

# Forts of Rajasthan and Recent Tourist Inclinations

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## ABSTRACT

Forts have always had great fascination for men and rulers over the centuries. Forts in Rajasthan have been very famous for their strength and impregnability. The art of constructing forts is as old as the human civilization. All over the world whether in Asia, Greece, Rome, China, Euphrates, Tigris or Egypt people constructed fortified walls to protect them. Like in foreign lands, men in India also constructed forts around the village to protect themselves from wild animals, foreign invasions and also thieves and robbers. Fortified towns existed in India even before the advent of the Aryans. The desert state of Rajasthan is a land of irony and extremes. This vibrant and striking region is the home of the Rajput warrior clans who had ruled here for many years. Rajasthan is also home to some of India's most romantic cities. The Rajputs were prolific builders and have dotted the arid Aravali landscape with their legacy of some most imposing and magnificent forts and palaces in the world. Today the structures defy time to tell the story of gallantry, courage and tragedy of the bygone era and its story of survival in the harsh Thar Desert. The forts and palaces dotted on every hilltop speak not only of its rich cultural heritage but also of sacrifice and bravery of the people. The mixture and brilliance of Rajasthan's architectural heritage can amaze a visitor.

**KEYWORDS :** *Forts of Rajasthan, Eco-tourism Circuit, Package Tours.*

## INTRODUCTION

Rajasthan occupies significant place on the world map taking into consideration the most favoured destinations of the tourist of the whole world. Tourism is credited to be biggest industry of this world having the maximum growth rate. In Rajasthan, tourism is being commercially developed. Tourism here is culture. That's why a large number of tourists visit Rajasthan which is most famous in the whole world for the magnificent strongholds atop the hills. Record number of tourists arrived Rajasthan in the year 2006. The statistics being 12.20 Lac for foreign tourists and 234.83 Lac for the domestic ones.<sup>1</sup> This clearly shows that growth of around 25.00 % was seen in the domestic tourists in Rajasthan, the statistics being 7.87 % in case of foreign tourists in the year 2006.<sup>2</sup> If we talk about year 2007, an increment of 14.82% was recorded in foreign tourists, while for domestic tourists the statistics remained 10.38% as compared to that of year 2006.<sup>3</sup>

**TABLE NO. 1 : Decadal Table of the Arrival of the Tourists in Rajasthan<sup>4</sup> (1971-2007)**

Year	No. of Domestic tourists	No. of foreign tourists	Sum/ total	% change in comparison to last year. (domestic)	% change in comparison to last year. (foreign)	Sum/ total
1971	880694	42500	923194			
1981	2600407	220440	2820847	6.13	5.87	6.11
1991	4300857	494150	4795007	15.14	18.32	15.46

Out of this the maximum number includes those tourists who basically tend to visit the forts of this glorious land besides other attractions. Countrywise data<sup>5</sup> of foreign tourists who visited the cities having famous forts, in the year 2007:

Name of the City	UK	France	Italy	Canada	USA	Germany	Australia	Japan	Malaysia	Srilanka
Udaipur	16282	17890	10298	6450	25078	13055	7616	4683	0	0
Jaipur	42376	43009	30696	24329	43060	51695	28806	24892	5153	3272
Jodhpur	12893	29231	11909	3922	10354	12754	6135	1689	225	112
Chittorgarh	4245	3685	2495	2348	3951	2309	1991	845	337	0
Bharatpur	2095	2565	949	590	1164	1292	1383	815	49	0
Bikaner	6570	26517	8148	1950	1677	10330	2877	104	0	0
Sawaimadhampur	4982	3210	2384	4347	3980	3475	3000	1624	0	613
Bundi	1256	3033	451	296	491	786	1035	63	0	0
Jaisalmer	6683	31421	9195	2007	3973	10786	3996	1007	71	9
Ajmer	804	427	136	148	411	274	142	108	46	0

South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE), New Delhi awarded Rajasthan as the most favorite tourist place of the whole of Asia, in April 2006. Developmental works are being done in the sphere of tourism, taking financial aid from the central government.

This involves new developments like light and sound shows at forts like Amber, Chittorgarh, Gagron forts etc. The **Eco Tourism Circuit (2007-08) Plan** includes development of Flood Light System upon historical sights, specially forts.<sup>6</sup>

In the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07), an amount of Rs. 14750.00 Lac has been approved which includes expenditure upon heads like tourism campaign and propaganda, tourist supporting force, development and conservation of tourist places, proper lighting system/light and sound attractions, information and technology project, direction and administration, and investment in public as well as private sector etc.

Out of this budget upon lighting system includes basic amount of Rs. 60.00 Lac. Out of this actual expenditure incurred upon this head was 43.03 Lac up till December, 2006 under Tenth Five Year Plan, (2002-07).<sup>7</sup>

In the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), a basic amount of Rs. 55 Lac has been provisioned for this head, out of which an expenditure of Rs. 11.88 Lac has already been done uptill December, 2007.<sup>8</sup>

Under this Special light/sound attractions have been introduced in some strongholds to attract maximum number of tourist to these places like for example, Chittorgarh Fort (Chittorgarh), Taragarh Fort (Ajmer) etc. The flood lights of Taragarh Fort, Ajmer is the latest development done by the Tourism Department. An expenditure of around Rs. 1 Crore has been done upon this. These lights are controlled by automatic timer and will be switched on from 7-10 in the evening. All this has been done considering the plan commenced by the central government specially for the development and care of these historical sights.<sup>9</sup>

The Department of Tourism has been making concerted efforts to improve tourist facilities in Chittaurgarh – and The Sound and Light Show is a step in this direction. The one hour evening entertainment, which has started only recently, is proving to be a great draw among the tourists. As many as 1000 to 1500 visitors are coming to witness the show everyday. Enacting the right blend of sound, light and varying effects, the Show begins with the 6th century king Chitrangada, who is in search of land for his capital. He finds Chittaur to be a safe place from invasions. The story then meanders to the valiant defence of the town by Bappa Rawal from the Arab invaders who brought Mewar on the political map of the country. Episodes in the show also relate to the beauty of Rani Padmini and the sense of pride she had. Rana Kumbha is portrayed as a versatile and able ruler. The spirituality and devotion of Meera, the treacherous plan to kill young Udai Singh and the supreme sacrifice by Panna Dhai are some other gripping features of the show which enthrall the visitors.

