

News story: Culture Secretary Karen Bradley on India mission to attract more tourists to Britain

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley met key representatives from the Indian travel market today to bang the drum for British tourism.

India is a key priority for the government's tourism arm. VisitBritain expects the number of visits from Indian tourists to grow from 415,000 in 2016 to 531,000 by 2020.

Last year the Indian tourism market was worth £433 million to the UK economy, with the average Indian visitor spending more than £1,000.

The Culture Secretary met senior representatives including British Airways, Cox and Kings, Thomas Cook India Ltd, Mercury Travel Ltd, MakeMyTrip.com and Ezeegol.com to highlight the range of unique attractions Britain has to offer and discuss how the UK government and VisitBritain can best support tourism growth from India.

England and Wales are hosting the Cricket World Cup in 2019 and this has been earmarked as a key event that can be used to encourage cricket-loving Indian visitors to come and see the best of Britain.

Karen Bradley, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

India is forecast to be the world's fastest growing major economy over the next five years, sparking a huge rise in outbound travel.

It is vital that we capitalise on our strong relationship with India to make Britain the number one European destination for Indian holiday and business visitors in the coming years.

The cultural ties between the UK and India span centuries and our countries both benefit from shared ideas, institutions and technologies. As we prepare to leave the EU, it is a fantastic opportunity to further strengthen this special relationship and boost travel between India and the UK.

VisitBritain Chief Executive Sally Balcombe said:

We know that visitors from India are coming in increasing numbers and rate Britain for its interesting and exciting contemporary culture and its outstanding natural beauty. By continuing to showcase the incredible experiences on offer and working with

regional partners such as Cox and Kings to extend our reach, we will inspire more visitors from India to discover for themselves, all there is to see in our nations and regions.

In February the UK and India agreed to ease restrictions on the number of scheduled flights between the two countries, removing limits from key Indian cities including Chennai and Kolkata.

There is capacity for 1.6 million passengers to fly directly from India to the UK every year, with 88 scheduled services per week in each direction between the two countries, and India-UK direct flights are higher than any other European country.

It is one of VisitBritain's seven GREAT inbound tourism markets, meaning there is long-term potential for growth and the national tourism market is investing additional funds in the market.

The Culture Secretary is visiting India to mark the UK-India Year of Culture, announced in 2015. She has opened a joint exhibition between the British Museum and the CSMVS Museum in Mumbai. Other key events include the 1928 Anglo-India film Shiraz, which was remastered by the BFI and set to a modern score by musician Anoushka Shankar and has just completed its tour of India. Acclaimed contemporary dance piece FAR by Company Wayne McGregor, scored by Brian Eno, will also undertake a four-city tour of India in November.