

## **The Specific study on Challenges and Prospects of Homestay in Rural Tourism, Uttarakhand, Region**

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### **Abstract**

This Research examines the prospects and challenges of homestay accommodation in rural Uttarakhand, India, based on secondary data sources. Homestays are a sort of community-based tourism that provides visitors with an authentic experience of the local culture and way of life by allowing them to stay in the homes of local families.

Homestay is the best way to experience the famed Himalayan hospitality of Uttarakhand. A Homestay is staying in someone's home as a paying guest for short time period where the guests are provided with budget friendly accommodation and services by individual family and the local community. People from Uttarakhand are simple and warm and follow the ancient Vedic tradition of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' or 'Guests are God' and they welcome their guests with open arms and offer personalized care and services. This research emerged to study the opportunities & challenges of the home-stay tourism in Uttarakhand and to reveal how hospitality is being offered in this form of tourism.

The Himalayan state of Uttarakhand is blessed with geographical, cultural and environmental diversity and a peaceful environment has positioned it as one of the most visited states in Uttarakhand, India. Tourism in this region has a wide scope in which home stay plays an important role and has a great potential in itself. This study will evaluate the pros, cons and prospects of expanding home stays. Economic instability, rising visitor demands for cleanliness, and the reliance of local governments on outside funding all posed challenges to the expansion of home stays. Everyone who runs a home stay business has noticed an improvement in their financial situation and living standards.

**Keywords:** Homestay, Tourism, Potential, Future, Uttarakhand, Facilitators, Hospitality

### **Introduction**

#### **Concept of Home stay-Defining Home stay**

What is a homestay? It seems an easy quest to answer. It means staying in a 'home'. However, there are multiple variations in different countries. Researchers have not been able to give a single definition of homestay. The most dominant concept in the literature on homestay has been that of 'commercial home'. Most of the research on the subject has centered around the phenomenon of commercial homes.

The homestay refers to a stay in the house of a local family by a tourist, a home that provides rooms to tourists commercially. Homestays are popular among tourists who want not only clean and affordable accommodation but also want to enjoy the local authentic culture and lifestyle of the local family which may not be available in commercial accommodations. Staying in a homestay can be a unique experience in itself as the guest can soak in the warmth of the friendly and personalized hospitality of the host family. Homestays can range from a stay in chalets, cottages, chateaux in

mountains, farmhouses, beach villas, mansions, castles, ranches, cave homes, historic houses, and tree houses. Not only do homestays provide authentic encounters to the guest but also provide an opportunity for the host to earn supplementary income and exchange culture with tourists from diverse cultures across the world. A homestay operator may provide a genuine cultural connection to the tourists and area and provides them with information on local products, sightseeing, culture, flora, and fauna which is hard to find at a commercial hotel.

In Uttarakhand, tourism is already a major driver of economic growth and livelihood promotion. Untouched nature in its entire splendor is what Uttarakhand offers visitors. The state has been blessed with gorgeous natural beauty. The fact that almost 45.43% of its geographical area has a dense forest cover, make it all the more remarkable. The economy of the state has been mainly conquered by the service sector including tourism which contributes a major part to the total GSDP.

The concept of homestay is most prevalent in more rural locations that are rich in both cultural and natural attractions. These kinds of activities entice visitors and tourists to come to unusual locations in order for them to experience and witness the culture of those locations, as well as to contribute financially directly to the economy of those locations. Homestays are gaining popularity as a form of accommodation in the travel and tourism industry. A homestay typically involves travellers staying in the homes of local residents rather than traditional hotels or resorts. Homestay have attracted governmental and private partners due to the economic development prospects it brings. It has been recognized that the homestay programs can serve as a useful instrument in the process of fostering the growth of the community (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). Homestays are frequently categorized as either micro or small-scale businesses, depending on the number of guests staying at each location. It is a relatively insignificant source of income, but it does contribute to the general economic well-being and community growth of the region. The homestay program has a multiplicative effect on the local economy. The Sustainable Development Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 produced the result of community-based tourism as a solution to the issue of sustainable development. The Government of Uttarakhand India first introduced the idea of homestay in 2007, despite the fact that it was an established practice across the world. Uttarakhand's helping and scrupulous people are as diverse as its many natural features. Several indigenous tribes calmly co-exist, each keeping alive its own distinct culture. People from Uttarakhand are simple and warm and follow the ancient Vedic tradition of '*Athithi Devo Bhava*' or 'Guest are God' and they welcome their guest with open arms and offer personalized care and services and expand a sense of responsibility towards our guest. There are many registered home stays available in this heavenly state of India where one explore rural locality, full of splendid natural surroundings, enjoy local culture and cuisine, and explore hidden spots with the help of native people. The options and services are many as diverse. Choose from living in ancient historic havelis, heritage building, plantation bungalows, village huts, contemporary residences, and remote rural cottages.

