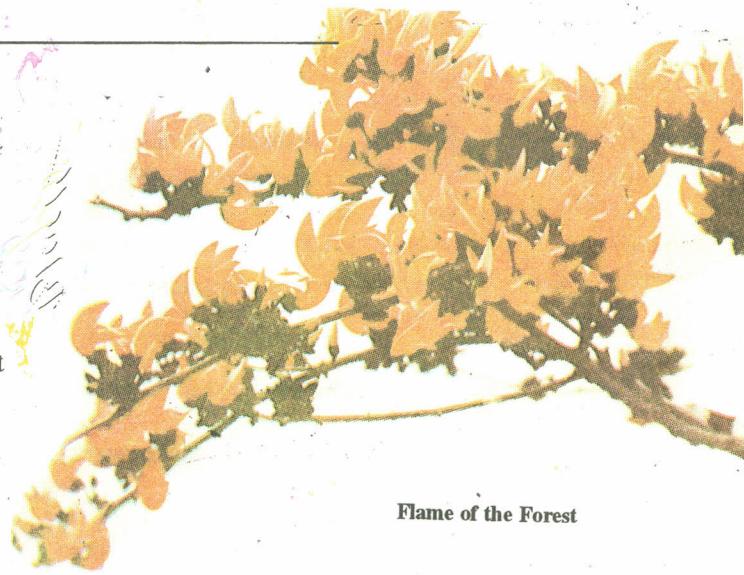


UNIT 18 SEASONALITY AND DESTINATIONS

Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Seasons and Climate
- 18.3 Seasonality in Tourism
- 18.4 Festival Season
- 18.5 Measurement of Seasonality
- 18.6 Destination Management, Marketing and Employment
- 18.7 Destination
- 18.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.9 Keywords
- 18.10 Answer to Check Your Progress Exercises
- Appendix



Flame of the Forest

18.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- appreciate the role of climate in tourism,
- know the relationship between climate, destination and tourism,
- understand the concept of seasonality in relation to tourism,
- know about the measurement of seasonality,
- learn about the impact of seasons on the destination and its marketing,
- know the impact of seasonality on employment, and
- learn about destinations.

18.1 INTRODUCTION

Very often you hear, “Oh! its tourist season”. What does it mean? Well, there are tourists all around the place and accordingly go the activities and services. You may have heard a hotelier say, “this was a bad season.”. Here he is not talking about the climate but in terms of his business which did not yield him the expected profits during that particular period. In this Unit an attempt has been made to familiarise a learner in tourism with matters related to seasonality and destinations. The Unit starts with a discussion on climate and weather conditions and how they affect the movement of people from the place of origin to destination. It further discusses different types of seasonality, its measurement and impact on destinations. Certain characteristics of destinations have also been listed. Such information equips a tourism professional with the knowledge to cater to his clients or generate awareness.

18.2 SEASONS AND CLIMATE

Seasonally a year can be divided into four main periods, recognised in the northern hemisphere as:

- Spring (21 March to 20 June)
- Summer (21 June to 22 September)
- Autumn (23 September to 21 December)
- Winter (22 December to 20 March)

Seasons are important in view of the climatic changes associated with them and their impact on all forms of life. Even human beings are not spared from the rhythms of cyclic variations in climate.

The average weather conditions prevailing in an area over successive years is taken to be the climate of that region. The basic elements which constitute the weather conditions are:

- temperature of the air,
- humidity of the air,
- type and amount of cloudiness,
- type and amount of precipitation,
- atmospheric pressure, and
- speed and direction of the wind.

The specific measurements of the above factors represent the weather conditions at any given time in a place. They, however, keep on changing over time and space leading to varied weather conditions. By and large similar weather conditions prevail at the same point of time during successive years in a given place. The average measurements, thus discerned over a period of few years are described as the climate of that place.

