

Religious Tourism in Ayodhya

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India is renowned for its religious monuments and temples. India is remarkable for its ability to coexist with such harmony in its diversity, despite having so many castes and ethnicities, each of which practices its respective religions. India is home to many religious sites and destinations for pilgrims because Hinduism is the most popular religion there. Uttar Pradesh is one of these states that attracts tourists for its pilgrimage industry. There are numerous temples and religious sites that draw many tourists and believers all year long. These towns and places in Uttar Pradesh are well-known for the pilgrims and temples and their beautiful geography. The most authentic tour of India you can take includes a stop at one of these pilgrimage sites in Uttar Pradesh. This essay is supported by secondary data that was gathered from numerous sources.

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1. Introduction

Ayodhya, a well-known religious destination in Uttar Pradesh, became prominent due to its association with Ram, a hero from

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Hindu mythology. As one of the seven most significant Hindu pilgrimage sites in India or Saptapuri, Ayodhya is regarded as the birthplace of Ram. It has always been a very well-known city in Indian history and mythology, formerly known as Saket. It was once the seat of the mighty Kosala kingdom. The fame of Ayodhya is due to the city's numerous allusions to the renowned Indian epic Ramayana. Moreover, Ayodhya is mentioned in ancient literature like the Atharva Veda, which glorifies it as a thriving city God created. According to the Vedas, Manu was the name of the first man in the universe. According to the Ramayana, Manu created the city of Ayodhya 9,000 years ago. Ayodhya is listed as one of Hinduism's seven most sacred towns in other ancient books, including the Skanda Purana.

The biggest festival in India, Diwali, begins in Ayodhya city. When Rama returned after defeating Ravana in battle, it is thought that the festival of Diwali was, first and foremost, a celebration with lamps. Ayodhya is not only well-liked by Hindus; it also occupies a special place in Jains' hearts. It so happens that Adinath, one of the five Jain Tirthankars, was born there. Even Muslim influences can be seen around Ayodhya. The contentious Babri mosque, which was demolished in 1992, was also located there. Babur, the Mughal emperor, is thought to have destroyed the Rama temple at the site of his birth to erect a mosque. The main point of contention is Hindu organizations' agitation to have a Rama temple rebuilt on the same property.

2. Methodology

This paper is theoretical in nature and based on secondary data. Secondary data has been collected from various journals, websites and newspapers.

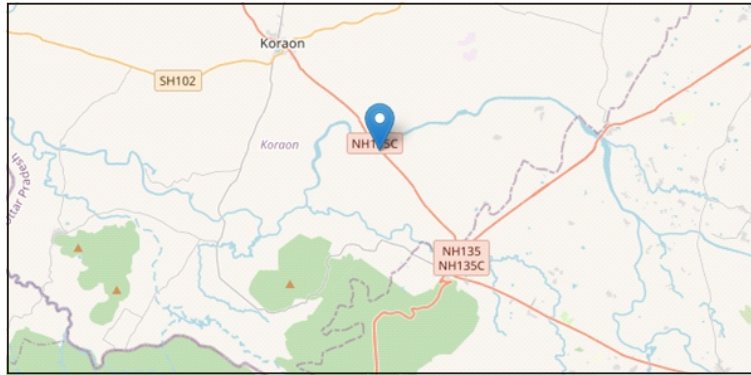
3. Ayodhya

Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India, is located at latitude 24.941553 and longitude 82.127167. Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India, is in the Villages location category with GPS coordinates of 24° 56' 29.5908' N and 82° 7' 37.8012' E.

3.1 Geographical Status

Located on the southern bank of the Saryu River, Ayodhya city is part of the Faizabad district of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Overall, the

climate is moderately monsoon. The following table displays the average monthly information for the climate’s many components, including temperature, rainfall, and humidity:



Source : <https://www.latlong.net/place/ayodhya-uttar-pradesh-india-15948.html>

Sr. No.	Month	The Highest Average Monthly Temperature (In Centigrade)	The Lowest Average Monthly Temperature (In Centigrade)	Average Temperature (in Centigrade)	Average Relative Humidity (in per cent)	Average Monthly Rainfall (in cm)
1.	January	20.8	8.1	14.4	62.2	1.60
2.	February	26.6	11.2	18.9	54.2	2.12
3.	March	34.5	16.3	25.4	35.0	0.81
4.	April	38.2	22.0	30.1	26.8	0.51
5.	May	42.2	25.6	33.9	37.2	1.25
6.	June	40.0	27.4	33.7	57.8	11.96
7.	July	35.2	25.6	30.4	79.2	29.22
8.	August	33.2	25.9	29.5	82.4	31.41
9.	September	34.1	24.4	29.2	77.2	20.05
10.	October	32.6	22.0	27.3	62.0	4.87
11.	November	29.3	12.3	20.7	58.1	0.77
12.	December	25.5	8.4	16.9	63.2	0.61
Annual Average		33.9	19.1	27.4	57.9	105.1

Source : <http://www.nagarnigamayodhya.in/pages/en/newtopmenu/ayodhya-city/en-geographical-status>

3-2 When to Visit Ayodhya?

