

Home-Stay Tourism Potential in Garhwal Himalaya: A Case Study of Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand

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Abstract

Tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification, to become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. India is a country with great natural and cultural diversity and is the most sought-after tourist destinations. Home Stays are informally arranged by social connections in rural areas. It allows the visitor or the tourist to rent rooms from local families. This type of tourism is of twin benefit; it not only enables the visitor to have first-hand experience of local culture, traditions, and language, but also allows the host to earn a decent income in situ. Home stays are a scope for eco-friendly tourism in fragile Himalayan Mountain ecosystem. As per the guidelines laid by Government of India, any Home Stay can have only five rooms at the maximum. The concept helps in preserving the culture and environment of the area as well as boosts the financial status of the hosts.

The main objective of the paper is to examine the potential benefits of home stay tourism in the study area. The participation of local community ensures the sustainability of this form of tourism. The Home-Stay reduces the large-scale urbanization and commercialization of rural areas, thereby keeping a check on population expansion, pollution, and degradation of mountainous areas. It also helps in regulating out migration of people from rural areas to cities.

Pauri Garhwal district in the Garhwal Himalaya consist 15 blocks comprising 3473 villages, has pristine views, adventurous treks, as well as the serenity that one looks for at any tourist destination.

Keywords: Home Stay, Fragile Himalayan Mountain Ecosystem, Eco-friendly Tourism, Preservation of culture, Preservation of Environment

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Tourism Potential in Garhwal Himalaya

With its towering peaks, majestic landscapes, rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, the Indian *Himalayan Region* (IHR) has long drawn visitors and pilgrims from the Indian sub-continent and across the world. The Himalaya are home to over 52.7 million people and had 46.8 million visits in 2011 (Apollo, 2015a; 2015b). A huge part of that number is domestic visitors (45.3 million), mostly pilgrims visiting sacred temples located in the High Himalaya (e.g., Amarnath, 3,888 m; Manimahesh Lake, 4,080 m; the complex of four temples at Chota Char Dham, 3,048 to 3,553 m). In total, about 4.7 million people visit the High Himalaya each year (Apollo, 2015b). In India, tourism industries have the strongest impact on economy and it is growing rapidly with its foggy hill stations, captivating beaches, historical monuments, golden deserts, serene backwaters, pilgrimage sites, rich wildlife, and colorful fairs which capture the heart of every tourist. The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was INR2,478.2bn (2.2% of total GDP) in 2014, and prediction is to rise by 7.2% pa, from 2015-2025, to INR5,339.2bn (2.5% of total GDP) in 2025. In 2014 Travel & Tourism directly supported 23,024,000 jobs (5.5% of total employment). It is expected to rise by 2.2% pa to 29,020,000 jobs (5.7% of total employment) in 2025. Visitor exports generated INR1,224.4bn (4.1% of total exports) in 2014. This is forecast to grow by 6.3% pa, from 2015-2025, to INR2,377.2bn in 2025 (4.2% of total). Travel & Tourism generated 23,024,000 jobs directly in 2014 (5.5% of total

employment) and this is forecast to grow by 1.9% in 2015 to 23,455,500 (5.5% of total employment) (Mamhoori, A., 2015). This includes employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines, and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services). It also includes, for example, the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists. By 2025, Travel & Tourism will account for 29,020,000 jobs directly, an increase of 2.2% pa over the next ten years.

