


LAKSHADWEEP TOURISM POLICY - 2016


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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industry and in many regions the single largest source of investment and employment. Tourism has emerged as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development. Tourism promotes international understanding and gives support to local handicrafts and cultural activities. It is an important segment of the Indian economy, especially in terms of its contribution towards foreign exchange earnings, generation of additional income and creation of employment opportunities. Tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner for India. However, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), India's share in world tourism arrivals is only 0.38%, accounting for 0.62% of the world tourist receipts. This indicates that much of the tourist potential is yet to be tapped. With rapid advances in Science & Technology, tourism has acquired the status of an industry in all industrialized countries. The high influx of foreign tourist traffic has accelerated demand for certain economic production and distribution activities.

The creation of niche tourism products like medical tourism, wellness tourism, religious circuits, adventure tourism, cruise tourism and caravan tourism has served to widen the net of this sector. Inbound tourism is booming and the country is going all out to lure more travelers from around the world. Contrary to perception across the world that tourism in India is still confined to traditional methods, the country is opening up with trendy tour packages and affordable air travel deals to woo inbound visitors from every segments.

Tourism in India is witnessing widespread growth on back of increasing inbound tourism by the burgeoning Indian middle class, raising inflow of foreign tourist and successful government campaign for promoting Incredible India. Infrastructure development holds the key to India's sustained growth in tourism sector. Further, the government has allowed 100% foreign investment under the automatic route in the hotel and tourism industry. Significantly, the country has the potential to become a major global tourist destination, with the tourism sector expected to contribute around INR 3414.8 billion (US\$ 77.0 billion) by 2021. India is currently ranked 12th in the Asia Pacific region and 68th overall in the world's attractive destination.

Lakshadweep Islands lying off the west coast of India comprises of 10 inhabited Islands; 17 uninhabited islands/islets; six submerged banks and three coral reefs. The total land availability including the inhabited and uninhabited island is 32 Sq.km only, however it is bestowed with 4000 Sq.km lagoon area; 20,000 Sq.km of territorial waters and 4, 00,000 Sq.km of exclusive economic zone.

The underwater view at Lakshadweep is kaleidoscopic and breathtaking. The pristine beauty, white sandy beaches, crystal clear water, shallow lagoon, rich marine wealth, variety of coral eco system and water sports activities like, scuba diving, snorkeling, wind surfing, water skiing, para sailing, sailing boats, speed boats makes Lakshadweep as one of the most popular holiday destination for tourists both domestic as well as foreign. No wonder, Lakshadweep is fast becoming India's one of its kind "Adventure Sport- Nature Tourism" location. Each island is fringed by snow white coral sands. The crystal clear water and the abundant marine life enhance the beauty of these islands. Against the vast expanse of blue sea, the islands look like

reef made of marine live coral boulders which block the incoming swells of the outer sea. The islands are restricted area and permit from the Administration is required to visit the islands. Lakshadweep was given the National Eco-Tourism Award 1997. However due to various limitations such as limited availability of land, cultural factors, the potential of tourism has not been harnessed fully.

VISION

- To Position tourism as an engine of socio - economic development of Lakshadweep by harnessing its direct and multiplier effects on employment and poverty eradication in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner by active participation of all segments of the society.

OBJECTIVE/GOAL

- To promote Tourism in such a way, which is economically viable, environmentally sustainable, socially acceptable and culturally desirable.
- To promote Tourism with the main objective of creating meaningful employment opportunities to local unemployed people of Lakshadweep.
- To promote Tourism to unlock the entrepreneurial potential of local people and make them a part of Tourism promotion in Lakshadweep.
- To attract investment both public and private in promoting sustainable tourism in Lakshadweep.

MISSION

- To transform Lakshadweep as an unique tourist destination in India
- To position Lakshadweep as a visible global brand in tourism.
- To position Lakshadweep as the best dive destination in the world.

STRATEGY

The strategy to achieve the vision of Lakshadweep Tourism Policy is-

- Creation of world class tourism infrastructure in all the islands of Lakshadweep within the carrying capacity of each island through public investment, private investment as well as through Public Private Partnership to cater to the needs of high end tourists.
- Popularizing "Tourist's Home" based bed and breakfast scheme in Lakshadweep in consultation with all the stakeholders wherever feasible.
- Establishing cheaper, faster and reliable transport network to connect all the islands of Lakshadweep with each other and with mainland.
- Promotion of high value low volume tourism by conducting tour packages through SPORTS/LTDC, private tour operators, travel agents etc.,
- Creation of trained manpower in tourism sector in association with reputed organizations.

- Promotion of visit of foreign cruises and yachts by notifying islands like Agatti and Minicoy as immigration control post and custom port.

PRESENT STATUS

Till 1990, the Department of Tourism was functioning with an ex officio Director and with a skeleton staff. As a part of revamping of the Department, posts of Tourism officers and other essential staff were created and filled. The full fledged Department of Tourism was created in the year 1990. Since then, there have been visible changes happening in the Tourism sector. More accommodation facilities have been created under state sector schemes and the Central Sector Schemes. The efforts in developing tourism in the desired way in Lakshadweep has been recognized by the Govt. of India and the maiden eco- friendly resort award constituted by Govt. of India was bagged by Lakshadweep Tourism.

Development of Tourism in Lakshadweep started in a small way in 1973 when the uninhabited Island of Bangaram was declared open for international tourism. Initially Hotel Corporation of India has set up a resort at Bangaram to cater to a small group of tourists, after obtaining clearance for bringing foreign tourists from Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India. The SPORTS (Society for promotion of Nature Tourism & Water Sports), the nodal agency of the Administration for promoting Tourism in the U.T. of Lakshadweep came into existence in the year 1982. Since 1982-83, the society started undertaking domestic tourism in the inhabited islands of Kadmat, Kavaratti, Kalpeni & Minicoy and set up a small resort in the uninhabited island of Bangaram for catering to international tourists.

Taking into account the challenges for promoting tourism in a larger scale such as fragile ecology, limited carrying capacity, limited transportation facilities, the Lakshadweep Administration had introduced the concept of " ship based tourism " under which certain number of seats are reserved for the tourists in the ships operated by the Administration. The tourists availing the package tours are brought through the ship and during the day-time; they land in the islands and during the night they again board the ship and stay on board. This strategy, while helping to promote tourism also ensured that resources are not over exploited.

Presently SPORTS is operating, both ship based and flight based packages to Kavaratti, Kadmat, Kalpeni, Minicoy, Bangaram and Thinnakara islands. "Lakshadweep Samudram" is the popular package among tourists operated in M.V.Kavaratti covering three islands i.e Kavaratti, Kalpeni and Minicoy. Besides SPORTS is also operating the stay packages at Kavaratti, Kadmat, Minicoy, Bangaram and Thinnakara islands. The tourist arrival data to Lakshadweep is as follows.

| Year | Number of Tourists Arrival |
|---------|----------------------------|
| 1996-97 | 5013 |
| 1997-98 | 4484 |
| 1998-99 | 3648 |
| 1999-00 | 2120 |
| 2000-01 | 3863 |
| 2001-02 | 3798 |

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