



# The Big Fat Indian Wedding

With a slew of initiatives, hotels are ensuring that the wedding day is special for the couple as well as for the hotel's bottom line.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

The Ministry of Tourism's campaign to promote weddings in India and the trend of celebrities choosing India for their weddings is auguring well for the hospitality industry. Experts weigh in.

## PERSONALITY MATTERS

Today's couples are increasingly seeking personalized and unique experiences that reflect their individuality, values, and cultural nuances. Weddings are moving beyond traditional ceremonies and becoming immersive experiences. From creating unforgettable moments through interactive elements and engaging activities for them and their guests, to choosing environmentally conscious vendors, to opting for intimate and inclusive celebrations, modern couples are aligning their big day with their values and aspirations. Kadmbini Mittal, Regional VP - Commercial, India and Southwest Asia, Hyatt, says, "Under our dedicated initiative, Perfectly Yours, we have allocated specialized teams and resources to cater to these celebratory occasions which make our hotels gain an edge over traditional venues. In 2023, our weddings segment witnessed an impressive year-on-year growth of 50%, underscoring

the effectiveness and importance of our efforts in this area. At Hyatt, we have tailored our offerings to cater to these discerning preferences. We understand the importance of curating weddings that embrace individual choices and desires."



Statue of Unity Tent City



Sangeet at a Hyatt property



JW Marriott Juhu

## REVENUE DRIVER

Weddings are a substantial source of revenue for a five-star luxury hotel. The recent uptick in hotel weddings can be attributed to various factors and the evolving trends and needs of couples. Personalization, one-stop solution for all needs, controlled services and added amenities of a luxury hotel are making it increasingly convenient and lucrative for people to get married at a five-star



Kadmbini Mittal, Regional VP - Commercial, India and Southwest Asia, Hyatt

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luxury hotel. Deep Vahi, Director Sales & Marketing at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu, says, "Weddings are a planned and timely source of revenue that add to the projections and booked revenue much in advance. It's a space where we command a big market share and hold a great potential to grow. Weddings also amplify revenues from other avenues like rooms, restaurants, bars, and spa. The biggest launch at JW Marriott Juhu will be that of the Grand Sangam Ballroom in July, masterfully designed for flawless weddings and social affairs in Mumbai. We expect to generate a revenue of approximately Rs 8 crore to Rs 10 crore per month from the ballroom in its new avatar in Q4 of 2024. We foresee an average of 50% of the total catering revenue to be attributed to weddings in the months to come."

## DESTINATION CALL

During the last wedding season, the Statue of Unity Tent City hosted eight weddings, while the Rann of Kutch Tent City hosted one wedding along with two other social functions related to weddings. Bhavik Sheth, COO, Evoke Experiences, says, "We collaborate with various state governments, managing properties that offer unique experiences through their natural beauty. Wed-



WH Shivavilas Palace, Sandur

dings are a crucial market for us, significantly contributing to our revenue alongside standard room and F&B sales. Weddings account for 15%-18% of our business at known sites like Rann of Kutch and Statue of Unity, and 5%-8% in newer locations like Gandhisagar Forest Retreat and Kuno Forest Retreat. There is a need to increase awareness and position these destinations as ideal for weddings.”

**THE HOTEL EDGE**

During the pandemic and its crowd restrictions, a new trend emerged as couples sought out exquisite and distinctive venues for their destination weddings, tailored to a smaller guest list of approximately 100-120 attendees. This shift created opportunities for smaller, boutique properties to shine. The perception of a segment of people changed where they aspired to have a more exclusive, scaled down and eco-friendly wedding. Mridula Jose, Vice President Marketing & Product Development, CGH Earth says, “CGH Earth launched ‘Wedded On Earth’, showcasing its portfolio of boutique and luxury hotels and resorts situated in extraordinary locations that embody local culture, ecological mindfulness, and community engagement. The collection features diverse venues, such as a backwater destination nestled within coconut groves and surrounded by traditional Kerala wooden houses, a re-imagined fishing village along a pristine beach, a secluded hillside retreat immersed in nature’s wonders, a waterfront locale steeped in colonial heritage, and a revitalized rural Tamil village experience, among others. Each venue sets the stage for truly distinctive and unforgettable wedding ceremonies.”

**PUSHING THE BOTTOMLINE**

“Weddings today contribute around 35-50% of total revenues for our wedding-specific hotels with gross operating profits ranging from 50-60%. Weddings contribute significantly in boosting the overall revenues of hotels, and The Park Hyderabad, The Park Visakhapatnam, and The Park Bangalore are no exception. This



Mridula Jose, Vice President, Marketing & Product Development, CGH Earth



Bhavik Sheth, COO, Evoke Experiences



The Kahwa Lounge at WelcomHeritage Grand Srinagar



WH Gurkha HouseBoats, Srinagar



WH Ramgarh, Panchkula



Ajit Singh Garcha, The Park



Abinash Manghani, Chief Executive Officer, WelcomHeritage Hotels

segment drives up the sales not only in banquet and room but also in ancillary services like spa, laundry, and restaurant dining. During the wedding season from November to March, revenue from weddings accounts for up to 25% of the total income. Even during the summer months, auspicious wedding dates drive substantial revenue growth,” says Ajit Singh Garcha, Area General Manager (The Park Hyderabad, The Park Bangalore, and The Park Visakhapatnam). Revenue from weddings in city hotels typically ranges from 10-20%, but in resort destinations, this percentage can be significantly higher. “At our hotel, reflecting recent trends, we aim for 20% of our revenue to come from social events and weddings during the financial year. Weddings generate good margins as clients often opt for premium choices for their once-in-a-lifetime event. Additionally, bulk room bookings are usually priced at premium rates,” adds Garcha.

**MEMORIES UNLIMITED**

The weddings segment holds key importance for the hospitality industry; therefore, it is vital that hotels are planned, built, and operated in ways that can fully leverage this segment. Abinash Manghani, Chief Executive Officer, WelcomHeritage Hotels, says, “Over the past few years, this segment has grown tremendously and continues to contribute to our top lines at WelcomHeritage. Our hotels offer exclusive buyouts boosting occupancies, and due to which we can customise our services for the event. Weddings also contribute to the revenue from food & beverage, more than the room revenue with couples and host families laying out elaborate, exquisite buffets for their guests. Additionally, revenues trickle in from allied services like decorations, spa, and beverage packages.”

With hotels offering a plethora of options from palace hotels to forts, havelis and nature retreats, weddings are certainly a key focus area for hospitality. ■