

Original Article

Tourism Planning and Development in the Konkan Region of Maharashtra: An Overview

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Abstract

The Konkan region of Maharashtra, stretching along the Arabian Sea from Palghar to Sindhudurg, represents a coastal tourism zone with vast natural, cultural, and historical potential. This research focuses on the planning and development of tourism in Konkan by identifying key attractions, analysing tourism statistics, and assessing infrastructure and policy frameworks. Konkan tourism embodies diverse products like beaches such as Tarkarli and Diveagar, forts such as Sindhudurg and Murud-Janjira, temples, hill stations, and ecotourism sites which combine to constitute an appealing mix for domestic and international visitors. Data from the Ministry of Tourism and Government of Maharashtra indicate that Maharashtra recorded over 3.7 million foreign tourist visits in 2024, the highest among Indian states, reflecting a favorable environment for coastal regions like Konkan to benefit from growing demand. Historical forts, water sports, local culture, and cuisine add further value to the tourism portfolio. However, challenges remain in infrastructure, amenities, communication, safety, and environmental sustainability. This paper uses primary and secondary data sources, including government statistics, district tourism records, and policy reviews, to examine tourism planning objectives, district-wise attractions, development strategies, and future directions. It concludes with targeted suggestions to enhance sustainable tourism growth and maximize socio-economic benefits for local communities.

Keywords: Konkan, Tourism, Development, Planning

Introduction

Tourism plays an increasingly important role in regional development through employment generation, infrastructure improvement, and cultural preservation. Maharashtra, one of India's most visited states, recorded approximately 3.71 million foreign tourist visits in 2024, making it the leading Indian state for international tourists.

The Konkan region comprises the coastal districts of Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri, and Sindhudurg is blessed with varied tourism resources including serene beaches, robust forts, temples, coastal ecosystems, forested hills, and rural villages. The potential for tourism in Konkan spans from leisure beach tourism to heritage exploration and adventure eco-tourism. This paper examines tourism planning and development in the Konkan region and suggests actionable strategies to harness its full potential.

Objectives

1. To identify and categorize major **tourist attractions** in the Konkan region.
2. To analyse **tourism growth trends** in Maharashtra with a focus on Konkan.
3. To explore current **planning and policy frameworks** shaping tourism development.
4. To assess **infrastructure and service delivery** constraints and opportunities.
5. To offer **suggestions** for future sustainable tourism planning.

Data Sources

This study draws from multiple sources such as Government reports including the India Tourism Data Compendium 2025 and Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024. Also District tourism listings from official tourism websites. Data related to Tourist attraction compilations (e.g., scenic beaches, forts, heritage sites)

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from travel guides and government tourism interest portals. Secondary tourism statistics, including national and state-level visit counts from Tourism Ministry Websites.

Methodology

This research uses qualitative content analysis of policy documents and tourism listings, coupled with secondary data analysis of tourism statistics. It involves:

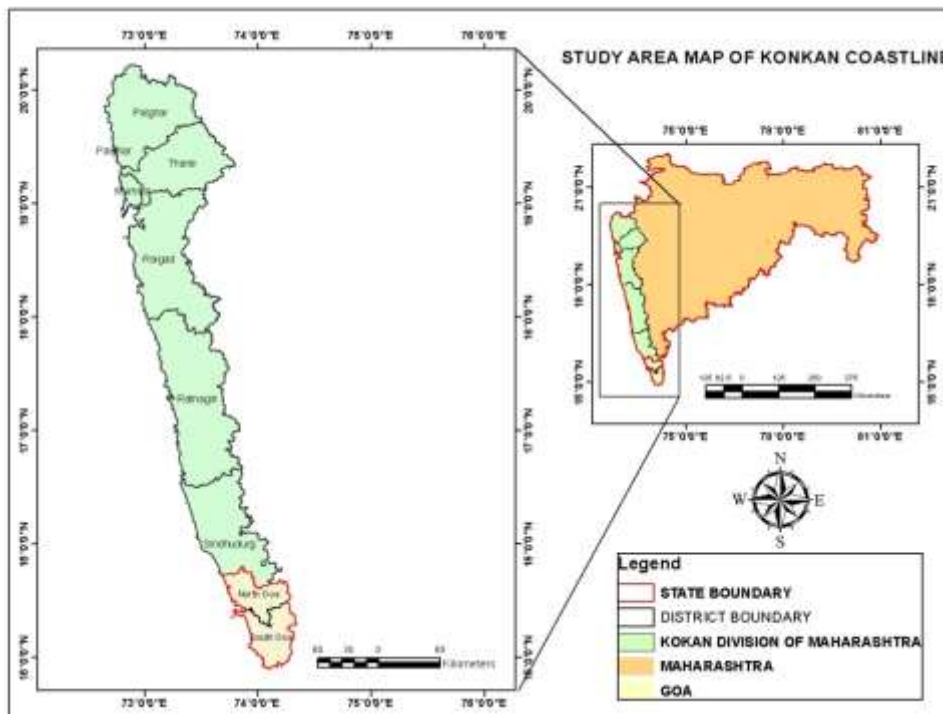
- Reviewing statistical trends of domestic and foreign visits.
- Cataloguing attractions by district.
- Mapping tourism potential to planning frameworks.
- Drawing insights from existing government policies and regional development initiatives.