Ayodhya is a popular tourist destination since it is an important city from a religious perspective. The most fabulous season to visit Ayodhya is from October to March, when the weather is believed to be perfect for enjoying your sightseeing activities, and the whole place looks mesmerizing with temperatures hovering at a comfortable 23 degrees Celsius. However, the location is evergreen throughout the year. Ayodhya is a well-known tourist destination, so there are several places to stay for a reasonable price, and the city has a vast range of housing options and hotels to help you discover and find enjoyable and authentic experiences according to your preferences and budget. In addition, hotels in Ayodhya offer a wide range of amenities, so you may choose one that fits your preferences and price range and yet let you take full advantage of your stay there.

Ayodhya has a diverse range of holy sites for visitors to explore, including numerous historic temples, magnificent museums, busy streets, bazaars, chic urban areas, and stunning gardens. The top six temples in Ayodhya, which clearly express the city's religious and cultural legacy, are listed below. Most temples are within easy walking distance of one another, making it simple to visit them all in a few days.

3-3 Prominent Places to Visit

Prominent Place to Visit in Ayodhya are as follows :

1. **Ramjanma Bhoomi** : It is believed that Lord Ram's temple originally stood in this holy place. The order of Emperor Babur destroyed the temple, and a mosque was built in its place. Ram Janam Bhumi-Babri Masjid, one of the most religious sites in Ayodhya, has received the most media attention and coverage. The temple is now allowed to visit after years of controversy. The location where the fabled King Ram is thought to have been born in the temple. The Babri Masjid is no longer in its former magnificence; all that is left are the ruins. The best times to visit the location are believed to be Ram Navami, Dussehra, and Diwali, when the biggest festivals are celebrated with enormous vigor and pomp, along with various song and dance performances, unique rituals, and pujas. You will undoubtedly have the memory of your visit to this exquisite shrine with you for the rest of your life.

- 2. Hanuman Garhi :** Hanuman Garhi is one of the holy sites in Ayodhya that has made a place for itself not only in the hearts of its devoted followers but also as a popular destination for tourists. One of the most well-known religious sites in Ayodhya, the holy place is well-situated in the city's centre and is a must-see. According to legend, visiting this shrine can wash away your sins and grant your requests. Hence it is frequented all year long by devoted Hindus. The inner sanctum of this cave temple houses a figure of Mata Anjani holding a young Hanuman in her arms. The location is also well worth a visit because of its remarkable architecture, which displays impressive architectural talent and circular bastions at each corner. The temple assumes a colourful form when major holidays like Hanuman Jayanti, Ram Navmi, Ram Leela, Diwali, and Dusshera are held. During the holiday season, the temple located on a mountain is breathtakingly lovely.
- 3. Nageshwarnath Temple :** This temple was built initially by Kush, the younger son of Lord Ram, who plays a significant role in the epic Ramayana. Once, while taking a bath in the Saryu River, Kusha misplaced his amulet. He searched for it but was unsuccessful. Kusha continued to believe that a bad omen had befallen him and prevented him from finding the amulet. But in reality, a Nag Kanya who had fallen for him picked up the amulet. She won the young warrior's respect and adoration when she gave the amulet back. Kush built the Nageshwara Temple in Ayodhya in honor of Nag Kanya since she was a devout devotee of Lord Shiva. This temple has managed to maintain its original attractiveness since the beginning of time, while the rest of the city was entirely buried by dense woodland. The temple building features semi-divine Nagas praising Lord Shiva. The entire place is filled with excitement as Shivaratri, which falls in March, is celebrated with fanfare and merriment.
- 4. Kanak Bhavan Temple :** The temple, which is more often known by the name Kanak Sone ka Mandir, gets its name from the lavishly embellished idols of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita that are covered in a substantial amount of gold jewels. One of the top sacred sites for both pilgrims and tourists alike, the Kanak Bhawan Temple continues to be a distinctive attraction. It's a stunning sight to see the magnificent dawn and sunset from where the temple is situated. Indian mythology holds that

Kaikeyee, who was in charge of exiled Lord Rama and his wife Sita, eventually constructed this shrine for Sita as a sign of penitence. The black and white tiled courtyard has evening musical performances, which is a popular draw for tourists.

