Research Paper

EPRA International Journal of Economic and Business Review-Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume - 13, Issue - 2, February 2025 | e-ISSN: 2347 - 9671| p- ISSN: 2349 – 0187

SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.862 || ISI Value: 1.433 || Journal DOI URL: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra2012

TRANSFORMING ANDHRA PRADESH INTO A GLOBAL TOURISM HUB: A STUDY OF TOURISM POLICIES INCLUDING THE NEW TOURISM POLICY 2024-29

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ABSTRACT DOI No: 10.36713/epra20207 Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra20207

Andhra Pradesh has been recognized as a prominent tourist destination since India's Independence. Over the decades, state governments, in alignment with central five-year plans and national tourism policies, have implemented various measures to enhance tourism infrastructure and increase tourist footfall. Following the bifurcation in 2014, the new Andhra Pradesh government introduced specific tourism policies that outlined a clear vision and mission for the tourism sector. Andhra Pradesh currently ranks third in domestic tourism, attracting 278 million domestic visits annually, along with 180,000 foreign visitors.

The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Policy 2024-29 aims to position the state as a leading global tourism destination by leveraging its rich cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and spiritual landmarks. Recognizing tourism as an industry, the policy emphasizes economic growth, employment generation, and sustainable development. The "Swarna Andhra Tourism Vision 2047" envisions Andhra Pradesh as a world-class tourism hub, while the "Swarna Andhra Tourism Mission 2029" sets specific goals, such as increasing tourism's contribution to the state's Gross Value Added (GVA) from 4.6% to 8% and its share in employment from 12% to 15%.

To support this vision, the policy introduces fiscal incentives, including tax benefits, land acquisition reimbursements, and capital subsidies for tourism projects. Infrastructure development, improved connectivity, and sustainable tourism practices are prioritized to enhance visitor experiences while preserving natural and cultural resources. Through these strategic measures, the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Policy 2024-29 aims to boost the state's tourism potential, attract investments, and create a thriving tourism-driven economy.

KEYWORDS: ***A.P. Tourism. New tourism Policy, Industry status, Swarnandhra Tourism Mission***

INTRODUCTION

India, with its diverse landscapes, rich heritage, and vibrant culture, is a global tourism hotspot. From the towering Himalayas to serene beaches, and from ancient temples to modern cities, India offers a unique blend of history, spirituality, and adventure. Tourism significantly contributes to India's economy, provides employment, and fosters cultural exchange.

Andhra Pradesh, often referred to as the "Kohinoor of India," is a treasure trove of heritage, nature, and spirituality. It features iconic sites such as Tirupati, Araku Valley, and Amaravati, which attract millions of visitors each year. With its vast coastline, scenic landscapes, and rich traditions, tourism in Andhra Pradesh plays a crucial role in regional economic development and cultural preservation.

CURRENT STATUS OF TOURISM IN INDIA

India's tourism sector has seen significant growth in recent years. In October 2024, Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) reached 820,294, a slight decrease of 1.4% from October 2023. However, Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from tourism rose to ₹25,010 crore, an increase of 31.58%. Indian Nationals' Departures

(INDs) also grew by 4.8% to 2,374,819. Domestic tourism remains strong, with 2.509 billion Domestic Tourist Visits recorded in 2023. Post-pandemic, the sector is recovering well, contributing over ₹19.13 trillion to the GDP in 2023—10% above 2019 levels—and creating nearly 43 million jobs. India's ranking in the Travel and Tourism Development Index improved to 39th among 119 countries in 2024, reflecting a focus on travel safety and hygiene. The Government of India promotes tourism as a driver of social inclusion, employment, and economic development

IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM SECTOR IN ANDHRA PRADESH

The number of domestic tourists visiting the state has significantly increased from 93 million in 2014(Combined Andhra Pradesh bifurcation year) to 237 million in 2019. With 13.8 per cent of national footfall, Andhra Pradesh reported 93.2 million domestic tourist visits (DTV) and stood third in terms of DTV in 2021. The state attracted 11.13 per cent of total national tourists and reported 192.72 million DTV in 2022. The state recorded 107 per cent growth in DTV in 2022 when compared to 2021. Travel sector and tourist activities picked up in the state in 2022 after the COVID-19-induced slump in 2021.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the efforts of the state government through different Tourism Policies of Andhra Pradesh for the last seventy years
- To examine the trends in growth for both domestic and foreign tourism in the state.
- To describe the aims and the strategies of the New Tourism Policy of AP 2024-29

METHODOLOGY

For this article, the data sources are secondary, including AP tourism websites, reports from the Ministry of Tourism- India, tourism reports from the AP government, APTDC, tourism websites and newspapers.

