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FOCUS

# Tourism

WEST BENGAL

## Tourism Growth

The World Travel and Tourism Council has named India as one of the fastest growing tourism destinations in the next 10 years



A Bengal Chamber initiative to promote TOURISM in West Bengal



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## Boost for Tourism sector in Union Budget 2010-2011

With an allocation of Rs 91 crore more than the amount allocated in the current fiscal year, India's tourism sector got a boost in the Union budget by the Finance Minister. The budgetary allocation to the tourism sector this year stands at Rs 1,119.41 crore, a 9% increase over the previous year's allocation. Of the Rs 1,119 crore, Rs 1,050 crore is under planned outlay and the rest is under non-planned outlay for the tourism sector.

The government has shifted its focus to tourism in the financial year 2010-2011 - a sector that seems to have taken the biggest hit due to the global melting and economic downturn, with foreign visitors to India dropping from 5.28 million in 2008, to 5.1 million in 2009.

The 'Incredible India' campaign has received the biggest share with almost one-third of the total outlay going in its kitty. While about Rs 342 crore, an increase of over 15 per cent from the previous budget, has been set aside for wooing foreign visitors, about Rs 67 crore has been allocated for promoting domestic tourism as against Rs 56 crore in the previous budget.

Tourism infrastructure also got an overall increase of six per cent in its outlay over the previous year's amount of Rs 442 crore. About Rs 470 crore has been earmarked for creating new infrastructure facilities like constructing budget accommodation, wayside amenities, tourist reception centres, refurbishment of monuments, adventure and sports facilities and illumination of monuments.

In the Union Budget 2010-2011, benefit of investment linked deduction under the Income Tax Act has been extended to new hotels of two star category and above anywhere in India to boost investment in the tourism sector.

## Exciting Places to see in West Bengal



### Breathtaking Bhangzang Salamander Lake

This lake is located 14 km from Kurseong. In the past, it used to be a

favorite place for the British and people from the neighboring towns used to hang out here frequently. A relatively unknown getaway among the tourist destinations in Darjeeling, it is a beautiful green-tinged lake that shelters the rarest and most endangered species of salamanders - a species under threat of extinction.

### Blissful Biharinath

Biharinath is located about 55 km from Bankura. At a height of 1481 ft, it is the highest hill in the district. There is a wide range of flora and fauna. Main attraction is a temple and a small tank located at the foot. The hill houses a few wild animals including chameleon, racaphorus, hyena, and pangolin. Biharinath is an ideal destination for nature lovers.



### Gorgeous Gangdua Dam



Gangdua Dam, also known as Shalidam, is built across the Shali River, about 4 km from the Amarkan in Bankura District. This 4,900 ft long dam was constructed to

save a particular village of Bankura from floods and now it irrigates nearly 1,320 acres of land. It is an ideal picnic spot where many people arrive, mostly during winter months. Shalidam is situated near Gobinda Prasad High School, on the way to Bankura- Meja.

### Marvellous Mahananda Weir Wildlife Sanctuary

Mahananda Weir Wildlife Sanctuary, situated between Mahananda and Teesta Rivers, is a vast expanse of forest lands with lush green undulated hilly regions in the foot hills of Himalayan ranges. The Sanctuary is a natural habitat of many varieties of wildlife fauna and flora. The foliage includes thick woody trees and dense bushes. The animals include rare mountain goat, Chetal, barking clear, fishing cat, sambar, tiger, elephant and Indian bison.



## Rural tourism debut for Bengal this month



A Rs 70 lakh project has been launched at Ballavpur Danga village near Santiniketan by the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation Limited

A Rs 70 lakh project has been launched at Ballavpur Danga village near Santiniketan by the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation Limited setting off the launch of the first rural tourism project in Bengal. The project will primarily be run by self help groups (SHG) thereby employing locals.

A similar project will also be opened shortly at Mukutmanipur in Bankura

district while work on two more initiatives at Hooghly and Bankura districts are in progress.

For all these projects, the state government will prepare the physical infrastructure while SHG will undertake the daily activities for which specific soft-skills training will be imparted.

## Slowly on the Ganges: An Eight Hundred Mile Voyage across India



Tourists will now be able to revisit the country's colonial past from Kolkata to Varanasi through the 800 mile cruise on the river Ganges with West Bengal Tourism launching the service. This is the first cruise on the Ganges after almost 200 years. Very few

journeys can be as interesting as a journey into the colonial past. The eight hundred mile expedition is to be offered as a fifteen day trip and only ten sailings are planned for the coming season. The expedition takes in a number of the most

important historical sites in India including the colonial splendours of Kolkata, stops daily in smaller towns and villages to see handicrafts, rural life and a variety of local cultures as the cruise passes from region to region.

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## Making Kolkata beautiful Makeover for China Town and Subhas Sarovar

The state tourism department has taken up multi-crore projects to beautify east Kolkata, including China Town, to attract both domestic and international tourists. China Town is the oldest colony of the Chinese settlers in the country. The plan to attract the tourists include a heritage tram ride across the city, beautification of China Town and Subhas Sarovar, an artificially built lake near Beliaghata.