This practice has played an important part in the improvement of the rural sector economy in Uttarakhand. The government's goal was to popularize traditional aspects of the local culture, such as their food, music, and dance as well as their festivals and fairs. In a similar manner, the primary objective of homestays is to increase the level of involvement of people living in rural areas in the tourism industry. Both "Community homestay" and "Private Homestay" are scheduled to be available as options for participants. It is anticipated that rural communities that host homestay programs will benefit from an increase in their total annual income as a result. As per Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB, 2018) Homestay is a housing complex where the owner of the residential complex should reside in the same complex and should have a minimum of one room and a maximum of six rooms. The owner is responsible for food to the tourists in the residential complex. The provisions or rules for homestay businesses have been established by the government of Uttarakhand. To begin, property owners who are interested in providing homestay

accommodations are required to register their properties with the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB). Second, the proprietor of the home should be able to offer sanitary food that has a regional flavour and rooms that are comfortable and well-equipped. There are various constraints which can be resolved by active participation and engagement of communities. Tourists are increasingly being influenced by online and social media platform. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on social media and other online portals for popularizing home stays as a tourist product.

The article investigated the impact of homestay tourism on the local economy.

### Objectives

The present study aims at fulfilling the following objectives:

1. To study the concept of home- stay tourism in Uttarakhand.
2. To find out the status and potential of home-stay tourism in Uttarakhand.
3. To explore various emerging technology trends adopted at different stages of the hotel guest cycle to enhance the home stay experience.
4. To analyse the problems and prospects faced by homestay owners
5. To examine the future scenario of home-stay tourism in Uttarakhand

### Scope of Study

1. Home-stay is an emerging concept in tourism and hospitality industry which is also considered to be the best alternative to hotel accommodation.
2. Utility of home stay to help tourists come across land, people, culture and cuisine of any place in its perfect aspect unlike hotel accommodation.
3. Possibilities of different types of houses being converted to home-stay like heritage homes, farm houses, estate bungalows, ancestral homes etc. that gives a pleasant stay away from busy towns and cities but near to places of tourist attractions.
4. Contribution to conservation of local cultural and natural heritage at the same time ensuring sustained income to the local population.

### Research Methodology

Uttarakhand state is selected for the present study. In the present study descriptive research design is used because the study aims to describe the “Home stay in Uttarakhand: A stepping stone towards new horizon in tourism industry”. The present research paper is based on secondary data collected from published research paper, thesis, articles, journals, newspapers and websites.

### Literature Review

Resource Persons and Year of Publication	Views Regarding role of local food as Destination Attraction
Dr. Anupama Srivastava and Sanjay Singh (2019)	Present a research paper on "Sustainable Tourism Development: Potential of Home Stay Business in Uttarakhand" and found that Home Stay is a new and emerging accommodation sector in India. Home Stays are generally located in the rural areas. So the impact of tourism which was till now limited to only commercialized tourist areas will soon reach the villages. Undoubtedly, home stay tourism would bring economic development and employment growth in rural areas. However it is so closely connected with local people of visited destination, the impact of local culture and environment would be very