EFFORTS IN DEVELOPING TOURISM IN ANDHRA PRADESH

During the 50s and 60s specific measures to encourage tourism in the combined state of Andhra Pradesh were taken as part of the ***second and third five-year plans.*** They were like constructing tourist rest houses at many places and providing accommodation to tourists. Rest houses were constructed in the tourist spots in the present Andhra Pradesh state area like Srisailam, Mahanandi, Ahobilam, Lepakshi, Horsely Hills, Amaravathi, Tirupathi Mypadu, Nagarjuna Sagar and Nagarjuna Konda along with selective places in Telangana region.

Department of Tourism, established in 1974, started concrete measures for the development of tourism here with two offices namely the State Tourist Information Bureau and Regional Tourist Information Bureau. The programmes of the Tourism Department include the development of places for tours in the State and the framing and distribution of tourist literature, granting licenses to excursion agents, coordinating with the central government in implementing central government schemes in the State and maintenance of tourist rest houses etc.,

Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation **(APTDC)** is a state government agency under the Department of Tourism, established in 1976 to promote tourism in Andhra Pradesh. As a corporation with its present name from March 1980 working with the catching slogan of –"*the more you see it the more you love it"* on the official website and the main motto is -*everything is possible.*

In the 1980s and later Tourist Guest Houses were constructed at different locations for the the safety and comfort of visitors. During the '90s Andhra Pradesh Government started new strategies to attract more tourists from both outside and within the country. The same spirit and pace of tourism development continued in the 21st century in the combined Andhra Pradesh

The state has been separated into 7 divisions for tourism administration,
1.Visakapatanam Division with Srikakulam, Vijayanagar and Vijag2. Kakinada Division with E.G and W.G 3. Vijayawada Division with Krishna and Guntur 4.Nellore Division with Nellore, Prakasam 5. Tirupati Division (Chittoor district) 6.Kadapa Division – YSR Kadapa 7.Kurnool Division- Kurnool and Anantapur

Currently, the Visakhapatnam division accounts for approximately 60 per cent of the total tourism earnings. In comparison, the Tirupati division contributes about 15 per cent, while Vijayawada contributes 10 per cent. The remaining four divisions each share roughly 4 per cent of the earnings from tourism.

2015-20 STATE TOURISM POLICY

After 2014, Andhra Pradesh, with its thirteen districts, became a leading destination for domestic tourism, attracting nearly 152.1 million tourists, accounting for approximately 13.3% of the domestic tourists nationwide. The state ranked the third most visited state in the case of domestic tourism.

New tourism policies with specific goals at state levels were introduced during this time. Then TDP Government came up with a new Tourism policy for 2015-20. It followed the mission-based approach to advance tourism as part of the Realization of Swarna

Andhra's vision by 2029. The state offered nine foremost tourism themes:

1. Beach, Water-Based
2. Eco-Tourism
3. Buddhist
4. Religious
5. Heritage
6. Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Exhibitions (MICE)& infrastructure development
7. Recreation/Adventure
8. Spiritual/Wellness
9. Medical

The policy aimed to position the region as a top tourist destination through sustained investments in tourism infrastructure and services. Key targets included:
1. To be the most preferred state in India for domestic tourism and among the top 12 for international tourism.
2. To invest ₹10,000 crores in tourism, contributing 7 per cent to the State GSDP by 2020.

2020-25 STATE TOURISM POLICY

New policies were introduced as different ruling parties assumed power in the state. The new YSRCP government, elected during the general elections of 2019, has examined all the possibilities and engaged with various stakeholders to develop a more dynamic tourism policy for the 2020-2025 period. While the state has made significant progress in tourism development, its true potential remains largely untapped. The next phase of growth will require a reimagining of tourism and a rethinking of development strategies to fully unlock the state's tourism potential..

The state is separated into 5 tourism hubs for intense growth in the tourism sector. Visakapatanam, Rajamaundry,Amaravathi, Tirupati and ananthapuramu hubs were planned and implemented.

THE GROWTH RATE OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURISM IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Table 1 shows that tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh, both domestic and foreign, have been uneven even before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, these visits dropped significantly, but they began to recover afterwards. From 2015 to 2019, the domestic tourism industry showed steady growth, with strong recoveries after setbacks in 2015 (30.31% growth) and 2016 (25.97% growth). However, domestic tourist numbers fell sharply in 2020, dropping by 70.12% compared to 2019. In 2022, tourism rebounded with over 192 million visitors, showing a growth of 106.61%. This increase reflects renewed confidence and efforts to bring tourism back.

The foreign tourism sector experienced fluctuating growth, with notable declines in 2010 (-59.4%), 2013 (-23.67%), and 2014 (-70.3%). There were significant increases in 2015 (358.58%) and 2022 (501.96%). From 2016 to 2019, numbers stabilized but with modest growth. The pandemic caused a dramatic drop in 2020, with a decline of -75.89% to 67,591 visitors. In 2021, numbers fell further to 27,600, down -59.24% from the previous year. However, tourism rebounded sharply in 2022, rising by 501.96% to reach 165,800 visitors.