The weather changes are caused by the revolution of the earth around the sun and the inclination of the equatorial plane to the plane of its path by an angle $23^{\circ} 27'$. The other factors which affect the weather conditions include the:

- radiant energy of the sun,
- earth's atmosphere which modulates the passage of solar radiation, and
- natural land forms and geophysical features of the earth's surface, like mountains, valleys, oceans, ice-caps, deserts, lakes, river, etc.

The climate of any particular region is also determined by its geographical location and physiographical features. In the Indian sub-continent, the climate is influenced by the alternating monsoons and consists of four principal seasons. These are:

Cold weather season (December to February)

Hot weather season (March to May)

South-west monsoon season (June to September)

North-east monsoon season (October to November)

Here you must remember that every tourism professional must be well equipped to answer the queries related to weather. About any destination you may be asked frequently what is the humidity there? Will it rain during the time of our visit? Which is the best season to visit? etc.

This makes the following of weather forecasts and reports important in tourism. You must be aware that the media plays a vital role in this regard. Daily weather bulletins are carried out by Radio Stations and Television. The newspapers also report on weather. Besides you get to know about the weather of different destinations world over through published reports and charts etc. For example see Chart 1.

18.3 SEASONALITY IN TOURISM

The seasonal variations in climate make significant impact on travel and tourism. The most visible impact is the emergence of tourist seasons because of climatic changes. People move to cooler places like beaches and mountain resorts during summer months and to warmer areas during winter. The development of hill stations in India is primarily due to this phenomenon. When the mercury goes up in the plains of India, the hill tops are usually cool and pleasant. The British rulers in India, therefore, developed a number of hill stations to have a comfortable life during hot weather seasons. These include Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Shimla, Kullu, Manali, Mussoori, Nainital, Shillong, Darjeeling, Mount Abu, Kodaikanal and Ooty. Several

millions of international and domestic tourists visit these hill resorts every year during hot weather season. In fact it is an escape from unpleasant weather at home. Some of them have also become popular for winter sports activities during cold weather seasons.

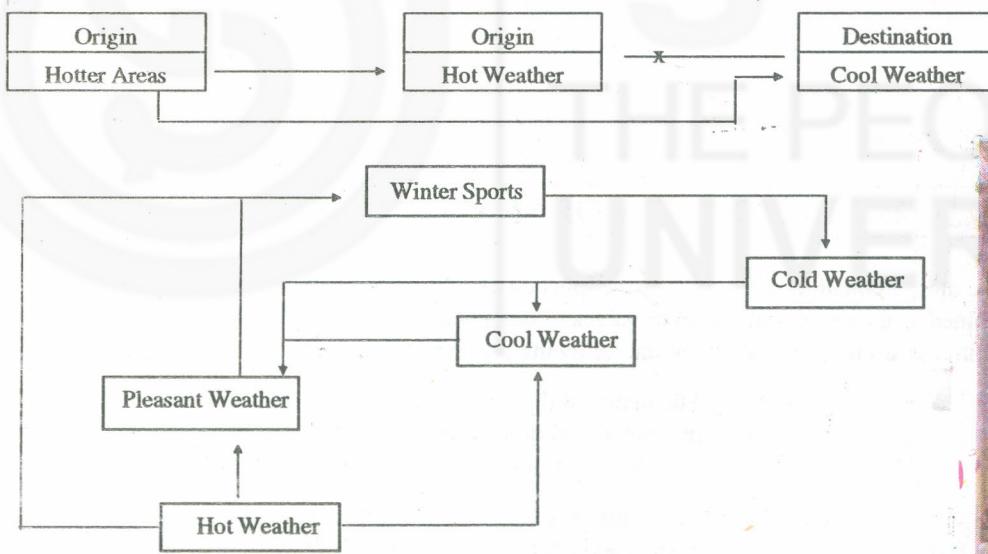
India also has a coastline of about 5700 kms providing a comparatively cool climate during summer and warmth during winter. Beach tourism is thus becoming popular in India with the development of some of the internationally known beaches like Goa, Kovalam, Mamallapuram, Puri, Konark, Gopalpur-on-Sea, etc. The climatic differences between different regions have thus helped India to develop beach and hill tourism.

