



INDIAN RAILWAY AND TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industry in the world. Tourism is travelling for pleasure and come back to their origin place. There are three major components in tourism namely Attraction, Accessibility and Accommodation. Accessibility refers to the way in which tourist access to a destination. There are different modes of transport in India for tourist. Among all railways is one of the preferred mode of transport. In addition to the transport of tourist to and within a destination, Indian Railway itself be a tourist attraction. Indian Railways offers many train tours to the tourist for the promotion and development of tourism.

The present paper examines the railway infrastructure in India and various tour package and facilities provided by Indian Railways to the tourist. Here we will discuss about the luxury tourist trains and hill trains of India. The data used are secondary in nature.

KEYWORDS

Indian Railway, Train Tours, Components, Hill Trains, Luxury Trains

INTRODUCTION

Railways are the most economical, convenient and popular mode of travel especially for long distances travel all over the world. The railroad was invented in the seventeenth century in Germany with wooden tracks. The first steel rails were developed in the USA during the early 1800's.

In India, the railways serve as the most important means of inland transport. The Indian Railway is Asia's largest and world's fifth largest system after (US, RUSSIA, CANADA, CHINA). It has a total route length of 63,028km. it was in April 1853, when the first train steamed out of Bombay (Mumbai) to Thane, a stretch of 34km. The Indian Railway is owned and managed by the government of India. The broad gauge(85526km) lines account for almost 80% of the total network(10876km) of the total traffic. The steam engines have been replaced by diesel and electric engines which has helped in increasing the speed.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study are as follows:

- To study how Indian Railway promote tourism in India.
- To study about the Indian Railway infrastructure & various facilities provided to the tourist.
- To study about luxury & hill trains of India.

RAIL TOURS IN INDIA

India by rail offers a fascinating odyssey through time and space, culture and history offering glimpses of unity amidst diversity, shrouded in enchanting mystery, colours that capture the heart while soothing the soul. No one offers the multi-dimensional magic of the real India more excitingly than the Indian Railway.

LUXURY TOURIST TRAINS

PALACE ON WHEELS

An extraordinary train for extraordinary people. A train with historic charm and modern conveniences. This was operated by the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation, along with the Indian Railway in 1982. This train takes the tourist on a royal odyssey. This train has been designed to suit the modern needs from air-conditioner to bar, lounge, music, pantry, and restaurant etc. The 14 coaches of this train are named after former Rajput states. The train takes the tourist to the beautiful places of Rajasthan and U.P. The journey starts from Delhi every Wednesday.

ROYAL RAJASTHAN ON WHEELS

After successfully running Palace On Wheels for more than two and half decades, the Indian Railways in association with Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. Launched a new train' Royal Rajasthan On Wheels" with added facilities compared to Palace on wheels. This train also starts from Delhi and taken to the tourist, Itinerary; Delhi-Jodhpur-Udaipur-Chittaurgarh-Sawai Madhopur-Jaipur-Khajuraho-Varanasi-Agra-Delhi.

DECCAN ODYSSEY

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. in association with Indian Railways, Ministry of Tourism has launched a super deluxe luxury train-The Deccan Odyssey. The train reflects the ways of Indian royalty. Each coach is named after some of the best tourist places and forts of Maharashtra. The train has 21 coaches. It travels throughout the destinations of Maharashtra.

THE GOLDEN CHARIOT

The land once ridden by formidable armies is now traversed by the world's unique luxury train. The Golden Chariot beckons you to discover worlds that are enriched with history and culture. The Golden Chariot presents a fine balance between a glorious yesterday and an omnipresent tomorrow in the magnificent landKarnataka,Goa, Tamilnadu, Keraka and Puducherry.

MAHARAJA EXPRESS

The Maharaja Express is a luxury offering from Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. A design marvel, the train offers several unique features from having most spacious cabins to having personal valets attached to each cabins to take care of the guest. The train can accommodate 88 guests. There are 14 guest carriage featuring 43 cabins in total, which include 20 Deluxe cabins, 18 Junior suites, 4 suites and one truly classical Presidential suite. A lifetime experience, the journey on Maharaja Express brings one closer to bygone era of Imperial India.

FAIRY QUEEN

The Fairy Queen was built for the erstwhile East Indian Railway in 1855. Its steam engine is the oldest working engine in the world. It has the prestige of having a place in the Guinness Book of worlds records and also winning the National Tourism Award. The Fairy Queen starts from Delhi and reaches the picturesque town of Alwar in Rajasthan the same day, from where the guest are taken to Sariska Tiger Reserve for an overnight.

HILL RAILWAYS

The mighty Himalayas are an apt crown for India. The glory of the Himalayan range is unmatched and can best be appreciated by seeing them with one's own eyes. The Indian Railways have made awe-inspiring contribution by bringing the mountain range closer to us through engineering marvels and dedicated efforts put up by the master of the craft.

KALKA-SHIMLA RAILWAY (KSR)

Offers tourist a breathtaking view of the Himalayan peaks, snow capped mountain, inviting trails, the heady fragrance of flowers....and a wonderful opportunity to take in all these leisurely, as the toy train from Kalka winds its way up slowly and steadily to Shimla. The train starts in 1903. The train takes 5 hours for the 96km. journey from Kalka to Shimla. The toy train from Kalka to Shimla is entrancing with 107 tunnels and lofty arched bridges. It has been included as a World Heritage Site since July 2008.

DARJEELING HIMALAYAN RAILWAY (DHR)

The most famous of the hill trains, links the town of NewJalpaiguri to Darjeeling. The breathtaking landscape of Darjeeling(2127m above the sea level) must be seen to be believed – the Himalayas in all their glory, orchid swaying in the gentle breeze, lush green tea estates. In 1999 UNESCO declared DHR as a World Heritage Site.

