

Srinagar's Recognition as a World Craft City

Srinagar has become the fourth Indian city to be recognized as a 'World Craft City' by the World Craft Council (WCC). This designation follows three years after its inclusion in the UNESCO Creative City Network (UCCN) for crafts and folk arts. This accolade underscores the city's rich heritage and the skill of its artisans, marking a significant milestone in the global recognition of Srinagar's crafts industry.



[Source: Edunovations]

Historical Context

Srinagar, with its more than 4,000 years of recorded history, has been a hub of artistic excellence and craftsmanship. The city is renowned for its shawls, carpets, and papier-mâché art. The arrival of Persian and Central Asian artisans in the 14th century significantly influenced the local craft scene, introducing new techniques and styles that have become integral to Kashmir's artistic identity. This historical amalgamation has created a unique blend of craftsmanship that is both traditional and innovative.

World Craft Council (WCC): An Overview

The World Craft Council (WCC) is a Kuwait-based organization dedicated to the recognition and preservation of traditional crafts globally. Established on June 12, 1964, by Aileen Osborn Vanderbilt Webb, Margaret M. Patch, and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, the WCC aims to enhance the role of crafts in both cultural and economic spheres. The organization promotes fellowship among craftspersons, facilitates cultural exchange, and supports the preservation and promotion of traditional crafts.

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The Significance of WCC Recognition

The designation of Srinagar as a World Craft City by the WCC is a testament to its vibrant craft industry. This recognition is likely to reopen Kashmir's centuries-old connections with craft centers in Central Asia and Iran, fostering cultural and economic exchanges. It places Srinagar on a global platform, highlighting its contribution to the world of crafts and positioning it as a key player in the global handicrafts market.

Implications for Srinagar's Craft Industry

1. Economic Benefits

The recognition as a World Craft City is expected to attract tourists, investors, and buyers interested in authentic crafts, thereby boosting the local economy. The increase in demand for Srinagar's handcrafted goods could lead to sustainable income for artisans and a revitalization of the craft sector.

2. Cultural Preservation

The designation underscores the city's dedication to preserving traditional crafts. It provides a platform for local artisans to showcase their skills and ensures that these crafts are passed down to future generations. The spotlight on Srinagar's crafts can also lead to increased efforts in documenting and safeguarding traditional techniques.

3. Global Recognition

Being recognized as a World Craft City elevates Srinagar's status as a global center for handcrafted goods. It enhances the city's visibility on the international stage, encouraging collaborations and exchanges with other craft cities around the world.

4. Skill Enhancement

The WCC designation can lead to the introduction of training programs and workshops for artisans, helping them to refine their skills and adopt new techniques. This can enhance the quality of their products and make them more competitive in the global market.

Connections with Central Asia and Iran

Srinagar's crafts have deep historical connections with Central Asia and Iran. Persian artisans have significantly influenced Kashmir's shawl and carpet industry, with designs often named after Iranian cities like Kashan and Tabriz. The WCC designation is expected to strengthen these traditional ties, leading to knowledge exchange and cultural collaboration.

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Role of Local Authorities and Organizations



[Source: The Hindu]

Local authorities and organizations like the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage-Kashmir (INTACH-K) have played a crucial role in promoting and preserving Srinagar's crafts. The recognition by the WCC is seen as a validation of these efforts. It provides a modern platform to highlight places that have been centers of creativity and aesthetics for centuries.

Government and Policy Support

The designation comes at a time when the government and policy-makers are focusing on reviving Kashmir's craft sector. Initiatives like Geographical Indication (GI) tags for crafts, craft tours, and supportive policies by the handicrafts and handloom department are contributing to the sector's revival. The WCC tag will further boost these efforts, providing new opportunities for artisans and promoting genuine crafts.

Impact on Artisans



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For the artisans of Srinagar, the WCC designation is a much-needed recognition. It validates their skills and hard work, providing them with a platform to reach a global audience. Artisans can benefit from increased sales, tourism, and collaborations, leading to sustainable income and growth. The recognition also supports skill preservation and cultural heritage, ensuring that traditional crafts continue to thrive.

List of Indian Cities Recognized as World Craft Cities

Srinagar joins Jaipur, Malappuram, and Mysore as the fourth Indian city to be recognized as a World Craft City by the WCC. Each of these cities is known for its unique crafts:

- 1. Jaipur:** Famous for Kundan Jadai (gem setting), Meenakari jewellery, Lac-based crafts, and Gotta Patti work.
- 2. Mysuru:** Renowned for Kinnal paintings, Sandalwood carvings, and Rosewood inlay work.
- 3. Malappuram:** Known for stone carving, a tradition dating back to the Pallava dynasty (275 CE to 897 CE).

Future Perspective

The World Craft Council tag for Srinagar is expected to have long-term benefits for the city's artisans and craft sector. Enhanced global recognition and demand for handicrafts can lead to sustainable income through increased sales and tourism. The designation will also support skill preservation, cultural heritage, and access to networks for collaboration and growth. As Srinagar's craft sector gains more visibility, it is poised to reach new heights, contributing to the city's economic and cultural development.

The recognition of Srinagar as a World Craft City by the World Craft Council is a significant achievement for the city. It highlights Srinagar's rich heritage and skilled artisans, positioning the city as a global center for handcrafted goods. The designation is expected to bring economic benefits, support cultural preservation, and enhance the city's global recognition. It also provides new opportunities for artisans, promoting sustainable income and growth. As Srinagar continues to build on this recognition, it can look forward to a vibrant and thriving craft sector that contributes to its cultural and economic development.