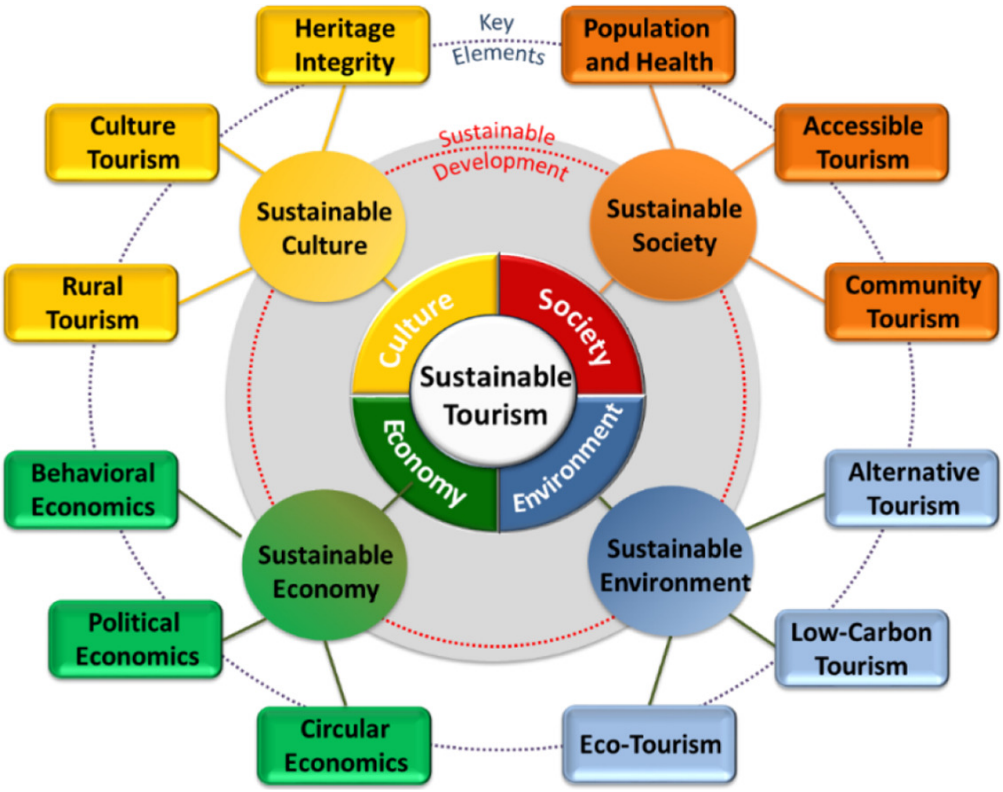
Sustainable Tourism

Why in News?

As per the United Nation World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Barometer, international tourism in Asia and the Pacific is rapidly recovering, with arrivals reaching 82% of pre-pandemic levels in Q1 2024.

What is sustainable Tourism?

- **Historical basis** – In 1992, the *'Earth Summit'* in Rio established the triple principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability.
- Since then, the principles of sustainable tourism have been adopted by the tourism industry worldwide.
- **Need –** Tourism activities often lead to habitat degradation, pollution, and resource depletion.
- **Sustainable tourism –** UNWTO defines it as 'leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while *maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity* and life support systems'.
- **Aim**- To *minimizing the negative* and *maximizing the positive effects* of all forms and activities of tourism on environment, local communities, heritage and inclusive economic growth.
- **Components**
    - Sustainable environment
    - Sustainable society
    - Sustainable culture
    - Sustainable economy



Sustainable Tourism is in line with the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to transform our world and continue to create positive impacts.

What are the significances of sustainable tourism?

