

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN BUNDI: BALANCING GROWTH AND CONSERVATION

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Dr. Sandeep Yadav\*  
Dr. Ashutosh Birla\*\*

### ABSTRACT

*Tourism in Bundi, Rajasthan, has emerged as a vital economic driver, significantly contributing to employment, income generation, and the overall Gross Domestic Production of the region. The city's natural, historical, social, and cultural attractions have positioned it as a renowned tourist destination. While the State Government has been proactive in supporting tourism through policies and plans, challenges persist in areas such as infrastructural development, professional training, access to capital, and the formulation of effective policies and tax structures. This paper aims to explore the impact of tourism development on the overall environment of Bundi, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts among the local population, service providers, and both the State and Central Governments to unlock the full potential of the tourism and travel industry in the region.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Tourism, Development, Sustainable, Challenges.*

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### Introduction

Tourism involves individuals traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business, or other purposes. It plays a crucial role in the economic development of a region by contributing to employment, income generation, and the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The tourism industry stimulates local businesses, fosters infrastructure development, and promotes the preservation of cultural and natural resources. Additionally, it creates opportunities for entrepreneurship, encourages investment, and enhances the global visibility and economic resilience of a destination.

### Objective

Despite being recognized as a clean and eco-friendly sector, the tourism industry can pose challenges to the economic, social, cultural, and political fabric of the visited region. This paper aims to delve into the evolution of Bundi's tourism industry, exploring its impact on the local environment—both advantageous and detrimental. The primary goal is to analyse the reasons for tourism in Bundi and the challenges in tourism development in Bundi.

### Methodology

The methodology is simple, based on field work and sample surveys of stakeholders involved with this industry. Secondary data was collected from various government offices, internet and publications. GIS based mapping is done to show the circuits in the city.

### Study Area

The city of Bundi is strategically positioned at 25° 27' North latitude and 75° 39' East longitude, nestled in a valley along a narrow gorge of the Aravalli Hills. Located approximately 210 km south of

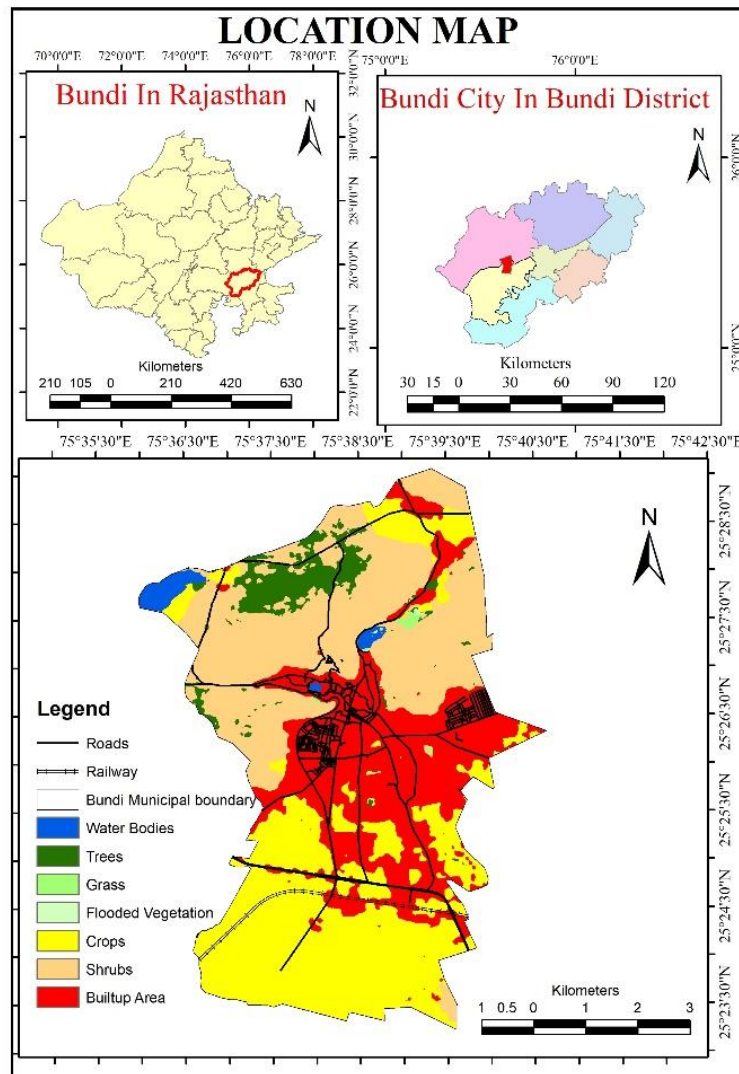
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\* Professor, Government Girls College, Bundi, Rajasthan, India.