	high.
Basak et al., 2021; Dey et al., 2020; Prayag et al., 2018.	The homestay refers to a stay in the house of a local family by a tourist, a home that provides rooms to tourists commercially. Homestays can range from a stay in chalets, cottages, chateaux in mountains, farmhouses, beach villas, mansions, castles, ranches, cave homes, historic houses, and tree houses
Pandey et al., 1995	The development of tourism at a particular place has positively influenced the livelihood of people of that place but on the other hand it has also had some negative impacts on the lifestyle of the local people, making them lose their own traditional culture and heritage.
Devkota, 2010	Home stay tourism is a major player when it comes to the reduction of rural poverty. It integrates all activities of tourism such as trekking, cultural tourism, agro-tourism, health tourism, and ecotourism.
Rizal et al., 2018; Inversini et al., 2022	Not only do home stays provide authentic encounters to the guest but also provide an opportunity for the host to earn supplementary income and exchange culture with tourists from diverse cultures across the world.
Bhan & Singh, 2014	There are also other negative impacts of tourism in society such as increase in crime, increase in the sex trade among women, increase in consumption of alcohol, negative impacts on the lifestyles of local people, exploitation of local resources, impacts on religion and practices of local people. All these provide grounds for a negative attitude towards tourism.
Gu & Wong, 2006; Agyeiwaah, 2019; Janjua et al., 2022.	Homestay is accommodations arrangement in which tourists stay as if they were family members in the house of homeowners in a destination, eat local delicacies, and enjoy routine life as it is lived by the host in exchange for a payment.
Wang, 2007; Gunasekaran & Anand, 2012	Travellers continue to select homestay accommodations over other types of accommodations for a variety of reasons, including the welcoming ambivalence, customized services, home- cook local meals, authentic experiences, and cultural immersion.
Budhathoki, 2013	It is a good source of earning foreign currency. It reduces the gap in the balance of payment, provides increased tax revenue, gives rise to economic development of the nation, and increases the employment opportunities. It may also provide new markets for local people to sell their products, such as agricultural products, livestock and others.
Samsudin & Maliki, 2015	Defined homestay as "one pattern of management of ecotourism", thereby highlights the importance of homestay as an ecotourism accommodation option. The rural community is encouraged to participate in tourism via homestay businesses.
Walter et al., 2018; Reimer & Walter, 2013; Kuhzady et al., 2020	Homestays are characterized by a high level of engagement between guests and hosts, and they aim to safeguard the environment, local culture, and local jobs as components of sustainable community based tourism.
Walter, Regmi, & Khanal, 2018	The economic impact of homestays can be significant and can have both positive and negative effects on the local economy.

Acharya & Halpenny, 2013	Modern tourists prefer homestays to chain hotels because they offer a relaxed stay in a homelike setting. This lets them truly experience host culture and unspoiled nature.
Kwaramba, Lovett, Louw, & Chipumuro, 2012	Homestays have demonstrated success in several developing countries, including Malaysia, Costa Rica, Thailand, and Nepal.
Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1987	The tourism business has seven main effects: on the economy, on the environment, on society and culture, on the quality of services provided, on state and local tax revenue, and on the mindset of the locals. The tourism business is not without its drawbacks. Income, tax revenue, infrastructure investment, GDP, and other economic indicators all raise thanks to the tourism sector.
Soeld, 2003; Teer & Sharpley, 2008	Tourism can have an impact on community development. It can change values, enhance traditional lifestyles, and alter consumption patterns. Positively, tourism can empower local populations to participate in development interventions.

### Homestay in Uttarakhand

Homestays are becoming more popular in Uttarakhand, and this trend has the potential to improve the lives of women in the state's hill communities as well as the economy. Uttarakhand's homestay tourism is scattered over the state, while it is thriving in the areas surrounding the Ramganga valley and Jim Corbett's hamlet (Kyari), Binsar (Bhakrakot), Dhikule (Agore), and Sharmoli (Sharmoli). Both local and international travelers often stay in Sharmoli's homestays. There are 335 homestays in Uttarakhand, both in urban and rural areas. Of these, 133 are located in the Kumaon Administrative division (Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board). There is greater room for expansion in the Kumaon area because to the region's picturesque terrain and distinct hill culture. The state of Uttarakhand launched the "DeendayalUpadhyayAtithiAwaas (homestay) Yojana" with the intention of popularizing a particularly successful homestay model. The scheme's goals are twofold: first, to improve basic infrastructure, and second, to strengthen capacity development in an effort to promote homestay. Over a hundred houses throughout the three valleys have signed up to participate in the homestay program as of this writing. Many communities in the Vyans, Chaundas, and Darma valleys have been included in the program thanks to the Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam. As a result, the groundwork has been laid for Uttarakhand to create the world's first tourism route dedicated entirely to visiting indigenous communities. A second instance of homestay has been documented in Sharmoli. A tiny town in Pithoragarh that serves as an example for women's empowerment and is run entirely by local women's organizations. In order to improve locals' standard of living and ensure the long-term viability of the area's natural and cultural treasures, this hamlet, which serves as Johar valley's main entry point, has developed a community-based tourism plan.