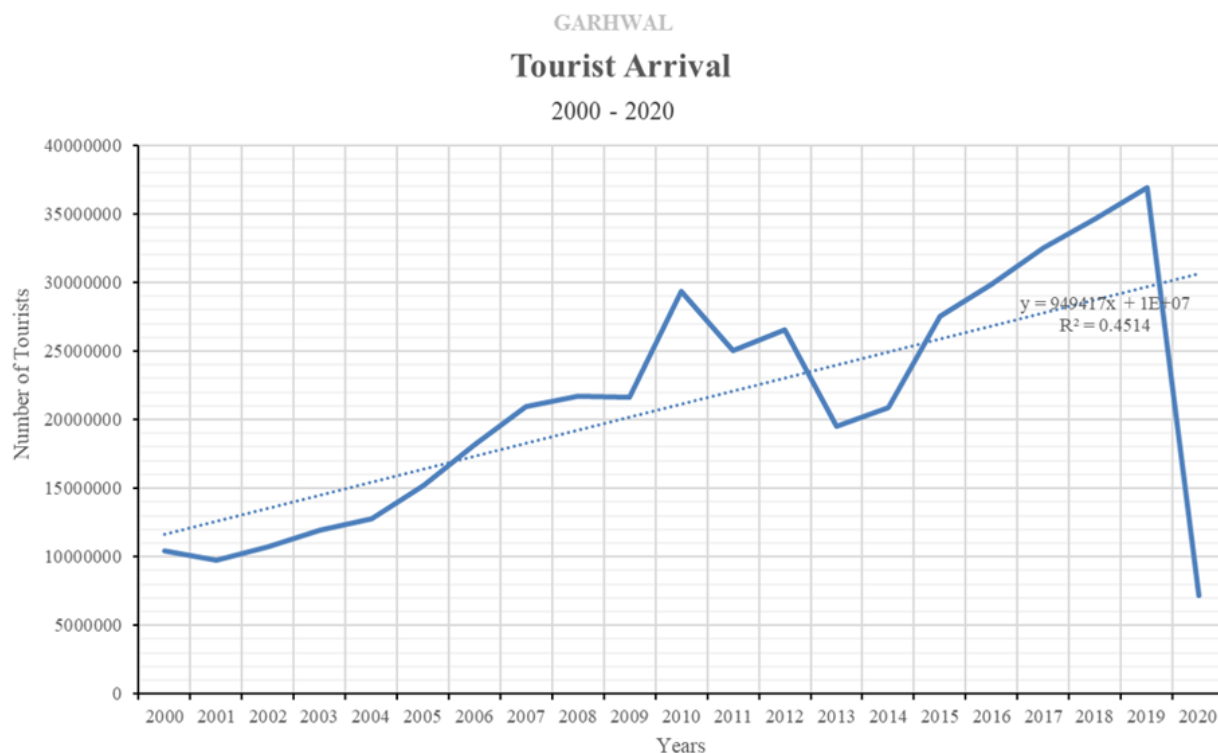


Figure 1. Tourist (domestic + foreigner) Arrivals in Garhwal in the last 20 years.

Source: Tourist Statistics from 2000 to 2020 of Major Tourist Destinations; Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) [<https://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in/document/type/market-research-and-statistics>].

The trend graph above depicts the rise and fall of tourist arrival both domestic and foreign in Garhwal from 2000 to 2020. As its evident from the graph the tourist inflow witnessed a rising trend since 2000 with a slight dip in mid-2008 to rise again in 2010 steep decline visible and after June 2013 there was steep decline due to the disastrous Kedarnath Cloud burst tragedy. There was a slow rise in the number of tourist arrivals in Pauri Garhwal towards the end of 2014 which kept a gradual rising trend and climbed a peak in 2019 but the downfall massively in 2020 due to the outbreak of Novel corona virus. The restrictions as well as lockdown has hit Tourism industry very intensely since then.

