tourism dedicated to planning, booking, and facilitating conferences, seminars, and other events; which is a big money-maker in the travel industry

Impact of Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

❖ Positive Impacts:

- **Livelihood Generation** - Tourism is a significant source of income for Himachal Pradesh. It boosts the local economy by creating jobs, enhancing local businesses, etc.
 - E.g., *the tourism sector provides around 14% employment opportunity to the state's workforce.*
 - **Infrastructure Improvement** - The demand for better facilities for tourists leads to the development of infrastructure like roads, airports, and hotels.
 - E.g., *construction of new helipads, Kiratpur-Manali Highway, etc.*
 - **Cultural Exchange** - Tourism fosters cultural exchange and understanding. Visitors learn about the local culture, traditions, and history, while locals gain exposure to diverse perspectives and ideas.
 - E.g., *in the years between 2001 and 2021, Himachal Pradesh has lost 4.82 kilohectares of its forest and tree cover. More than 80,000 trees have been cut in order to build highways, hotels and power plants.*
 - **Revenue Generation** – Tourism contributes to a significant level of revenue generation for the state government.
 - E.g., *the tourism economy in Himachal amounts to ₹11,000 crore and contributes to 7.3% of the state's gross domestic product (GDP).*
 - **Conservation Efforts** - Tourism can be a motivation for the conservation of natural environments and cultural heritage, as these are primary attractions for tourists.
 - E.g., *promotion of Eco-tourist villages, support for natural farming, etc.*
 - **Development of Isolated Regions** – Promotion of tourism facilitates the development of the other neglected regions or sites of the state.
 - E.g., *Nayain Rahein Nai Manjile Scheme.*
- ❖ **Negative Impacts:**
- **Environmental Degradation** - Tourism, especially in ecologically sensitive areas, can lead to environmental issues like pollution, deforestation, and wildlife disturbance. The Himalayan region is particularly vulnerable to these impacts.
 - E.g., *in the years between 2001 and 2021, Himachal Pradesh has lost 4.82 kilohectares of its forest and tree cover. More than 80,000 trees have been cut in order to build highways, hotels and power plants.*
 - **Overcrowding and Resource Strain** - Popular tourist destinations in Himachal Pradesh often face issues like overcrowding, which can strain local resources like water and energy, and impact the quality of life for residents.
 - E.g., *Himdhara reported that over 70% of springs in Himachal Pradesh, crucial for local water supply, have dried up or become seasonal, causing acute water shortages in villages.*

- **Cultural Dilution** - The influx of tourists can sometimes lead to diluting local cultures and traditions.

➤ The commercialisation of cultural practices to cater to tourist tastes is a concern.

- **Economic Dependency** - Over-reliance on tourism can make the local economy vulnerable to fluctuations in the industry, which can be influenced by various factors like disasters, pandemics, etc.

➤ E.g., *the tourism sector in Himachal Pradesh has suffered losses of approximately Rs 2,000 crore due to heavy rains and low footfall in July and August.*

- **Enhance Vulnerability to Disasters** – To cater for the need for mass tourism and to enhance revenue from tourism, mindless and unscientific construction in the state made the state more prone to natural disasters.

➤ E.g., *an estimated 950 roads, including the Chandigarh-Manali National Highway, had been blocked by landslides, disrupted state transport buses on approximately 2,100 routes and leaving locals stranded.*

- **Inequality** - The benefits of tourism are not always evenly distributed, leading to inequality. Some areas or communities may benefit more than others, creating disparities.

➤ E.g., *the development of traditional sites like Shimla, Dharamshala, Kullu-Manali, etc.*

To overcome the challenges of mass tourism, the consequences of mindless construction, and to ensure sustainable tourism in the state, the H.P. govt has taken many initiatives.

These initiatives are:

- **Eco-Tourism Initiatives** - Himachal Pradesh has been actively promoting eco-tourism by developing eco-friendly tourist destinations. This includes creating nature trails, promoting bird watching, and encouraging tourists to appreciate and conserve the natural beauty of the region.