Due to its closeness to the heavily populated plains, which experience extreme heat in the summer, Uttarakhand has been a popular destination as of late. Even at higher elevations, the roads in Uttarakhand are well-suited to link the state's rural communities. Despite this, most communities have more women and older people who can participate in homestay entrepreneurship at the family level than males because of the outmigration of young men in quest of greater prospects of income.

- As of the year 2020, there were more than 700 homestays registered with the Uttarakhand Tourist Development Board.

- The number of homestays in the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary area of Uttarakhand increased dramatically between 2014 and 2019, according to a research done by the Wildlife Institute of India and the Uttarakhand Forest Department.
- According to the same research, homestays in the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary area bring in an average of INR 1, 54,000 (about USD 2,100) annually each homestay.
- Especially in outlying regions, the homestay industry in Uttarakhand has the potential to greatly increase local employment and tax revenue, according to a research by the Uttarakhand Tourist Development Board.
- According to a poll performed by the Uttarakhand Tourist Development Board, visitors who choose to stay in homestays in Uttarakhand are most interested in engaging in the following activities: hiking, bird-watching, and learning about the local culture and customs.
- Many programs, such as the “Homestay Registration and Classification System” and the “Homestay and Rural Tourism Policy 2019,” have been implemented by the Uttarakhand government to boost the homestay industry in the state.
- Over 13 lakh (1.3 million) people are employed by the tourism industry in Uttarakhand. The top five tourist destinations in Uttarakhand are Mussoorie, Nainital, Rishikesh, Haridwar, and Dehradun. Uttarakhand is known for its scenic beauty and adventure activities like trekking, mountaineering, and river rafting.
- The Uttarakhand Tourist Development Board estimates that in 2019, the state would see more than 3 crore (30 million) domestic and foreign visitors, who will bring in more than INR 26,000 crore in income (approximately USD 3.5 billion).
- Homestays in Uttarakhand allow tourists to experience the local culture, customs, and hospitality while also taking in the state’s stunning natural scenery. In rural locations and hill stations, where guests may get away from the noise and bustle of the metropolis, homestays are quite popular.
- Uttarakhand’s government has been working on a number of fronts to boost the state’s tourist industry, including building new facilities, highlighting ecotourism, and encouraging and helping residents set up bed and breakfasts and other hospitality enterprises.
- As a result, numerous companies are competing for a share of the homestay industry in Uttarakhand by providing enticing packages of their own. To thrive in the homestay industry, entrepreneurs must provide excellent customer service, tailor each stay to the individual, and guard their online image.

**Table No. : 01** District Wise Home Stay in Uttarakhand in July 2023

S.No	Name of District	Number of Home Stay
1	Almora	445
2	Bageshwar	167
3	Chamoli	605
4	Champawat	146
5	Dehradun	693
6	Haridwar	65
7	Nainital	808
8	Pauri Garhwal	236
9	Pithoragarh	708
10	Rudraprayag	263
11	Tehri Garhwal	329
12	Udham Singh Nagar	11

13	Uttarakashi	675
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**Total 5,151**

**Source:** uttarakhandtourism.gov.in

### **Challenges of Home-stay Tourism in Uttarakhand**

- ✓ Home-stay could be a suitable platform for cultural exchange through Guest-host interaction.
- ✓ Youths of Uttarakhand can find livelihood opportunities in their own village or town by involving in home-stay activities.
- ✓ Locals may have an opportunity to learn new languages and skills.
- ✓ Home-stay business can make the locals independent and smart as well.
- ✓ It can help to reduce conflicts among different communities.
- ✓ Home-stay tourism can generate economic and employment opportunities in rural hilly areas of Uttarakhand.
- ✓ It can be a tool to reduce the poverty level of local community.
- ✓ It can attract local and other investors to incorporate in tourism practices.
- ✓ People can sale their traditional food items, handicrafts & souvenirs to the tourists visited.
- ✓ Home-stay tourism may result in developing modes of transportation to the villages for easy accessibility, training institutions for capacity building and improved healthcare services.