Because recent comprehensive Konkani-specific tourism data is limited, state-level statistics are used to contextualize the region’s growth potential.

a) Study Area

The Konkani region of Maharashtra stretches along the Arabian Sea from Palghar in the north down to Sindhudurg in the south. It comprises lush green hills of the Western Ghats, long sandy beaches, rivers, historic forts, traditional fishing villages, and rich cultural heritagemaking it inherently attractive for diverse forms of tourism such as: Beach tourism (e.g., Tarkarli, Ganpatipule), Heritage and fort tourism (e.g., Sindhudurg Fort), Ecotourism and mangrove tourism, Adventure tourism (water sports, scuba diving, trekking), Rural/agro tourism, Monsoon tourism during the rainy season

Despite this potential, historically the region faced challenges like inadequate infrastructure (roads, sanitation, accommodation), limiting its reach compared to Goa or Kerala.



Map1: Konkani Coastline Location, Source: Researcher Work

Tourism Planning and Development in Konkani Growth and Trends in Maharashtra Tourism

Tourism in Maharashtra has seen dynamic recovery after pandemic disruptions, with outbound and

inbound travel gradually returning to pre-COVID levels. National data shows that international tourist arrivals in India reached 20.57 million in 2024, with Maharashtra among the top destinations.

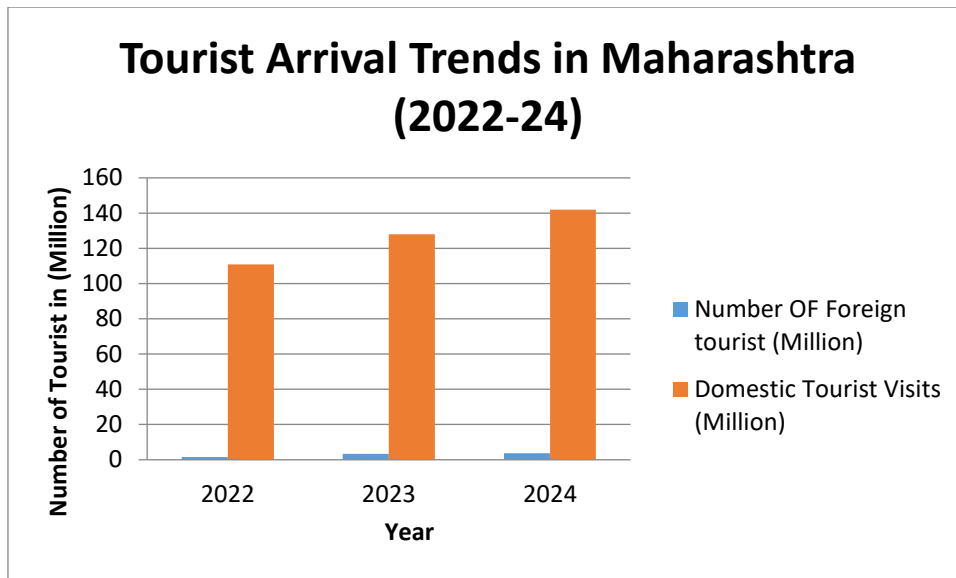


Fig. 1: Maharashtra Tourist Arrival Summary (2022–2024) (in millions) Source: ITDC

Policy and Strategic Framework

The Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 outlines goals for enhancing infrastructure and increasing tourist footfall, including boosting economic revenue from tourism by supporting enhanced services and global marketing. Additionally, targeted programs such as beach certification initiatives are being rolled out across Konkan beaches to improve quality standards (Blue Flag certification projects at beaches like Parnaka and Guhagar).

The state’s latest tourism policy puts a strong emphasis on sustainable growth, economic impact, and diversification of tourism products, including coastal and riverine tourism segments which directly concern Konkan. It aims to create tourism hubs, drive investment, and introduce incentives such as subsidies, tax benefits, and infrastructure support for new tourism facilities.

Infrastructure and Connectivity

Konkan’s tourism growth depends heavily on road, rail, and coastal connectivity. Although detailed region-specific infrastructure data is limited, trends suggest growing accessibility due to Konkan Railway and improved local roads, Regional upliftment projects in beach tourism infrastructure and Emphasis on better services and facilities at key destinations.

