

## **“Our goal is to 10X our number of inbound tourists – from 9.3 million to 100 million!”**

As the newly appointed Director General of Tourism for India, **Mugdha Sinha** is set to revolutionize the country’s tourism industry. Drawing from her diverse background in culture, administration, and data-driven decision-making, Sinha is determined to position India as the top global destination for a wide range of travellers, with a particular focus on the rapidly growing segment of wedding tourism.

### **Bridging Culture and Tourism**

Sinha’s career transition from the **Ministry of Culture**, where she oversaw divisions related to galleries, museums, and anthropology, has laid a strong foundation for her work in tourism. She believes the relationship between culture and tourism is deeply interconnected. “Culture holds the key assets, the heritage treasures, and tourism has the power to showcase them,” says Sinha. “Culture and tourism are inseparable—tourism relies on culture for its unique offerings, and culture needs tourism to gain visibility.”

In her current role, Sinha is tasked with marketing, product development, and leveraging India’s unique cultural identity to attract international visitors. Her approach spans a variety of tourism segments, including **adventure tourism, heritage tourism, wellness tourism, MICE**, and niche areas like **wedding tourism**. Her goal is to diversify India’s tourism offerings while maintaining sustainable management of the country’s cultural and natural resources.

“We’re focusing on developing homestays, expanding adventure tourism, and promoting heritage tourism,” Sinha explains. “Every tourism product we create must offer an authentic experience for our visitors.”

### **India’s Tourism Vision for 2047**

With the country gearing up for its 100th anniversary of independence in **2047**, Sinha has set an ambitious long-term goal for India’s tourism sector: to increase inbound tourist arrivals from **9.3 million** to **100 million** by 2047. “Our target is

to 10x the number of foreign visitors,” she says, emphasizing the need for exponential growth.

However, Sinha is also keen to ensure that this expansion is achieved sustainably. “We must find the right balance between making India an attractive destination and preventing over-tourism. Sustainability is at the core of our efforts—whether it’s about being eco-friendly, supporting local communities, or preserving our heritage,” she notes.

### **A Data-Driven Approach to Tourism Strategy**

Sinha’s leadership is characterized by a strong reliance on data analytics to inform tourism policy. “I’m passionate about data,” she states. “We are analyzing trends to understand who’s coming to India, where they’re coming from, how long they stay, and what they spend.”

She believes that data is key to refining India’s tourism offerings. “We’re moving beyond traditional marketing to using data-driven insights to track trends. This allows us to make informed decisions and invest in product development,” she adds.

Sinha is also focused on elevating the **Incredible India** campaign into ‘**Inevitable India**’, positioning India as the first-choice destination for travellers heading East.

### **The Growth of Wedding Tourism**

One of the fastest-growing sectors within Indian tourism is **wedding tourism**, which has long been popular among non-resident Indians (NRIs) and international clients seeking India’s rich cultural backdrop for their weddings. From luxurious palaces in **Rajasthan** to tranquil beach resorts in **Goa**, India offers a wealth of wedding destinations that showcase its cultural diversity.

Sinha recognizes the potential of wedding tourism but believes the sector’s growth is still in its infancy. “India is already a wedding destination, but there is so much more we can do,” she says. “A recent high-profile domestic wedding generated **600 crore rupees** and drew international attention, proving the tremendous potential of this sector.”

Despite this success, Sinha sees areas for improvement, particularly in streamlining processes that will make India a more attractive and efficient destination for wedding clients.

### **Streamlining Wedding Tourism**

While India's wedding tourism sector is thriving, Sinha acknowledges the challenges in simplifying the process for clients. "Weddings aren't just ceremonies; they are contracts involving caterers, event managers, photographers, and venues," she explains. "How can we make it easier for clients to access reliable wedding partners and simplify the permission process for large events?"

Sinha also advocates for developing human capital in wedding tourism. "Weddings are becoming multilingual and multicultural, and the professionals working in this sector need to understand the nuances of different cultures. For instance, regional cuisines must be tailored to suit various cultural preferences," she points out.

### **Infrastructure Development for Wedding Tourism**

Sinha envisions developing infrastructure that caters to wedding tourism, not just for high-end clients, but also for India's growing middle class. "Out of India's **1.42 billion** people, **31 million** belong to the middle class," she notes. "We must create destinations that appeal to this segment, not just the elite."

Sinha highlights **Rajasthan's** successful model of wedding tourism, with venues and hotels situated along highways to provide convenient access for guests. She is working with state governments to promote lesser-known but beautiful locations as wedding destinations, such as **Gwalior**, **Nagpur**, and **Vizag**, which she believes have the potential to become wedding hotspots.

### **The Future of Wedding Tourism: Innovation and Monetization**

Looking ahead, Sinha is exploring how technology can play a larger role in wedding tourism. "We are considering smart contracts to streamline wedding transactions," she says. "Many premium clients already monetize their weddings through exclusive media rights. Could we develop systems to help people reduce upfront costs while also monetizing their events?"

She also envisions creating financial products tailored to weddings, such as loans and insurance packages. “Weddings are expensive, and many families take loans to cover the costs. We could partner with financial institutions to create products designed specifically for wedding expenses,” she adds.

### **Sustainability in Wedding Tourism**

As destination weddings continue to grow in popularity, Sinha stresses the need for sustainable practices in the sector. “We must develop wedding tourism responsibly, ensuring that our cultural and natural resources are protected,” she says. “By promoting wedding destinations in tier-two and tier-three cities, we can spread the economic benefits more evenly and reduce the strain on over-touristed areas.”

### **Shaping the Future of Indian Tourism**

Sinha’s holistic vision, combining culture, data, sustainability, and infrastructure development, promises to elevate India’s position on the global tourism map. From eco-tourism and adventure tourism to wedding tourism, her approach prioritizes growth while safeguarding the country’s rich heritage for future generations.

“India has everything to offer, from our heritage to our incredible diversity. My mission is to make sure the world sees how truly invincible India is,” she concludes.