The tourist movement in the whole of the world is, in fact, influenced by climatic seasons. Tourist looks for better weather conditions. Hence, from the Tourism point of view the hot season is the peak season at hill stations. Millions of tourists flock to Mediterranean beaches in Europe and west coast beaches in United States during summer. During winter, the tourists travel to warmer regions including India. Relatively few international tourists visit India during summer months as compared to winter season.

The peak tourist season is from October to March with the largest arrivals during the month of December. The lean tourist season is from April to June with the lowest arrivals during the month of May.

The diversity of climates in India with its several striking contrasts is also a motivation for the movement of domestic tourists from one part of the country to another. While Assam in the east presents extreme dampness, Rajasthan in the west presents extreme dryness. Similarly, Punjab in the north has continental climate with alternating fierce summer heat and winter cold, while Kerala in the south has a tropical maritime climate with almost invarying warmth and uniformly moist air. These contrasts in climate between different regions drive millions of people across the country in different seasons. There is normally a heavy rush of tourists from north to south during hot weather season and from south to north during north east monsoon.

MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE



18.4 FESTIVAL SEASON

The different regions of the country do have specific crops and periods of cultivation depending on their climatic seasons. The period of plenty after the harvest in every agricultural season is therefore, the time for rejoicing and celebrations. A number of fairs and festivals have thus come into being as a part of Indian social life. The Pongal Festival in Tamil Nadu, Paush Mela at Shantiniketan, the Festival of Nongkrem in Meghalaya and Onam Festival in Kerala are a few such festivals. Several other festivals of historic and religious significance are also being celebrated in different parts of the country. In fact, the Indian calendar is dotted with hundreds of fairs and festivals which are celebrated with devotion and spiritual fervour. The sheer

splendour of these festivals can have no rivals. They depict a passion for colours, a surrender to ecstasy and an underterrning faith in the beauty of life.

These fairs and festivals have become a source of great tourist attraction in recent years. A number of them are therefore being organised systematically and given wide publicity to attract tourists. These include a few festivals celebrated everywhere or in most parts of the country and others celebrated only in specific regions. For example Holi is celebrated in different parts of the country but it is the Holi of Mathura and Vrindawan that has become a tourist attraction. Similar is the case with Dussehra at Mysore or Kullu. (Fair and Festival attractions of India as per their seasons are mentioned in Appendix.)

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the link between climate and tourism.

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- 2) What is a festival season?

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- 3) Why do people go to hill stations in summer?

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18.5 MEASUREMENT OF SEASONALITY

The measurement of seasonality in any phenomenon is achieved through time series which is defined as the numerical record or values of the given variable at successive intervals of time. A time series usually consists of the following four components:

- 1) **Trend** — It is the general tendency of the series to gradually increase or decrease over a period of time. For example the international tourist arrivals in India were increasing steadily over the years from a low base during 1951.
- 2) **Cyclic Movement** — It represents oscillations of greater or lesser regularity about the trend. The oscillation or booms and depressions occur at large intervals of time.
- 3) **Seasonal Movement** — It represents the fluctuations in the series which occur at regular intervals of time, not exceeding a year. For example, the international tourist arrivals are usually the highest during December and the lowest during May in India.
- 4) **Random Component or Irregular Fluctuations** — The fluctuations which are not governed by any law or regularity and are purely haphazard are referred to as random component.