However, challenges in last-mile connectivity is very poor, the signage boards, mobile network and street lights are still not available at majority places. Coastal region of Ratanagiri district is most neglected in terms of Road Transport Infrastructure which need massive overhaul including major bridges on the creeks between Agardanda to Dighi (South Raigad) Bagmandla to Vehswi, Dabhol to Dhopave, Tavasal

to Jaigad, safety infrastructure at forts and rural trails remain a concern. Stoppage to long distance train required at major taluka places of Konkan which will result in to the smooth transfer of tourist from Mumbai and other parts of India to Kokan region.

Transportation Prospects

- **Konkan Railway enhancements** like expanded Ro-Ro services improve accessibility along the Mumbai–Goa corridor, especially during peak festivals.
- Major projects such as the **Kolhapur–Vaibhavwadi rail link** (3,244 crore) aim to better connect Konkan with inland Maharashtra and boost tourism and trade.
- Road widening (NH-66) and new expressways are expected to reduce travel times and support tourist inflow.
- **Chipi Airport (Sindhudurg)** enhances air connectivity, reducing travel time from major urban centres and facilitating flights aimed at tourism growth.

Strategic Beach Shack Policy

A major recent initiative is the Strategic Beach Shack Policy approved for the Konkan coast which aims to offer regulated, eco-friendly beach shacks along selected beaches to enhance the coastal tourism experience. Implementation prioritises local residents for employment and operating licenses to ensure economic benefits for coastal communities. Environmental protection through coastal zone oversight is a key component of this policy. Pilot project conducted on beaches like Varsoli, Diveagar, Guhagar, Aare Ware, Kunkeshwar, and Tarkarli.

These shacks help encourage longer tourist stays and create linkages to local homestays, cuisine, and crafts while balancing development with conservation.

Community, Sustainability & Local Rural Tourism Development

Since 2013–14, the Government of Maharashtra has implemented the Konkan Rural Tourism Development Programme to promote

rural tourism, improve village infrastructure, and generate employment opportunities for local people in the Konkan districts. Tourism planning increasingly emphasises local participation, especially through homestays, beach shack operations, and hospitality training. Priority employment for locals in tourism businesses is part of policy design.

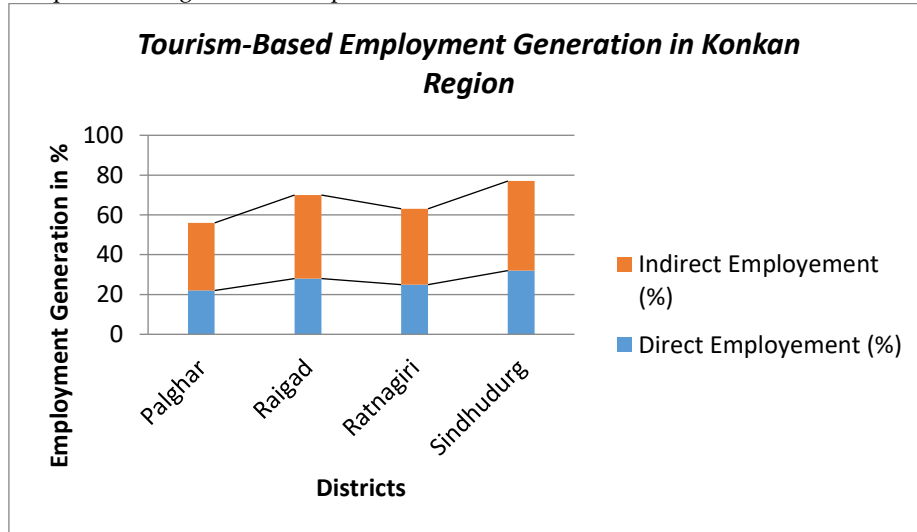


Fig: 3 Employment Generations through Tourism

Beach Certification & Facilities

The state government has recently invested 20 crore to upgrade facilities at key Konkan beaches targeting Blue Flag certification (international standard for beaches), which will raise environmental and safety standards.

Ecotourism & Environment

Konkan’s mangroves and coastal ecosystems are leveraged for sustainable tourism, with initiatives promoting non-motorised activities (e.g., kayaking)

and educating tourists about biodiversity conservation. The government actively promotes monsoon tourism, celebrating the region’s dramatic transformation during rains as a unique appeal. E.g Amboli Ghat, Karjat, Khopoli, Marleshwar, Mahul could be developed on this line.

District-Wise Tourist Places (Konkan)

Below is a structured listing of major tourist attractions by district, showing the rich variety available in the region.

