

BRANDING MADHYA PRADESH AS THE HEART OF INCREDIBLE INDIA: PROSPECTS & CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Located in the Central part of India, the state of Madhya Pradesh shares its boundaries with Uttar Pradesh in the north, Chhattisgarh in the east, Maharashtra in the south and Gujarat & Rajasthan in the west. It is among the fastest growing states in the country. Madhya Pradesh as a state is blessed with diverse cultural legacy and conferred abundantly with natural wealth and resources - fuel, minerals, agriculture, and biodiversity. In addition, it is the country's only diamond-producing state. Being an agrarian state, agriculture is the primary source of income for the people of Madhya Pradesh. In addition to notable quantities of coal, coal-bed methane, manganese, and dolomite, Madhya Pradesh boasts of having the largest stone and copper reserves in India. Madhya Pradesh, usually referred to as 'The Heart of Incredible India', is one such state that has enormous potential to lure travelers of every segment. The state is home to 3 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 11 National Parks, 24 Wildlife Sanctuaries and 6 Tiger Reserves along with several other diverse tourism attractions. In spite of the tremendous opportunities, the state has dragged behind in the tourism phenomena. Of late, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has signed an agreement with a travel company, Travelxp, to highlight and showcase the magnificence and distinctiveness of its tourism destinations to the travellers worldwide. The objective of the present study is to highlight the potential of Madhya Pradesh as a world class tourism hub. The study also carries out a detailed evaluation of challenges and prospects of promoting religious, adventure and heritage tourism in Madhya Pradesh.

KEYWORDS: *Tourism, Madhya Pradesh, Wildlife, Lake, Heritage, Religious.*

Introduction

Madhya Pradesh got the status of separate state way back in 1956. There are several monuments, forts, castles, palaces and pilgrim centers places all across the state. The state has much to offer to its travellers ranging from historical monuments, cultural legacies to wildlife and holy shrines. The state of Madhya Pradesh is endowed with natural charm, comprising primarily of a flat terrain marked with the cliffs of the Vindhyas and the Satpuras, which ascends to 6 rivers, namely, Narmada, Tapti, Chambal, Sone, Betwa and Mahanadi. Tansen, the Great Mughal court musician and Kalidasa, the famous Sanskrit poet were both from the state of Madhya Pradesh.

Since independence, tourism industry has grown by leaps and bounds in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The state of Madhya Pradesh has a wide range of tourism products that caters to the diverse needs of tourists. The state boasts of natural attractions and a unique identity owing to its central location, magnificent splendor, and state-of-the-art infrastructure. The state is gifted with wealth of land, hospitality of its people, its historical significance and diverse culture.

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The state of Madhya Pradesh is known as the "Tiger State of India" for its healthy stock of tiger population. It is a state where human beings respect the rights of other creatures to exist and flourish in their natural habitats. The state is famous for tiger, leopard, Indian skimmer, sloth bear, Indian bison/gaur, gharial, paradise flycatcher, Indian roller, barasingha, spotted deer, lesser florican, blackbuck, white tigress, Indian pangolin, nilgai, chinkara, barking deer, sambar, wild boar, Indian wild dog, Indian pitta, cheetal, Great Indian Bustard, dolphin and many more wild species.

Madhya Pradesh, popularly referred as the "Heart of Incredible India", offers a wonderful blend of amazing geographical beauty, astute urban planning, and a rich history. Several historical monuments and renowned heritage sites may be found in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The state is home to numerous religious destinations that draws a large number of pilgrims throughout the year.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the factors associated with heritage and religious tourism in Madhya Pradesh.
- To study the major initiatives taken by government to promote and develop tourism in the state.

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory and analytical in nature. As a result, data has been collected from a variety of sources, including books, national and international journals, published government reports, annual reports, different websites, newspapers, articles and so on. A thorough search of online sources and social websites was conducted in order to investigate the factors affecting tourism in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The collected data is reviewed and scanned so as to arrive at conclusion.