There are several statistical techniques for the estimation of each of the above components from a time series. Seasonal movement can be measured easily with the help of seasonal indices. It is the percentage ratio of the average value of the variable during the specific season to the overall average per season. Usually the seasonal indices are calculated either for

each month or for each quarter. In case the time series is available for each month for a period of ten years the monthly index for any month is estimated by using the following formula.

$$\begin{aligned}
 I_m &= \frac{\text{Average value for the month "m"}}{\text{Overall average value per month}} \times 100 \\
 &= \frac{\text{Total of the values for the month} / 10}{\text{Total of the values for all the months} / 12 \times 10} \times 100 \\
 &= \frac{\text{Total of the values for the month} \times 1200}{\text{Total of the values for all the months}}
 \end{aligned}$$

It has already been mentioned that the foreign tourist arrivals in India are highly seasonal. It can be quantified by calculating monthly indices of tourist arrivals as per the calculations given below:

FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS IN INDIA (Including the nations of Pakistan & Bangladesh)

Month Year	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
1981	116130	104456	114853	105190	81338	89535	105292
1982	116148	104915	113254	105709	82393	87683	112583
1983	117065	102823	117280	101794	81513	87397	111408
1984	123013	113483	118899	112162	87285	76254	92891
1985	103676	101749	108919	96979	85960	93836	109637
1986	128581	118886	137274	108805	90558	105956	126742
1987	134292	128986	132297	108405	95435	105923	127611
1988	149156	136776	138840	108804	94649	111381	136857
1989	155633	142279	155497	114046	104237	120188	148884
1990	177984	154758	149653	122986	107989	110033	143973
1991	144173	114567	130178	113862	109988	114658	149215
1992	177475	167268	148559	134895	123446	124386	160971
Total	1643326	1490946	1565503	1333637	1144791	1227229	1526064
	(t1)	(t2)	(t3)	(t4)	(t5)	(t6)	(t7)
Indices	110	100	105	90	77	83	103

FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS IN INDIA (Including the nations of Pakistan & Bangladesh)

Month Year	August	Sept.	October	November	December	Total
1981	112614	88430	115281	113483	132608	1279210
1982	111448	92680	117643	118147	125559	1288162
1983	104822	95562	127458	121042	136812	1304976
1984	88326	81816	104032	87222	108369	1193752
1985	96570	91453	117185	120779	132641	1259384
1986	113378	103773	132148	131220	153755	1451076
1987	119867	106016	132728	144678	148052	1484290
1988	129419	109961	136294	162181	176343	1590661
1989	135666	130581	170321	167134	191627	1736093
1990	133941	128067	146263	151241	180270	1707158
1991	141830	122693	158942	174304	203098	1677508
1992	153529	139746	174622	189573	173182	1867651
Total	1441410	1290778	163297	1681004	1862316	17839921
	(t8)	(t9)	(t10)	(t11)	(t12)	(T)
Indices	97	87	110	113	125	

where Index for its month = $(Ti/T) \times 12 \times 100$

It may be seen that the monthly index for December is 125 while the same for the month of May is 77. It implies that if 77 persons visit the country during May, about 125 tourists are expected during December.

18.6 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT, MARKETING AND EMPLOYMENT

The primary concern of destination management is the carrying capacity which is defined as the threshold limit of tourist traffic. Beyond that carrying capacity the tourists can cause serious damage to the resources of the destination including its environment and ecology. In the case of seasonality, the limits are applied to peak season arrivals.

In effect, the largest number of tourists who can stay in an area sets the limits of peak season traffic.

As a result of the above limit, there is usually a problem of excess capacity in the tourism infrastructure during lean periods. For example, in the case of a hill station, where the tourist traffic is mainly during summer months, the hotel rooms and restaurants may remain idle during winter months. There has to be, therefore, proper infrastructural planning so as to ensure optimum utilisation of available capacity. The usual practice is to create only so much of capacity which would ensure an average capacity utilisation of about 70 per cent throughout the year. The excess demand, if any, during peak period is normally met by "over loading" and temporary facilities. Overloading is often achieved by converting regular rooms into dormitories and by extending guest accommodation to other utility areas. Temporary facilities are usually tented accommodation, temporary huts, accommodation in transport units etc. But sometimes this also fails. For example, In 1993 the Goa Government issued press statements to the effect that those who have no bookings for accommodation should not visit Goa in December and January for they were not likely to get a place to stay.

