

**Issues and concerns to be addressed by
Ministry of Railways
For enhancement of the National Tourism Economy**



**World Travel & Tourism Council, India Initiative
A-228, Sushant Lok, Phase I, Gurgaon
Haryana - 122 002
Tel: +91 124 426 1874, Fax: +91 124 426 1875
Website: www.wttcii.org**

**Green Revolution
White Revolution..
IT Revolution..**

now it is time for a

Tourism Revolution

Current Status

- **Employment Created – 50 Million jobs**
 - **GDP Contribution – 6%**
- **Foreign exchange earnings 12 billion USD**

2015 Potential

- **Employment created 75 million**
 - **GDP Contribution 8%**
- **Foreign exchange earnings 25 billion USD**

Ownership of the 2015 potential rests with the Ministry of Railways whose partnership with the Tourism industry is sincerely requested to realize this potential, which is of national importance and contributes significantly to inclusive growth

Railways & Tourism:

Indian Railways, one of the most wide-spread rail networks in the world, is full of activity. This busy rail network is completely owned by the Central Government of India and is administered by the Ministry of Railways. Indian Railways formally commenced its passenger services on 16th April, 1853 with a small rail link connecting Bombay (now Mumbai) to Thane. The Indian Railway website developed to undertake online reservations is operational. It is one of the most convenient and popular mode of transport for traveling in India. Indian Railways offers a host of options to the tourists who choose to explore India by train.

Indian Railways operates certain reasonably priced tour packages across the nation for domestic as well as foreign tourists. These tour packages are categorized under the 'Bharat Darshan' plan, with wide-ranging destinations and tourism packages. Tourism trains also ply in varied parts of the country to introduce, re-introduce, live and re-live the real, ancient India, its heritage and culture. Indian Railways has already introduced exotic and high end trains for the luxury market.

The Railways plays an important role in Tourism and also the Indian Economy. Tourism in India can spread its wings with effective and proactive steps taken by the Ministry of Railways. This coupled with passenger friendly policies enhance the relationship link between railways and tourism for economic development.

Macro Issues:

- Train travel is becoming very popular world over. It is also a “ green” way to travel.
- India is lacking quality trains in the “ tourist” segment.
- Security and safety of trains and tracks, antiquated communication, safety equipment and signaling systems. Aging colonial-era bridges and century-old tracks also require regular maintenance and upgrading.
- Not everyone can afford the luxury trains @ 500-1000\$ a night – This should not be the only priority
- Indian Railways must gear up to offer the best travel experience for both foreign and domestic tourists.
- Poor upkeep of stations and trains on tourist sectors. Railway Stations lack toilet facilities/ Filthy toilets on the trains.
- Quality of meals and service have is poor and unhygienic and needs to improve drastically.
- Reservation systems to be more user friendly as does not give adequate time for tourist bookings
- Current reservation segment levies a supplement for group/charter bookings. Bulk business while may not be necessary to an already 'oversold' oversubscribed' passenger service, is something that our railways should be looking at.
- Market & provide ticketing from overseas to operators who deal in say youth/student travel.
- Support tour operators to create 'rail package holidays' specially designed for the youth/student market. After all it should be the national responsibility of the Indian railways to facilitate these young minds to go back with a positive image of India.
- Provide 'tourist facilitation centers' at the major railway stations such as Delhi, Agra etc. Today **the hapless tourist is most vulnerable while embarking or disembarking at our stations at shortstop time.**
- Provide safe, secure, hygienic, retiring room facilities at major stations. This could be even made a chargeable facility (to cover costs).
- All train stations to quickly utilize land, which is excess by developing 3 / 4 Hotels.
- Haulage charges for travel below USD 200 per person per day may be reworked to minimum and be revisited and reduced as well.

Micro Issues:

- Shatabdi trains on main tourist routes usually stop at last platform which makes it inconvenient for passengers to disembark / exit. Also stoppage time is too little. **For example, at Agra, it is 5 minutes – very difficult for elderly tourist with baggage.**
- Make it easier and convenient for tourist travel and on-line ticket purchase facilitation
- Tourist trains should reach a much higher level of sanitation and cleanliness
- Ensure all trains on important tourist sectors can have the **use of platform Number ONE**
- **Quality of Meals needs urgent improvement** keeping in view convenience and taste of visitors
- Provide sufficient stoppage time for easy **loading and unloading of baggage especially Shatabdi's**
- Meet & Greet services should be in designated areas. Important Stations must have **meeting points & tour operators allowed access to the railway platform like airports**
- Make good, clean, food courts at selected railway stations where the tourist can have a good meal at an affordable price.
- The 'tourist facilitation centers' should offer facilities such as Internet etc.

Quick Wins:

- For a start we need a Shatabdi to run clockwise and anti clockwise 2 times a day on the golden triangle
- In the medium term there should be a "Tourist" train built with a nice dining car, 50% first class cabins and the rest can be economy
- We should have daily trains running on the key tourist sectors so that the clients can use this option over overcrowded roads and endless airport security.
- The same can be done in the Tamil Nadu where we have a train connecting Chennai to Cochin via Trichy and Madurai.
- Railways must have Tourist trains, which are affordable with excellent facilities – air-conditioned, dining cars, 1st class cabins and run these on longer routes where overnight journeys are required. This will help increase passenger numbers, as a lot of people do not like to drive in India
- Platform tickets are not sold at Railway Stations in Delhi on many occasions for the public, this makes Meet & Assist services extended to foreign tourists difficult. Need to urgently revisit this. Issuance of Special Passes to Bonafide Tour Operators at Delhi and other major tourist destinations.
- To create special tourist trains in popular tourist circuits such as Mumbai-Goa, the entire Konkan railway network is perhaps one of the worlds most picturesque, let's exploit it.
- Upgrade the mountain railways, and make it a tourism product rather than a hugely subsidized commuter product. At least take some rakes and allow up gradation with a subsequent higher tariff structure.

Conclusion:

The success of any Tourism depends upon the benefits it gives to the various users. Railways is a key facilitator of Tourism and is of paramount importance for implementation and constant improvement in Tourism Policy. There is an urgent need for structured institutional changes from the Ministry of Railways in order for work cohesively together with Tourism and realize the potential of Tourism jointly.

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