West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation managing director TVN Rao said that a sum of Rs 6 crore would be spent on the projects. The landscaping and beautification of Subhas Sarovar will be done at an estimated cost of Rs 5 crore while another Rs 1 crore is to be spent in beautifying China Town. The foundation stone for the proposed project to beautify China Town was laid on 15 February by the state tourism minister Mr Manabendra Mukherjee. Under the beautification plans, the state government will set up a gateway near the Park Circus connector. A tower designed by Chinese architect Zhang Bo and city-based architect Partha Das, will also be set up on the Christopher Road-Gobinda Chandra Khatic Road crossing. The tower will be illuminated in the evenings.



WBTD and the Kolkata Improvement Trust (KIT) will carry out the Subhas Sarovar beautification project jointly. Around Rs 5 crore will be spent in setting up a children's park, joggers' track, food court and landscaping of the area. Plans are also on to set up an amphitheatre.

### WBTD tie-ups with two STB's and private travel companies to promote tourism products

West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTD) has tied-up with State Tourism Boards Jammu and Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh, as well as private travel companies Thomas Cook and MakeMyTrip.com to promote their tourism products through its website and vice versa. The Corporation will soon give a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of these associates in its website [www.westbengaltourism.gov.in](http://www.westbengaltourism.gov.in). Currently the website offers

Karnataka tourism's URL. WBTD website which offers online booking facility for all its hotel properties in the state is in the process of promoting hotel property stakeholders in the state through its website. The state tourism department has divided West Bengal into three tourist circuits, firstly Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri wherein the state tourism department largely promotes wildlife besides heritage;

secondly Murshidabad focusing on promoting Heritage Tourism and thirdly River Tourism circuits that stretches from Parakat to Bay of Bengal, besides Sunderban in Kolkata and Bishnupur. These areas will be developed under Public Private Partnership model. The state government has allocated Rs 100 crore for tourism infrastructure development, besides Rs 6 crore for publicity.

### Forest hamlet flaunts tourism tag

Nestled in the pristine Sinchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Chatakpur forest village has a lot to offer. It is a perfect blend of modern amenities and comfort set in the wild. You can go trekking, bird watching, visit the viewing point having a watchtower and if you are interested you can even have a firsthand experience of farming and milking cows. The village is a perfect blend of modern amenities and comfort set in the wild. There are four rooms available with attached toilets,

running water, food and electricity. Farm fresh organic vegetable and poultry is available. Chatakpur is at an altitude of 7,450 ft and a breathtaking sunrise can be seen from here. On a clear day, Chatakpur offers a panoramic view of the snow-clad mountains up to the Nathula pass on the Indo-China border, on one side and the plains of Siliguri on the other. Chatakpur can be reached via the Rambh forest bungalow - 28 km drive or via Sonada, 25 km away from Darjeeling.

## Sundarbans National Park

Sundarbans National Park located within the Sundarbans delta in West Bengal is a great place to visit for it is a tiger reserve, national park and UNESCO World Heritage Site as well as a biosphere reserve. There are over 200 species of the Royal Bengal Tiger found here. These tigers have an exceptional characteristic of bathing in saline waters. These tigers are also famous all over the world because of its fierceness. Besides Royal Bengal Tiger, other animals present in the area include fishing cats, wild boars, macaques, foxes and jungle cats, common grey mongoose, chital, flying foxes and pangolins.

The park is also the home to a large variety of reptiles, birds and invertebrate species like the salt-water crocodiles.



The coastal delta of Sundarbans which lies on India's Bay of Bengal mouth has a large area of mangrove forests, different flora and fauna in its unique ecosystem.

There are more than 60 plant species here that have the ability to withstand saline inundation and estuarine conditions on account of the tidal effects. During the month of April and May, the Genwa's flaming red leaves, the Kankara's crab-like flowers as well as the Khalsi's yellow flowers can be seen in full bloom. These are some of the attractions which add beauty to its surroundings. Commonly found trees and plants in the area include the Dhundal, Passur, Sundari, Goran, Genwa and Kankra.

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**Do you know?**  
 India could generate an additional USD 30 billion in GDP and 14 million jobs with government investments of about USD 2 billion per annum, if the tourism industry in India is developed to global standards.

## Night landing facility at Bagdogra soon



*Evening flights are likely to start soon at Bagdogra. The defence ministry has given its approval to extend civilian operations at the airport*

Evening flights can soon start at Bagdogra. The defence ministry has given its approval to extend night landing facility to civilian operations at the airport, a strategic forward base of the Indian Air Force and a gateway to the tourist hotspots of Darjeeling and Gangtok. Right now, civilian flights can only operate between 10 am and 3 pm. The state government has decided to hand over 14.5 acres to the civil aviation ministry for developing infrastructure for night landing. The state had given 8.5 acres earlier for upgrading and expansion of the terminal at the airport. Airports Authority of India (AAI) officials said the land would be used to construct the approach landing facility for operations after sunset. The 9,000-foot long runway at the airport has night landing facility for Air Force

planes. In the absence of an approach, only skilled pilots can make the landing although civilian aircrafts are allowed to use it only in exigencies. Once the approach landing facility is in place, all pilots will be able to land here after sunset. Modernization of the terminal is underway and is expected to be completed by April 2010. The number of parking bays will be increased from three to five, allowing more flights within a short span of time. The security hold will be expanded to accommodate 400 passengers, more than double the capacity now. At present, Kingfisher, Jet Airways, Air India, SpiceJet and GoAir operate to and from Bagdogra. Bhutan's national carrier Druk Airways operates flights four days a week to Paro and is interested in operating daily flights between Bagdogra and Kathmandu.



Basanto Utsav at Shantiniketan, West Bengal

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