

Rural Tourism

Tourism growth potential can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its 7 million villages. Across the world the trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach. Alongside, the stresses of Urban lifestyles have led to a “counter-urbanization” syndrome. This has led to growing interest in the rural areas. At the same time this trend of urbanization has led to falling income levels, lesser job opportunities in the total areas leading to an urbanization syndrome in the rural areas. Rural Tourism is one of the few activities which can provide a solution to these problems. Besides, there are other factors which are shifting the trend towards rural tourism like increasing levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture and improved accessibility, and environmental consciousness. In the developed countries, this has resulted in a new style of tourism of visiting village settings to experience and live a relaxed and healthy lifestyle. This concept has taken the shape of a formal kind of Rural Tourism.

Under this Scheme, thrust will be to promote village tourism as the primary tourism product to spread tourism and its socio-economic benefits to rural and its new geographic regions. Key geographic regions would be identified for development and promotion of Rural Tourism. The implementation would be done through a Convergence Committee headed by the District Collector. Activities like improving the environment, hygiene, infrastructure etc. would be eligible for assistance. Apart from providing financial assistance the focus would be to tap the resources available under different schemes of Deptt. of Rural Development, State Govts. and other concerned Departments of the Govt. of India.

1. **Definition of Rural Tourism :** Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism. Rural tourism is essentially an activity which takes place in the countryside. It is multi-faceted and may entail farm/agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, and eco-tourism. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like; it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is predominantly in natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions.
2. **Identification of villages:** Each State/UT Govt. would be requested to furnish one proposal for promotion of Rural tourism. Based on the merits and after a joint inspection by the Deptt. of Tourism, and the State/UT Govt. if required ten proposals would be identified for implementation in the country.

3. **Preparation of detailed plan for implementation of the project:** After shortlisting the proposals, the State/UT Govts. would be requested to draw up a detailed plan of action. The thrust here would be to achieve convergence between the different schemes of the Govt. of India and the State Govts. It should be ensured that at least 50% of the project should be implemented through achieving convergence of different schemes. Assistance up to Rs.3 lakhs would be provided to the State Govt. for engaging an expert for preparing the project report.
4. **Assistance under the Scheme:** A maximum of Rs.50 lakhs would be sanctioned under this scheme. The activities listed under the para-5 could be taken up.
5. **Permission activities:** The following works may be taken up under the Scheme –
 - i) Improvement of the surroundings of the village. This would include activities like landscaping, development of parks, fencing, compound wall etc.
 - ii) Improvements to roads within the Panchayat limits. This shall not include any major road which connects the village.
 - iii) Illumination in the village.
 - iv) Providing for improvement in solid waste management and sewerage management.
 - v) Construction of Wayside Amenities.
 - vi) Procurement of equipments directly related to tourism, like Water Sports, Adventure Sports, Eco-friendly modes of transport for moving within the tourism zone.
 - vii) Refurbishment of the Monuments.
 - viii) Signages
 - ix) Reception
 - x) Other work/activities directly related to tourism
 - xi) Tourist Accommodation
6. **Focal Point for implementation of the projects:** State tourism Development Corporations are entrusted with responsibility of Focal Point of formulating and implementing Rural Tourism Projects in consultation with District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners to ensure convergence from other yojnas, schemes and allocations for broader/integrated development at the site to benefit local communities.
7. **Constitution of a Convergence Committee:** A Convergence Committee would be set up under the chairmanship of Managing Director, State Tourism Development Corporation/Commissioner of Tourism to oversee the implementation of the project.
8. **Execution of the works:** The execution of the work would be entrusted to any Central Govt./State Govt. agency and the funds would

be released directly to the implementing agency by the Govt. of India as recommended by the State Govt.

9. **Installments of release:** On sanction of a work the first installment of 80% of the sanctioned amount of CFA will be released. The final installment of 20% would be released on submission of the UC for the first installment or on completion of the projects.
10. **Following codal formalities:** The executing agency shall follow all codal formalities while awarding contracts and procurement of equipments and ensure complete transparency in its transactions.
11. **Management of assets created:** The infrastructure and assets created will be maintained and managed by the State/UT Governments or their agencies with no financial commitment to Govt. of India except those assets created in the protected areas of ASI.
12. **Prescription of the Schedule of Rates:** While executing the works the executing agency shall follow the Schedule of rates prescribed by the CPWD or the State PWD.
13. **Submission of the Utilisation Certificates:** The executing agency shall furnish the Utilisation Certificate through the State Government for release of the second installment. A Completion Certificate has also to be furnished through the State Govt. before the release of the final installment.