

5 Agra Monuments in Foreigner's Top 10

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Replying to a query in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, Union culture minister Mahesh Sharma said Taj Mahal alone has 23% share of foreign tourists travelling to India. Agra Fort got 12% in 2014. He added that foreign exchange earnings through tourism in India during 2012, 2013 and 2014 stood at Rs 94,487 crore, Rs 1,07,671 crore and Rs 1,23,320 crore respectively.

The minister dismissed claims that the tourism industry had witnessed a decline compared to the last few years. "On the contrary", he said, "foreign tourists' arrival growth rate in India has more than doubled between 2012 (4.3%) and 2014 (10.2%). In 2013, it was a mere 5.9%.

In terms of exact numbers, a total of 6.58 million tourists visited India in 2012, which increased to 6.97 million in 2013 and 7.68 million in 2014.



AGRA TOP DRAW FOR FOREIGNERS

Agra and Fatehpur Sikri have 5 of the top 10 monuments most visited by foreigners in India

- Taj Mahal gets 23% of India's foreign tourists (6.4L/yr) – the highest; Agra Fort gets 12% (3.43L)
- Three other monuments in and around Agra are Fatehpur Sikri (5th), Akbar's Tomb (8th) & Itimad-ud Daulah (10th)
- Delhi's Qutub Minar attracts 2.76L foreign tourists each year

Source: TNN //TIMESINTERNET//

Citing Archaeological Survey of India's data on foreign tourist arrival at centrally-protected monuments in 2014, Sharma said Taj Mahal with 6.4 lakh visitors, Agra Fort with 3.43 lakh and Qutub Minar with 2.76 lakh were the top three tourist destinations in the country.

The other three monuments of Agra which featured in the top 10 list are Fatehpur Sikri (5th position), Akbar's tomb (8th) and Itimad-ud daula (10th).

To another query on carbon pollution around the Taj Mahal, the minister said that the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ) Authority has banned entry of Euro-I model, petrol/diesel-operated auto loader vehicles from July 31 to reduce vehicular pollution in the vicinity of the Taj. He added that TTZ Authority has also decided to convert petrol/diesel-operated commercial vehicles to CNG. So far, 34,302 vehicles have been converted to CNG in Agra, he said.

However, though the Taj Mahal still remains at the top of the most-visited monuments in the country, there has been a constant fall in the number of foreign visitors to the 17th century monument in the last three years. There were 7.9 lakh visitors from abroad to the Taj in 2012. But the number came down to 7.4 lakh in 2013, further dipping to 6.4 lakh in 2014.

Prior to 2012, the average foreign tourist footfall at the world heritage building had been increasing at a rate of 10-15% per annum. In 2010, 6.1 lakh foreigners had visited the Taj. The number went up to 6.7 lakh in 2011 and further to 7.9 lakh in 2012.