

INDIA

Arrival of foreign tourists took big hit in 2021, data shows

The Hindu Bureau

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Travellers from U.S., U.K., Bangladesh, Canada, Afghanistan, Nepal and Australia visited India that year



The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions saw the foreign tourist arrivals in India dip by 44.5% in 2021. While in 2020, 2.74 million foreign tourists had visited India, in 2021, the number was 1.52 million.

According to the India Tourism Statistics 2022, released in New Delhi on Tuesday by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar, the arrival of NRIs, however, increased by 52.6% in 2021 compared to 2020.

In 2021, the top 15 countries from which foreign tourists arrived in India included the U.S., the U.K., Bangladesh, Canada, Nepal, Afghanistan and Australia. These nations accounted for nearly 81% of foreign tourist arrivals in India last year.

The report goes on to say that air travel was the most favoured mode of travel for foreign tourists with 87.5% opting for it.

Interestingly, the number of Indian nationals departing the country saw a rise in 2021 as compared to 2020. In 2021, 8.55 million Indian nationals departed the country as compared to 7.29 million in 2020 – a 7.3% increase.

The UAE was the top destination for Indians in 2021, followed by the U.S., Qatar, Oman and the U.K.

Domestic tourism in India saw a minor revival with an increase of 11.05%; while in 2020, the number of domestic tourists was 610.22 million, in 2021 it was 677.33 million.

The statistics further show that tourism continues to be an important foreign exchange earner for the country. In 2021, foreign exchange earnings from tourism amounted to \$8.797 billion as compared to \$6.959 billion in 2020, a growth of 26.4%.

Mr. Dhankhar said that tourism was a key driver of economic growth and income generation in the country. He stressed on the need for fully leveraging India's immense potential in the field of medical tourism as well as the growing global interest in ancient practices of healing such as ayurveda and yoga.

“Now that COVID is behind us, we will get an opportunity to showcase our diverse culture,” he stated.

Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy said the government was working for all-round development of the tourism sector.

The Ministries of Civil Aviation, Road Transport and Highways, External Affairs, Culture and Commerce were all working for the development of the tourism sector, he said, adding that this would help in convergence leading to sustainable and world-class infrastructure development.

Mr. Dhankhar also gave away the National Tourism Awards for 2018-19 with Uttarakhand, Maharashtra and Telangana getting the top places. The awards were given after a gap of two years due to the disruption caused by the pandemic.