

# **Tourist footfall in Madhya Pradesh increases by 526 per cent**

Madhya Pradesh has cemented its position as one of India's leading tourist destinations, recording an unprecedented 526% increase in domestic and international tourist arrivals in 2024 compared to 2020. The state welcomed a record 13.41 crore tourists, reflecting its growing appeal as a multi-dimensional travel destination rooted in spirituality, heritage, nature, and wildlife.

“This historic growth in footfall is a matter of immense pride for all of us,” said Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav. “Madhya Pradesh is a holy land of natural beauty, cultural richness, and extraordinary biodiversity — and today, it is the first choice of millions of travellers.”

## **Tourism Rebound Post-Pandemic**

According to Shiv Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Tourism and Culture Department, and Managing Director of MP Tourism Board, the 13.41 crore tourist arrivals in 2024 represent:

- 19.6% growth over 2023,
- 50.6% increase over 2019, and
- A staggering 526% rise from the pandemic-affected year of 2020.

This growth has been driven by visionary policy interventions, robust infrastructure, and strong community engagement, positioning Madhya Pradesh on the global tourism map.

## **Spiritual Tourism Leads the Way**

Religious tourism remains the state's strongest pillar, with over 10.7 crore pilgrims visiting sacred sites in 2024 — a 21.9% jump from the previous year.

- Ujjain, home to Mahakal Lok, led with 7.32 crore visitors, a 39% increase over 2023.
- Chitrakoot surpassed 1 crore tourists, up by 33%.

- Other key destinations: Maihar (1.33 crore), Amarkantak (40 lakh), Salkanpur (26 lakh), and Omkareshwar (24 lakh).

Massive projects such as Mahakal Lok, Omkareshwar Mahalok, Shri Ram Vanagaman Path, Devi Lok, Raja Ram Lok, and Hanuman Lok have played a pivotal role in revitalizing spiritual tourism.

### Heritage Tourism Soars

Heritage-rich destinations saw a 25% increase, attracting over 80 lakh tourists:

- Gwalior welcomed 9 lakh+ visitors, a three-fold rise from 2023.
- Khajuraho drew 4.89 lakh visitors, including over 33,000 international travellers.
- Other heritage hotspots: Bhojpur (35.91 lakh) and Maheshwar (13.53 lakh).

Madhya Pradesh now boasts 18 UNESCO-recognized sites — three on the permanent list and 15 on the tentative list, with Bhojpur recently added. Notably, Gwalior has also been named a UNESCO Creative City of Music.

### Wildlife & Eco-Tourism Flourishes

As India's most forested state, Madhya Pradesh remains a haven for wildlife lovers:

- Recognized as the Tiger, Leopard, Gharial, Vulture, and Cheetah State,
- Home to 12 national parks, 25 wildlife sanctuaries, and 9 tiger reserves.

Key wildlife hotspots in 2024:

- Madhai – 4.34 lakh tourists
- Panna – 3.85 lakh
- Kanha – 2.48 lakh
- Bandhavgarh – 1.94 lakh

- Pench – 1.92 lakh

The Cheetah reintroduction project at Kuno Palpur National Park continues to attract global attention.

### Nature and Adventure Destinations Gain Traction

Madhya Pradesh's natural offerings drew a significant number of eco-tourists:

- Pachmarhi – 2.87 lakh
- Bhedaghat – 2.34 lakh
- Tamia, Patalkot, Gandhi Sagar, Sarsi and Sailani Islands are becoming go-to spots for adventure, camping, and water tourism.

### International Footprint Grows

A total of 1.67 lakh foreign tourists visited the state in 2024. Key attractions:

- Khajuraho – 33,131
- Gwalior – 10,823
- Orchha – 13,960
- Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Panna, and Pench together hosted over 72,000 international wildlife tourists.
- Urban centres like Indore (9,964) and Bhopal (1,522) also witnessed steady international footfall.

### A Model for Inclusive, Sustainable Tourism

According to Shukla, “The surge in tourism is a result of integrated efforts — from destination development and community participation to policy reforms and heritage conservation. Madhya Pradesh is now not just a travel destination, but a case study in holistic, regenerative tourism.”

With such remarkable growth and diverse offerings, Madhya Pradesh is redefining the tourism narrative in India — standing tall as a vibrant, inclusive, and future-ready destination that welcomes the world.