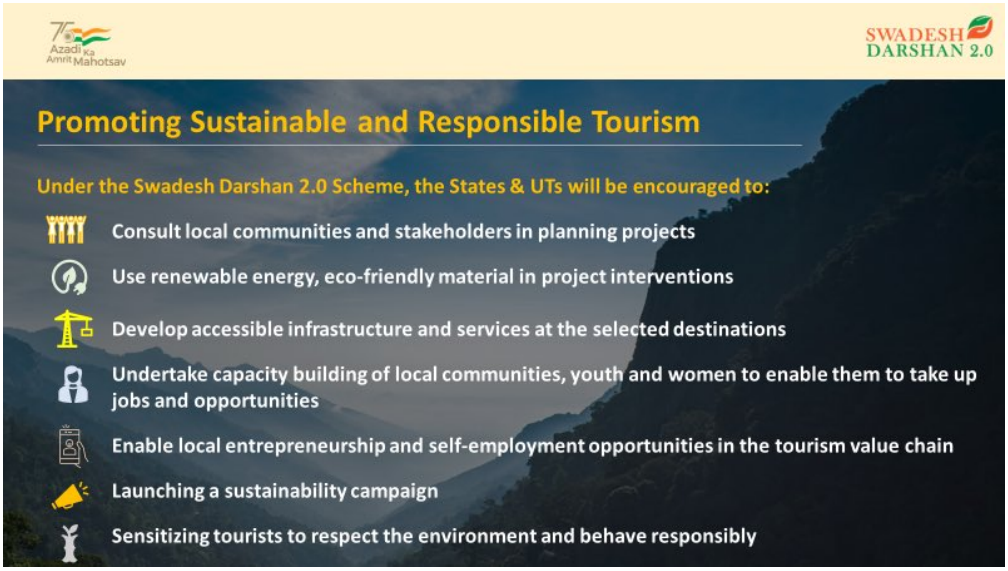
- **Biodiversity protection –** Sustainable tourism helps protect biodiversity by preserving natural habitats and endangered species.
- **Eco-friendly accommodations-** Using renewable energy, water conservation systems, and waste reduction practices in hotels and lodges.
- **Climate action -** It contributes to climate action by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting the use of renewable energy sources.
- **Cultural preservation –** Helps maintain and promote local traditions and heritage.
- **Community development -** Empowers local communities through inclusive growth and equitable resource distribution.
- **Diversified income -** It helps diversify income sources for local communities, reducing reliance on traditional industries that may be environmentally harmful.
- **Social equity -** It promotes social equity by ensuring that the benefits of tourism are distributed fairly among all stakeholders.
- **Quality over quantity -** It emphasizes quality experiences over mass tourism, leading to more satisfying and enriching travel experiences.
- **Economic growth –** It supports local economies by creating jobs and generating income for local communities.

What are measures taken by India for sustainable tourism?

Sustainable tourism practices in India are bound together by the twin travel dicta

of Bharat Darshan and Atithi Devo Bhavah, now known the world over through the medium of the Incredible India campaign.

- **National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism** – It aims to *mainstream sustainability* in the Indian tourism sector and ensure more resilient, inclusive, carbon-neutral and resource-efficient tourism while safeguarding natural and cultural resources.
- It has identified ***seven strategic pillars*** to make India a global destination for sustainable and responsible tourism
    - Promoting environmental sustainability
    - Protecting biodiversity
    - Promoting economic sustainability
    - Promoting socio-cultural sustainability
    - Scheme for certification of sustainable tourism
    - IEC and capacity building
    - Governance
- **National Strategy for Ecotourism** - It was designed to *develop an enabling ecosystem* for the growth of ecotourism in the country.
- It emphasised creating *synergies* amongst the 8 ministries of the Central government, State Governments, Panchayati Raj Institutions, conservation NGOs and the private sector.
- It also envisaged *ranking the States* based on the globally recognised parameters of ecotourism to foster competitiveness and encourage mutual learning among all states
- **Draft National Tourism Policy 2022-** It aims to promote sustainable tourism by *minimizing the negative impact of tourism* on social, environmental and economic aspects and *maximizing the positive impact*.
- **Travel for LiFE campaign** - It aims to encourage the 300 Mn domestic tourists in India to shift towards *responsible behaviour* and *mindful resource consumption* while travelling.
- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme 2.0** – It aims to develop *sustainable and responsible tourism* destinations in the country.



- **Challenge Based Destination Development** – A sub-scheme under Swadesh

Darshan 2.0 aims to transform our tourist destinations as sustainable and responsible destinations.