NILGIRI MOUNTAIN RAILWAY (NMR)

Nestling among the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu, at 2600 m above sea level, is the “Queen of Indian Hill Station”-Udhagamandalam (Ooty). The train starts from the town of Mettupalayam and thus begins a journey full of twist and turns, as this Meter Gauge train ascends 46km on its way to the hill resort of Ooty in four and half hours. The 16 tunnels and tall girder bridges on the way, along with breathtaking view, making it a ‘not-to-be-missed’ journey.

KANGRA VALLEY RAILWAY (KVR)

The Pathankot-Joginder Nagar section is the rail approach to the beautiful Kangra Valley of Himachal Pradesh. The work on this line started in 1926. Three years later, this 163km route was opened to traffic. The entire route gives beautiful views of Kangra valley, hills on the sides, streams and the Dhauladhar range. It travels past the ruins of the old Kangra fort.

NERAL-MATHERAN RAILWAY (NMR)

This line connects Neral to Matheran. Matheran is a tiny hill resort, close to Mumbai. The route, covered in a time period of one and half hours, is full of beautiful scenic views of the region.

VARIOUS FACILITIES OF INDIAN RAILWAYS

Indian Railways plays an important role in the promotion and development of Tourism in India. Various facilities and schemes are launched by Indian Railway. These are as follows:-

INDRAIL PASS

To explore the splendour of multi-faceted India. Indrail passes provide excellent value and enhance the charm of holidays visitors from abroad. It offer visitor on a budget, the facility of travel as they like, over the entire Indian Railway network without any route restriction, reservation fee, super fast charges etc. The Indrail passes are also available for half day, full day, two days and four days for the benefit of visitors arriving by international flights and visiting visiting only one or two connecting destinations.

CIRCULAR JOURNEY TICKETS

Indian Railways provide the facility of booking circular journey tickets for pilgrimage or sightseeing trip to many destinations. These tickets offer unique travel flexibility, as they are issued for all journeys which begin and complete at the same station.

BHARAT DARSHAN TRAIN

Bharat Darshan train offer highly economic package for the budget traveller costing 800/- per passenger per day. The tariff includes rail travel, road transfer, meals, accommodation, sightseeing etc. these trains run on a number of different itineraries across the country.

BUDDHIST SPECIAL TRAIN (Mahaparinirvan Express)

The Buddhist Circuit Special Train offers an all inclusive 7 nights/ 8 day package covering major destinations related to the life of Lord Buddha. The itinerary starts from Delhi and covers Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Varanasi, Samath, Kushinagar, Lumbini, Sravasti and Agra. The package is operated using a special train with Air-conditioned coaches included hotel stay and local sightseeing at places of tourist interest.

RAIL TOUR PACKAGE

These are all-inclusive packages with rail travel, road transfer, accommodation in 2/3 star hotels as well as meals and sightseeing as per detailed itineraries. These packages are available almost to all the popular historic pilgrimage and other tourist destinations across the country. New packages are being developed on a continuous basis as per demand. For details Centre of IRCTC.

TOURIST CARS

If you wish to travel in groups for sightseeing, excursion, pilgrimage etc. Indian Railway can provide exclusive coaches for your journey according to your programme. These are called Tourist Cars second class, First and air-conditioned first class. These cars have facilities for cooking etc. and the upper class coaches additional facilities like lilen room, sitting-cum dining room attendant's compartment etc.

FOREIGN TOURIST QUOTA BOOKING

Foreign tourist (including NRIs) holding valid passport can avail Foreign Tourist Quota facility to book railway tickets online using IRCTC eTicketing website www.irctc.co.in International users can book tickets under Foreign Tourist Quota upto 365 days in advance. There is a charge of Rs.200 + applicable taxes per ticket booked under Foreign Tourist Quota through IRCTC eTicketing websits.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM PORTAL

www.railtourismindia.com is the travel and tourism portal operated by IRCTC which provides one stop solutions to all your travel and tourism requirements including tour package, special trains, Bharat Darshan, Cab Rentals, Hotel Bookings etc.

FINDINGS

The following are the findings of this paper:-

1. India have several luxury and hill trains for the growth of travel and tourism industry.
2. To attract Foreign tourist IndRail Pass facility is provided by Indian Railway.
3. Indian Railway also provided tour packages and catering facility for the tourist.
4. Foreign Tourist Quota Booking facility provided for foreign tourist including NRIs by Indian Railway.

SUGGESTION

The following are the suggestions of this paper:-

1. Provision for hygienic catering services should be implemented.
2. Indrail pass facility provided for Indian national's also to increase the tourist traffic.
3. Number of luxury and toy trains should be increased.

4. To connect major tourist places of India, Indian railway introduced special tourist trains.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is a multi billion industry in India, and comprising many sectors. These sectors are very important for the promotion and development of tourism. Transport is one such sector in the hospitality industry. Railways have become the essential USP of the tourism industry of India. Railways are now keen to stimulate travel and to improve the system. Railway companies are trying to make travel as comfortable as possible for the travellers by introducing more and more amenities and facilities. Introduction of the royal trains like Palace on wheels, Golden chariot and Maharaja Express trains offers both luxury and signifies the rich culture of our country. With the help of mountain trains tourist are able to explore the mountains and countryside in a unique way. The government of India has focused on investing on railway infrastructure by making investor- friendly policies. At present several domestic and foreign companies are also looking to invest in Indian rail projects. The Indian Railways is taking effective steps to attract the tourists. Thus it can be stated that the Railways play a major role in promoting tourism in the country. It makes tourism industry as one of the income generating industry for the Government of India.

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