Established at a cost of Rs. 2.9 Crores, this project is the first of its kind in the State on a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) basis. Financed by the Union Ministry of Tourism and executed by ITDC; the event is being operated by Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) and Hindustan Zinc Limited on a partnership basis.

The show has the voice of well known actors like Hema Malini and Shah Rukh Khan while Lata Mangeshkar, Rehmat Khan and Radhika Chopra are the vocalists. The newly introduced sound and light show suitably reflects the pride and glory of Rajasthan. The episodes of romance, valour and chivalry have been creatively displayed. It will be the endeavour of the Department to take earnest steps for further improving the infrastructure and tourist facilities in different monuments and forts of Rajasthan.

About Udaipur a nineteenth century French traveler Louis Rouselet, setting his eyes for the first time on the landscape that composes the valley of Udaipur burst out, *“at lengths we passed round the last hill, and Oudeypoor (Udaipur), the capital of Mewar was before us. My men shouted and danced for joy. As for myself, I stood in ecstasy gazing in the sublime panorama spread out at my feet. Never had I even hoped to see anything so beautiful. It resembles one of the fairy cities in the Arabian nights.”*

Udaipur is conducting various package tours out of which the one ‘Udaipur-Kumbhalgarh-Ranakpur-Gogunda-Udaipur’ involves a journey to all the forts in Udaipur region and gives deep information about Mewar Circuit.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, an authority was organized for integrated development of Amber, which is engaged in the stage by stage development in stipulated time period.<sup>11</sup>

Keeping in consideration the safety of the tourists, special tourist force has been employed for the safeguard of the tourists at Jaipur, Jodhpur, Mount Abu, Pushkar - Ajmer, Jaisalmer, Sawai Madhopur, Bikaner, Chittor and Bharatpur etc.

Following is the table<sup>12</sup> which gives us an information regarding the number of military personnel employed for the purpose :

<i>S. No</i>	<i>Name of the fort-city</i>	<i>Number of retired military personnel employed as tourist Police/Force</i>
1	Jaipur	37
2	Jodhpur	19
3	Jaisalmer	12
4	Udaipur	19
5	Ajmer	15
6	Sawai Madhopur	19
7	Bikaner	7
8	Bharatpur	6
9	Chittorgarh	8

RTDC conducts various package tours for sightseeing, from capital New Delhi to various tourist places famous for forts, in Rajasthan. Major among them are, **Mewar Package** (a six day tour), which runs from Delhi - Jaipur-Chittorgarh- Udaipur- Haldighati- Ranakpur-Nathdwara -Ajmer- Pushkar - Delhi. Another is a package tour of **Rajasthan Sightseeing** (15 days) which runs from Delhi -Bikaner -Jaisalmer -Jodhpur -Mount -Abu -Ranakpur-Nathdwara- Udaipur - Ajmer-Pushkar-Jaipur-Sariska-Delhi.<sup>13</sup>

In the State Budget, an amount of Rs. 675.00 Lac has been approved under the **Mewar Complex Plan** at Gogunda, Chavand and Diver.<sup>14</sup> In the year 2006, the Tourism Department had announced a New Hotel Policy of Rajasthan. This policy is proposed to be replaced by **Rajasthan Tourism Unit Policy-2007**.<sup>15</sup>

According to this policy, in Rajasthan Municipal Corporation (Land-Utilization Conversion) Rule, 2000, provisions for conversion of residential land into commercial and

other purposes have been made and definition of commercial, residential and industrial land – utilization has been given. In Rule 12, provision for conversion of non-commercial land for commercial purpose has been made on 40% of the reserve residential price. As per these provisions any residential land or building used for hotels shall be converted on the 40% residential reserve price. All such heritage properties forts, palaces are also covered in this category and in case of establishing hotels in such heritage properties, developer has to deposit conversion charges as per provision of the Rule-12.

In Rajasthan presently there are many Havelis, Forts and Palaces in heritage category that can be developed into hotels, which would be of special attraction to tourists. This would not only increase the tourist arrivals in the state but also promote the culture of Rajasthan. Hence for this, in Rule-12(i) the following proviso shall be added :-

(i) that any heritage property such as Havelis, Forts, Palaces, Hunting lodges etc, which have been constructed prior to 1950, and are proposed to be utilized for conversion / construction into heritage hotels having minimum of 10 rooms shall be exempted from above mentioned fees. The General Administration Department of Rajasthan has remitted 17 properties (which includes many strongholds), located in 6 districts of the state, for tourist promotion and development, to the Tourism Department. Tenders have been invited and all formalities for remissions are being done for Tijara Fort (Alwar). Besides this, properties like Sarwar Fort (Ajmer), Shahbad Fort, (Baran), and Badnor Fort, (Bhilwara) have also been taken under consideration for the same.<sup>16</sup>

The department has also given recognition to tourist promotion agencies as **Monuments India Tours, Jaipur** while agencies like **Forts and Palaces Tours Limited, Jaipur** has been renewed in the year 2007-08.<sup>17</sup>

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