### **Challenges of Home-stay Tourism in Uttarakhand**

- ✓ One of the prime constraints for home-stay tourism is poor infrastructural facilities like better roads, supply of electricity, telecommunication and healthcare service. Without these facilitations one cannot take home-stay initiative successfully. Owner may face difficulty to establish better services for the tourist.
- ✓ There is a shortage of skilled human resources like service providers, entrepreneurs, guides etc. due to the unavailability of better training institutions. Peoples also lack in creativity and entrepreneurship skills.
- ✓ Peoples are not aware about the Govt. schemes, regulations, registration parameters and other policies related to home-stay business.
- ✓ Apart from this poor marketing network is also a challenge for home-stay tourism in Uttarakhand. It is very much necessary to promote Uttarakhand as a home-stay destination.
- ✓ Lack of coordination among entrepreneurs, government bodies, non-govt. bodies, intermediaries and others could be a major challenge for home-stay tourism.
- ✓ For the successful development of home-stays in Uttarakhand, it is necessary to conserve the natural resources and cultural heritage. The local peoples should be encouraged to take initiatives to conserve their traditions and resources.
- ✓ Safety & security of the travellers is an issue of prime concern. Uttarakhand needs to setup better safety measures for the tourist visited.

✓

### **Advantages**

- ✓ Promoting local and international tourist investment. Bringing new economic and job possibilities to rural communities, which will help reduce poverty.
- ✓ Lessening racial and ethnic tensions.
- ✓ Natives gain self-assurance, knowledge, and competence via exposure to other languages and cultures.
- ✓ More people in host communities should get educated on the importance of protecting the environment.

- ✓ Major actors should constantly intervene to raise local and international visitors' understanding of tourism.
- ✓ Expanding access to education and training facilities for capacity enhancement.

### **Suggestions**

- ✓ The local community needs help in planning and developing homestays. So, it is important to provide technical support to the residents of the chosen homestay tourist area in order to facilitate homestay planning and growth.
- ✓ To ensure that visitors to a homestay tourism site get excellent treatment, residents there should be trained in areas such as leadership, hospitality, and food and beverage preparation (using a menu reflective of the area's cuisine).
- ✓ Travel entrepreneurs should network homestay destinations with the country's other tourist stakeholders.
- ✓ Public personnel should be encouraged to participate in homestay tourism via the provision of "Leave Travel Concessions" from the government.
- ✓ The government's support and other facilities for homestay tourism should be tailored to the specific needs of the industry, which includes both public and private homestay operations.

### **Conclusions**

Uttarakhand is a state in the northern part of India. It is often referred to as the "Devbhumi" due to its religious significance and numerous Hindu temples and pilgrimage sites found throughout the state. Uttarakhand has a rich and vibrant cultural heritage. It is also rich in natural and Biodiversity. There are many opportunities for tourism development in the state. Investment in tourism sector constitutes priority of state government to boost economic growth and development. Government of Uttarakhand and its communities are trying to promote home stay tourism in order to boost their economy, stop migration by creating local employment opportunities and earn foreign exchange earnings but digital based promotion like creating website that tell about home stays in an informative and engaging manner, search engine optimization, social media marketing, physical print marketing materials and many other forms of digitalization is must for the growth and development of home stay tourism and achieving success in them. Tourists are increasingly being influenced by online and social media platform. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on social media and other online portals for popularizing home stays as a tourist product. By utilizing these various digital based and physical promotion methods and channels, we can make home stays business popular among travelers and make it their preferred choice for stay. This ultimately will make home stay tourism more profitable and financially prosperous. Developing a good quality home stays can help in tapping the full potential of tourism in Uttarakhand in the future. Home stays can help the tourism sector of an economy at places where developing a hotel can be commercially unviable due to the high land and construction cost and the tedious approval process. Developing a luxury home stay at such locations will be a better value proposition due to lower overhead costs and higher profitability compared to a regular hotel and will also help in the holistic development and growth of the destination itself. So, the Government needs to make an effective plan and policy for the development of Home Stay tourism in Uttarakhand

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