

Published Date:	Thursday 30th December, 2021	Publication:	The Hindu Business Line [New Delhi]
Journalist:	Forum Gandhi	Page No:	10
MAV/CCM:	96,202/46.7	Circulation:	39,085

Hotels see good occupancy despite Covid fear

But as a precautionary measure, New Year Eve celebrations have been cancelled

FORUM GANDHI

Mumbai, December 29

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and hotels are seeing a good occupancy rate for New Year's Eve despite the looming fear of Omicron. However, hotels have cancelled their New Year Eve parties as a precaution.

BusinessLine spoke to multiple hotel chains, including Accor, IHCL, Pride Group, Sarovar and Lemon Tree.

Some hotels like Pride Group have cancelled New Year's Eve parties across its hotels. Sarovar said that it has already withdrawn its parties in metro cities and Ajay Bakaaya, its Managing Director said that while cancelling parties was a bit of a dampener, it was a responsible move by the government.

On the other hand, players like Accor have said that safety of its guests and staff is priority, and hence, "all events and celebrations are being organised as per rules," said Puneet Dhawan, Senior VP - Operations, Accor India & South Asia. Sources at IHCL said that it does not organise New Year Eve parties but has a special festive dinner gala, and will be "following all norms and are maintaining the capacity gap and time limit."

SP Jain, Chairman, Pride Hotels, said, "We dropped the idea of celebrating New Year Eve due to Omicron. The crowds can become unmanageable, and our staff will also be at risk. Our restaurants, will operate at 50 per cent capacity as per



About occupancies, players said the demand was there but wasn't up to the mark

guidelines."

About occupancies, players said the demand was there but wasn't up to the mark. Liesure destinations like Udaipur, Jaipur and Goa are witnessing good traction for hotel chains like Accor, IHCL and Lemon Tree.

Not many cancellations

Despite the new virus, OTAs, too, haven't seen many cancellations. Players like Ease-

MyTrip, ixigo and Thomas Cook have hardly felt any impact.

"Current industry travel trends indicate growing consumer confidence in travel driven largely by vaccination drives, pent-up demand, the festive holiday and wedding season. We have recently seen a surge in search queries for popular domestic leisure destinations for year-end travel including Goa, Jaipur, Srinagar and Udaipur," said Alope Bajpai, Group CEO & Co-founder, ixigo.

For now, Indians are choosing to travel in India itself. This has boosted Thomas Cook's domestic business with a 4x surge vs 2020, and for EaseMyTrip, advance bookings for January and February have seen a jump of 15 per cent.

With inputs from Swaraj Baggonkar