\*\* Associate Professor, Government Girls College, Bundi, Rajasthan, India.

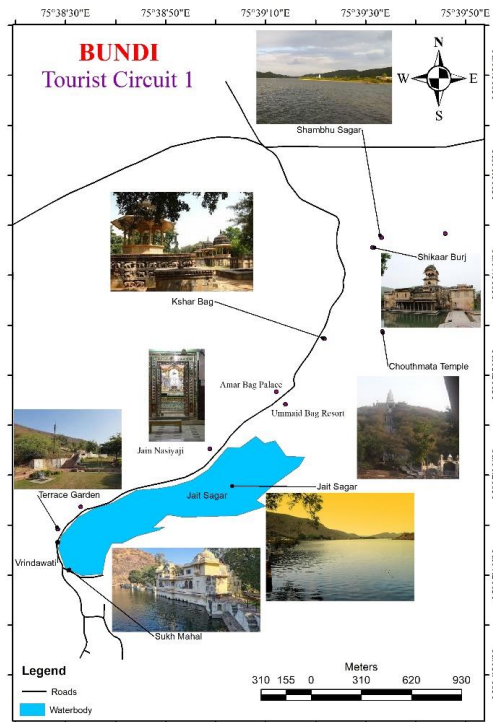
Jaipur and 36 km east of Kota on National Highway No. 52, it serves as a significant geographical point. The climate in Bundi is characterized by moderation, with an average annual temperature of around 20°C. The coldest month is January, recording an average temperature of 24.5°C, while May marks the hottest month with temperatures soaring up to 46°C. The region receives an average annual rainfall of 628 mm, predominantly during the Monsoon season, constituting 90% of the total precipitation.

Agriculture forms the backbone of the region, engaging 67% of the working population in agricultural and allied activities. Notably, in the city of Bundi, 80% of male workers and 76% of female workers are involved in secondary and tertiary activities, while 4% of male and 8% of female workers derive their livelihood from household industries.



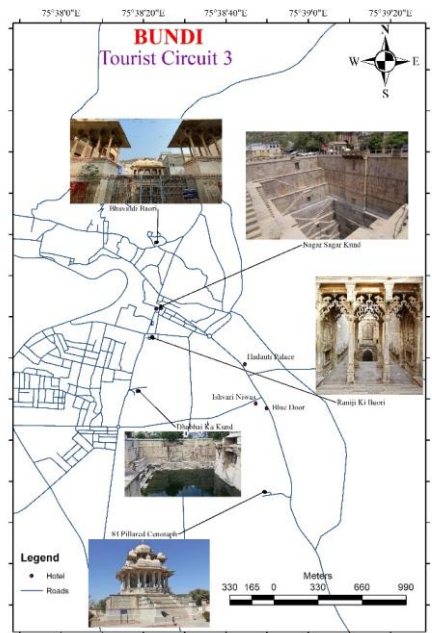
Bundi stands as the transport nodal centre of the district, boasting a Broad-Gauge railway station and a State Roadways Bus Terminus. The city serves as the administrative headquarters of the district, housing essential facilities such as Civil lines, Collectorate, District Court, Post & Telegraph Office, a Jail, three Colleges, numerous schools and hospitals, an Agriculture Mundi, and branches of several nationalized and cooperative banks. Additionally, Bundi hosts the Television Relay Centre, featuring the tallest TV tower in the State. The nearest airport is in Jaipur which is 210 km away from the city.

**Places of Interest**

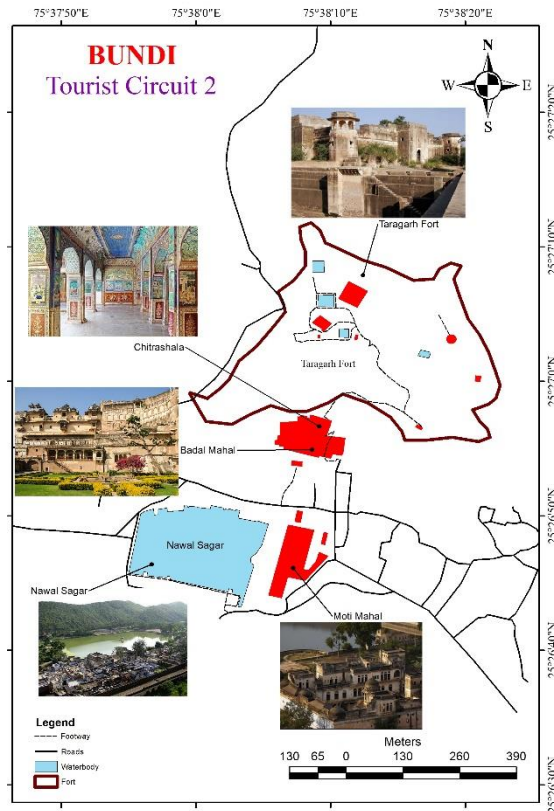


The city is ancient with fort, palace and numerous monuments showing its rich cultural heritage. The city is called city of stepwells as there are over twenty-five such stepwells of which only few are in a good condition. The city could be divided broadly into three tourist circuits.

