MARKET REPORT

HVS Monday Musings: Time to Recreate Goa Tourism Model at Other Beach destinations?

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Goa’s tourism growth story is steadily picking up steam, as it has emerged as the go-to holiday destination for domestic tourists post the second wave. Other Indian beach destinations can learn from Goa's best strategies to attract tourists.

Goa’s tourism growth story is gradually getting back on track as it has become the go-to holiday destination for domestic tourists since the state reopened post the second wave. Due to the limits on overseas travel, several outbound Indians are also choosing to vacation in Goa. From resorts, hotels, and private villas to dorm rooms and beach huts, Goa has something for everyone. As a result, occupancy has been steadily improving month after month, with September 2021 occupancy approaching pre-pandemic levels for the month and average rates surpassing pre-pandemic levels. With the government taking steps to welcome foreign tourists back, Goa, which is known as one of India’s top beach and nightlife destinations, may soon see a surge in demand from international tourists, allowing it to recover faster than most leisure destinations.

The government has adopted a number of initiatives to resuscitate the sector, the most important of which is vaccination of the majority of the eligible population. According to media reports, the first dose of vaccination has been given to 100% of the state's eligible population, and roughly 70% of the adult population has been fully vaccinated. Moreover, the government intends to prioritize responsible and high-quality tourism over volume going forward, with plans in place to rebrand and remarket Goa as a diverse tourism destination.





However, even before the pandemic, Goa, which attracted approximately 8 million tourists in 2019, was suffering from over-tourism. Environmental degradation, severe commercialization, pressure on infrastructure, deteriorating cleanliness, and exorbitant prices, particularly during peak season, have all contributed to a negative experience for visitors and locals alike. These challenges, particularly the rate of infrastructure development, are unlikely to be resolved very soon, giving India the opportunity to develop other untouched and unexplored beach destinations for tourists along its 7,500-km coastline.

The government is already taking various steps to transform the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, as well as Lakshadweep, into world-class tourism destinations comparable to the Maldives, Bali, and Mauritius. However, other upcoming tourist locations such as Bekal, Gokarna, Daman & Diu, Pondicherry, and Odisha, to mention a few, have not yet been able to draw their fair number of tourists. These destinations should reassess their positioning in order to climb up the hierarchy by emulating some of Goa's best strategies while avoiding the state's mistakes. To achieve the much-needed balance between tourism and sustainability, authorities should also evaluate global best practices and tourism models, as well as implement effective destination management strategies. Improving last-mile connectivity to these areas, building adequate infrastructure amenities, including quality hotel supply, and executing new marketing strategies, can help attract tourists looking for an alternative to Goa, while also helping reduce over-tourism in Goa in the long run.