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# THE FLIGHT TO FREEDOM: INDIA'S VACATION RUSH BEGINS

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As the Independence Day long weekend kicks off, Indians are taking to the skies in big numbers. The extended weekend, coupled with the festive mood, has ignited a surge in travel demand across the country. From bustling cities to serene hill stations, destinations have witnessed a significant uptick in bookings. Popular domestic destinations like Goa, Udaipur, Puducherry and Munnar top the list based on hotel reservations, with international gateways also experiencing high demand. This trend could significantly boost domestic tourism across India, experts say.



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## TOP PICKS

Reflecting a broader shift in travel preferences, Puducherry tops the list as tourists flock to its tranquil ambience and unique charm. Udaipur and Munnar also stand out, with hotel bookings rising by 5.4 times and 4.2 times, respectively, as compared to the three weeks in the run-up, data sourced from Cleartrip showed. Jaipur and Udaipur emerged as the most popular domestic destinations.

### Puducherry, Udaipur, Munnar lead growth in hotel bookings



The data is for check-in date between 14 and 20 August, in comparison with average bookings received for check-in for the three weeks prior to these dates.

### Jaipur and Udaipur top domestic flight charts, with international gateways also in high demand



This is for bookings received for travel between 12 and 18 August, in comparison with the average bookings received for the previous four weeks, with the booking done four days in advance.

## SOARING HIGH

No wonder flight fares on some highly sought-after routes took passengers on a wild ride during the Independence Day rush. Flight prices on popular routes have soared during the period, with a spike seen around the peak travel dates.

### Airfares take off for long weekend

Fare of cheapest non-stop flights from major metros to select tourist destinations (in ₹)



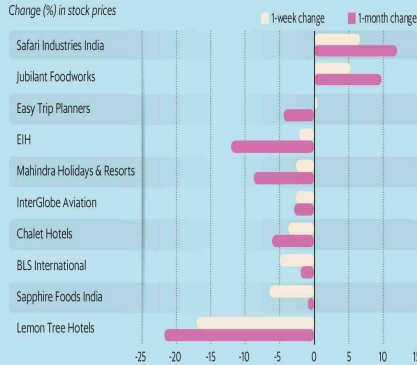
The ticket prices are one-way, as of 9 August.

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## STOCK CHECK

However, market investors are not too excited by the prospect of the long weekend bonanza for the sector. Sentiment for tourism-related stocks remains patchy as stocks belonging to the Nifty India Tourism Index have seen mixed fortunes in the past week and month.

### Holiday cheer for travel, but market mood uncertain



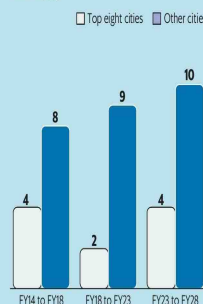
These stocks are select constituents of the Nifty India Tourism Index.

## SET FOR RECOVERY

Indians had been displaying a growing appetite for both domestic and international adventures even before this current surge in travel. Industry experts are optimistic about a resurgence after the pandemic. Data from airports in tourism-linked cities shows increased footfalls this year.

### Demand for branded hotel rooms will be led by smaller cities in coming years

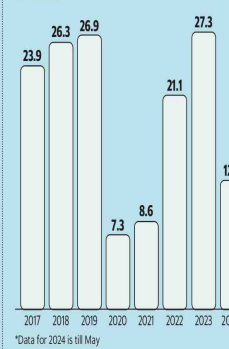
Compound annual growth rate (%) in branded room supply



Top eight cities are Mumbai, New Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Pune, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad.

### Indians are more eager than ever to hit the skies for foreign trips

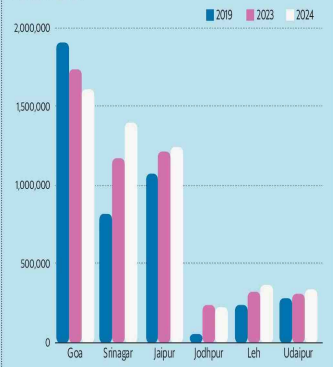
Number of Indians travelling to countries abroad (in million)



\*Data for 2024 is till May

### Airports look busier than ever

Footfalls of domestic passengers in key tourism-oriented airports in April-June quarter



Shuja Asrar contributed to this story. Source: Bloomberg, Cleartrip, Hotelivate, Nirmal Bang Institutional Equities Research, ministry of tourism, Airports Authority of India

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