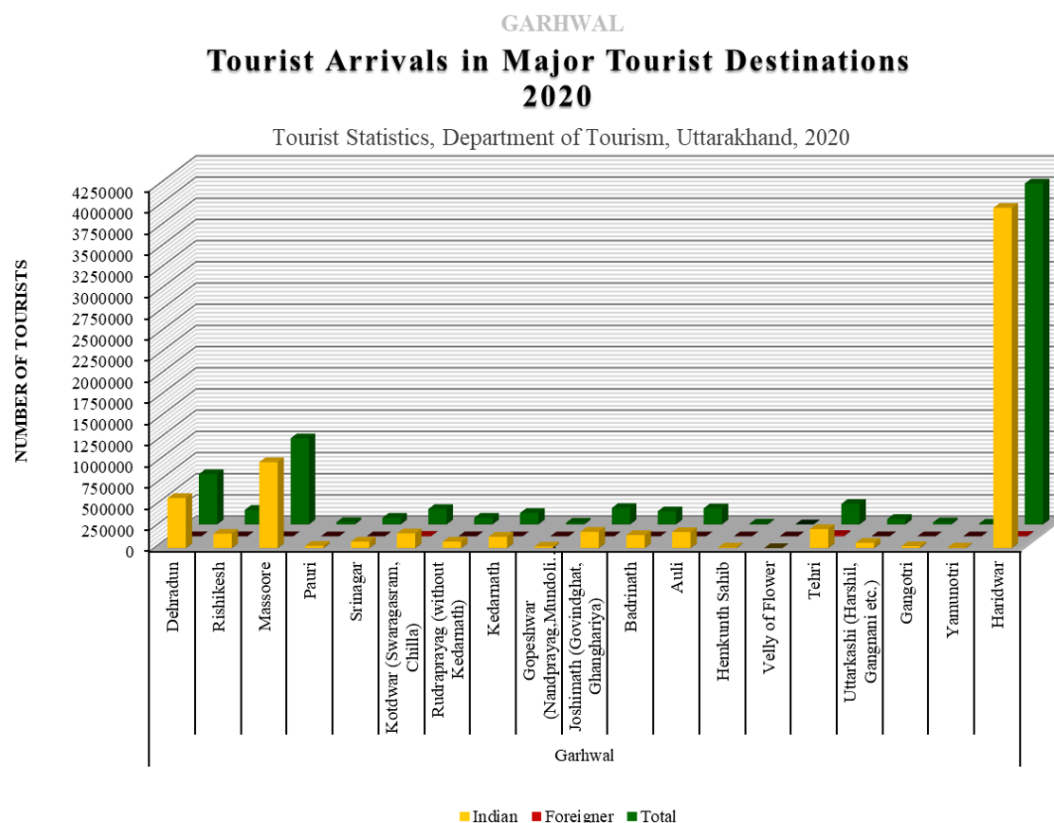


Figure 2. Tourist Arrivals in Major Tourist Destinations in Garhwal, 2020.

Source: Tourist Statistics from 2000 to 2020 of Major Tourist Destinations; Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB)/<https://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in/document/type/market-research-and-statistics>.

The above statistical diagram the number of tourist arrivals in major tourist destinations of Garhwal in 2020. This year had seen a major slump due to lockdown and restrictions in movements hence we find that negligible number of foreign tourists visited the region during this period. Haridwar followed by Mussoorie and Dehradun still had marginally good number of domestic tourists in 2020.

Impacts are Irreversible

Mass tourism has had its negative impacts, such as; Narrow Country roads are blocked by tourist traffic, Attractive landscapes and scenic destinations are damaged by hotels construction, Litter spoils the look of a place and tourists are a major cause of this, Danger to animals who might get suffocated if they eat plastic or any other non-biodegradable item mixed in grass or soil, Popular local destinations are overcrowded beyond their carrying capacity, Wildlife is frightened away due to the honking of horns, Trees and hills are cut to make roads to access tourist destinations.

Need of the hour is Paradigm Shift in approaches to tourism sector from general tourism to more community and environment friendly tourism. The tourist destinations are not disturbed neither in physical form nor in cultural setup of tourist destination. Various types of contemporary tourism are beneficial to both destination and tourists like- Eco Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Green Tourism, Rural Tourism, Soft Tourism, and the theme of discussion in this paper is **Home-Stay Tourism**.

Concept of Home-Stay

The home-stay tourism in simple terms means an house hold unit based tourism. According to Oxford Dictionary "A holiday or other period abroad spent staying in home of a local family. Founded in 1932 as the Experiment in International Living, the organization that would later become World Learning Inc. was inspired by Dr. Donald

Watt's simple idea to improve understanding across cultures and nations by sending US students abroad to expand their worldviews. The first Experiment group departed New York City in June 1932 on a ship bound for Germany. The 23 students on board became trailblazers for the thousands who have followed in their footsteps. These students returned home with a transformed outlook on the world and new lifelong leadership and communication skills to empathize and collaborate with others. The Experiment became the first program to offer "home-stays," in which American students were paired with host families.