➤ E.g., to fully unlock the potential of eco-tourism, the H.P. govt developed a master plan. Under the plan, *eco-tourism will be promoted in 93 sites in various areas of the state.*

- **Diversification of Tourism** – Under the H.P. Tourism Policy, govt has come up with a diverse form of tourism to maintain the ecological balance along with sustainable income and development of the state.

➤ E.g., *Agro-Tourism, Film Tourism, Pilgrim Tourism, Lake Tourism, etc.*

- **Establishment of new tourist sites** – Under the “*Nai Raahein, Nai Manzile Scheme*”, the state government is establishing new tourist sites to lower the burden on traditional sites and provide income opportunities to the local people, along with environment-friendly tourism.

- **Community-Based Tourism** - Himachal Pradesh has encouraged community-based

tourism initiatives, which involve local communities in tourism activities. This not only provides employment opportunities to locals but also helps in preserving traditional culture and heritage.

- E.g., *Naggat community tourism is a successful example of community tourism promoted by an NGO named Anand, to ensure sustainable tourism in the area.*
- **Biodiversity Conservation** - Conservation of biodiversity is a priority, and various protected areas and wildlife sanctuaries have been established. These areas are actively conserved to protect the unique flora and fauna of Himachal Pradesh.
 - E.g., *Daranghati WLS (Shimla), Khirhanga NP (Kullu), Kalatop WLS (Chamba), etc.*
- **Promotion of Renewable Energy** - Himachal Pradesh has been working to promote the use of renewable energy sources, like solar power and hydroelectric power, to reduce the carbon footprint associated with tourism infrastructure.
 - E.g., *H.P. Solar Power Policy 2016.*
- **Heritage Conservation** - Efforts have been made to conserve and promote the rich cultural and architectural heritage of the state. Historical sites and heritage buildings are being preserved and showcased to tourists.
 - E.g., *The Government of Himachal Pradesh (GoHP) has taken several measures to appreciate and preserve Shimla's heritage:*
 - ✓ Heritage conservation responsibilities are shared between the TCPO and Shimla Municipal Corporation.
 - ✓ A 50m area around the Mall Road has been designated as a Heritage Zone under the Town and Country Planning Act 1977.
 - ✓ An inventory of 97 colonial-era buildings and cemeteries both inside and outside the Heritage Zone has been prepared for preservation efforts.
- **Tourism Education and Training** - Training programs for tourism professionals and guides have been initiated to educate them about responsible and sustainable tourism practices.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns** - The government has launched awareness campaigns to educate both tourists and locals about the importance of sustainable tourism and environmental conservation.
 - E.g., *the "Horn Not Ok" campaign.*
- **Collaboration with NGOs and Environmental Organizations** - The government collaborates with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and environmental groups to implement sustainable tourism practices and conservation efforts effectively.

- E.g., *The Healing Himalayas* is an organisation that conducts ‘clean up treks’ along the most popular trek routes in Himachal Pradesh. Tourists and sometimes local community members join these treks, cleaning up trash as they go along.

In conclusion, the journey of Himachal Pradesh towards sustainable tourism serves as a model for other regions facing similar challenges. It underscores the importance of responsible tourism practices that respect and preserve the natural environment while contributing to the economic and social development of the local community.

Environmental Concerns of Tourism Industry

Tourism's impact on the environment includes both negative and positive aspects.

❖ **Negative Impacts:**

- **Land Use Alteration** - The construction of houses, hotels, and restaurants to accommodate tourists leads to significant changes in land use.
 - E.g., the Shimla town, which was *built for a population of just 25,000 in the early 20th century, today houses close to 3,00,000 people.*
- **Deforestation and Agricultural Land Replacement** - Forests are cleared, and agricultural lands are often replaced with buildings, roads, and waste disposal areas.

