

# **India's heritage tourism forecast to reach \$47 billion by 2030**

On the eve of World Heritage Day, India's extraordinary heritage takes centre-stage, reflecting centuries of culture, art and history. From iconic wonders like the Taj Mahal to the quiet grandeur of forgotten temples and ancient forts, each monument narrates a unique story of the nation's past. With a growing global interest in heritage tourism, travellers from around the world continue to explore India's heritage sites and discover its hidden gems, drawn by the depth and diversity of its cultural landscape.

With a growing emphasis on sustainable and immersive experiences, the country's tourism sector celebrates its architectural marvels while promoting cultural conservation. April 18 serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving these landmarks, ensuring that future generations can continue to explore and connect with India's extraordinary history.

And it's not that India's cultural and architectural wealth has gone unnoticed by the global tourism industry. In 2023, the country's heritage tourism market generated a staggering US\$ 30.3147 billion, and projections suggest that this will grow to US\$ 47.4512 billion by 2030, at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.6 per cent. This surge in heritage tourism has been driven by the enduring appeal of India's historical sites as well as a significant revival in travel activity in the post-pandemic era. In 2023, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) sites attracted 25.81 lakh international visitors and 530.90 lakh domestic tourists, underscoring the immense interest in India's past.

The country's recognition as home to 43 UNESCO World Heritage Sites – 35 cultural, seven natural and one mixed property (Khangchendzonga National Park – further reinforces its status as a major destination for cultural and historical tourism. These sites not only attract tourists but also serve as beacons of the country's rich legacy, celebrated across the world.

## **Heritage hospitality**

Heritage hospitality in India is undergoing a vibrant renaissance, with hotels increasingly becoming custodians of culture rather than mere providers of

accommodation. Leading hotel chains are restoring palaces, havelis and colonial buildings, offering guests immersive cultural experiences that blend architectural grandeur with regional cuisine, craft and traditions. These hotels not only preserve heritage structures but also support local communities through employment, artisan partnerships and cultural programming.

The Government's backing, alongside evolving traveller preferences for authentic experiences, is driving this sector towards sustainable and inclusive growth. The Union Budget 2025-26 has made provisions for the development of 50 new tourist destinations, aimed at further enhancing India's appeal as a heritage destination.

### **Government initiatives**

The Government of India has played a crucial role in supporting the growth of heritage tourism. Initiatives like the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes fund the development of infrastructure at spiritual and cultural sites across the country. Over 100 such projects have been sanctioned in various states, while local engagement is encouraged through heritage walks, cultural festivals, and the Dekho Apna Desh campaign. Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism's skill-building schemes ensure that locals are trained in tourism services, helping to sustain the growth of the sector.

### **Sustainable growth**

The hospitality sector's involvement in heritage preservation goes beyond simply providing accommodation. Many hotels are actively participating in the promotion of local culture through heritage walks, folk performances, and masterclasses in local cuisine. Hotels are also focusing on sustainable tourism practices, such as sourcing food locally and collaborating with regional artisans to showcase indigenous craftsmanship in their design.

With the increasing demand for quality accommodation in religious and spiritual destinations, hotel chains are expanding their presence in these areas, offering both comfort and cultural immersion. This alignment between heritage tourism and sustainable hospitality ensures that the growth of the sector benefits local communities, enhances the travel experience, and preserves India's cultural treasures for future generations.

India's heritage tourism industry is not only contributing significantly to the economy but is also fostering growth and employment opportunities. With an expanding hospitality sector and a focus on preserving and promoting heritage, India is poised to become a global leader in heritage tourism. As travellers continue to seek authentic experiences that offer a deeper connection to history and culture, India's rich heritage will remain an enduring source of inspiration and exploration for generations to come.