

IATO 39th Annual Convention in Bhopal Paves the Way for Tourism Growth in Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh Tourism forges new alliances and highlights its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, poised to increase inbound tourism

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-- The 39th Annual Convention of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), held in Bhopal and hosted by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, concluded on a high note, reaffirming Madhya Pradesh's status as a key player in India's tourism landscape. The convention, which ran from August 31st to September 2nd, 2024, brought together over 1,200 delegates from across the country, including tour operators, travel agents, industry experts, and dignitaries, showcasing the immense potential of Madhya Pradesh as an offbeat multispecialty destination.

The theme of this year's convention, "Resurgent India Inbound," focused on boosting inbound tourism to India, with a special emphasis on Madhya Pradesh's diverse cultural, natural, and experiential tourism offerings. The convention provided a vital platform to engage with key stakeholders and explore strategies to attract more international tourists.

Dr. Mohan Yadav, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, inaugurated the convention and



Upper Lake Bhojtal in Bhopal



Sanchi Stupa - a UNESCO World Heritage Site

emphasized the state's ongoing commitment to enhancing tourism infrastructure and creating unique travel experiences. He highlighted Madhya Pradesh's rich cultural and natural heritage, which includes UNESCO World Heritage Sites like Sanchi, Bhimbetka, and Khajuraho, as well as its abundant wildlife sanctuaries and revered religious sites. The Chief Minister stressed that Madhya Pradesh is well-positioned to become a top destination for both domestic and international tourists due to its diverse attractions and well-developed tourism infrastructure.

During the convention, IATO Vice President Ravi Gosain shared insights into the success of the previous year's convention held in Chhatrapati Sambhajigar (Aurangabad), which resulted in a 15-20% increase in foreign tourist arrivals in the state. The significant turnout at this year's event in Madhya Pradesh signals a positive outlook, with expectations of a 30-40% rise in inbound tourism to the state in the near future.

Mr. Mahendra Pratap Singh, Chairman of IATO's Madhya Pradesh Chapter, highlighted the strategic advantage of Madhya Pradesh's central location and its excellent connectivity, which make it a prime destination for tourists. With two international airports in Indore and Bhopal, alongside domestic airports in cities like Gwalior, Jabalpur, and Khajuraho, travelers can easily access the state. Additionally, the forthcoming airports in Rewa and Datia, along with the launch of the PM Shri Paryatan Air Service connecting key cities such as Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Ujjain, and Khajuraho, are set to significantly improve connectivity and boost the state's tourism appeal.

Madhya Pradesh has made significant strides in improving its tourism infrastructure. The ongoing development of luxury tent cities, new hotels, and amenities at emerging destinations is set to elevate the tourism experience. Additionally, the expansion of air connectivity is creating



Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav Addressing the Attendees at the 39th IATO Convention in Bhopal



Business Session chaired by the Principal Secretary Mr. Sheo Shekhar Shukla and the Additional Managing Director Ms. Bidisha Mukherjee, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board at the IATO Convention

more opportunities for Madhya Pradesh to attract international tourists.

Key sessions during the convention focused on emerging trends in travel, digital marketing, sustainable tourism practices, and experiential travel, all of which align with Madhya Pradesh Tourism's long-term strategies for growth. Special attention was given to expanding partnerships with tour operators and travel trade partners to ensure that Madhya Pradesh remains competitive in both international and domestic markets.

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board played a pivotal role in facilitating networking opportunities among tour operators, travel agents, and hospitality stakeholders, paving the way for new business collaborations. These interactions are expected to result in stronger travel packages, improved infrastructure partnerships, and the promotion of unique, off-the-beaten-path experiences across the state. Attendees expressed enthusiasm about the potential collaborations and opportunities to promote Madhya Pradesh as a must-visit destination.

In addition to the strategic discussions, attendees had the chance to explore Madhya Pradesh's cultural and natural treasures through several curated Familiarization (FAM) trips. Over 350 members of IATO were taken on special tours to iconic sites such as Chanderi, Ujjain, Indore, Bhimbetka, and Bhopur. These immersive experiences allowed participants to witness firsthand the state's diversity, including its historical landmarks, spiritual centers, and vibrant wildlife, thereby equipping them with the knowledge to better promote Madhya Pradesh to international tourists.

On the third day of the convention, a 5 km "Run for Responsible Tourism" saw the participation of nearly 500 members, reinforcing Madhya Pradesh Tourism's commitment to promoting sustainable and responsible travel practices. It is a known fact that Madhya Pradesh has created a benchmark in responsible tourism through its deep efforts empowered by community development

As part of the convention, IATO honored states and organizations that have made significant contributions to the field of tourism. Madhya Pradesh was awarded the "Best Promotional Publication by State" in recognition of its innovative and effective tourism promotion efforts. Ms.



Business Session by Dr. Ilayaraja T, IAS, Managing Director of Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Corporation

Bidisha Mukherjee, Additional Managing Director of the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, accepted the award on behalf of the state.

The 39th Annual Convention of IATO not only strengthened Madhya Pradesh's ties with key channel partners but also solidified the state's position as a leading destination in India's tourism industry. With growing interest from the travel trade community and an increased focus on experiential travel, Madhya Pradesh Tourism is well on its way to achieving its goals of boosting inbound tourism and creating memorable travel experiences.

Madhya Pradesh Tourism remains committed to promoting the state's rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and diverse attractions to visitors from around the world. Madhya Pradesh is a kaleidoscope of rich cultural experiences and a deep treasure trove of history enthusiasts. As the state continues to expand its tourism offerings, enhance its infrastructure, and build strong partnerships, it is poised to see continued growth and success in the global travel market.

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Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board

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