

Hotels, travel bookings surge as Holi weekend approaches

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Hotel and travel companies are seeing a surge in bookings for the coming long weekend marked by the Holi festival holiday on Friday.

With the Omicron coronavirus wave also showing signs of ebbing across India, more people are hitting the road, benefiting travel and hospitality companies.

Mumbai-based travel agency Thomas Cook has seen bookings jump three-fold for the Holi weekend for domestic locations such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Kashmir, Andaman and Goa.

For other companies too, demand is at an all-time high, and most hill stations are reporting unprecedented occupancies, especially for locations such as Gulmarg, Srinagar, Shimla, Manali and Nainital.

With Holi falling on Friday this year, holiday-makers are looking to extend celebrations by taking leave either before or after the festival to make the best use of the extended weekend, said Daniel D'Souza, president and country head-holidays, SOTC Travel. "We are witnessing strong demand from millennials/young professionals, groups of friends, couples and multi-generational families," D'Souza said, adding that SOTC's bookings this weekend are 1.5 times more



People play 'Lathmaar Holi' at Krishna Janambhoomi Temple, in Mathura on Tuesday. PTI

than that of other weekends in March.

Abhishek Logani, chief business officer, hotels, at online travel firm MakeMyTrip said hotel bookings during the Holi

weekend are likely to exceed that of the previous long weekends of Christmas and **New Year 2021**. Bookings are also 50-60% more than any weekend in January and February,

Logani said. There's traction for Kashmir (Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Leh and Ladakh), Goa, Alibaug, Daman and Diu, Digha in West Bengal and Jim Corbett in Uttarakhand, he added.

Lemon Tree Hotels' upscale brand Aurika Hotels and Resorts in Udaipur and Coorg is witnessing high demand and should achieve close to 80% occupancy for the coming weekend, said Vikramjit Singh, the company's president.

"We are also experiencing a high volume of bookings for other leisure destinations, particularly in North India, where our resorts in Rishikesh and Manesar are nearly sold out," he said.

Lemon Tree is also looking to boost staycation demand at its

city-based hotels by creating special long-weekend packages for those properties, Singh added.

Satyajeet Krishnan, area director, New Delhi, and general manager, Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, said Taj properties are seeing a threefold increase in bookings compared to last year with more than 50% occupancy for staycations for this weekend. "Our dining services are also operating at full capacity...", he said.

"The Holi weekend is shaping up to be one of the most popular periods of travel this year, being the first long weekend after the omicron wave. Destinations in demand are Dubai, and domestic destinations like Ladakh, Goa, and