The salient features of Home-stay tourism:

- 1) The goal of a homestay is for the tourist to be immersed in their host's culture.
- 2) The tourist may participate in family activities, including dining out, going to amusement parks, camping, and traveling. The visitor may be expected to pay a portion of the activity-related costs, such as tickets, parking, gas and travel expenses.
- 3) Host families can play a pseudo-parental role, giving advice and sometimes supervising students' activities.
- 4) In many homestays, families act as cross-cultural advisers, helping the tourists understand and adjust to their new culture.
- 5) These guests can live in a homely atmosphere and get a chance to mingle with another local family who are mainly the host.
- 6) At some places even more than one family are accommodated at one place.
- 7) As per the guidelines set by Government of India, any Home Stay can have only 5 rooms at the maximum.
- 8) Despite the potential difficulties, host families, including children, are able to learn about other cultures.
- 9) Many host families stay in touch with their tourists long after they return to their home countries.



Figure 3. Benefits of Home-Stay tourism.

Source: Conceptualized and Illustrated by authors.

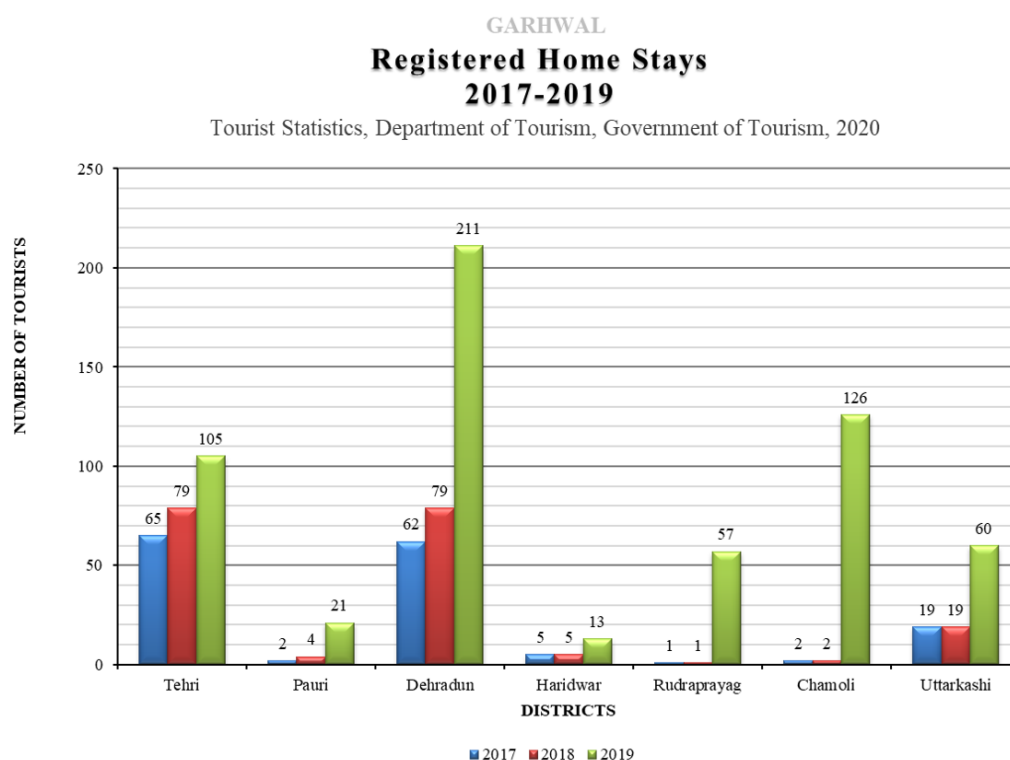


Figure 4. Growth in Registered Home-stays in Garhwal.

