

PROMOTION OF RURAL TOURISM

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The Ministry of Tourism through its central sector scheme of 'Swadesh Darshan (SD)' complements the efforts of tourism infrastructure development by extending financial assistance to the State Government/UT Administrations in consultation with them. The Ministry of Tourism under this scheme has sanctioned 2 projects under the Rural Circuit theme as per the details given below:-

State/Year of Sanction	Project Name	Amount sanctioned (Rs. In crore)
Bihar / 2017-18	Development of Bhitiharwa- Chandrahia- Turkaulia	44.27
Kerala / 2018-19	Development of Malanad Malabar Cruise Tourism Project	57.35

The Ministry has now revised its Swadesh Darshan scheme as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0) with the objective to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations in the country and has selected 57 destinations for development under the scheme. While delineated area of the selected destinations may also include rural areas, the Ministry in the year 2022-23 has sanctioned 29 projects including 'Rural Tourism Cluster Experience at Gunji' in Uttarakhand for Rs. 32.20 crore. The Ministry of Tourism has also released guidelines for Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD), a sub-scheme of Swadesh Darshan scheme and has identified 42 destinations in the country based on the parameters stipulated in the scheme guidelines for development including the following 5 destinations under Vibrant Village category:

State/ UT	Destination
Arunachal Pradesh	Kibitho
Himachal Pradesh	Rakchham, Chhitkul
Sikkim	Gnathang Village
Uttarakhand	Mana Village
Uttarakhand	Jadung

No proposal to include tourism in the concurrent list has been prepared. However, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has launched National Strategy and Roadmap for the development of Rural Tourism in India on 8th December 2021 and National Strategy for Promotion of Rural Homestays on 5th May 2022. The strategy is based on the key strategic pillars identified for the development of Rural Tourism and Rural Homestay. The key strategic pillars are:

1. Model policies and best practices for rural tourism
2. Digital technologies and platforms for rural tourism
3. Developing clusters for rural tourism

4. Marketing support for rural tourism
5. Capacity building of stakeholders
6. Governance and Institutional Framework

Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel management, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is the Central Nodal agency to support the Ministry of Tourism in coordinating and implementing the plans and schemes for promotion and development of rural tourism and rural homestays in the country.

The rural tourism village portal (www.rural.tourism.gov.in) has been developed to showcase the potential of Rural Tourism in India. The website has information about the rural tourism destinations in India, Rural homestays in India etc.

The Ministry of Tourism launched the Best Tourism Villages Competition to honor a village that best exemplifies a tourism destination with renowned cultural and natural assets, preserves and promotes community-based values, goods, and lifestyles, and has a clear commitment to sustainability in all its aspects - economic, social, and environmental - with the overarching goal of making tourism one of the drivers of positive change, development, and community well-being.

The Ministry of Tourism launched the Best Rural Homestay Competition which will serve as a platform for rural homestays to showcase their unique offerings, allowing tourists to explore novel and captivating lodging options.

The Ministry of Tourism participates in the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Best Tourism Villages Competition. It is an important avenue for India to showcase its initiatives in sustainability, conservation and rural tourism in the global arena. In the 2021 edition, Pochampally in Telangana was recognized as Best Tourism Village. In 2022, Khonoma was selected for the upgrade programme of UNWTO. In 2023, Dhordo village in Kutchh Gujarat was selected as Best Tourism Village and Madla Village, Madhya Pradesh was selected for the upgrade programme.

A Task Force for Development of Rural Tourism has also been constituted under the Chairpersonship of Secretary (Tourism) and comprising of representatives from identified Central Ministries/State Governments/UT Administrations and Industry Stakeholders.

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

BY/SKT

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