- E.g., from 2001 to 2022, *Himachal Pradesh lost 5.02 kha of tree cover and 2.48 MT of CO₂ emissions.*

- **Soil Erosion in Mountainous Regions** - The construction of roads on slopes causes soil erosion, *leading to ecological imbalances and loss of biodiversity.*

- E.g., Owing to over-extraction, *Paris polyphylla (locally known as “Haimavati”) has been listed as endangered* in HP and other Himalayan regions.

- **Water Run-off and Erosion** - Reduced water seepage due to development increases run-off, causing more erosion and potentially leading to floods and infertile lands.

- E.g., *Shimla consumes 42 MLD (million litres a day) of water but only 15% of it reaches the tank.*

- **Waste Management Challenges** - Managing solid waste and sewage treatment in tourist areas is often difficult.

- E.g., *in the state, 91.95 MLD of sewage is produced, exceeding the treatment capacity of 114 MLD by 22.15 MLD across 32 urban areas.*

❖ **Positive Impacts:**

- **Environmental Awareness** - The influx of tourists and the income they generate leads to increased environmental consciousness.

- **Promotion of Sustainable Tourism** - Tourists, especially from abroad, often bring ideas that help minimize environmental stress and promote sustainable practices.

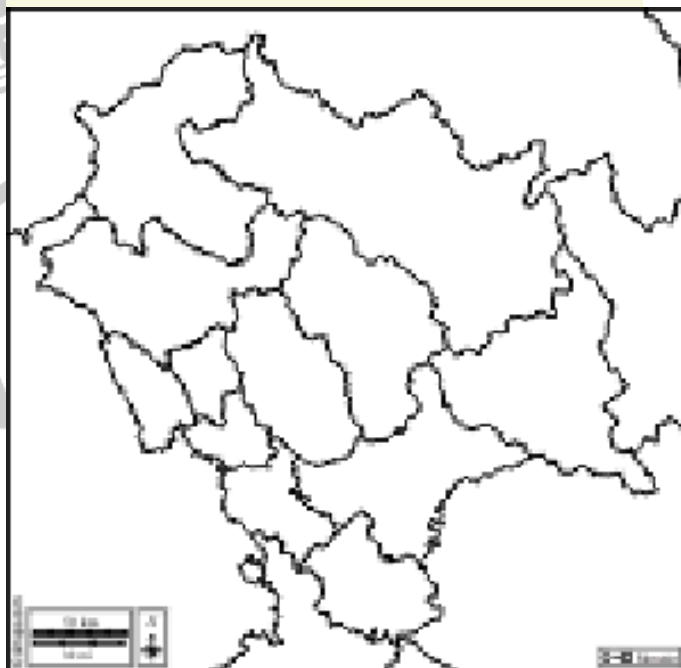
➤ E.g., *Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) assisted “Project for Improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystems Management and Livelihoods”.*

- **Adoption of Protective Measures** - Destinations tend to adopt more environmental protective measures.

➤ E.g., *H.P. Solar Power Policy 2016, the “Horn Not Ok” campaign, etc.*

- **Research and Development** - Governments, like that of Himachal Pradesh, initiate research projects to study tourism's side effects on the environment.

In conclusion, while tourism presents significant environmental challenges, it also drives innovation and awareness towards more sustainable and environmentally conscious practices. The key lies in finding a balance that allows for the economic benefits of tourism while minimizing its ecological impact.



Eco-Tourism

All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in the natural areas (UNWTO), having minimized negative impacts come under eco-tourism.

- It is marketed as "responsible" travel to natural areas, conserving the environment, and improving the well-being of the local people.

Himachal Pradesh is graced with a variety of mountains, lakes, rivers, glaciers, forests, etc. which attract a large number of tourists annually. To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of the state along with tourism, eco-tourism can play a significant role.

