

UTTARAKHAND DEVELOPS ITS TOURISM OFFER



The Indian state of Uttarakhand wants to boost its tourism. They want to bring more foreign tourists by expanding their offer. The plan is to develop the states infrastructure to provide services for adventure tourism.

The state is quite popular with tourists. There were some 19.4 million visitors in 2006 but some 90% of them are pilgrims. The fact is that Uttarakhand is well known because of its religious places. The religious or spiritual tourists travel to the sites like Badrinath-Kedarnath, Gangotri-Yamunotri, Kumbhkshetra Haridwar, Hrishikesh, Hemkund Sahib, Piran Klear as well as annual pilgrimage places like Kailash Mansarovar yatra and Nandadevi yatra. The government, nevertheless, wants to separate the religious tourism from leisure tourism. The officials believe that adventure tourism will bring more foreigners to Uttarakhand. Prakash Pant, the minister of state, Tourism and Culture, Uttarakhand, said: "We are developing 110 trekking stretches along the mountain range and many of them will also pass some national parks and reserves. We will have guided trekking tours there. The idea is to tap more foreign tourists to the state." The minister also believes that through the offer of adventure sports and the concept of adventure tourism they will reach 15 per cent growth every year in foreign tourist arrivals.

This is the reason why the state is undergoing a development in its tourism infrastructure to be able to cater to the foreign tourists needs. They are even planning to expand the two existing airports in the state. There are new hotels being built. "We have decided to start air-taxi service in the state for the benefit of tourists. If all goes as planned the service will be functional within a year. It will be a public-private partnership project and we are deciding on the private firms," Pant added.

This development is also interesting for the hotel industry because Uttarakhand tourism ministry is leasing out land to hospitality firms for setting up luxury hotels.

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