The first circuit: It comprises of Sukh Mahal, Jait Sagar, Terrace Garden, Kshar Bagh,



Shikar Burj, Chauth Mata Temple and Narsingh Das Ashram. This area is situated between the hills with forests and waterbodies. There are two private hotels, the Amar Bag Palace (SR2) and the Ummaid Bag Resort, besides this there is one Government owned hotel Vrindavati. All of them have beautiful surroundings and is perfect to have a comfortable stay far from the crowd of the city.



The second circuit: It includes the area around the palace that is Nawal Sagar, Taragarh Fort, Badal Mahal, Chitrashala, and Museum. This is the central business area of the ancient Bundi. There are numerous Havelis and homestays around the Fort area which are moderately modified to cater to the requirements of the foreigners.

The third circuit: It includes the Chougaan Gate, Nagar-Sagar Kund, Bhavaldi Baori, Rani ji ki Baori, 84 pillared Cenotaph, Dhabhai ka Kund. This is mainly the area outside the walled city and has good accommodation facility like the Hadouti Palace, Ishwariya Niwas, Hotel Ananta and other budget hotels. The best part is majority of hotels and restaurants here serve continental, Indian and Chinese food which are enough to satisfy the hunger cravings of the tourists.

**Present Tourism Trends**

Over the past few decades, the influx of tourists has undergone a remarkable transformation from being relatively sparse to a burgeoning phenomenon. Initially, international tourists were a rarity, with meagre numbers trickling in. However, a significant shift occurred with the development of robust infrastructure and the implementation of strategic promotional initiatives by authorities.

**Table: Bundi Tourist Inflow**

Year	Domestic	Foreign
1981	840	131
1991	2660	344
2001	20847	3994
2012	50788	16523

2013	49434	15739
2014	49925	15063
2015	54574	15290
2016	59864	15420
2017	65021	16442
2018	70442	16534
2019	70946	14610
2020	19022	4186
2021	16959	52
2022	376061	2379
2023	379956	4396

Source: Tourist Information Centre Bundi

In the year 1981, the total number of tourists visiting the region was a mere 971, comprising 840 Indians and a mere 131 foreign tourists. Fast forward to 2018, and the landscape had drastically changed, witnessing a substantial increase to 70,442 Indian tourists and 16,534 foreign tourists. Unfortunately, the momentum took a hit in 2020, with a decline to 19,022 Indian tourists and 4,186 foreign tourists, primarily attributable to the global spread of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns enforced by governments worldwide. This downturn serves as a testament to the profound impact of external factors on the tourism landscape.

But with the intervention of district administration the trend is uphill and it will keep increasing as Bundi has come under Ramgarh Tiger reserve and tiger safaris have started which will surely give the tourism sector a major boost.

### Challenges

While promoting tourism in Bundi, there are several challenges that may be encountered. It's essential to be aware of these challenges to develop effective strategies for overcoming them:

- **Limited Air Connectivity**

The distance from the nearest airport is a significant challenge. It is 210 km away. Developing better air connectivity or exploring alternative transportation options is crucial.

- **Infrastructure Development**

The need for infrastructure development, including roads, accommodation facilities, and tourist amenities, is essential. Insufficient infrastructure impacts the overall travel experience and discourages visitors.

- **Cultural Sensitivity**

Ensuring that the local community is culturally sensitive and welcoming to foreign tourists is vital. Cultural misunderstandings or miscommunications affects the overall satisfaction of visitors.

- **Lack of Marketing and Promotion**

Inadequate marketing and promotion efforts may result in low visibility among potential tourists. A lack of awareness about Bundi's attractions can hinder the destination's popularity.

- **Environmental Sustainability**

Balancing tourism growth with environmental sustainability is crucial. Uncontrolled tourism can lead to environmental degradation, affecting the natural beauty of the region. Proper planning for environmental sustainability thus becomes a priority.

- **Seasonal Tourism**

Depending on seasonal patterns, tourism in Bundi experiences peaks and troughs. Developing strategies to promote year-round tourism and managing the impact of seasonal fluctuations is important. Bundi is highly visited in the rainy and winter seasons.

