

## RURAL TOURISM PERSPECTIVES OF JODHPUR CITY (RAJASTHAN)

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### ABSTRACT

*Rajasthan is rich in culture and heritage which attracts tourists from all over the world. Every year thousands of foreign as well as domestic tourists arrived in Rajasthan and most of these tourists choose Jodhpur city as their tourist destination. Many historic places in Jodhpur are sites of major attraction for tourists arrived in Jodhpur but there are also many rural excursion sites near Jodhpur as well which now-a-days emerging tourism sites are. In this paper efforts will be made to explore the rural tourism perspectives of Jodhpur city.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Rural Tourism, Heritage, Tourists, Economic Development.*

### Introduction

In simple words, the word tourism can be understood as an organized, purposeful desire of man to stroll from one place to another. The International Union of Official Travel Organization (IUOTO) defined tourist as "a tourist is a person traveling for a period of 24 hours or more in a country other than that in which he usually resides". Now-a-days tourism becomes emerging industry in the modern world and today tourism is a key driver for the economic development of many countries. Today, rural tourism is a new idea to strengthen economic and social life of peoples of rural areas and especially in India rural tourism is relatively new. As rural tourism is strictly concerned with rural areas, so it can be very useful in growth of rural society. India is a country of villages and still a large percentage of population is still living in rural areas so there is vast scope of development of rural tourism in India. There is an urgent need on behalf of government, non-government and other institutions to encourage and promote tourism in rural areas. Rural tourism refers to tourism activities in rural areas which involves traditional societies and practices, in small scale.

For development of rural tourism, it is essential to understand the rural environment, economic, socio-culture conditions and demography of that place. Rural tourism generates supplementary income for rural peoples and thus can contribute to the wellbeing of the rural peoples which in turn can reduce migration on one hand from rural areas and accelerate development of the rural areas on the other hand. Thus, the concept of rural tourism comes out with objective to benefit the rural community through income generation, increased employment opportunities, conservation and development of rural arts and crafts, and conservation of the environment and heritage. Rural tourism will bring people close to rural cultures, their faiths, local languages and rural life-styles. Rural tourism not only generates employment for rural people, but it also helps to develop cultural and social values. There is huge potential for rural tourism in Rajasthan yet to be explored and it can play a significant role in rural economic development which in turn can help in poverty alleviation. Increased awareness, growing interest in rural heritage and culture and improved accessibility, and environmental consciousness are some factors which encourage rural tourism in India.

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### **Rural Tourism - Definition**

Time to time many academicians has defined rural tourism in their own way. According to Irshad (2010) "Rural tourism is located in rural areas, contains traditional societies and practices, in small scale". According to MacDonald & Jolliffe (2003) rural tourism refers to a "distinct rural community with its own traditions, heritage, arts, lifestyles, places, and values as preserved between generations". In view of Pedford (1996) "The concept includes rural custom and folklore, local people's traditions, values, beliefs and common heritage". Reichel et al. (2000) defined rural tourism as "Rural tourism is based on features of rurality and sustainability with small scale enterprises in rural areas". According to Lane (2009), pure rural tourism is defined as a tourism type located in rural areas.

### **Characteristics of Rural Tourism**

Rural tourism is though part of tourism, but is has following certain specific characteristics:

- Rural tourism is strictly located in the rural areas only.
- Rural tourism involves only people and their families residing in rural areas.
- Rural tourism involves only small settlements on a small scale rather than large hotels, buildings etc.
- Rural tourism involves rural lifestyle, culture, craft and environment.

### **Benefits of Rural Tourism**

Rural tourism is beneficial from both visitors and hosts point of view.

- **From the Host's Point of View**
  - Rural tourism helps in creating jobs and employment in rural areas.
  - Increased employment opportunities help reducing the migrants from rural areas.
  - Rural tourism is supplementary activity to agriculture, so it can contribute to diversified profile.
  - Rural tourism generates secondary income source which comes from serving, home-made products to the visitors, renting rooms for tourists as well as providing additional services like village safari.
  - Rural tourism in turn encourages infrastructural development in rural areas.
  - Rural tourism changed the lifestyle of rural people, thus bring the urban and rural lifestyles closer to each other.
- **From the Tourists' Point of View**
  - Rural tourism offers holiday in small settlements, so they are comparatively cheap and close to nature.
  - Rural tourism enables the tourists to know the people in their own environment.
  - In rural tourism tourist may take part in various rural activities like harvesting, feeding animals and also in various rural activities like bringing water in sand pots etc.
  - While enjoying rural tourism, tourist may learn new skills, rural traditions, traditional crafts etc.