Raigad District

Category	Tourist Places
Beaches	Alibag, Kashid, Murud
Forts	Murud-Janjira Fort, Kolaba Fort
Temples/Heritage	Harihareshwar Temple
Other	Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary, hill drives

Ratnagiri District

Category	Tourist Places
Beaches	Ganpatipule, Bhatye Beach
Forts	Ratnadurg Fort, Jaigad Fort
Cultural Sites	Swami Swarupanand Ashram (Pawas), Thibaw Palace
Scenic Villages	Kelashi Beach & Village

Sindhudurg District

Category	Tourist Places
Beaches	Tarkarli, Devbaug Beach
Forts	Sindhudurg Fort, Devgad Fort
Adventure Sites	Scuba diving, coral reefs

Palghar District

Category	Tourist Places
Beaches	Parnaka Beach (targeted for Blue Flag certification)
Forts	Arnala Fort
Natural Sites	Coastal mangroves, fishing villages

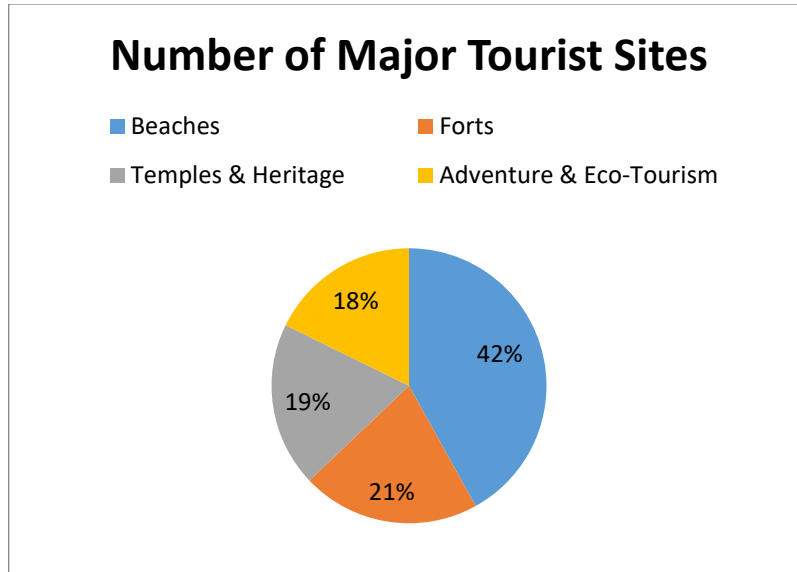


Fig: 2 Number of Major Tourist Sites, Source: MTDC

Discussion: Planning and Development Factors

- Economic and Community Impact**
 Tourism provides local income through homestays, eateries, transport, and craft markets. Policies promoting local hiring and entrepreneurship help support community welfare.
- Environmental Sustainability**
 Coastal ecosystems in Konkan are fragile; sustainable planning must balance growth with environmental protection. Initiatives like beach certification improve service standards while enforcing environmental safeguards.
- Safety and Infrastructure Needs**
 Despite growing visitation, safety infrastructure especially at forts and water sport locations requires investment. Safety challenges persist due to rugged terrain and seasonal weather risks.

Conclusion

The Konkan region of Maharashtra holds substantial potential for tourism growth due to its unique mix of beaches, heritage forts, spiritual sites, and coastal ecology. While the region benefits from Maharashtra’s overall growth as a tourism destination, specific challenges in infrastructure, safety, and sustainable development remain. Strategic planning that aligns policy support with community-centric development and environmental conservation will be key to unlocking Konkan’s full potential.

Tourism planning and development in the Konkan region of Maharashtra is evolving through strategic policies, infrastructure investments, and sustainable community-centric initiatives. With its unmatched natural beauty and improved connectivity, Konkan is gradually shaping up as a key tourism hub provided deployment continues to balance growth with environmental and socio-cultural sustainability.

Challenges & Future Directions

Despite gains, key challenges remain hurdles in the development of Konkan region. They are mainly Infrastructure gaps such as cleanliness, quality accommodation, basic services which limits tourist satisfaction in many areas. Urgent Need for integrated marketing to attract international tourists. Balancing environmental protection with commercial development along fragile coastal ecosystems.

Future planning priorities should include enhancing connectivity with improved transport links. Promoting specialised tourism products (heritage circuits, adventure, cruises). Strengthening regulatory frameworks for safety should be in a place.

Suggestions

Integrated Marketing Strategy could promote Konkan as a coastal tourism circuit nationally and internationally. Infrastructure Investment could develop quality roads,

interpretive centers, and safety facilities (especially at forts and water sport sites). Environmental Safeguards can be implemented for strict waste management and coastal protection norms. Community Participation would enhance local livelihoods through homestays, guided tours, and heritage preservation grants. Data-Driven Planning could establish comprehensive visitor tracking mechanisms at key attractions.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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