

HVS Monday Musings: Government Initiatives to Rebuild Indian Tourism Post the Second Wave

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Travel demand – both leisure and business – is gradually improving in the country, bringing in a newfound enthusiasm and euphoria in the Indian travel & hospitality sectors. The declining cases, easing of restrictions across states, and increasing momentum of the vaccination drive, coupled with people's inherent need to travel, are key factors driving this revival. A uniform national travel guideline is also expected to be implemented soon, which will further ease travel within the country.

Most states have reopened their tourism and hospitality sectors after the second wave, while others are cautiously moving towards it with several strict guidelines and protocols in place. The state governments and tourism boards are also evaluating various initiatives needed to revive the sector post the second wave and chalking out long-term reboot plans for it.

Restoring traveler confidence and inoculating most of the population, especially tourism employees, are the top-most priorities for most states. The state government of Kerala, for instance, is planning to inoculate the entire population of key tourist destinations to make them completely 'safe' for visitors, and Vythiri became the first tourist destination in the state to achieve this feat. The state is also introducing a 'bio bubble' system, where all tourism-sector service providers – from airport ground staff and hotel staff to tourist guides and cab drivers – will be inoculated. Moreover, tourist spots in the state are open to only certain categories of tourists, such as those who possess a negative RT-PCR report taken within 72 hours or have received at least one dose of the COVID vaccine. These initiatives are expected to gradually restore traveler confidence in the state, which is still reporting several daily cases.



For the revival and holistic development of the tourism sector, the tourism boards in some states, such as Kashmir, Kerala, and Himachal Pradesh, are focusing on identifying and developing new unexplored tourist destinations to ease the burden on the other popular locations in their states. Meanwhile, some others, such as Karnataka and Maharashtra, are introducing novel tourism products such as caravan tourism to lure back

Summary

The Indian tourism sector is gradually coming back to life after the second wave of the pandemic in the country. State governments are taking several steps to revive the sector, some of which have been highlighted in this article.

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tourists. Moreover, the Maharashtra government recently introduced an adventure tourism policy to streamline such activities in the state and is also planning to introduce a vacation home rental policy to regulate this segment, which is experiencing significant growth post the pandemic. Meanwhile, the states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have started the groundwork to promote water-based tourism and sports.

These initiatives, especially high vaccination rates and stringent safety measures, will aid in the revival of the sector, as has been witnessed in several international tourist destinations. Dubai is a perfect case in point, where the tourism sector has made a significant recovery since reopening in July 2020, with 3.7 million visitors during the July 2020-May 2021 period. High vaccination rates (over 73% of the population in the UAE is fully vaccinated), efficient cooperation between the government and the private sector, and intensive efforts by the government to enforce COVID-related guidelines through penalties and deployment of volunteers at tourist attractions, have helped the city gain global recognition as a 'safe' travel destination. As a result, the city has not only been able to attract leisure tourists but has also successfully hosted several business events in the last few months. The state governments in India, in collaboration with other key stakeholders, can evaluate some of the best practices followed by Dubai and other international destinations, which can help in a quicker recovery of the tourism sector in the country.

About **Mandeep S Lamba**



Mandeep S. Lamba, President – South Asia, oversees the HVS global hospitality practice for South Asia. He has spent over 30 years in the hospitality industry of which the last 19 have been in CEO positions. Having worked with leading International and domestic Hotel Companies such as IHG, Radisson & ITC Hotels, he also set up joint venture companies with Dawncy Day Group UK and Onyx Hospitality, Thailand to own and operate hotels in India giving him a broader exposure to the hospitality business.

An established industry leader, Mandeep has won several awards and recognitions in India and abroad for his accomplishments and contribution to the hospitality industry. He is a Certified Hospitality Administrator from the American Hotels Association (CHA), a member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, UK (MRICS) and a member of the Tourism Council of CII (Northern India). His views are often solicited for television and print media as a spokesperson for the hospitality & tourism sector.

Prior to joining HVS in 2018, Mandeep was the Managing Director, Hotels & Hospitality Group for JLL.

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