### **Rural Tourism in Rajasthan**

In last few decades Rajasthan has emerged as one of the most favorite tourist destinations for both domestic and foreign tourists. Rajasthan is well known for its diversity in terms of cultural heritage, rare wild life, natural habitats and historical as well as archaeological wonders. The giant forts, fascinating palaces of historical importance, heritage hotels, colorful fairs and festivals, folk music, local art and handicrafts, etc. has attracted tourist not only from other parts of India but also from all over the world. The western Rajasthan is part of Thar district and the desert environment of this part of the state is also a major attraction for tourist, particularly the foreigners. Few decades ago tourism in Rajasthan was not in developed stage and was largely confined to the selected foreign tourists and domestic pilgrim traffic. In last few decades, due to serious efforts made by State Government agencies, entrepreneurs and individuals tourism has grown to a mass phenomenon putting Rajasthan as tourist destination on the foreign and domestic tourist map. Earlier tourist is Rajasthan was confined to pilgrims and heritage places like forts, palaces etc. but today scope of tourism in Rajasthan has widened and desert tourism and rural tourism are new dimensions of tourism in Rajasthan.

Rajasthan is rich in art and culture and architecture. Before Rajasthan state formed, it was consisting of various states or 'Riyasats' and ruled by mainly Rajput rulers. The Rajput rulers built forts, havelies, and other monuments and beautiful carving was done on stones of these structures. On the other hand, in western Rajasthan the art, folk music, fairs and festivals were soul of social life and today they attract tourists from all over the world.

#### Rural Tourism Perspective in Jodhpur (Rajasthan)

The Jodhpur is one of the main tourist attractions of Rajasthan and offers wide variety of tourist attractions. Many tourists come Rajasthan; choose Jodhpur as their tourist destination. There are many tourist destinations in Jodhpur including forts, Umaid Bhawan Palace, Bal Samand Lake, Jaswant Thada, Mandore Garden etc. but there are also several rural tourist destinations around Jodhpur city as well. These tourist sites were remaining unexplored for long time but with development of tourism these rural sites are explored and now every year many tourists come to the Jodhpur and enjoy rural tourism destinations. The excursion from Jodhpur tourists to visit these areas helps to explore the rural life, so these excursions offer a thoroughly enjoyable experience to the tourists. Domestic and tourist arrival in Jodhpur in last few years is shown in following table.

**Table: Domestic and Tourist Arrival in Jodhpur**

| Year | Domestic tourists | Foreign Tourists |
|------|-------------------|------------------|
| 2007 | 453775            | 123056           |
| 2008 | 493717            | 123942           |
| 2009 | 427532            | 73080            |
| 2010 | 445271            | 108073           |
| 2011 | 404640            | 103034           |
| 2012 | 383357            | 121034           |
| 2013 | 435919            | 119924           |
| 2014 | 520198            | 139640           |
| 2015 | 598967            | 126772           |
| 2016 | 972337            | 138558           |
| 2017 | 894085            | 144363           |

Source: Annual Report, Department of Tourism, Govt. of Rajasthan.

The above table shows that from 2007 to 2015 there is no significant change in domestic tourist arrival in Jodhpur but there is significant increase in domestic tourist arrival in Jodhpur from 598967 in 2015 to 972337 in year 2017. There is not significant change in foreign tourist arrival in Jodhpur from year 2008 to 2017 and number of foreign tourist arrived in Jodhpur is comparatively low than domestic tourist arrival. The major rural tourism destination near jodhpur are as follows:

- Osian:** Osian village is located about 70 km away from Jodhpur. Osian is ancient town that used to be the center of trading during the 8th to 12th centuries. The Sachiya Mata Mandir is of great attraction for Hindus. Every year thousands of visitors came to Osian to visit Sachiya Mata Mandir and Jain Temples. The Sachiya Mata temple is dates to 8th century. While entering the Sachiya Mata temple complex, one can use a series of magnificently sculpted arches. Inside it are beautiful images and sculptures of Hindu deities. There are approximately 15 Ossian Jain temples near Jodhpur. The most fascinating one of the Jain Osian temples in Rajasthan is the Mahavira temple. It is dedicated to the last (24th) Jain Prophet. The main temple was constructed around 775 A.D. Ossian holds a great significance for the Jain community. Every year many both Hindus and Jains pilgrims visit Osian. Camel safari is another tourist attraction in Osian. These safaris allow tourist to travel on golden sand of the Thar desert. Camel safari usually includes meals, stay (in case of overnight tours), and mingling with the locals through conversation, folk music and folk dance, along with the main attraction of riding the famous ship of the desert. While Camel Safari tourist can experience the real life of the arid region and travelers got the opportunity to live the authentic life of a desert dweller.
- Guda Bishnoi Village:** About 22 km away from Jodhpur, Guda Bishnoi village is rural tourism destination. Here tourists enjoy both scenic beauty as well as exotic wildlife. Guda Bishnoi village is inhabited by the mainly Bishnoi community, one of the tribes of Rajasthan. Bishnoi community is committed to the worship the nature and they are devoted to the protection and conservation of the natural environment around them. This village is home of many wild life animals like gazelles, antelopes, Demoiselle cranes, Saru cranes, spotted owls, Blackbucks,

rabbits, blue bulls, and peacocks living in natural habitats and it is interesting to see their natural routines near Guda Lake. While visiting this village one can enjoy the traditions and lifestyles of rural Rajasthan and understand way of original life present in Marwar. Tourists could see common rural occupations like sheep-herding, weaving, and pottery etc. and learn and purchase these finely-crafted products manufactured in these areas. Another attraction in this village is Khejarli, the site of the Khejarli massacre where 363 Bishnois lost their lives trying to save the forest. The Guda Bishnoi Lake, an artificial lake by the village, is a sight to behold, serving as a watering hole for many birds and animals. Tourist staying in this village experiences the real village culture of Rajasthan.

