

TRAVELTALK

VIEWPOINT

A long way to go...

With another year gone by, we now step into not just a new year, but a new decade as well! The year 2020 holds a lot of promise for the tourism industry and even as countries all over the world are reeling under some crisis, everyone hopes that tourism will salvage the economy. India has its sights set on increasing inbound arrivals while improving the image of the country among foreign tourists. The Ministry of Tourism is making all the right noises to attract tourists and with their increased focus on domestic tourism, they surely know where the goldmine is.

As we step into the new year, we are also expecting the Budget and like every year, the industry has a set of demands that they want fulfilled so that they can assist the government to bring in the tourists. The agents still feel India is costly for tourists as compared to neighbouring countries and that's the reason tourists prefer to visit these countries. To make India a more viable destination, they want further reduction in GST.

The agents also call for more thrust on infrastructure development, better roads and better connectivity, to introduce tourists to lesser-known destinations within the country. UDAN, the scheme to connect smaller cities and towns, has been very effective in increasing accessibility and more work needs to be done on those lines.

Sustainability has been a major concern of the industry lately. Tourism is in a very special position to benefit local communities, economically and socially, and for conservation of the environment. Within the tourism sector, economic development and environmental protection should be pursued as aspirations that should be mutually reinforcing, and practices that commensurate with these values can provide long-term benefits to the industry as well as the community. India's brand-building exercise also needs reinforcement. Incredible India 2.0 needs to strike a chord with tourists.

With these demands listed, it's time to work towards our goals. Let's make this indeed a Happy New Year!

GST to be reduced further

Contd from page 3



Gurbax Singh Kohli
Vice President
FHRAI

“The hospitality sector is at an inflection point after a decade of stunted growth and the government must capitalise on the huge potential of this sector. One of the major boosts to achieve this target is to grant an industry status to the sector on a national level and compensate states for any notional loss. The industry needs to be made eligible for tax incentives and concessions available to infrastructure industries under Section 80 I/A of the IT Act.”



Jyoti Mayal
President
TAAI

“We expect the finance minister to declare tourism as an industry and set up a corpus fund for the same, as well as classify hotels, resorts, and convention centres under the RBI infrastructure lending norm criteria. There is a need to develop policy mechanism for single-window clearance. The government should create a global bidding fund for enabling Indian companies to bid for MICE events. There is also a need to enhance funding limits to raise SEIS rates to 7 per cent for foreign exchange earnings and enable SEIS to discharge GST liabilities.”



Sandeep Dwivedi
Chief Operating Officer
InterGlobe Technology Quotient

“There has been a spike of 4.7 per cent y-o-y in the 2018 Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE), with an expectation to grow at 7 per cent by 2028 (Source: IBEF report on Hospitality & Tourism – Oct 2019). As our travel fraternity marvels at the recorded figures, there is no ounce of doubt how hopeful we are about amiable provisions for tourism this year. We need further expansion in infrastructure following the government's sanction for development of 10 prominent sites into 'Iconic' tourist destinations. We definitely expect more focus on expansion.”



Deepak Narula
Managing Director
GRN Connect

“We are expecting a positive, moderate-approach Budget with the continuance of thrust on improving infrastructure across the country. There is lot to be done in the tourism sector, and an urgent need is to make India a safe and tourist-friendly country. Furthermore, visa on arrival needs faster clearances so we need some effort there as well. Our monuments need to be glorified, so a lot needs to be spent on brand building. Northeast India also needs urgent attention in terms of connectivity and safety of travellers.”



Rajesh Arya
Vice President
ADTOI

“We need a big gift from the finance minister for the tourism industry, in terms of relieving the tax burden on businessmen. Similarly, we want the GST regime to be revised further. We need a uniform GST because the slabs do not work well for us. Also, in the tourism sector, there are some crucial concerns that affect business, like the water crisis and pollution. There is a need for the government to invest money to deal with these issues. For domestic tourism, there is a need to increase or improve road connectivity to most destinations.”



HS Duggal
Managing Director
Minar Group

“Inbound tour operators have high hopes from the Budget, with a focus on push on infrastructure, connectivity, more efforts on pollution control and environment safety. Since tourism is facing headwinds, we look forward to some support in the Budget. With tourism directly dependent on air transportation, the government must consider bringing Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) under the GST regime so that cost of air travel is reduced. Another long-pending demand of operators is to be under exporters category.”



Sanjeev K Nayar
General Manager
WelcomHeritage

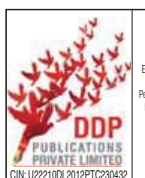
“The government should continue with its tax reforms, be it further rationalisation of the GST or personal income tax so that there is some surplus income available in the hands of the consumer to facilitate travel. Though the infrastructure has improved considerably over the years, there still remains scope for improvement. There needs to be focus on National Skill Development Corporation, to train the youth in hospitality and travel operations, as there is shortage of a skilled workforce at the bottom of the pyramid.”



Pushpendra Bansal
Chief Operating Officer
Lords Hotels & Resorts

“The government should strengthen its initiatives to create sustainable hospitality. This, in my opinion, is the need of the hour. It should also waive off tourist visa fee for a shorter period to increase inbound tourism. Another important aspect is the lack of adequate infrastructure. The focus should be on developing amenities like building good quality roads and constructing public restrooms on highways as well as petrol stations to make road trips safer and more women-friendly.”

Inputs by Hazel Jain, Kanchan Nath, Nisha Verma, Manas Dwivedi



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