Tourist Attractions in Madhya Pradesh

- **Tiger Reserves:** Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (Umaria), Kanha Tiger Reserve (Mandla), Sanjay Tiger Reserve (Sidhi), Satpura Tiger Reserve (Hoshangabad), Panna Tiger Reserve (Panna), Pench Tiger Reserve (Pench)
- **Wildlife Sanctuary:** Kheoni WLS (Dewas), Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary (Raisen – Sehore), Singhori WLS (Raisen), Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, Veerangana Durgawati WLS (Damoh), Panpatha Wildlife Sanctuary (Umaria), Bori Wildlife Sanctuary (Hoshangabad), Phen Wildlife Sanctuary, Gangau WLS (Panna), Panhmarhi Wildlife Sanctuary, Pench Mowgli Sanctuary (Seoni), Dubari Wildlife Sanctuary, Gandhi Sagar WLS (Mandsaur), Orchha Wildlife Sanctuary (Tikamgarh), Narsinghgarh WLS (Rajgarh), Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary
- **Wildlife Sanctuary (Fresh Water Ecosystem):** National Chambal WLS (Morena), Ken Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary (Panna – Chhatarpur), Son Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary (Sidhi – Shahdol)
- **Wildlife Sanctuary (Endangered Bird Species):** Ghatigaon Wildlife Sanctuary (Gwalior), Karera Wildlife Sanctuary (Shivpuri), Sailana Wildlife Sanctuary (Ratlam), Sardarpur Wildlife Sanctuary (Dhar)
- **Urban Protected Areas:** Van Vihar National Park (Bhopal), Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary (Indore), Mukundpur Zoo, Butterfly Park, Raisen
- **National Park:** Fossil National Park (Dindori), Ghughwa National Park, Kuno Palpur National Park (Sheopur), Madhav National Park (Shivpuri), Dinosaur National Park (Dhar)
- **Archaeological Treasures:** Tulsi Museum, Ramvan, Satna, ASI Museum, Sanchi, Raisen, District Museum, Vidisha, Gujar Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Central Museum, Indore, Site Museum, Bhanpura and District Museum Mandsaur, Jaisinghpura and Vikramkirti Mandir Museum and District Museum, Raigarh, State Archaeological Museum, Bhopal, Birla Museum, Bhopal, Local Museum, Bhopal, Rani Durgawati Museum, Jabalpur, Archaeological Museum of Sagar, Damoh, Rewa and Shahdol, Maharaja Chhatrasal Museum, Chhatarpur, ASI Museum, Shivpuri, District Museum, Panna, ASI Museum Khajuraho, Tribal Museum, Bhopal
- **Places Famous for Pilgrimage:** Ujjain, Maheshwar, Chitrakoot, Omkareshwar, Bhojpur, Amarkantak
- **Places Famous for Heritage Tourism:** Khajuraho, Gwalior, Orchha, Chanderi, Islamnagar, Mandu, Datia, Sanchi, Bhimbetka, Burhanpur, Vidisha
- **Places Famous for Leisure:** Bhopal, Pachmarhi, Marble Rocks, Shivpuri, Jabalpur
- **World Heritage Sites (identified by UNESCO) -** The sites of Khajuraho, Bhimbetka and Sanchi

- Famous Tourist Circuits

- Bhopal, Islampur, Sanchi, Bhojpur, Bhimbetka
- Indore, Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, Mandu, Burhanpur
- Gwalior, Datia, Shivpuri, Orchha, Chanderi
- Khajuraho, Panna National Park, Chitrakoot, Maihar
- Jabalpur, Bhedaghat, Bandhavgarh National Park, Kanha National Park, Amarkantak
- Pachmarhi, Tamia, Madhai, Satpura National Park, Tawa, Pench National Park

Fairs & Festivals in Madhya Pradesh

Shivratri is one of the most popular and widely celebrated festivals in the city of Bhopal, Gwalior, Indore and Sehore. One-week long Dance Festival of Khajuraho is held in the month of February from 20th to 26th every year. The festival organised by the Madhya Pradesh Kala Parishad to highlight the richness of the Indian classical dance styles. Orchha and Chitrakoot is famous for the festival of Ramanavami. The Malwa Utsav, celebrated to honour the Natya Shastra, is famous in the business city of Indore and Ujjain. Lokrang of Bhopal, Kalidasa festival, and Tansen Samaroh are among the many fairs celebrated with great pomp in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Gwalior Trade Fair, which was started in 1905 by the King of Gwalior, is one of the largest fairs of the state. Gwalior Mahotsav is a carnival organized to promote the tourism of Gwalior. Madhya Pradesh is also known for its folk dances, such as the Tera Tali performed by the Kamar tribe, the Bhagoriya dance of Jhabua, the Jawara performed in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, Matki dance, Phulpati dance, Grida dance, Maanch, and Gaur Maria dance, to name a few.

Discussion

The state of Madhya Pradesh has various tourist attractions that can lure and entice a large number of travellers. It is brimming with tourist spots of different types, natural as well as man-made. Historical monuments in the form of havelis, castles, forts and palaces can be found in nearly prominent city of the state. The significance of travel and tourism sector in Madhya Pradesh has only recently been recognised, with the state government initiating steps to encourage the T&T sector in the state. By means of its consistent and rigorous promotional drives and campaigns, the government is able to niche the state in the map of tourism industry not only in India but also overseas. The government is regularly promoting the state not only at domestic level but also at international level by organising and partaking in travel fairs, leading heritage walks around the world, and exhibiting at trade shows.

Of late, the tourism slogan of Madhya Pradesh has bagged numerous trophies and accolades for the state. One of the factors influencing the growth and development of tourism in Madhya Pradesh is its geographical location in addition to its richness in cultural and heritage treasures as well as state government's marketing drive to promote tourism industry in the state which has resulted in an upsurge in the tourist movement in recent years. The state is also stressing on the need of various skill development programs, T&D initiatives in the form of 'Earn while you learn,' 'HSRT,' and many others. The state is rapidly gaining popularity among tourists, particularly domestic travellers, who are flocking to the state in encouraging digits owing to its promotional campaign, as well as its ancestral treasures and latest infrastructural advancements. The state government effectively promotes Madhya Pradesh as wildlife, spiritual, pilgrimage, heritage, eco-tourism, and MICE tourist destination. These marketing drives have the ability to pique the interest of travellers.

The state has witnessed lesser number of international tourist arrivals. The main reason for this is lesser number of international airports in the state and infrastructure which does not meet international standards. The government is aiming to give a boost to the tourism industry by bringing in novel ideas like caravan tourism, water-sports tourism, MICE tourism and film tourism.

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