Table 1
The Growth Rate of Domestic and Foreign tourism in Andhra Pradesh

Year	Domestic Tourism (in number)	Growth rate (%)	Foreign Tourism (in number)	Growth Rate (%)
2010	155789584	-1.1	322825	-59.4
2011	153119816	-1.71	264563	-18.05
2012	207217952	26.1	292822	1.10
2013	152102150	-26.60	223518	-23.67
2014	93306974	-38.7	66333	-70.3
2015	121591054	30.31	237854	358.58
2016	153163354	25.97	341764	43.69
2017	165433898	8.0	271362	-20.6
2018	194767874	17.73	281083	3.58
2019	237051508	21.71	280356	-o.26
2020	70828590	-70.12	67591	-75.89
2021	93277569	31.69	27600	-59.24
2022	192767000	106.61	165800	501.96

Source: India tourism statistics, Ministry of Tourism, different years (2010-2023)

LATEST TOURISM POLICY (2024-29)

In 2024,Andhra Pradesh TDP led coalition government has introduced the Tourism Policy for the period 2024-2029, aiming to position the state as a premier global tourism destination. This policy grants **industry status** to the tourism sector, offering incentives such as stamp duty reimbursements, capital subsidies, and operational benefits, including power at industrial rates and electricity duty exemptions for five

years. Additionally, it provides a 100% SGST reimbursement for up to 15 years, depending on the project's scale. The policy also focuses on developing various tourism circuits—temple, eco, adventure, wellness, and agri-tourism—to diversify and enhance the state's tourism offerings.

THE MAIN AIMS OF THE POLICY

In line with the Swarna Andhra Vision 2047, which aims to transform Andhra Pradesh into a $2 trillion economy with an annual Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth target of 15%, the tourism sector has been identified as a key component of this transformative agenda. Swarna Andhra Tourism Vision 2047 aims "to make the state a premier tourism hub for India and the world, offering a diverse array of spiritual, coastal, ecological, adventure and wellness experiences, empowering local communities and fostering sustainable development."

Vision consists of five Elements 1) Position Andhra Pradesh as the premier destination in India for both international and domestic tourists. 2) Enhance the tourism sector's contribution to over 20% of the state's Gross Value Added (GVA). 3) Establish tourism as a significant employment generator, contributing to more than 20% of the state's workforce. 4) Advocate for sustainable and responsible tourism practices to safeguard the state's natural and cultural heritage. 5) Develop world-class tourism infrastructure, and best-in-class terminals, ensure seamless connectivity, and provide well-equipped way-side amenities to enrich tourist experiences.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

To realise the above vision state government mission has the following objectives

- Boost Economic Contribution: Increase the tourism sector's share in the state's Gross Value Added (GVA) from the current 4.6%to 8%
- Enhance Employment Opportunities: Raise the tourism sector's contribution to employment from 12% to over 15%, creating diverse livelihood opportunities across associated industries.
- Strengthen International Appeal: Position Andhra Pradesh among the top 10 states in India for Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), enhancing its global tourism profile.
- Increase Tourist Spending: Elevate the average spending by domestic tourists from INR 1,700 to INR 25,000, amplifying the economic impact of tourism activities.
- Extend Duration of Stay: Prolong the average tourist stay from the current 1-2 days to 5 days, offering richer, more immersive experiences.
- Expand Accommodation Capacity: Increase the state's classified room inventory from 3,500 to over 10,000 rooms, ensuring a robust supply of high-quality Hospitality options.
- Attract Private Investment: Mobilize private investments worth INR 25,000 crore to enhance infrastructure, services, and innovative tourism models, bolstering sector competitiveness.

STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES

The policy emphasizes six strategic pillars to achieve its mission objectives and position Andhra Pradesh as a premier tourism destination: 1. Diversification of tourism products and development of destinations 2. Activation of demand and creation of world-class tourism infrastructure 3. Targeted branding and tailored experiences 4. Professional skills development for the workforce 5. Promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism 6. Effective governance and administration to establish Andhra Pradesh as a leading tourism destination.

PROPOSED KEY MEASURES

The following strategic measures are proposed to rebuild the tourism sector in this state in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and to restore its standing as a premier destination in the global tourism market.

Anchor Hubs: are essential tourist destinations that offer a wide range of experiences, including beach tourism, river cruises, spiritual tourism, eco-tourism, wellness, heritage, adventure, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has identified seven Anchor Hubs: Visakhapatnam (Vizag), Tirupati, Araku Valley, Rajahmundry, Amaravati, Srisailam, and Gandikota. These hubs will be developed using a "hub-and-spoke" model, which allows surrounding areas to benefit from the growth and development of these central locations.

