

FAMILIARISTS, NOT TOURISTS

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As COVID-19 continues to be a part of our lives, in our contemporary, more restricted world, local travel will continue to be a popular choice amongst travellers. As they get more comfortable exploring destinations closer to home, new trends for local getaways are climbing to the top of travel agendas.

With domestic travel rising as it remains easier, safer and more sustainable, as per Booking.com's 'Future of Travel' research findings, 49% of Indian travellers plan to explore a new destination within their home country. The survey conducted by the digital travel platform also reveals that 52% of Indian travellers still plan to travel within their own country in the medium term (7-12 months' time).

Of these 41% plan to do so in the longer term (in over a year's time). Srinagar, Digha, Manali, Goa and Alibaug are some of the top trending Indian destinations for Indians travelling from 1st February to 28th February, 2021 as compared to the same time last year.

SURGE IN STAYCATIONS TO NEARBY DESTINATIONS

When it comes to local travel, 50% Indian travellers will take the time to appreciate the natural beauty of their home country. Whether travellers decide to stay local or not, 57% Indian travellers intend to travel somewhere they've already been previously for its familiarity.

Doorstep delights offer both cost and time savings for travellers, and it is likely that tourism and hospitality companies respond with extra add-ons to their travel offerings. This could include historic and cultural

heritage tours to educate and entertain visitors. New, more novel experiences such as guest chefs and bespoke cocktails could also be in the mix to help win local tourists' affection.

POPULARITY OF HOLIDAYING WITH PETS

Travelling with furry companions has been top of traveller's minds in recent months, with the use of Booking.com's 'pet-friendly' filter more than doubling since travel restrictions began. With no sign of slowing down, the trend to travel with pets is one that we are likely to see continue throughout 2021 and beyond.

Similarly, the desire to explore places closer to home is fuelling a renaissance of road trips. People are keen to rediscover forgotten local gems, and have found a renewed passion to support local business and communities. This is happening as they seek to rebuild, and inspire a newfound sense of pride in the history and beauty that's just around the corner.

TRAVEL LIKE A LOCAL

- 49% travellers plan to explore a new destination within their home country
- 25% of Indian travellers intend to travel to the other side of the world by the end of 2021
- When it comes to local travel, 57% intend to travel somewhere they've already visited before



78% of travellers expect the travel and hospitality industry to offer more sustainable travel options to meet their goals of sustainable travel in the future.

STILL DREAMING OF FAR-FLUNG TRAVEL?

While local travel will continue to keep travellers occupied well into 2021, the desire to jetset to far-flung places still remains strong in the traveller's psyche. Appreciation for familiarity will sit alongside an enduring love and anticipation of international travel and exotic destinations. 25% of Indian travellers intend to travel to the other side of the world by the end of 2021, compared to only 12% by the end of 2020.

Commenting on the 'Future of Travel' study, Ritu Mehrotra, Regional Manager, South Asia at Booking.com said, "While it will be some time before travel returns to pre-pandemic levels, all signs point to the fundamental and enduring role that travel plays in all our lives. Looking ahead, staying closer to home and becoming familiarists rather than tourists will continue to be at the forefront of travel agendas. Rediscovering India and travelling like a local is what 2021 is going to be about."

The study also found that a majority of Indians have become more aware of the wider impact of their trips. 70% travellers now want to travel more sustainably in the future. What is even more interesting is that 78% of travellers expect the travel and hospitality industry to offer more sustainable travel options to meet their goals of sustainable travel in the future.

The impact of coronavirus has inspired 55% of Indian travellers to consider reducing waste and recycle plastic when travelling, once travel restrictions are lifted. This shows that people are not just committed to protecting themselves, but also the places they visit. ■