

**LEISURE AND RECREATION TOURISM OFFERING -TOURISM POTENTIAL TO INVESTORS AND TOURISTS IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

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Taking advantage of Andhra Pradesh being a microcosm within itself, offering unmatched tourism potential to investors and tourists, the State government has come up with a theme-based tourism plan. Its objective is to develop the State as one of the most preferred tourist destinations in the country through sustained investments and robust infrastructure to offer a diverse experience to tourists. As part of its tourism strategy, the State will offer themes of Rural Tourism, Agri Tourism/Farm Stays, Heritage, Buddhist, Eco-Tourism, Beach and Water-based Tourism, Adventure and Recreational Tourism, Religious, Cuisine, Spiritual/Wellness and Responsible Tourism. As per the action plan chalked out by the department, equal emphasis will be laid on different themes as each has its own significance. Rural Tourism proposes to popularise arts and crafts of various regions, thereby enhancing the income generation of artisans.

One of the initial steps of the plan will be to integrate local arts, crafts and cuisine with all important tourism activities in the State. The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority (APTA) will set up experience centres at each of these locations that serve as the focal point for creation of experiences around the art and craft. These centres will highlight areas with history of the craft and experiential activity for visitors to try their hand at the crafts. Setting up souvenir shops and development of basic amenities are part of the plan.

Under Agriculture Tourism, the APTA will construct accommodation in farmlands for tourists to experience village life and farming. The farm stays will be listed on digital channels of AP Tourism. It will develop the identified villages on a public private partnership (PPP) mode and organise skill development workshops to train locals in various tourism related activities required to build the ecosystem.

Under Heritage Tourism, the department will explore the possibility of converting the heritage buildings into accommodation units while ensuring preservation and conservation of the monuments. Further, it will conduct heritage walks and tours for students, nature enthusiasts and others.

It will also develop museums, in coordination with the ASI and Archaeology Department by upgradation of infrastructure, application of augmented reality and virtual reality to enhance tourist experience, development of short films to depict historical and cultural significance of the places.

As Andhra Pradesh has a significant Buddhist heritage as it is a cradle of Mahayana Buddhism and has more than 40 significant Buddhist sites, the APTA will promote Buddhist Tourism to popularise the historical significance of Buddhism in the State and develop special Buddhist circuits by linking all the Buddhist sites in close coordination with other States.

Vizag cluster comprising Salihundam, Thotlakonda, Bojjannakonda and Bavikonda and Amaravati cluster consisting of Amaravati Stupa, Undavalli Caves and Nagarjuna Konda are prominent Buddhist tourism

clusters in the State. With AP being blessed with a rich forest cover and having varied flora and fauna, eco-tourism is expected to pay rich dividends. Eco-tourism will be developed by creating experiences which have low impact on environment and have high-involvement of local people.

Equal importance will be given to Beach and Water-based Tourism, Adventure and Recreational Tourism, Religious, Cuisine, Spiritual/Wellness and Responsible Tourism. Temple tourism will also be promoted in a big way.

***Different themes***

Rural Tourism, Agri Tourism/Farm Stays

Heritage, Buddhist Tourism

Eco-Tourism, Beach and Water-based Tourism

Adventure and Recreational Tourism

Religious, Cuisine, Spiritual/Wellness, Responsible Tourism

Skill Development and Capacity Building Skills and service are key factors that will drive superior tourist experience in Andhra Pradesh. To ensure sustainable growth of the tourist sector, presence of a skilled and experienced workforce is essential.

As per NSDC (National Skill Development Corporation), it is estimated that the tourism sector in the State will have an incremental workforce requirement of over 1 Million skilled manpower by 2022. To generate the adequate quantity and quality of manpower for the industry as also to up-skill the existing workforce employed in the State Tourism sector, the capacity of the education & skill development infrastructure in the State must be increased. The endeavour of GoAP is to cultivate a pool of trained world-class manpower for the Tourism Industry.

This vision will be achieved in line with Government of India's initiatives by coordinating with Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC), leading hotel management institutes and universities of the State. The GoAP will undertake initiatives to cater to the demand for skilled manpower in the tourism sector and raise awareness of tourism and importance of good customer service in local communities.

Positioning Andhra Pradesh as a Tourism Education Hub Developing a dedicated Tourism Universities/Hotel management institutes in line with national and international tourism education institutions for providing tourism education and research is necessary to formalize tourism education and skill development in the State. Collaboration with industry stakeholders, tapping into private investments and support of foreign universities and international experts will be key to drive this initiative.