Thematic Circuits: The policy seeks to elevate Andhra Pradesh's tourism landscape by introducing Thematic Circuits, specialized travel pathways focused on specific themes to provide tourists with richer and more immersive experiences. The state aims to establish over 25 thematic circuits, including 2 Buddhist circuits 10 Temple circuits 5 Beach circuits 4 River Cruise circuits 3 Eco-Tourism circuits 2 Sea Cruise circuits Seaplane Circuits World-Class Infrastructure: The policy emphasizes the development of world-class infrastructure to cater to the increasing demands of domestic and international tourists. This includes seamless connectivity across air, road, rail, and waterways, as well as the expansion of high-quality hospitality facilities, ensuring a comprehensive and exceptional travel experience. The government places a high priority on the development of disaster-resilient tourism infrastructure to safeguard visitors, staff, and local communities while ensuring the sustainability of tourism facilities. The policy targets private investments of ₹25,000 crore to develop tourism infrastructure.

Professional Human Capital Development: The state government prioritizes the development of a skilled workforce for the tourism and hospitality sectors, ensuring that high-quality, market-driven skills are imparted to meet the expectations of both domestic and international tourists. The state already hosts several renowned institutions, including ICI Tirupati, IITTM Nellore, FCI Visakhapatnam, SIHM Tirupati, and Adventure Academy Kadapa, which will serve as key partners in delivering these training programs.

Targeted Branding and Experiences: The government is planning to implement a strategic and innovative approach to tourism promotion by utilizing advanced marketing techniques, digital platforms, and global partnerships. This initiative aims to enhance the visibility of the state and establish it as a premier tourist destination. A key component of this effort is the launch of the "Discover Andhra Pradesh" campaign, which will highlight the state's cultural, historical, and natural attractions. The campaign will feature tailored messaging designed for both domestic and international audiences.

Sustainable and Responsible Tourism: The Government of Andhra Pradesh aims to establish the state as a model for sustainable tourism. This will be achieved by incorporating environmentally responsible practices, empowering local communities, and developing eco-friendly infrastructure. These initiatives are designed to maintain long-term ecological balance while improving the quality of experiences for visitors.

Governance and Administration: The Government is committed to strengthening the governance and administration of tourism through an efficient, innovative, and adaptive policy framework. Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) will be created to manage anchor hubs and thematic circuits using the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Implement a robust performance monitoring system to evaluate the outcomes of tourism policies and programs. Incorporate stakeholder feedback into the decision-making process to ensure continuous improvement and relevance.

Safety and Security: Ensuring the safety and security of tourists is paramount for fostering a thriving and sustainable tourism industry. The Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) is committed to implementing comprehensive measures that align with international best practices to protect all visitors, with particular attention to foreign travelers, solo women travellers, and families. A dedicated Tourism Security Force (TSF) comprising well-trained personnel stationed at major tourist destinations across the state will be deployed at destinations. Dedicated tourist police stations will be set up at key locations, and staffed with females and adoption of International Safety Protocols.

Arts, Crafts and Cuisine: The Government of Andhra Pradesh recognizes the state's rich cultural heritage reflected in its diverse arts, crafts, and cuisine. These traditions, nurtured over centuries, represent an integral part of the state's identity. By promoting arts, crafts, and culinary tourism, the Government aims to offer immersive experiences to visitors, ensure the preservation of local traditions, and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for artisans and culinary professionals.

Gastronomic Tourism: The government of Andhra Pradesh is committed to positioning Andhra Pradesh as a gastronomic destination by highlighting its rich culinary heritage and unique flavours. Collaboration with the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) in Tirupati planning to organize food festivals showcasing the state's diverse and flavorful cuisine.

Industry Status: The state government has granted "Industry Status" to the tourism and hospitality sector in all its segments. This recognition highlights the sector's strategic importance as a key driver of economic growth, job creation, and regional development. The initiative aims to create a favourable environment for investment, promote growth, and improve the sector's competitiveness within the state. Different fiscal incentives are declared to new entrepreneurs in this sector like 100% stamp duty reimbursement and capital subsidy, etc. Special incentives and non-fiscal incentives will be given as part of the speed of doing business.

The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) welcomed the measures by the AP state government, which are both investor-friendly and focused on enhancing tourist satisfaction to realize the vision for the tourism sector.

CONCLUSION

These measures with clear vision underscore Andhra Pradesh's strategic focus on leveraging tourism as a key economic driver, aiming to attract investments, create employment opportunities, and enhance the state's appeal to both domestic and international travellers. With the strong and experienced visionary leadership of Hon'ble Chief Minister Sri Nara Chandrababu Naidu at the state level, along with the cooperation of Modiji's central government policies and sufficient budgetary allocations, there is a firm hope that Andhra Pradesh will achieve its objectives in the tourism sector.

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