The marketing strategy for any destination or facility has to be formulated on the basis of the extent of seasonality and the capacities available. It would involve special promotions, off-season prices and development of new products. For example, in the case of hill resorts, winter sports can be developed as a special attraction and sold at special off-season prices. The development of new off-season markets to achieve demand substitution by domestic and regional tourists is yet another method of dealing with seasonality in tourism. Thus, a clear understanding of seasonality is a primary requisite in formulating effective tourism marketing strategies.

The seasonality in tourist traffic to any destination seriously affects the employment potential. The providers of various tourist services tend to retain only the minimum number of persons on a regular basis. The excess demand during peak periods is met by extending the working hours of existing employees or by recruiting people on ad-hoc basis for short periods of time. Even, self employed persons may have to remain idle during lean periods as there may not be enough demand for their services. They have to, therefore, find alternate jobs in other sectors of the economy during such periods. At times, because of climatic variations the job market is affected during the peak season also. For example early rains in the plains during summer check the flow of tourists to hill stations having a chain reaction on the employment pattern there.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) How can seasonal movement be measured?

- 3) Discuss the link between seasonality and employment potential at a destination.



18.7 DESTINATION

In Unit 1 we discussed what a destination means in tourism. Here we will give you some more information related to destination.

Destinations can be naturally attractive like wild life sanctuaries or they can be designed with man-made or artificial attractions like amusement or theme parks, historical complexes or holiday villages. People and their customs and life style including fairs, festivals, music, dance, and ornamentation can also be staged as attractions. The Jaisalmer Desert Festival is an exercise of this kind. Many destinations have been developed as 8 modal designs, around a central attraction or an activity complex, where supplementary attractions and facilities are in close geographical proximity. Such modal attractions can then form circuits that link places of interest where tourists can make day trips and return to a particular centre or resort which provides the amenities and entertainment which tourists demand. Such modal destinations are ideal for package tours which sell because they combine so many activities and cover an area extensively.

Destinations and attractions also cover a vast area. They encourage linear tourism which is popular with motorists and coach tours, such as the number of attractions that can be covered between Delhi and Jaipur or Bangalore and Ooty. Tourists can make stopovers as they like and for as long as they wish.

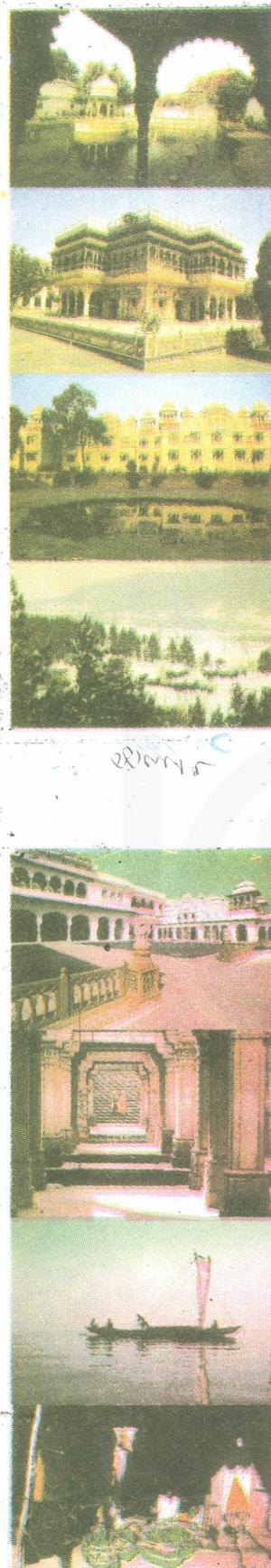
More than the site or the event, the attraction of a destination lies in the image that the potential tourist has of a particular place. For example, many tourists thinks of India as a single destination. For others, North India is the primary attraction because of Raj literature. For some India is a land of Temples whilst for many its attraction lies in Mughal Forts and Palaces. Many reject India because it is strange and therefore fearsome and for many the poverty of India is a deterrent. In fact the image of a destination depends on a variety of factors like attitude of the host population, civic amenities, natural surroundings, accessibility, food etc.

