

Digital Tourism, Safety and Sectoral Reforms

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With a view to bring in more transparency, accountability and improved service delivery, the Ministry of Tourism introduced an online system of receiving, processing and conveying/ granting approvals for classification of accommodation units and recognition of Tourism Service Providers. Applications can be filed at the portal of National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (NIDHI+), i.e. nidhi.tourism.gov.in. This online process has also been integrated with a payment gateway.

As a part of the Ministry's continuous endeavours to make travel for tourists safe and secure, the Ministry of Tourism has set up a 24x7 Multi-Lingual Tourist Helpline on the toll free number 1800111363 or on a short code 1363, which is now available in 12 Languages including 10 international languages for domestic and foreign tourists to provide support service in terms of information relating to Travel in India and to offer appropriate guidance to tourists in distress, while travelling within India.

Safety and Security of tourists is essentially a State subject. However, the Ministry of Tourism has been continuously taking up the matter with all the State Governments and Union Territory (UT) Administrations for setting up of dedicated Tourist Police to strengthen on-ground safety mechanism for tourists. With the efforts of Ministry of Tourism, States/UT's viz Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim and Uttar Pradesh have deployed tourist police.

State Governments and Union Territories have the provisions for availing the benefits of the 'Safe Tourism Destinations for Women' under Nirbhaya fund for projects specifically designed to improve the safety and security of women tourists.

The Ministry of Tourism launched a Handbook on Industry Status to the Tourism and Hospitality Sector in September, 2024. This has been circulated to the State Governments/UT Administrations for adopting into their industry/tourism policy.

e-Visa scheme is now available to the nationals of 172 countries valid for entry through 32 designated airports, 6 designated seaports and 1 land port. The record International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) in India during 2019 to 2024 are mentioned as under:

Year	ITAs (in Million)
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2019	17.91
2020	6.33
2021	7.00
2022	14.33
2023	18.89
2024	20.57

Source: Bureau of Immigration

The Government introduced a simplified GST structure with significant rate reductions across key sectors of trade and commerce, including the hospitality sector, with effect from 22.09.2025. The implemented Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms are set to transform India's tourism sector, making travel more affordable and accessible for both domestic and international tourists.

The highlights of the GST reforms affecting the tourism and hospitality sector are listed below:

- i. The GST on hotel rooms priced below ₹7,500 per day has been reduced from 12% to 5% (without ITC).
- ii. GST on buses with a seating capacity of over 10 persons has been cut from 28% to 18%.
- iii. GST on art and cultural goods has been lowered from 12% to 5%, providing direct support to artisans and sculptors.
- iv. Consumer durables, Food and related items: Most of the food and related consumables are now having reduced GST at 5 percent or some have nil GST. Similarly, many items used in hospitality sector such as TVs, refrigerators, ACs etc. are having reduced GST which is positively impacting the sector with reduced cost of operations and capital expenditure.

This information was given by Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

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