Source: District wise details of registered units under Home Stay scheme, March 2019; Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB)/<https://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in/document/type/market-research-and-statistics>].

The above Bar graph clearly depicts that in the year 2019 the number of registered Home stays have risen considerably in Dehradun (211) followed by Chamoli (126), Tehri (105), Uttarkashi (60), Rudraprayag (57), Pauri (21) and Haridwar (13). The year 2020 has brought a halt in any addition to this list due to covid 19. The Region has so much to give aesthetically that this industry is bound to flourish after the normalization of tourism activities.

Study Area

The district of Pauri Garhwal lies between 78°24' to 79°23' East longitude and 23°45' to 30°15' North latitude, having an area of 5329 Km². It is bordered by the districts of Haridwar in the southwest, Dehradun in the west, Tehri Garhwal, Rudraprayag, and Chamoli in the north, Almora and Nainital in the east, and the district of Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh in the south.

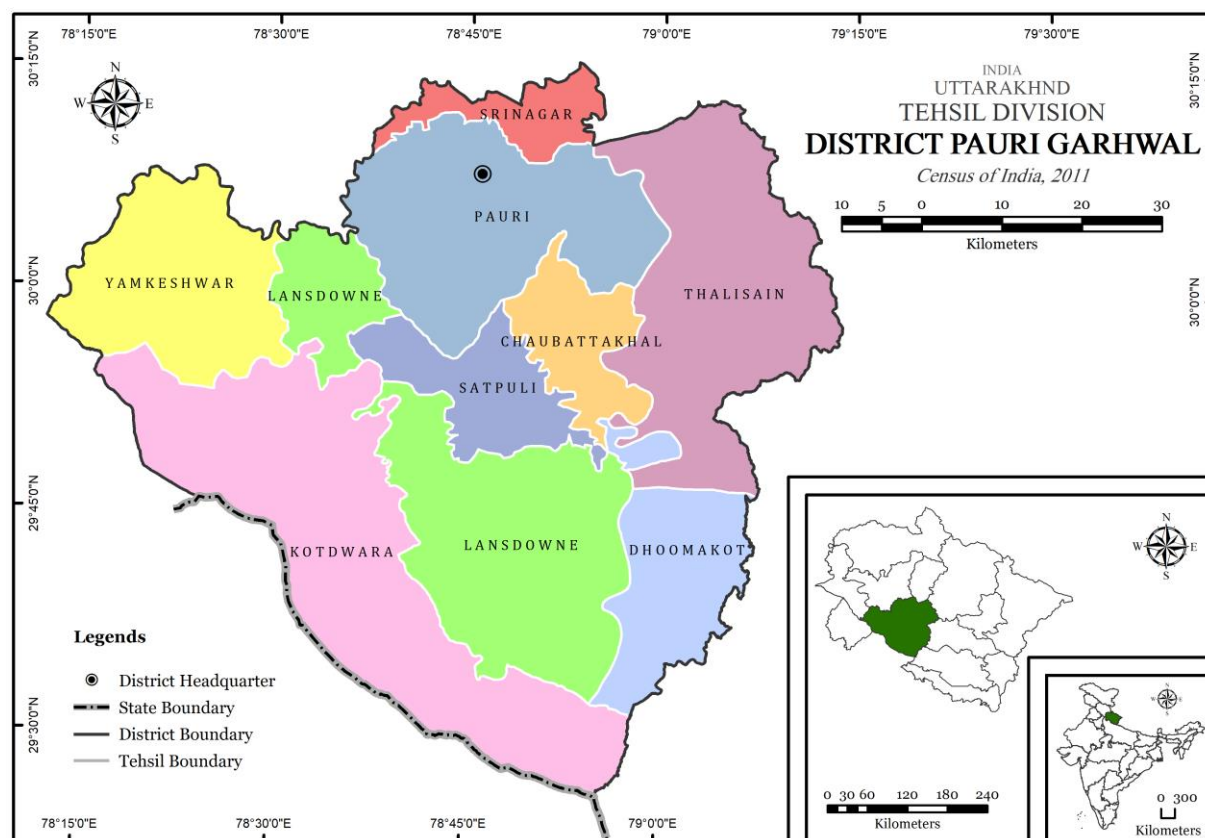


Figure 5. Locational Map of District Pauri Garhwal.