Skill and Capacity Development Programs Activity based training modules shall be developed with the help of experts and institutions. There shall be short modules that deal with common areas like sensitization and basic tourist handling, as well as special modules dealing with history of sites, treks / safari routes, expertise on flora of the region etc. All the stakeholders of tourism, viz., taxi and auto drivers, hotel staff, guides, service providers, tour operators shall be encouraged to undergo training on the common modules and guides shall be required to undergo training on the modules specific to their area of operation. State guide licenses shall be issued to monitor the services provided to the tourists. Issue of training completion certificates by the expert / institution shall be encouraged. Provision of internship opportunities through the skill development programs will also be explored to enable experience building and provide the stakeholders a platform for growth.

Responsible Tourism This Policy aims to promote sustainable and responsible tourism, to position Andhra Pradesh as a topmost destination for sustainable and responsible tourism. Sustainable Tourism is all about minimizing the negative impact of tourism on social, environmental and economic aspects and maximizing the positive impact. Responsible Tourism is about taking responsibility by all Stakeholders for achieving sustainable tourism and to create better places for people to live in and for people to visit. For tourism operators it is about providing more rewarding holiday experiences for guests whilst enabling local communities to enjoy a better quality of life and conserving the natural environment.

Cleanliness and Waste Management Tourism operations produce large quantities of solid waste, some of which is toxic. Responsible waste management is not only about carefully planning the disposal of waste. It is also about reducing and recycling waste that is generated, ensuring that you take responsibility for your waste “from the cradle to the grave”. There are 3 major facets of waste management – waste reduction, waste disposal and recycling. APTA shall collaborate with volunteers, experts, SHGs and NGOs to sensitize the host communities and other stake holders on waste management through cleanliness drives, workshops, promotional activities, etc. Plastic Free Zones The GoAP shall endeavour to declare tourist destinations are plastic free zones and undertake the necessary sensitization initiatives and make the regulatory and institutional changes.

Destination Planning and Management In-line with the guidelines of Government of India, the APTA shall endeavour to create destination development plans for major tourist destinations in the State.

A strategic framework for destination planning will include carrying capacity, access, basic infrastructure and core tourism infrastructure, which needs to be developed as part of public infrastructure. Involvement of host communities in planning and development of destinations shall be given due importance.

Accessible Tourism According to a study commissioned by the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, persons with reduced access to tourism including persons with disabilities and their families, potential people with reduced mobility due to old age, represent a third of the population. In line with the resolution “accessible tourism for all” by UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), APTA shall endeavour to encourage all the stakeholders to adopt accessible tourism practices through use of technology, sensitization workshops and associated infrastructure development in the State.

Safety and Security of Tourists Sensitization campaigns will be implemented for women & children tourists and tourists in general in Andhra Pradesh and such campaigns will be publicized on national and global platforms. In response to the pandemic, special COVID, health and hygiene related sensitisation workshops will be conducted for tourism industry stakeholders with focus on State specific issues as well as guidelines issued by the Government of India.

Promotion and Marketing An Omni-channel marketing strategy shall be followed to increasingly attract national and international tourists to the State.

Strategic Partnerships APTA shall encourage tie-ups between the tour operators of the State and the operators located in key source markets for the State through participation in tourism trade fairs & marts. APTA shall also endeavour to partner with Tourism and other related departments of other states. Furthermore, APTA shall endeavour to establish industry linkages through various modes like conducting webinars, organising roadshows, partnering with industry bodies etc.

Brand Campaigns APTA shall promote iconic tourism destinations of the State by conducting mass media and onground campaigns at key source markets. Such brand campaigns will leverage the unique natural and socio-cultural elements of the State and promote unique offerings of the State.

Digital Marketing APTA shall create and utilize its repository of digital assets such as photos, creatives, short clips, how to videos, 360 tours, etc. to develop customised digital marketing and media campaigns across multiple platforms. APTA shall develop interactive digital content such as Virtual tours, AR (Augmented Reality) & VR (Virtual Reality) application for all the prominent tourist destinations in the State. Further, familiarization trips for influencers will be explored for the promotion of tourism circuits and products of the State.

Interactive Tourist Engagement APTA shall strive to undertake activities that actively engage tourists and capture their perspectives and experiences in the State to bring out a genuine and authentic view. Initiatives such as gamification, interactive tourist forums, democratizing content creation etc. shall be explored.

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