

Laws Relating to Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

Tourism is one of the important revenue resources for the State government. Since the inception of the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC), the inflow of tourists in the State has almost doubled every four years. Table 18 gives the details from 1977 to 1981.

Table 18: Indian and Foreign Tourists in Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation Accomodation

Type of Tourist	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
1	2	3	4	5	6
Indian	36,360	40,198	50,874	60,812	69,263
Foreign	2,377	3,235	4,220	4,492	6,023
Total	38,737	43,433	55,094	65,304	75,286

Source: Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation

The State has one national park and 27 wildlife sanctuaries. This is the highest number of protected areas in any State. Evidently, H.P. is well endowed in wildlife and genetic resources. These resources are transversed by 1,994km of double-lane motorable road, 11,606km of single-lane road, 696km of jeepable roads and 4,439km of mud roads according to the PWD's 1983 account.

An analysis of the 14 odd laws that directly pertain to tourism reveals that they have the following main objectives.

- 1) The regulation of transport and the raising of financial revenue for the State through these laws. The relevant laws are given below.

The H.P. Motor Vehicles, Taxation Act, 1972

The H.P. Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 1976

The H.P. Ropeway Act, 1969

The H.P. Toll Act, 1976

The H.P. Prevention of Ticketless Travel in Road Transport Service Act, 1976

The H.P. Taxation (On Certain Goods Carried by Road) Act, 1976

The H.P. Passengers and Goods Taxation (Amendment) Act, 1977

- 2) Regulation of hotels and apartments, and the raising of revenue for the State through such laws. The relevant laws are given below.

The H.P. Registration of Hotels and Travel Agents Act, 1969

The H.P. Apartment Ownership Act, 1978

The H.P. Tax on Luxuries (in hotels and lodging houses) Act, 1979

The Indian Treasure Trove (H.P. Amendment) Act, 1979

- 3) Protection of buildings of historical significance and tourist attraction. The relevant law is the H.P. Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act, 1976.

Raising revenue for the State is indeed an important function of the laws, and so is regulating quality control of hotels, transport, and roads. However, the State cannot be oblivious of the fact that, with the rapid rate of ecological devastation going on in the State, there soon may not be much left to attract the tourist. The fate of the Mussoorie and Dehradun hills is a testimony to this fact. Once considered an ecological paradise, these hills are now sweltering in the summer, facing massive water shortages, and offering little solace to the tourists from the plains who wish to escape the heat. If the laws concerning tourism remain as the above, the same fate awaits the Himachal hills. Evidently, ancient monuments and historical sites are not alone in needing protection but rather the whole environmental setting in which they were created. Laws concerning tourism will have to take a holistic approach if the State wishes to continue to offer an alternative ecology to the tourists and retain the scenic beauty which attracts them. In the light of this, let us turn to see what type of legal alternatives need to be sought.