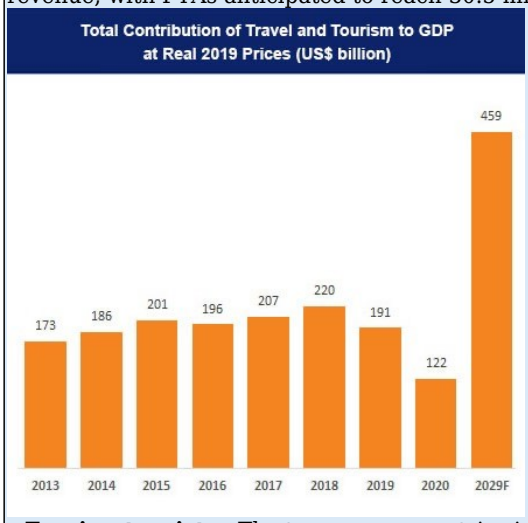
- 42 destinations has been shortlisted under ***4 categories***
  - Culture & Heritage Destinations
  - Spiritual Tourism
  - Ecotourism and Amrit Dharohar Destinations
  - Vibrant Villages Program Destination
- **STCI Certification** – *Sustainable Tourism for India Criteria and Indicators,* sets guidelines for sustainable practices in tourism.
- It aims to benchmark sustainable tourism practices for various tourism business enterprises, mainly *accommodation units and tour operators.*
- It makes it mandatory to ensure effective
  - Sustainable management, heritage protection, sharing social & economic benefits with the locals, conserving the environment, carrying capacity, and minimising negative impacts
- **State government policies** – Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Himachal Pradesh have made policies to promote sustainable tourism while protecting rich biodiversity and natural wealth.

What lies ahead?

- Educate tourists, stakeholders and local communities about sustainable tourism benefits and practices.
- Enhance policies and regulations to ensure compliance with sustainable practices.
- Collaboration between the government and private sector can drive investment, innovation, and efficiency in the tourism sector.
- Improve sanitation, waste management, and accessibility at tourist destinations.
- Use technology for efficient resource management and visitor monitoring.

Tourism in India

• With over 17 million foreign tourist arrivals in 2019 and domestic tourism contributing substantially to the economy, the potential for growth is immense.
• **Job creation** – Tourism is creating 78 jobs per million rupees invested, compared to 45 in manufacturing.
• **Revenue generation** – By 2028, India's tourism and hospitality industry is expected to generate over $59 billion in revenue, with FTAs anticipated to reach 30.5 million.



• **Foreign tourists** - The top source countries in 2023 were France, USA and Turkey.
• **FOREX** – In 2023, foreign exchange earnings from tourism stood at $28.07 billion.
• **Domestic tourism** – The states with the highest domestic tourist visits in 2022 were Uttar Pradesh (317.91 million) and Tamil Nadu (218.58 million).
• Gujarat and Maharashtra received the most foreign tourists with 1.78 million and 1.51 million visitors respectively.



Initiatives taken by India
• **PRASAD** – Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive, aims to enhance infrastructure and amenities at pilgrimage sites, focusing on improving accommodation, transportation, sanitation, and connectivity at key religious destinations.
• **Atithi Devo Bhavah** – To sensitize key stakeholders about the importance of hospitality and cleanliness.
• **Swadesh Darshan scheme** – To develop *thematic tourist circuits* across India, enhancing infrastructure and services in areas such as cultural, religious, and coastal tourism.
• **Dekho Apna Desh** – To encourage domestic tourism through webinars & virtual tours, promoting awareness of local destinations.
• **Adopt a Heritage scheme** – Promotes public and private sector participation in the preservation and maintenance of heritage sites and monuments.
• **Central Financial Assistance** – For developing sustainable tourism infrastructure, such as way-side amenities and biodegradable toilets.
• **Capacity building for service providers** – Training programs aimed at enhancing the skills of individuals in the tourism sector, such as a 150-hour homestay course to support rural tourism.
• **Hunar Se Rozgar** – To provide training for the unskilled workforce, enhancing service quality.
• **Visa simplification** – To make it more accessible for foreign tourists, including the implementation of online visa systems and expanding visa-on-arrival programs.

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