Source: Source: India and Uttarakhand - Modified by Research Scholar after Survey of India, 2020

C. D. Block Boundary - Digitized from District Census Handbook, Garhwal; Census of India, 2011

Aims and objectives

1. To examine the potential benefits of home stay tourism in the study area;
2. To assess the outlook of Natives for Home stay tourism in the region.

Methodology

The methodology undertaken is Primary Survey. **Primary data** (information gathered from interviews and informal interaction) and **secondary data** (cadastral map, toposheet and satellite imagery) has been used to identify the sites with the potential to be a tourist destination in the region. Their location was recorded with the help of GPS. The entire watershed boundary was also demarcated with the help of GPS (Trimble Juno).

Tourism Potential of Pauri Garhwal

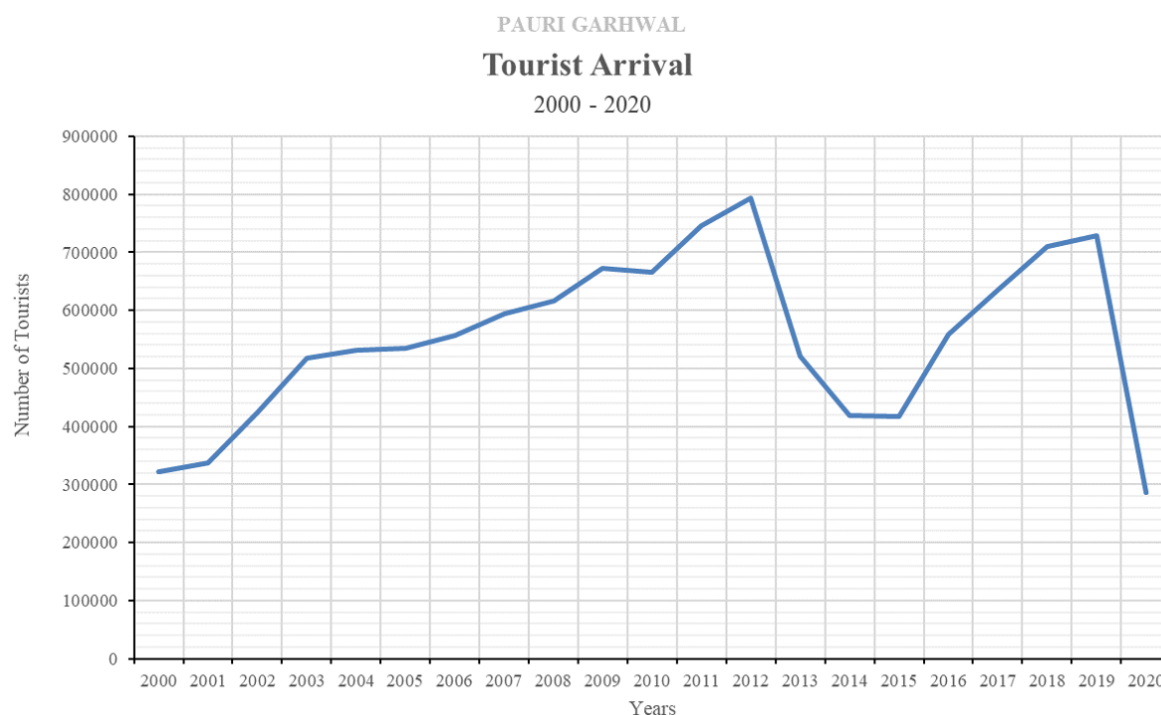


Figure 6. Tourist (domestic + foreigner) Arrivals in Pauri Garhwal in the last 20 years.

