

## **Maharashtra to develop 50 tourist spots with state funds, says MoS Jaiswal**

Maharashtra will fund the development of 50 tourist destinations through its own resources, signalling a decisive policy shift aimed at positioning tourism as a stronger economic engine for the state.

Speaking at the Advantage Vidarbha Summit, MLA Ashish Jaiswal said the initiative would be reflected in the upcoming state budget to be presented by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. He added that the government is also considering reserving seats in jungle safaris for resort owners to strengthen local hospitality businesses.

“We failed to tap the potential of the tourism sector. Even the CM admitted we did not do justice to this sector,” Jaiswal said during a panel discussion on tourism and hospitality in the Vidarbha region.

Under the proposed plan, approximately ₹5 crore will be allocated per constituency, alongside dedicated investments in publicity and promotion to raise the profile of Maharashtra’s destinations.

### **A New Tourism Policy in the Works**

Jaiswal said he had raised the matter in the state Assembly and secured assurances for a revised tourism policy.

Highlighting the sector’s economic impact globally, he noted, “Many countries run their economy on tourism. We have significant potential for destination tourism.” Budgetary support, he added, would fast-track implementation.

Drawing comparisons, he pointed to Gujarat’s campaign featuring Amitabh Bachchan as brand ambassador and wildlife-focused promotions in Madhya Pradesh, suggesting Maharashtra must adopt equally high-impact strategies. He confirmed discussions are underway with cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar for potential promotional collaboration.

## Film Tourism and Destination Branding

Jaiswal also revealed that Chief Minister Fadnavis has spoken with filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali about producing a film on the classical poet Kalidasa in Ramtek — a move aimed at leveraging cinema as a tourism catalyst.

He cited examples such as Shirdi gaining prominence through films on Sai Baba and Ladakh witnessing a tourism surge following *Three Idiots*. The proposed Ramtek Film City and heritage sites linked to Kalidasa and Meghdoot at Ramgiri are part of the broader vision to integrate culture and cinema into destination marketing.

## Industry Seeks Structural Reforms

Industry stakeholders at the summit emphasised complementary structural reforms. Representatives from hospitality groups and resort operators flagged:

- Higher operating costs in Nagpur compared to neighbouring states
- The need for infrastructure status for tourism
- Greater separation between tourism promotion and development functions

Meanwhile, Gorewada Zoo Director Chandrashekharan Bala outlined ongoing projects including a 115-hectare Indian Safari, a night safari, and a proposed African safari, positioning the park as a key attraction for wildlife tourism.

Resort owners also noted rising footfall in Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, though travel trade leaders stressed that Vidarbha's wildlife and biodiversity continue to lack coordinated international promotion.

## Tourism as an Economic Multiplier

The state's renewed focus suggests a clear shift: tourism is being repositioned not merely as a cultural sector, but as a strategic growth lever capable of generating employment, supporting regional development, and diversifying Maharashtra's economic base.

If effectively executed — combining infrastructure funding, film tourism, branding partnerships, and policy reform — the initiative could mark a transformative chapter for Maharashtra's travel and hospitality ecosystem.