

CONTEMPORARY TOURISM PLANNING

Introspecting Problems and Prospects



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Contemporary Tourism Planning: A Case Study of the Ajanta Ellora Development Project

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage and historic sites in Maharashtra had faced the risk of collapse and decay due to permeating rainwater. Temples, mural paintings and sculptures in the Ajanta and Ellora caves, both of which are inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1983, had been deteriorating and were in need of urgent action for conservation. An increasing number of tourists also called for the development of sightseeing facilities and other tourism infrastructure in the surrounding areas.

THE AJANTA ELLORA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Since 1992 Ajanta is being developed as a Tourist Center of Excellence in which elements of culture, tourism and clean civic life has been synthesized. An elegant environment has been created around the cave complex, which not only presents Indian heritage at its best but also shows how both domestic and foreign tourism could be given a big boost.

The Ajanta Ellora Development Project (AEDP) was formulated in 1991 and prepared by the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on request by the Government of India and the Government of Japan. The Government of India and Government of Japan signed a loan agreement in January 1992. The Tata Consultancy Services was appointed in November 1993 as consultants for the AEDP.

The AEDP was financed by the then Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund (OEFC is now merged with Japan Bank for International Cooperation) of Government of Japan. The OEFC had provided 82% of the finance and the rest 18% by the Government of Maharashtra. The OEFC had sanctioned a long term soft loan of Rs. 200 crore to the Indian Government for the restoration and development works at the World Heritage sites of Ajanta and Ellora and the loan is to be returned over 30 years at a nominal rate of interest 2.4% embodies Japans keen interest in developing the Buddhist sites in India, Ajanta and Ellora being prominent Buddhist caves of World Heritage status in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE AJANTA–ELLORA CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

1. To conserve and preserve the monuments and natural resources in Ajanta–Ellora region.
2. To improve the infrastructure in order to accommodate the increasing number of Tourist to the region and enhance their experience by providing improved facilities and services.
3. To preserve the historical and cultural background of religions like Buddhism and to highlight the significance of Ajanta and Ellora as well as other related sites.
4. To provide better visitor management service to enrich the overall visitor experience.
5. To motivate tourists to extend their stay in the region, thereby augmenting the country earnings from tourism.

PHASE I

The first phase of Ajanta–Ellora Development Project had commenced in 1992 and was completed in 2002 with the final expenditure of Rs.127.48 Cr. Which was spent on the Infrastructural facilities like upgrading Aurangabad Airport and developing and greening the routes to the caves. The details of the work completed under the subprojects are as follows.

1. **Conservation of Monuments (ASI):** In this subproject Rs. 8.60 Million was spent on the improvements to approach path to the Ajanta caves and improvements of the internal roads at Ellora.
2. **Afforestation (FDM):** In this subproject Rs. 32.436 Million was spent on tree plantation and fencing of 500 hectares at Ajanta and 237 hectares at Ellora.
3. **Aurangabad Airport Facilities (AAI):** In this subproject Rs. 108.77 Million was spent on up gradation of Airport, extending the Airstrip from 1500 ft to 7500 ft and Night landing facilities.
4. **Roads (PWD):** In this subproject Rs. 563.150 Million was spent on the widening and improvement of over 200 kms Roads to Ajanta and Ellora region.
5. **Water Supply and Sewarage (MWSSB):** In this subproject Rs. 55.8.6 Million has been spent on the water supply pipeline to the proposed Tourist Complex at Ajanta and Ellora.
6. **Electrical Supply (MSEB):** In this subproject Rs. 34.16 Million is spent on the 33 Kv line between Pahur and Fardapur and between Khultabad to Ellora. Two 5 MVA Transformers at Fardapur and Khultabad, have been commissioned and now are under active use.

Table I: (Subproject and Implementing Agencies under AEDP)

Sub-Projects	Implementing Agencies
Conservation of Monuments	Archaeological Survey of India, Department of Culture, Government of India (AIS).
Afforestation	Forest Department, Government of Maharashtra (FDM).
Aerodrome Facilities	National Airport Authority, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India.
Roads	Public Works Department, Government of Maharashtra (PWD).
Water Supply and Sewerage	Maharashtra Water Supply and Sewerage Board (MWSSB).
Electricity	Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB)
Visitor Management System	MTDC, ASI, Department of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra and Government.

Source: Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation.

PHASE II: (2004-2013)

Rs. 253.56 Cr. was sanctioned and JICA has extended the loan proposal upto 31st July 2014. The major development under this phase is the creation of the two visitor orientation centres, the only one of its kind in India.

AJANTA VISITOR CENTER (AVC)

The AVC is located off the SH 8 near Fardapur village 4 km from Ajanta caves. It has 5 museum hall in which actual size replica of 4 of the popular caves of Ajanta, 1, 2, 16 & 17 are recreated.

The important features AVC are:

- Three types of restaurants i.e. cafeteria, restaurant and student restaurants.
- Auditorium and an amphitheatre.
- Audio Visual Content which consist of movies about Buddhism, introduction to Ajanta, mural paintings, Jataka tales and e-learning games.
- Parking space that can accommodate 280 cars, 20 buses and 200 two wheelers.

ELLORA VISITOR CENTRE (EVC)

The EVC is located along the NH 211. It has 3 museums in which 1/10th size replica of the Kailash temple.

The important Features of EVC are:

- Two similar restaurants and a restaurant below the pergola.
- An auditorium and an amphitheatre.
- Audio visual content of AVC includes movies about Buddhism; Hinduism and Jainism, introduction to Ellora, mural paintings, Jataka tales and e-learning games.
- Parking spaces for 142 cars, 41 buses and 199 two vehicles.

CONCLUSION

The Ajanta-Ellora Conservation and Tourism Development Project has promoted the development of the tourism and other local industries by conserving these heritage sites and the surrounding natural environment, improving roads and airport facilities, and constructing tourist centers to provide better services for tourists. Today because of the AEDP Ajanta and Ellora have become popular tourist destination amongst the foreign and domestic tourists and rank amongst the top 10 monuments in India visited by foreign & domestic tourists. During 2011-2012 Ajanta received 4 Lakh visitors while Ellora got over 13 Lakhs.

Thus Ajanta-Ellora has become the first planned tourism destination of India and a prime example of International cooperation in tourism between India and Japan. The External Assistance provided by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for AEDP project is expected to achieve the economic development of this region through the protection of World Heritage sites and the development of tourism infrastructure, thereby stimulating local economic activities and increasing living standards of local residents. The execution of the AEDP is again a prominent example of Inter Departmental Cooperation as evidenced by the various central and Maharashtra State implementing departments.