How eco-tourism promotes sustainable development:

- **Promote ecological conservation and management** – Ecological tourism promotes responsible tourism and residents of the area act as conservators and managers of natural resources which leads to minimal damage to nature.
- **Livelihood generation & economic prosperity of local people** – It provides an additional income source to the local people through homestays, tent houses, restaurants, organic-agro products, handlooms products, etc.
 - E.g. *mud houses, igloo houses, and huts are some new eco-tourism-based initiatives which are started by the youth of H.P.*
- **Inclusive tourism** - Eco-tourism promotes support for inclusive tourism by integrating the

disadvantaged group so that they can participate and take benefits of tourism activities.

- **Minimal Impact on the Environment** – Eco-tourism is generally rural-based tourism with local development objectives. It requires limited infrastructure development, hence ensuring minimal impact on the environment.
 - Further traditional knowledge will be used to assist in the conservation of the ecology of the areas.
- **Culture and value exchange** – Because eco-tourism is generally rural-based tourism, visiting core areas of Himachal Pradesh by people of various states, allows the exchange of ideas, culture, and values.
 - This creates a sense of respect and harmony and it further advertises sensible tourism in the state.
- **Development of isolated regions** – The creation of new tourist sites in far-flung areas of the state leads to the developmental activities in that region.
 - E.g. *construction of highways, tunnels, ropeways, electricity connections, water supply etc.*
 - With the *creation of new sites will also ease the burden on conventional sites of tourism.* E.g. Shimla, Kullu-Manali etc.
- **Generate revenue for state govt** – It will increase revenue sources for govt through toll taxes, income tax, property tax, expenditure tax (GST), etc.
 - Recently, *the H.P. govt drew a master plan for eco-tourism activities in 93 sites.*

- **Assist other tourism** – Eco-tourism will also support cultural and heritage tourism, sectors that are highly compatible with ecotourism.

To nurture the potential of eco-tourism for the overall development of the state, the H.P. govt has started many initiatives:

- **H.P. Tourism Policy, 2019** - Positioning Himachal Pradesh as a leading global sustainable tourism destination for inclusive economic growth, HP govt come up with the Tourism Policy. The objective of the policy is:

- Protection of the state's natural and cultural heritage.
- Improved quality of life and better employment opportunities.
- Enhanced tourist experience.
- Innovation through private sector participation.

- **Nai Raahein Nai Manzil scheme** - Under this scheme, the state govt. of HP will **identify unexplored and untapped tourist destinations**.

- “Nai Raahein Nai Manzilein” scheme will promote tourism in these tourist places located across the countryside, particularly focusing on rural areas.
- The total budgetary allocation of the “Nai Rahen Nai Manzil” Scheme is Rs. 50 crore.

- **Master Plan for Eco-Tourism** – To fully unlock the potential of eco-tourism H.P. govt come up with a master plan. Under the plan, **eco-tourism will be promoted in 93 sites in various areas of the state**.

- Further on 1st June 2023, The Himachal Pradesh government sent a **Rs 500 crore budget to the union govt. for approval** to boost eco-tourism activities in Lahaul-Spiti.

- **Eco-Tourism society** – It was formulated under the Eco-Tourism Policy, 2001. The society is chaired by the Chief Minister of the state.

- The objective of the society is to **decongest and disperse overflowing city tourist destinations and bring the tourists closer to nature** and ensure adequate economic return to the State and livelihood opportunities to the local communities.

- **Model Eco Village Scheme** – Under the scheme, ecologically sustainable villages with minimal ecological footprints will be developed by using environmentally friendly lifestyles.

- The scheme will be implemented in 11 districts of the state (except Lahaul-Spiti). It will **promote the conservation of natural resources and also help to boost eco-tourism in these areas**.

- Until now, 15 villages have been identified under the schemes to develop as model eco-villages.

In conclusion, eco-tourism in Himachal Pradesh holds immense potential for promoting sustainable development and preserving the state's natural and cultural heritage. Through responsible tourism practices, it fosters ecological conservation, provides livelihood opportunities for local communities, encourages inclusive tourism, and minimizes environmental impact.



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