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## HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY STAGING A COMEBACK

# Hotels Start Hiring Again on Leisure, Biz Travel Revival

Post-Covid travel trends of workation, weddings, holiday season push demand

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Mumbai: The Indian hospitality industry, which had laid off millions over the first and second waves of the pandemic, has started hiring once again as leisure and business travel is staging a comeback amid falling infections and widespread vaccination.

Leading hotel chains like ITC-backed Fortune Hotels, Lemon Tree Hotels, and Royal Orchid Hotels, as well as travel platforms such as MakeMytrip have restarted hiring as post-Covid travel trends of staycation and workation, wedding bookings, upcoming holiday season – with many planning their vacation around Christmas and year-end, and huge pent-up demand have put hotels and overall travel industry on the path to recovery, company officials said.

A part of the hiring is focused on new hotel openings while some are done to backfill the exits.

Lemon Tree Hotels, which had to let go of several employees by the end of the second wave, hired 500 people last month and plans to hire 1,000 more in the next two months.

“From total employee strength of 8,500, we were down to 5,000 at the end of the second wave,” said Patu Keswani, chairman and managing director of Lemon Tree. “We hired 500 last month. With the opening of new hotels, in the next 18 months, we will hire an additional 2,000.”

Fortune Park Hotels, which is looking to open multiple properties, will hire around 500 by March. “Our current hiring pertains

### Who’s Hiring?

Fortune Hotels, Lemon Tree Hotels, Royal Orchid Hotels, MakeMytrip

### PROFILES IN DEMAND

Tech, product, design, revenue management, customer experience, leadership roles, housekeeping, kitchen, guest relations staff

### REASONS FOR HIRING

Rise in domestic travel, December holiday season booking, wedding, hotels’ foray into new cities, labour shortage, rise in attrition



**Huge pent-up demand has put hotels and overall travel industry on the path to recovery, say industry executives**

to new markets we are entering into with fresh properties under our various sub-brands,” said Samir MC, managing director of Fortune Park Hotels. “We have just opened our newest resort, Fortune Resort Benaulim, in South Goa. We are actively seeking staff for locations like Tiruppur, Hoshiarpur and Haldwani,” he said.

Royal Orchid Hotels plans to add close to 400 new staff members to its existing and upcoming properties, its MD Chander Baljee said. “As the economy and our business have started showing signs of recovery, we’ve stepped up our hiring efforts,” he said. “By the end of 2022, we hope to have 100 hotels in our portfolio.”

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# Travel Industry Rebounds

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Makemytrip, too, is aggressively hiring across tech and non-tech functions as the travel industry is rebounding after heavy losses during the pandemic.

“Domestic travel is picking up leaps and bounds every week,” said Yuvaraj Srivastava, group chief HR officer of Makemytrip. “Premium and five-star hotels are seeing more than 100% recovery compared to pre-pandemic times, and budget hotels have seen around 70-80% recovery.”

The country’s leading travel portal has about 200 open positions. “We have started hiring for all the locations and across roles,” Srivastava said. “It includes a combination of replacement and growth-led hiring.”

Economists and labour market experts that ET spoke with believe the worst is over for the travel and hospitality industry where several establishments shut down and thousands lost their jobs.

“The high mortality rate of the hotels and restaurants are a thing of the past,” said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Care Ratings. “Since September, various state governments have been pushing up the hospitality industry. The increasing appetite for travel has translated into better occupancy rates for hotels — especially in tourist destinations. All this is leading to the need for more manpower,” he said.

“Hiring is also driven by future growth plans as people are expecting that the

worst is behind us,” Sabnavis said.

## MANPOWER SHORTAGE

The pickup in travel has led to a manpower shortage and rising attrition in the industry. Both five-star hotels and smaller peers are facing manpower shortage as they had to let go of a lot of resources, said Rituparna Chakraborty, executive vice president at staffing and human resources solutions firm TeamLease Services.

“Most of it is incremental hiring as the upcoming long holidays and rise in travel are leading to a need for more manpower,” she said. “Across house-keeping, kitchen, guest relations, etc, there is demand for people.”

Functions that are heavily dependent on migrant labourers are also facing a shortage, Chakraborty said.

Arjun Sharma, chairman of Select Group that has diversified business interests in tourism and hospitality, said, “The biggest worry the industry is facing is the shortage of skilled manpower.”

Srivastava of Makemytrip said a slight increase in attrition shows that the market has opened up. “This is not only for the high demand tech roles but also for non-tech functions,” he said.