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# Such a Lovely Place, but can't Check in at the Time You Like

**HOLIDAY RUSH** Most top-end hotels sold out for the year end despite rise in overseas travel

Anumeha Chaturvedi

**New Delhi:** Popular leisure destinations across India are continuing to attract hordes of travellers for the year-end holiday season with an uptick in both occupancies and room tariffs over last year. This is despite the growing popularity of international travel especially to short-haul locations in Southeast Asia.

The Raffles Udaipur is sold out for New Year's Eve as a business tycoon in India has booked the entire luxury hotel for his family's year-end celebration from December 30-January 2. Mementos by ITC Hotels, Ekaaya, Udaipur is nearly sold out too. Nearly all properties of Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) in Rajasthan are also close to getting booked to capacity for Christmas and New Year's Eve, a phase that leads to blackout dates in the sector.

"Strategically, we decided to not accept wedding bookings around Christmas and New Year's Eve, but we are still seeing properties getting booked to capacity. Rates for IHCL's palace properties in Rajasthan are up 25% over last year, and occupancies are 8% higher than last year for the year-end season," said Ashok Singh Rathore, area director, operations for Rajasthan at IHCL and the general manager of Rambagh Palace in Jaipur. IHCL has around 26 properties across segments in Rajasthan.

The hospitality chain of the Tata Group is also expecting its properties in Goa, among India's top leisure destinations, to perform better than last year.

"December looks quite healthy, and we are expecting our average daily rates to be 4-5% higher than last year. We are expecting a better October-December quarter than last year," said Ranjit Phillipose, senior vice president, operations, Goa, at IHCL. The company has 35 properties across segments in Goa.

A spokesperson for ITC Hotels said in the leisure segment, Storii properties are seeing "high interest" in bookings across segments including Dharamshala and Goa. "Welcomhotel Chail, Amritsar, Jim Corbett, Shimla, and Welcomhotel Pahalgam are on similar trajectory. ITC Grand Goa, ITC Mughal and ITC Rajputana are all registering impressive occupancies," the spokesperson added.



Sorry  
WE'RE FULLY  
BOOKED

**Raffles Udaipur** fully booked for New Year's Eve; other high-end properties there too near full occupancy

**IHCL's palace** properties in Rajasthan see **25%** higher rates, occupancies **8%** higher; **Goa sees 4-5%** rate increase

**ITC Hotels' Storii** properties see strong booking interest across leisure destinations

**Radisson Hotel Group's** room rates up **10%** in Kashmir, Udaipur, Goa, and other markets



For Radisson Hotel Group, average room rates are about 10% higher than last year in leisure locations such as Kashmir, Udaipur, Lonavala, Karjat, Goa and Pondicherry, said Nikhil Sharma, MD and area senior VP for South Asia at the chain. "The revenue per available room will be about 10-14% higher than last year for some of these markets," he said.

Lemon Tree Hotels' properties in leisure locales such as Goa and Bandhavgarh are expected to perform better during this year-end holiday season compared to last year, said Vilas Pawar, CEO, managed and franchise division at Lemon Tree Hotels.

Leisure Hotels Group is also experiencing a 'significant' rise in Christmas and New Year bookings this year with several properties particularly those in hill destinations nearing full occupancy, said Shahzad Aslam, head of sales at the chain. "Booking trends suggest that all properties are expected to sell out as we approach the New Year," he added.