

INDIA

SPRING IS IN THE AIR

The bitter cold is on its way out and slowly but surely, spring is arriving in India. As the new leaves start peeping from their winter slumbers, one cannot help but feel hopeful for the coming months. Life is beginning afresh and so is our determination to get back to business.

Weekend trips and short domestic travel are still creating major stir in travel bookings. According to data released by a renowned online travel booking platform, last-minute weekend bookings made up for over 70% of the bookings during the Valentine's weekend. The portal also reported a steady month-on-month rise in the bookings since the Unlock phase.

Searches remain steady for offbeat locations that are easily accessible by short drives. Properties with unique experiences, offering outdoor activities, or those closer to nature have been at the top of the search list. Out-of-the-box accommodation like houseboats or tree houses is also quite popular according to recent Airbnb data.

With the pleasant climes of spring knocking at the doors, people are eager to shed the gloom of winter and set off on vacations or even staycations before the harsh summers set in. With vacations like Holi and Good Friday coming up, people are busy planning quick breaks with friends and family to places where they can reach easily and with minimal hassles. People are also opting to book stays luxury establishments in their own cities just to break the monotony of continued working from home.

IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY

IndiGo has announced the launch of 22 new flight routes that will bolster the domestic connectivity and boost tourism across the country. The new routes open up possibilities of connecting sacred cities, textile hubs, and historical capitals with direct flights and give guests the opportunity to explore newer circuits. The introduction of these affordable, safe, and hassle-free travel options between cities such as Jaipur -Vadodara, Kolkata - Gaya, Bhubaneswar – Patna, and others is sure to come in great use to plan experiential itineraries.

In other news, it is reported that Karnataka's luxury train, The Golden Chariot, is all set to resume its journeys after remaining off the tracks for almost three years. Reports suggest that the train is ready after its overhaul and all set to make its maiden journey on 14 March 2021. The renovated train will now feature Wi-Fi equipped smart TVs along with its signature impeccable luxurious amenities to make your journey memorable.

Vistara has also announced special non-stop flights between Mumbai and Male starting 03 March 2021. Guests can fly thrice a week under India's travel bubble agreement with Maldives. With the launch of the new flights, the airline is hopeful of seeing an increase in bookings. Maldives has emerged as one of India's most favoured holiday destinations and it continues to see an impressive traffic of leisure travellers. The airline will ensure the highest safety standards and follow all visa / entry protocols outlined by both governments.

IN OTHER NEWS

Infrastructural improvements and initiatives continue in full force to strengthen tourism in India and make the country ready to welcome tourists. Kochi now has a new international cruise terminal that can accommodate 5000 cruise ships at a time. The Sagarika International Cruise Terminal located at the Ernakulam wharf is well equipped to welcome large luxury cruise ships. Kochi is already popular as a destination for international cruise liners and this development will surely secure its popularity even more.

India now has an air bubble arrangement with Russia, bringing the total count of travel bubble arrangements to 25 countries. This follows the lifting of travel restrictions on air travel by the Russian government to and from India in January. Indian nationals, or nationals of Nepal or Bhutan stranded in Russia, all Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) and Person of Indian Origin (PIO) cardholders holding passports of other countries, Russian citizens travelling to India for any purpose other than tourism, and seamen from Russian countries can travel between Russia and India under this arrangement.

Cultural festivities are also on the rise with many taking to online platforms and others to hybrid formats. Madhya Pradesh government organised the Mandu festival in Mandu on 13 and 14 February 2021. It displayed many interesting aspects of the history of the place and showcased independent artistes and musical bands through performances. The Khajuraho Dance Festival is also slated to take place between 20 to 26 February 2021 and will focus on Indian classical dance forms. Eminent performers from different disciplines will grace the occasion with their enthralling recitals.

For detailed statistics and latest updates, please [click here](#).