

8 Indian beaches amongst the cleanest in the world

For the first time ever an international jury comprising the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) has named eight Indian beaches as being amongst the safest and cleanest in the world and have been awarded the BLUE FLAG certification.

What is BLUE FLAG Certification?

- The Blue Flag is one of the world's most recognised voluntary eco-labels awarded to beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators.
- In order to qualify for the Blue Flag, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility criteria must be met and maintained.
- There are nearly 33 criteria that must be met to qualify for a Blue Flag certification, such as the water meets certain quality standards, having waste disposal facilities, being disabled-friendly, have first aid equipment etc.
- The Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas is run by the international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education).
- FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education) was established in France in 1985 and got extended to areas outside Europe since 2001

The beaches that have been certified with the BLUE FLAG are:

1. Shivrajpur (Dwarka-Gujarat)
2. Ghoghla (Daman & Diu)
3. Kasarkod (Karnataka)
4. Padubidri (Karnataka)
5. Kappad (Kerala)
6. Rushikonda (Andhra Pradesh)
7. Golden (Puri-Odisha) and
8. Radhanagar (Andaman & Nicobar Islands).

“It is an outstanding feat considering that no ‘BLUE FLAG’ nation has ever been awarded for 8 beaches in a single attempt,” Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar tweeted adding, “this is also a global recognition of India’s conservation and sustainable development efforts”.

India is also the first country in Asia-Pacific region which has achieved this feat in just about 2 years' time. Japan, South Korea and UAE are the only other Asian nations who have been conferred with a couple of Blue Flag beaches, however, in a time frame of about 5 to 6 years! India is now in the league of 50 "BLUE FLAG" countries and the Environment Ministry is planning to take this journey forward to 100 such beaches in the country in the next five years.

India began its humble journey for receiving this status in 2018 and developed pilot beaches and presented the first set of 8 beaches for the certification recently. In its pursuit of sustainable development of the coastal regions of India, a highly acclaimed flagship program "BEAMS" (Beach Environment & Aesthetics Management Services) under ICZM (Integrated Coastal Zone Management) project was initiated. This was aimed at striving for this coveted International eco-label "BLUE FLAG" accorded by The Foundation of Environment Education, FEE Denmark.

Objectives of "BEAMS":

- Abate pollution in coastal waters,
- Promote sustainable development of beach facilities,
- Protect & conserve coastal ecosystems & natural resources,
- Strive and maintain high standards of cleanliness,
- Hygiene & safety for beachgoers in accordance with coastal environment & regulations.

Over 4600 beaches, boats, and marinas from around 50 countries have got the Blue Flag certification so far. Spain has the record of receiving the highest number of Blue Flag tagged sites. India is now in the league of 50 'BLUE FLAG' countries and has plans to expand the network of Blue Flag certification to 100 such beaches in the country in the next five years.

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