Source: Tourist Statistics from 2000 to 2020 of Major Tourist Destinations; Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) [<https://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in/document/type/market-research-and-statistics/>].

Tourist Destinations in Pauri Garhwal

Table 1. Major Tourist Attractions in the Pauri Garhwal.

Source: Tourism department, Pauri Garhwal [<https://pauri.nic.in/tourist-places/>], <https://pauri.nic.in/natural-paradise/>, <https://pauri.nic.in/wild-life/>], Places to see in Pauri [<https://www.euttaranchal.com/tourism/places-to-see-in-pauri-garhwal.php>].

Tourism Category	Places
Spiritual	❖ Tarkeshwar Mahadev Temple ❖ Shri Koteswar Mahadev Temple ❖ Dhari Devi Temple ❖ Neelkanth Mahadev Temple ❖ Binsar Mahadev Temple ❖ Jwalpa Devi Temple ❖ Nagdev Temple ❖ Kyunkaleswar Temple ❖ Kandoliya Temple ❖ Bairon Temple ❖ Vaysi Temple ❖ Hansyuri temple ❖ Binser temple ❖ Bungdhar Mahadev temple ❖ Kalinka Temple
Nature & Adventure	❖ Lansdowne ❖ Khirsu ❖ Doodhatoli ❖ Binsar ❖ Tara Kund ❖ Kanvashram

	❖ Bharat Nagar ❖ Kalagarh ❖ Kalinka ❖ Hansyuri ❖ Satpuli
Wildlife	❖ Chilla Wildlife Sanctuary ❖ Dhikala (a part of Jim Corbett National Park)

Home-Stays in Pauri Garhwal

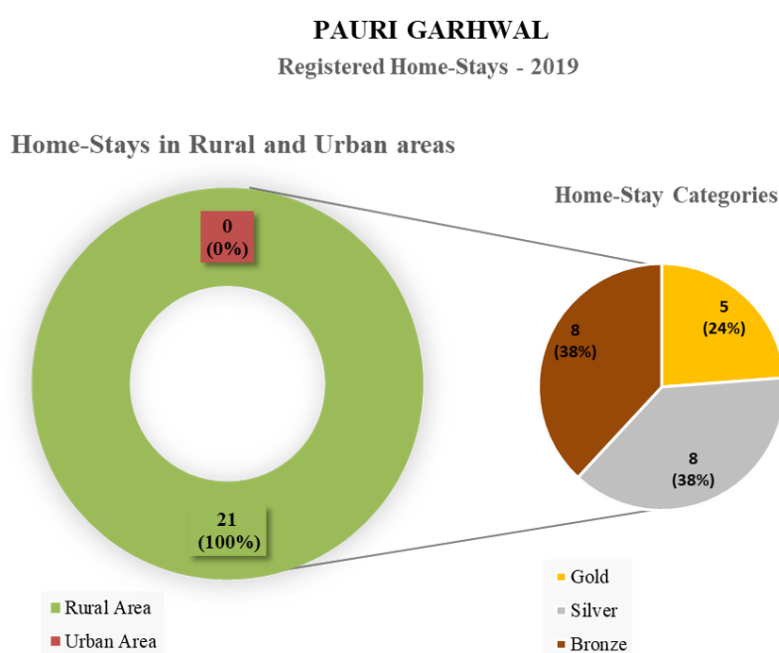


Figure 7. Registered Home-stays in Pauri Garhwal, 2019.

Source: District wise details of registered units under Home Stay scheme, March 2019; Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB)[<https://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in/document/type/market-research-and-statistics>].

Urban area (nearly 25%) is more commercial and there are more hotels and motels. That is an organized sector. In rural area its mainly ecotourism and sustainable form of tourism which are giving way to home stays. The natives are involved in this kind of tourism as they are offering their home facility to tourists. This way there is no need for any external help, as the whole family is involved in managing this business. Here people are into these kinds of small businesses to complement their income as agriculture is not enough as a means of earning to sustain livelihood.

