



WAVES OF CHANGE: RO-RO FERRY A BOON FOR KONKAN TOURISM

Mugdha Nene and her colleague Drashti Shah, both working at an MNC, planned a bike trip along the Konkan coast and Goa. Initially deterred by the poor state of the Mumbai-Goa highway, they found hope with the Maharashtra government's launch of South Asia's fastest Ro-Ro ferry from Mumbai to Sindhudurg.

With travel time now only 3 hours to Ratnagiri and 5 hours to Sindhudurg respectively, the friends set out to explore Konkan's scenic routes which were made possible by the new Ro-Ro ferry service just in time for Ganeshotsav. Investment in Ro-Ro ferries is a core example of Ministry of Fisheries & Ports, Government of Maharashtra, Shri Nitesh Ji Rane's commitment to develop world class, resilient & inclusive infrastructure for tourism which is one of the strategic pillars outlined in the Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 and the Vision 2047 of Viksit Maharashtra.

The Konkan coast holds immense tourism potential, round the year, that extends well beyond Ganeshotsav. With its pristine beaches, ancient temples, majestic forts & cascading waterfalls, the region offers diverse experiences for every season. The new Ro-Ro ferry makes these destinations far more accessible, encouraging monsoon treks through lush hills, winter escapes along serene beaches & summer visits for seafood festivals. By reducing travel time and providing greater comfort across consumer categories, the ferry ensures that the Konkan region provides another access route



Kunkeshwar Temple, Sindhudurg

to visitors throughout the year, strengthening local tourism & livelihoods sustainably.

Furthermore, tourists can bring their vehicles, allowing for direct, hassle-free exploration of remote beaches, forts & religious destinations without the usual highway fatigue. The ferry also represents a step toward sustainable travel. With fewer vehicles on the highway, emissions are expected to reduce while congestion on key arterial routes will ease considerably.

Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg are brimming with unexplored opportunities for religious and fort tourism. While the region is famous for its pristine beaches and scenic Konkan landscapes, it also comprises several lesser-known temples such as Kalika, Kanakaditya, Kankeshwar & Laxmi Keshav in Ratnagiri and Kashinath, Kunkeshwar, Bhadrakali & Bhagvati in Sindhudurg amongst others. Tour operators are already eyeing the route as an opportunity to curate unique experiences-sunrise tours at sea, seafood trails in coastal villages or cultural journeys that coincide with festive celebrations. For locals, this means not just an increase in visitors but also a chance to showcase Konkan's rich culture and heritage to a wider audience. This would also lead to gaining access to attractions such as museums, palaces, gardens in the vicinity of the temples.

Due to the significant reduction in time, the footfall can be increased significantly, attracting tourists from across the globe, leading to Konkan becoming an international tourist hub. Offering a substantial time savings in the amount of travel time and also boosting access to the districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg, the ferry facility directly increases the demand of homestays, traditional Konkani cuisine

& native handicrafts, such as Malvani artifacts & products based on kokum, which in turn warrants that tourism proceeds do not leave the community, also highlighting the 'Dekho Apana Desh' initiative. People longing for culture would be able to experience the unique customs of Konkan like Jatra, Gondhal, resulting in promotion of the region's traditions and awareness among tourists. The Ro-Ro will be an additional option for tourists to reach Konkan. Along with tourists, this will enable the mass working populations of Mumbai to escape from their day-to-day hectic lives and find bliss & comfort in Konkan's scenic landscape, becoming a dream destination for every Mumbaikar as a weekend getaway. This might also help in reducing the overtourism in Lonavala & Panchgani.

Together, unexplored gems of Konkan offer a compelling opportunity to develop religious & fort circuits, adding depth to the tourism identity and inviting travelers to experience faith, history & heritage in one journey. If nurtured with thoughtful planning & promotion, unexplored gems can put Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg firmly on India's religious & heritage tourism map.

This landmark initiative, taking shape through the vision of Shri Nitesh ji Rane, the hon'ble Minister for Ports Development in Maharashtra, of Ro-Ro service to the region will give a multiplier effect, increasing footfall, creating employment & increasing local income. For Maharashtra, this service marks an important milestone in integrating greener infrastructure with the state's rich cultural traditions leading to a multiplier effect on the Konkan tourism industry.

– Vivek Sharma