The image is neither constructed nor deconstructed over night. It tends to build up over time. In many cases it ends up in stereotypes created by the media or the promoters of tourist related practices and services. For example, for a long time the image of India was that of a land of snake charmers and rope climbing *fakirs*. Gradually many realistic things are now being added to the image.

No destination can become popular unless it is accessible and offers services and amenities that the tourists demand. Essential services are accommodation and food, backed up by local transport, activities and entertainment. In some cases the amenities themselves become the attraction as is the case with *handis* in Rajasthan. One reason for their attraction lies in the fact that they can be reached easily. Whilst the adventurer or explorer may enjoy the struggle to get there, the average tourist will not.

Accessibility means regular, efficient and convenient transport at an affordable price. Private transport requires good roads, service stations and wayside facilities. However a destination can become too accessible and therefore overcrowded like Mussorie, Shimla & Nainital. The

Destination in India



limited opening up of remote areas in difficult terrain, like Ladakh, have in a sense suffered from the problems associated with accessibility. Most destinations which have had long-term success have grown on the basis of unique attractions, like the Mount Everest or Vaishno Devi. However, mass tourists are more concerned with the provision of leisure activity like sun, sand and surf, which have a demand because they fulfil the idea of a holiday.

Tourist destinations, like other products, have life cycles—enjoying periods of growth and expansion and then decline and decay. Decline sets in because of overcrowding and changing trends and life-styles. Growing environmental consciousness and alternative ideologies, as well as activism have led to changes in the perception of tourists so that such tourists would like to distance themselves from mass tourists, and avoid the beaten track. Such tourists want to do things they have never done before and they want to forget comforts for a while. They try to establish more contact with local people and use the same facilities as the local population uses. Then there are tourists who believe that even alternatives can have a disturbing effect, particularly in developing countries because the contact between tourists and residents is much more intimate. For example, as in Jaisalmer as, say, compared to Khajuraho, where the tourist is enclosed and encapsulated.

Such tourists want to sustain the destination. They would like to clean up beaches, pick up debris in the mountains and be responsible to destination. However, sustainable tourism is also suspect. For example in the opinion of the World Wild Life Fund tourists are an antidote to poachery and conserving force which has been contested by local populations that depend on the forest environment for their survival, and are being denied access to the sanctuaries. Here we must also take note of the fact that in many cases destinations also determine the tourist season. For example, not all the wild life sanctuaries are open throughout the year. For certain months they are closed to the visitors. The same could be the case with same pilgrim destinations like Amarnath or Badrinath.

That sums up the creation of a tourist destination.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) What is the importance of supplementary amenities and attractions?

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- 2) What is the link between image and attraction in relation to a destination?

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18.8 LET US SUM UP

Seasonality has its own meaning in relation to tourism. Variations in climate have their own impact on travel and tourism. Tourist seasons are governed by climatic conditions at the place of origin as well as destination. There are ways to measure seasonality in tourism. Seasonality has its impact on destination management and employment. Destinations have their life cycle and their image is built over the years. In certain cases the supplementary attractions and services become primary attractions over a period of time.

18.9 KEY WORDS

Amenities	: Facilities
Antidote	: Medicine against a disease
Climate	: Average weather condition prevailing in an area over successive years
Debris	: Heap of rejected articles
Destination	: Place to be visited
Dormitory	: Sleeping room with several beds
Ecstasy	: Excessive happiness
Encapsulate	: Confine within a small place
Fluctuation	: Frequent changes in the quantity
Haphazard	: Casual
Infrastructure	: Permanent installation of basic nature
Lean Period	: Off-season time
Linear	: In the form of line
Modal	: Denoting manner
Optimum	: Maximum
Oscillation	: Periodic to & fro movement
Poachery	: Illegal killing of wild-life
Proximity	: Nearness
Quantity	: To be able to measure
Remote	: Not easily reached
Stereotype	: Of the same type
Threshold	: Minimum point below which the object becomes unidentifiable