- **Kheechan:** Kheechan, an international recognized rural tourism destination is located 150 km away from Jodhpur city near Phalodi town. Kheechan is a rural tourism destination for birdwatchers near Jodhpur city. Every year a huge number of migratory birds reach this village. About 5 km Away, Kheechan is the destination of temporary habitat of the demoiselle crane, locally known as 'Kurja'. In the months from August to March, one can see this unique species of birds which travel a long way from south-western Europe, Ukraine and Poland for a short halt at the village of Kheechan. Owing to the international recognition for being a temporary habitat of these birds, the village is also known as the demoiselle crane village. Rajasthan Government declared Kheechan as a tourist spot.
- **Khejarla:** Fort of Khejarla was constructed in 1611 AD, built by the Maharaja of Jodhpur in memory of war hero Maharaja Gopal Das in the war against the Mughal Empire. This fort is now converted in to a heritage hotel which presents many recreational activities such as henna art, camel rides, bullock cart rides, cycling, and traditional Rajasthani Folk Dances to tourist. Here a library having five hundred books was built by Thakur Bhairon Singh Khejarla, aimed at promoting as well as preserving the rich history and literature of Marwar. The nearby temple of Goddess Durga brings about a chance to take a walk into the neighbourhood and catch a sunset at the top of the hillock. Several camels, horse and jeep safaris traversing through Rajasthani lands are also available here. Here tourist can experience unique culture of northwestern India fully.
- **Rohet:** Rohet is located on Ahmedabad-Jodhpur National Highway and is today rural excursions site around Jodhpur. Rohetgarh Fort constructed in 16th century, is major site of attraction for tourists. This fort is presently converted into a heritage hotel. The Manvar resort located here offer tourists the best of Rajasthani traditional aura and ambiance. Near Rohet migratory demoiselle cranes can be seen while excursion. Manvar also offers the beauty of havelis made of sandstone.
- **Nimaj:** Nimaj is another rural excursion site near Jodhpur city. Here number of temples of the 9th century, dedicated to Ma Durga, with exceptional art work can be seen. The gallery of the temple has several sculptural arts.
- **Arna Jharna Museum:** About 10 km away from Jodhpur city, Arna-Jharna museum is situated in Moklawas village. This place is unique Desert Museum which has open spaces of the desert, including its flora and fauna. The Arna-Jharna museum is located on an abandoned sandstone mine which is surrounded by harsh and dry terrain. The mine is now transformed into a lake which has become the haunt and nesting ground of birds, notably the peacock. The soil near Arna-Jharna has been nurtured with rich biodiversity of indigenous grasses, cactus, and the resilient trees of the desert Khejri, Ber, Rohira, Kumquat Ker. The museum also famous for its unique collection of brooms collected from different parts of Rajasthan. Presently, about 100 types of brooms are displayed in this museum which throws light on the various broom-making communities of Rajasthan and their relation to the surrounding biodiversity.
- **Sardar Samand Lake Palace:** Among tourists arrived in Jodhpur, the man-made Sardar Samand Lake is a major site of attraction. This lake is located approximately 50 km away from Jodhpur. It is one of the man-made lakes present in the region, where countless migratory birds approaching its banks to enjoy this peaceful location. Atop the hill overlooking the lake is the former summer palace of the royal family, now converted into heritage hotels, giving tourists a true essence of living in a royal era. Near the lake, tourists enjoy watching fascinating bird species like the yellow-legged green pigeon, the Himalayan Griffon and the Dalmatian Pelican. Animals like the blue bull, gazelles, and the blackbuck may also be seen beating the heat at this watering hole.

### Conclusion

Jodhpur, the Sun City is a paradise in terms of the beautiful blue hues, the grand forts and rich culture. It is also the gateway to the Thar Desert which now boasts of having desert safaris, night camps and one of most breathtakingly beautiful sand dunes. Jodhpur attracts tourists via its soothing folk music including the World Sacred Music festival which is held every year bringing lovers of Sufism together. The beautiful attire comprising of bandhani sarees and turban clad men during various festivals also attracts tourists. Rural Tourism, a niche tourism product in Jodhpur now holds good potential to attract up market clients who would like to be escaped from commotion of explicit city life and be in rural environment in quest of mental peace. Rural home stays are premeditated to fascinate foreign tourists especially who are craving to learn more about the varied life styles and crafts of villages. Thus, Rural Tourism in Jodhpur is focusing to attract both domestic as well as foreign tourists. Rural Tourism also contributing in economic development of country by creating local employment opportunities in distant villages and hence it leads to sustainable development by preventing the migration of people from rural areas towards urban. This facilitates local talents service in tourism sector as stake holders. Rural Tourism turns out as a tourism initiative, constantly gaining attention in terms of civic development, poverty mitigation and prevention of cultural heritage. Thus, Rural Tourism in Jodhpur can be expected as a contributor in both rural development as well as tourism both.

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