5. Sumantanath : Ayodhya is not only regarded as one of the most significant pilgrimage sites for Hindus but also has similar significance for Jains. These temples are thought to have been constructed by Kesari Singh, the Nawab of Faizabad's treasurer, to honor the locations of certain Jain Tirthankaras birthplaces. One of the holiest locations in Ayodhya for Jain pilgrims, the site is home to five of the twenty-four Tirthankaras who are reputed to have been born there. The tourist destination, which is believed to be the Suryavansh dynasty's stronghold, is bordered by winding alleyways, expansive temples, and roadside stores selling trinkets. Near the Ramkot fortress is a collection of historic Jain temples known as Sumantanath. Beautiful inscriptions predict the countless Tirthankaras and their preaching on the walls of these temples.
6. Sita ki Rasoi : One of Ayodhya's unique religious places is Sita ki Rasoi, located on the city's northwest side. Goddess Sita's shrine has been transformed into a royal kitchen. The temple has a mock-up of an old kitchen in one corner, complete with a rolling pin and plate representing kitchen utensils. At the opposite end of the temple grounds are statues of the four brothers Ram, Lakshman, Bharat, and Shatrughan, as well as their wives, Sita, Urmila, Mandavi, and Srutakirti. Since Goddess Sita is also known as the Goddess of Food or the Goddess Annapurna, the temple has a special symbolic meaning. According to legend, the Goddess fed not just her own family but all of humanity by teaching them how to share and feed the destitute and the needy. The priests continue this tradition even now, providing daily free meals to everyone who comes to the church hungry. While showing respect, you can decide to donate voluntarily.

3-4 Number of Visitors Yearly

Since Yogi Adityanath was appointed chief minister of the state for the first time in 2017, the holy city has grown with each passing year increasingly. He garnered headlines worldwide in 2017 when he began the Deepotsav festival in Ayodhya on the eve of Diwali. Except

during the COVID-19 period, the event's splendor has risen yearly, breaking previous records for the number of lighted diyas and the volume of tourists who attend. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be there, making it even greater this year.

1.71 lakh diyas were lighted during the first Deepotsav in 2017, and this number climbed to 3.01 lakh, 4.04 lakh, 6.06 lakh, and 9.41 lakh in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively, setting new records and being included in the Guinness Book of World Records each year. The objective for this year is to ignite 15 lakh lamps.

The branding of Lord Ram's birthplace with Deepotsav has also considerably enhanced the number of tourists visiting Ayodhya.

Year wise Detail of Visitors

Sr. No.	Year	Number of Visitors
1.	2017-18	1,78,57,858
2.	2018-19	1,95,63,159
3.	2019-20	2,04,91,724
4.	2020-21	61,96,148
5.	2021- Aug, 2022	2,21,38,805

Ramlila troupes from several foreign nations, as well as various Indian states, have performed in Ayodhya during the five Deepotsavs that have taken place thus far. For example, in Ayodhya, Ramlila parties from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Trinidad, Russia, Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Fiji, as well as Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Gujarat, Karnataka, and West Bengal, performed by their customs.

4. Future Perspective

By 2030, Ayodhya will rank among the top tourist destinations in the world thanks to the Ram Mandir built shortly and the millions of people who will travel there to see it and pray there. Once the temple is built, this area will have more tourism opportunities. Ayodhya is a city of tenacity and history. It is a city of the spirit. Soon, it will be a tourist destination.

5. Conclusion

A State's socioeconomic growth is significantly influenced by religious tourism. It encourages people to share their values,

customs, traditions, and ways of life; it supports cultural variety and spirituality; it brings in foreign exchange, creates job possibilities, and it promotes cultural diversity. Furthermore, it aids in the management of a nation's soft power to preserve connections with other countries. Diverse and culturally rich religious tourism has been practiced in India. Locations in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh that are particularly popular for religious tourism. A State's socioeconomic growth is significantly influenced by religious tourism. It encourages people to share their values, customs, traditions, and ways of life; it supports cultural variety and spirituality; it brings in foreign exchange, creates job possibilities, and promotes cultural diversity. Furthermore, it aids in the management of a nation's soft power to preserve connections with other countries. Diverse and culturally rich religious tourism has been practiced in India. Locations in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, are top-rated for religious tourism.

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