18.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

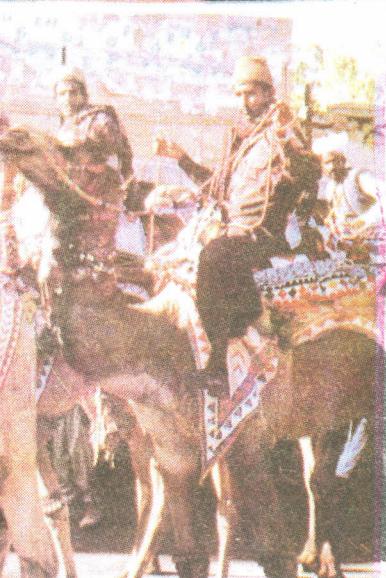
- 1) Mention how climate decides the destination of a tourist place e.g. hill station in summers.
See Sec. 18.3
- 2) A period of festivals that serves as an attraction to a tourist to visit the destination. See Sec. 18.4
- 3) Naturally, in order to escape from the heat and dryness.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Base your answer on Sec 18.5
- 2) Overloading in tourism language means meeting the excess demand through readjustments in the existing infrastructure. e.g. converting a single bed room into a double bed one. See Sec. 18.6
- 3) Base your answer on the last para of Sec. 18.6

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) The quality of supplementary services like local transport, entertainment etc. are linked to the image of a destination. Some times their better quality itself becomes an attraction. e.g. non-availability of local transport can keep the tourists away from a destination or a cycle rickshaw ride of Jaipur and Motor cycle Taxis in Goa have become an attraction for tourists. See Sec. 18.7.



SEASONALITY AND TOURIST ATTRACTIONS: FESTIVALS AND FAIRS OF INDIA

The year starts with a festive note. The NEW YEAR DAY is celebrated throughout the country with enthusiasm and pageantry. The festival of harvest, PONGAL is also celebrated in the same month in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Newly harvested rice is cooked and offered to the Sun God, *Surya*, and village cattles are decorated and paraded as a part of the PAUSHMELA at Shantiniketan and in Uttar Pradesh, it is MAKAR SANKRANTI on which day millions of devotees take a dip in river Ganga at Prayag (Allahabad). A spectacular KITE FESTIVAL is held at Ahmedabad on the day and the skies are dappled with bright kites. The festivities include kite flying competitions, cultural shows, food fests and exhibitions of exciting handicrafts.

The REPUBLIC DAY is celebrated on 26th January. It is a national festival and commemorates the day India became a republic in 1950. National flag hoisting and pageantry parades are held at all the State Capitals on the day. The most magnificent show of pomp is at New Delhi with parades, floats and cultural extravaganza.

The GREAT ELEPHANT MARCH is a major tourism event in Kerala in the month of January. An usual elephant marathon of over 100 decorated elephants is held at Trichur on the day alongwith other events like tug of war between elephants, boat race etc.

Towards the end of January or in the beginning of February, a fair called GANGA SAGAR MELA is held at the estuary of Ganga in West Bengal where millions of pilgrims gather to take a holy bath.

The month of February is also equally colourful with several festivals and fairs. A unique cattle fair is held at Nagaur, a place in Thar desert, during February-March every year. Thousands of horses, cattles, camels and other animals are brought and traded in the fair. Folk dances, music and other cultural shows are also organised during the fair for the entertainment of the visitors. The other festivals which make Rajasthan a riot of colours during the month are the DESERT FAIR at Jaisalmer and the HADOTI FESTIVAL at Kota. A major event of the month in Haryana is the SURAJKUND CRAFTS MELA where handicraft items from all over the country are displayed in a recreated village. The cultural events and food stalls in the village represent the rural India in its entirety. While the Indian craftsmen adorn Surajkund, the classical dancers of India bring alive the sculpted panels on the temples of Khajuraho during a week long DANCE FESTIVAL. The festival attempts to revive the intimate relationship between classical dances and temples culture. HOLI the festival of colours is celebrated almost all over India except a few States in the South. People of all ages participate in the holy celebrations and throw colours and water on their friends. The exuberant festival is preceded by VASANT PANCHAMI, a spring festival dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of learning.

