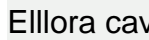


CENTRE TO PROMOTE DESTINATIONS IN 15 STATES AS PART OF SWADESH DARSHAN 2

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Ellora caves is among the sites included in the scheme.  The Hindu

Prayagraj, Chitrakoot, and Gwalior are among the cities identified in 15 States across the country to be promoted as part of India's new domestic tourism policy which moves away from theme-based tourist circuits and focuses on revving up destination tourism.

The initiative is being taken as part of the first phase of the 'Swadesh Darshan 2' which will be kicked off in January.

Fifteen States are part of the first phase which include Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Two destinations from each State have been identified, sources in the Ministry of Tourism told *The Hindu*.

Some of the prominent places identified are Jhansi and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, Gwalior, Chitrakoot and Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh and Ajanta and Ellora in Maharashtra.

The sources said the destinations had been zeroed in on after consultations with the State Tourism Departments, and the Centre was now waiting for approval from Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy. The Swadesh Darshan scheme is 100% centrally funded.

'Vocal for local'

The scheme has been revamped with the mantra of "vocal for local", a top official of the Tourism Ministry told *The Hindu* adding that it was essentially aimed at targeting domestic tourists.

The Swadesh Darshan Scheme was launched by the Centre in 2014-15 for the integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits. Under the scheme, the Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance to State governments, Union Territory Administrations or Central Agencies for development of tourism infrastructure in the country.

From December, the revamped scheme would be launched which seeks to enhance the contribution of tourism to local economies. "To create jobs including self-employment for local communities, to enhance the skills of local youth in tourism and hospitality, to increase private sector investment in tourism and hospitality and to preserve and enhance local cultural and natural resources," the vision document said.

President of Indian Association of Tour Operators Rajiv Mehra told *The Hindu*: "This is a very positive step as it has made State government as well as the local government as stakeholders. Local community would immensely benefit as It would help create jobs and that would lead to skill development among the natives. All in all, this shall directly boost the economy of the region."

END

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