Emerging Attractions

▪ Natural Resource Conservation system: Uffrainkhal

There is numerous tourist attraction in and around the study area. The area is endowed by natural beauty and no commercialization of area in regards to general tourism like hotels, guest houses, restaurants either private nor public owned in organized form in the study area. The home stay tourism is catching up in this natural captivating region of Himalayas.

The highlight of the region is initiatives and efforts put in by Sh. Sacchidanand Bharti Ji and his agile team in cooperation and collaboration with locals “Uffrainkhal Water Conservation system”. Which is one the best example of local problems and local solutions and with great potential or replicas. The area is not only of interest

for environmentalists, climatologists, geologists, and hydrologists that how grassroot efforts can alter the water crisis situation in the areas. The area is also of keen interest for tourists who visit the area.

The home stay tourism has great potential in this region. Major attractions for tourists in this region are Bhairon Temple and Sabligarh forts. Its Lachi Gad's highest point (altitude 2250mts). Kalinka Temple (Trek 2.5 kms from Seela Malla through the forests covered with trees) with green rejuvenating forest along the track. Bindsar Mahadev Temple (Trek 9 kms from Peersain through forests and altitude of 2500mts) which is for more for serious trekkers as trek is long and treacherous. Treks to beautiful grasslands at the north eastern part of the watershed. Trek to surainkhet market in Kumaun through beautiful forests of Oak, Pine, Rhododendron, and maple etc. It's around 6kms. Some interesting treks to small Deeba (2850 mts) around 7kms, Deboli Shiv temple around 3kms and Bunjidhar Shiv temple (3 kms) and Kulanteshwar 4kms temple trek in Almora district of Kumaon. Mesmerizing waterfalls and rapids in villages like lachi, Seela malla and Saingaon. Along eastern Nayar river between Syunsi and Gaunricheera waterfall.

Role in Diffusion of New Ideas

It is also believed that cross cultural interaction would definitely bring in new ideas such as change in cropping pattern and in promoting economic development of the area.

Environmental Awareness

The Homestay concept would also help the tourists to learn about the environment extensively when they will be amidst the nature. This would help in promoting the awareness back home. The tourists would experience many sustainable living ways that they can imbibe in life.

Analysis and Findings

1. The Primary survey observations suggest that the natives are very enthusiastic to host the tourists in their house.
2. The houses are more or less pucca in nature and have 4-5 rooms with a small kitchen garden.
3. The families are smaller in size as the majority bread earners have out migrated.
4. This is primarily a money order economy.
5. The young males can act as guides to these customized treks as they are very well versed with the area.
6. The observations also revealed that those left behind are sitting idle and the agricultural land is lying fallow for years.
7. This way they would supplement to family income in situ.
8. The hosts have immense knowledge about herbs and shrubs and their medicinal value.

Suggestions

1. Home Stay Tourism can be very well promoted here with certain prerequisites at place.
2. Improved transport connectivity from Ramnagar Railway station to the Lachi Gad watershed and all its villages.
3. Promoting tourism in this area through advertisements on social media.
4. Making the natives participate in the process of developing the idea of this type of Tourism.
5. The hosts are supposed to keep the house clean and hygiene intact so as to attract the tourists.
6. Tourists can enjoy participating in growing of crops and also, they can share their views about conservation of flora and fauna in their own native place.
7. The tourists can exchange their ideas of organic farming with the hosts.
8. The host guest interaction would help cultural exchange.

Conclusion

Home stays are a wonderful form of accommodation which provide all the facilities & services akin to what you have at your own house. You can thus stay in comfort without stretching your budget too much while on travel. This is the best way to preserve our flora and fauna while appreciating its natural flavour in the lap of Himalaya.

"Athithi Devo Bhava" There's a saying in India, *"Athithi Devo Bhava"*, which means "the guest is God". Indians consider it a huge honor to have guests in their home, and go out of their way to please them. There is nothing like Indian hospitality. Sadly, most visitors who come to India and stay in hotels never get to experience true Indian hospitality. The good thing is that all this is changing as a result of the growing popularity of homestays in India.

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