

## **Bangladesh emerges as sustainable tourism destination amid climate, environmental challenges**

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Dhaka: As global travelers increasingly seek destinations rich in natural beauty and cultural heritage, Bangladesh is carving a place for itself on the international tourism map. With its lush greenery, diverse ecosystems, and rich history, the South Asian nation is now being recognized not only for its scenic landscapes and unique experiences but also for its ambitious efforts in environmental preservation and climate resilience.

### **Tourism on rise**

In 2025, Bangladesh's tourism sector has shown encouraging growth. The government's "Visit Bangladesh" campaign, launched in late 2023, continues to draw visitors to iconic destinations like the Sundarbans—the world's largest mangrove forest and home to the endangered Royal Bengal tiger—and the picturesque hill tracts of

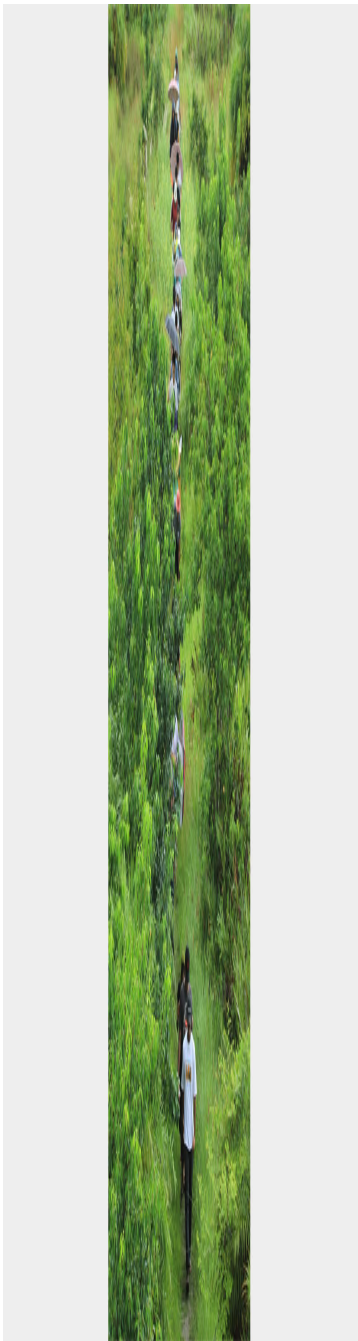
Bandarban and Rangamati.

Coastal areas like Cox's Bazar, which boasts the world's longest unbroken sea beach, remain major tourist attractions, while new investments are revitalizing historical sites in Paharpur and Mahasthangarh.

According to the Bangladesh Tourism Board, foreign tourist arrivals increased by 18 percent in the first half of 2025, compared to the same period in 2024. The government has partnered with private sectors to develop eco-friendly resorts, improve transportation infrastructure, and digitize visitor services.

### **Environmental wealth, challenges**

Bangladesh's rich biodiversity is one of its strongest assets in tourism. The country hosts more than 700 rivers, fertile wetlands, and forests teeming with life. However, this ecological abundance is under pressure from urban expansion, pollution, and climate change.



Tourists trekking through forest in Sundarbans—home to endangered Royal Bengal tiger

Environmental groups have voiced concerns over the degradation of natural sites due to unregulated tourism. Cox's Bazar, for instance, faces beach erosion and marine pollution, while the Sundarbans are threatened by rising salinity and reduced freshwater flow. The government, in response, has introduced new guidelines to promote responsible tourism, including limits on visitor numbers and stricter waste disposal measures in ecologically sensitive zones.

### **Confronting climate crisis**

Bangladesh is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, facing threats from rising sea levels, floods, and cyclones. Yet it is also gaining international praise for its climate adaptation strategies. In 2025, the country expanded its National Adaptation Plan, integrating

community-based solutions and climate-resilient infrastructure into development projects.

Tourism authorities are now working closely with environmental planners to ensure that new tourist facilities are built to withstand extreme weather and operate sustainably. Solar energy, rainwater harvesting, and green building standards are being incorporated into new tourism infrastructure, especially in coastal and rural areas.

### **Potential model for eco-tourism in South Asia**

With its blend of natural beauty and grassroots environmental awareness, Bangladesh has the potential to become a regional leader in sustainable tourism. Local communities, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sundarbans, are being empowered to run eco-lodges and guided tours, offering authentic experiences while preserving their culture and ecosystems.

UNESCO recently commended Bangladesh for balancing tourism development with heritage conservation, especially in the ancient city of Bagerhat—a UNESCO World Heritage Site now seeing a resurgence of interest thanks to improved accessibility and preservation efforts.

As Bangladesh faces the dual challenges of boosting its economy through tourism while safeguarding its fragile environment, the country's emerging eco-tourism strategy offers a hopeful blueprint—one that may inspire other developing nations confronting similar issues.

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