No less festive is the month of March. An ebullient festival of the month is SHIVRATRI devoted to the worship of Lord Shiva. The temples devoted to this deity are thronged by devotees the whole day and night on Shivratri.

The month of April brings the Hindu solar new year day BAISAKHI which is celebrated with dances and festivities throughout north India. In Punjab, it is celebrated with astounding revelry and feasting and the elated Bhangra dance is performed at every village.

A two week long spring festival called GANGAUR FESTIVAL is celebrated at Jaipur in veneration of goddess Gauri on the last day of the celebrations, a procession with chariots, dancers, musicians, decorated camels, horses and elephants takes the idol of goddess Gauri out in a palanquin.

In the south at Madurai, a marriage ceremony is enacted every year between goddess Meenakshi and her consort Sundareswarar. It is called CHITRAI FESTIVAL which culminates in procession with the deities carried in a chariot. Another spectacular temple

festival is POORAM celebrated at Trichur in Kerala where again the deity is taken out in a procession of caparisoned herd of elephants accompanied by the rhythm of fast beating temple drums.

An important festival in the month of May is ID-UL-FTR which is celebrated by Muslims all over India. It is a festival of prayers, family re-union and feasts to celebrate the end of Ramzan, the month of fasting. In Rajasthan, URS is celebrated at the dargah of Ajmer to commemorate the symbolic union of sufi saint Khoja Moinuddin Chisti with God. The International Flower Festival at Gangtok is another spectacular event of the month in which flora and fauna along with over 500 varieties of orchids are displayed.

As heat wave condition prevail in the plains of north India during the month of June, visitors move to Leh to enjoy HEMIS FESTIVAL which include mask-dances in the courtyard of Hemis Monastery.

One of the most spectacular temple festivals of India is the RATH YATRA held at Puri during June-July. The most impressive part of the festival is a chariot procession in which Lord Jagannath is taken out in an ancient and huge chariot of 14m high along with other chariots. All chariots are drawn entirely by thousands of devotees, displaying deep devotion and intensity of love for Lord Jagannath.

ID-UL-ZUHA or BAKRID is celebrated by Muslims all over India in the month of July. The festival commemorates the sacrifice of prophet Ibrahim's son in obedience to a command of God.

INDEPENDENCE DAY is celebrated throughout India on 15th August every year. Flat hoisting, bands by armed forces and cultural shows are the highlights of the celebrations. In Delhi, the Prime Minister hoist the national flag and receive salute at Red Fort.

A major festival which is celebrated throughout India with a lot of enthusiasm during August-September is JANMASHTAMI which commemorates the birth of Lord Krishna. The festivities include staging of Krishna Leela and offering prayers in temples. In Manipur 'Ras-Leela' dances are staged. Elaborate rituals are observed at Mathura and Brindavan where Lord Krishan is believed to have spent his childhood and youth.

The most exciting festival of the period is the harvest festival, ONAM, celebrated in Kerala. The people of this tine State irrespective of their age, sex, caste and creed welcome their beloved king Mahabali back from his exile with clean and decorated houses, flower columns, music and dances. A special attraction of the festivities is the Nehru Boat Race held at Alleppey and Aranmula.

GANESH CHATURTHI is celebrated in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka during September. The elephant headed God, Ganesh, is worshipped for 7 days and then the idols are taken out in spectacular processions with devotees chanting and dancing, to be immersed in the sea or lakes.

The birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is celebrated on second October every year as GANDHI JAYANTI. Prayer meetings and social activities are organised throughout India on the day. Special functions are held at Rajghat in Delhi and at Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad.

A most colourful festival celebrated in almost all parts of India is DEEPAWALI. The houses are lighted with lamps and sweets are exchanged.

The year closes with CHRISTMAS which is celebrated on 25 December. Prayers are organised at Churches and cakes distributed among people of all communities.