- **Competition with Nearby Destinations**

Bundi faces competition with nearby popular tourist destinations of Kota and Sawai Madhopur. Establishing Bundi's unique selling points and differentiating it from neighbouring areas is essential to attract tourists.

- **Skill Development and Training**

Ensuring that the local workforce, including guides and hospitality staff, is adequately trained in language proficiency, customer service, and cultural awareness is crucial for a positive tourist experience. Bundi had been lacking in this till last decade.

- **Preservation of Heritage Sites**

Balancing the preservation of heritage sites with the influx of tourists can be challenging. Managing footfall to avoid damage to historical structures while allowing visitors to experience the cultural richness is a delicate balance. People of the region especially young pairs spoil the buildings by carving their names on the walls.

- **Safety and Security**

Ensuring the safety and security of tourists is paramount. Addressing any concerns related to safety and providing a secure environment is crucial for building trust among visitors. Though incidences of molestation of foreigners have not been reported from Bundi yet.

- **Community Involvement and Benefits**

Engaging the local community in tourism initiatives and ensuring that they benefit from tourism-related activities is important. Striking a balance to avoid negative impacts on the local way of life is essential.

Understanding these challenges and proactively addressing them through strategic planning, community involvement, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders will contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in Bundi.

### **Strategies for boosting Tourism in Bundi**

Boosting the tourism industry in Bundi requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on enhancing the overall visitor experience and promoting the unique cultural and historical aspects of the region. Here are some strategies:

- **Heritage Conservation and Promotion**

We should highlight and preserve Bundi's rich heritage, including its historic forts, palaces, and step wells. Invest in the restoration and maintenance of these structures to make them more appealing to tourists. We should organize heritage walks and guided tours to showcase the architectural marvels and narrate the historical significance behind each site.

- **Cultural Events and Festivals**

The district administration should host cultural events and festivals like Bundi Utsav to celebrate the local traditions, art, and music. This not only attracts tourists but also fosters a sense of community pride. They should promote and market these events well in advance to draw a diverse audience.

- **Infrastructure Development**

Local administration should improve infrastructure, including roads, transportation, and accommodation facilities, to make it easier for tourists to access and explore Bundi. They should develop tourist-friendly amenities like information centres, signages, and public facilities.

- **Promotion through Digital Platforms**

The tourism department should establish a strong online presence through social media platforms and a user-friendly website. Share visually appealing content showcasing the beauty and uniqueness of Bundi and encourage visitors to share their experiences on social media, creating a positive word-of-mouth effect.

- **Culinary Tourism**

The local administration should promote the local cuisine by encouraging the establishment of traditional restaurants and street food stalls. Food festivals and culinary tours can attract food enthusiasts and should collaborate with local chefs to create unique culinary experiences that showcase the flavours of Bundi.

- **Adventure Tourism**

The forest department should capitalize on the natural beauty surrounding Bundi by promoting adventure tourism activities such as trekking, camping, and wildlife safaris. They should develop adventure packages that cater to different levels of adventure seekers. The tiger safari that started recently could be the game changer for the tourist industry.

- **Crafts and Handicrafts**

The industry department should highlight and support local artisans by promoting their traditional crafts and handicrafts. Establish craft markets where visitors can purchase authentic souvenirs. They should conduct workshops and demonstrations to engage tourists in hands-on experiences.

- **Collaboration with Travel Agencies**

The Tourism department should collaborate with travel agencies and tour operators like Mahindra, Cox & Kings, to include Bundi in their itineraries. Offer special packages and incentives to attract travel agencies to promote the destination. Training should be provided to local guides to ensure a high standard of service for tourists.

- **Community Involvement**

The local administration should involve the local community in tourism initiatives to ensure their active participation and a sense of ownership. This can include cultural performances, homestay programs, and community-based tourism projects.

- **Information Centres at the Airport**

The Tourism department should establish information centres or kiosks at the nearest airport to provide foreign tourists with detailed information about the journey to Bundi, including transportation options, travel tips, and cultural highlights.

By implementing a combination of these strategies, Bundi can enhance its appeal as a tourist destination, attracting a diverse range of visitors and contributing to the sustainable growth of the tourism industry.

### Summary

This comprehensive text explores the dynamic landscape of tourism in Bundi, Rajasthan, shedding light on its economic impact, historical and cultural attractions, and the challenges it faces. The paper emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts among local stakeholders and government bodies to unlock the full potential of the tourism industry in Bundi. With a detailed analysis of tourism trends, challenges, and proposed strategies for growth, it serves as a valuable guide for policymakers, businesses, and the local community. From heritage conservation and cultural events to infrastructure development and community involvement, the strategies outlined aim to boost Bundi's tourism industry sustainably and make it a sought-after destination.

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