

Immersive Getaways

Hotels and retreats with premium-priced rooms are making the case for a great experiential getaway.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

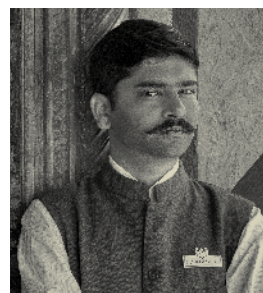
As a country that is known for its rich legacy of culture, art, royalty and nature, India has much to offer for people with a discerning taste. And to cater to them, hospitality has nuanced offerings - with premium priced rooms (above Rs 50,000 per night) - that ensure a bespoke experience awaits.

REGAL REPAST

With its history rooted in royalty, several palaces of the past are now premium hotels. The Living Legacies of Taj exemplify authentic Indian hospitality and showcase the very essence of 'Tajness' through their timeless elegance, unparalleled service, and deep-rooted traditions. "Our royal living palaces, such as Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur, Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, Taj Fateh Prakash Palace in Udaipur, Sawai Man Mahal in Jaipur, and Jai Mahal Palace in Jaipur, each tell a unique story of India's regal past. They offer sanctuaries where history and modernity co-exist in perfect harmony. With exquisite design, exotic art, and beautiful gardens, at our palaces, we craft mesmerizing experiences that exemplify royal living. Our restaurants serve recipes from royal kitchens, and the spas pamper guests with indulgent therapies. Over the years, these living legacies have redefined hospitality, blending tradition with contemporary comforts," says Ashok S Rathore, Area Director - Operations &



Ashok S Rathore, Area Director - Operations & General Manager, Rambagh Palace, Jaipur



Parikshit Singh Rathore, Lodge Manager, Aramnesh Gir

General Manager, Rambagh Palace, Jaipur. Interestingly, the room rates vary from \$1,100+ taxes in winter to \$700+ taxes in summer.

FOCUS ON EXPERIENCES

Likewise, at Aramnesh Gir, the team offers more than just a place to stay, and their value lies in providing a unique blend of luxury, authenticity, and sustainability that encapsulates the essence of Gir and unparalleled hospitality. Guests enjoy exclusive access to the breathtaking landscapes and wildlife of Gir National Park through guided safaris, personalized experiences that are tailored to their preferences, and meaningful cultural immersion. "Our wellness programs and tranquil environment ensure complete rejuvenation. By supporting eco-friendly practices and community initiatives, guests contribute to the

preservation of this pristine environment. Many have found their stay life-changing, sharing their experiences with others and creating a community of kindred spirits who appreciate the rare beauty and tranquillity of Aramnesh Gir. Our rates vary depending on the season, type of accommodation, and the specific packages chosen, ranging from \$900 to \$1,500 per night," says Parikshit Singh Rathore, Lodge Manager, Aramnesh Gir. The pricing is designed to ensure that each guest receives a bespoke experience that includes luxurious accommodations, personalized service, and exclusive access to the natural beauty and wildlife of Gir National Park. The cost covers not just a stay, but an immersive journey into the heart of Gujarat, complete with guided safaris, cultural excursions, gourmet dining, and wellness activities.

VALUE PROPOSITION

The premium pricing includes a holistic experience that guests often do not mind paying for as there is an inherent value in them. Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre,

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for instance, provides a holistic and luxurious experience for both leisure and business travellers with its presidential suite priced at Rs 95,000+ taxes. "Our modern rooms and suites are designed for ultimate comfort, featuring Sheraton Signature Sleep Experience beds, plush furnishings, and high-end amenities such as free high-speed Wi-Fi, coffee makers, and mini-fridges, with select rooms offering stunning views of the city skyline or our tranquil pool area. Guests can indulge in diverse culinary delights at our multiple restaurants, offering local Indian flavours and international cuisine, all crafted by expert chefs. Our hotel's world-class facilities include a full-service spa, a refreshing pool, and a 24-hour gym, ensuring relaxation and fitness options for all. Business travellers' benefit from our expansive meeting and conference spaces, equipped with state-of-the-art technology," says Varun Mehrotra, Director of Sales & Marketing, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre.

BESPOKE VIBES

Today, properties are betting big on offering custom-made getaways

JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu



JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu

and it always helps when retreats have properties to match. For instance, Samode Safari Lodge in Bandhavgarh offers an unparalleled experience of luxury, exclusivity, and immersive wildlife adventures, justifying its premium rate of Rs 80,000 per night. Situated in the tranquil Mardari village adjacent to the buffer forest, the lodge stands apart from the crowded clusters of other accommodations. The lodge features 12 elegantly designed villas spread across 30 acres, each offering modern amenities, private courtyards, and plush furnishings that exude comfort and sophistication. Yugdeep Singh, General Manager, Samode Hotels, says, "A key highlight of the Samode Safari Lodge experience is the all-inclusive, full-board plan that extends beyond traditional safari adventures. Guests can participate in a variety of unique activities that connect them deeply with the natural heritage and culture of Bandhavgarh. Each day is meticulously curated by an assigned naturalist, who plans personalized itineraries that include nature walks, bird watching, and educational talks, enhancing guests' understanding and appreciation of the ecosystem. The lodge's dining experience is another stand-out feature. Each meal is a curated surprise, served in different, picturesque locations within the property, adding an element of excitement and novelty to every dining occasion. The cuisine is a blend of local flavours and gourmet dishes, prepared with fresh, locally sourced ingredients, ensuring a delightful culinary journey."

Likewise, at Amaya, a luxury boutique resort set amidst 25 acres of rolling hills and pine forest in the hills of Solan district,



Varun Mehrotra, Director of Sales & Marketing, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru



Deepak Gupta, Co-Founder, Amaya

all aspects are carefully curated and customised to a very discerning traveller. "This one-of-a-kind-living-in-nature experience is priced competitively relative to luxury resorts in other destinations around the world. Furthermore, we are committed to sustainable practices and local community involvement. The lodge employs eco-friendly measures in its operations and construction, uses local materials, and provides employment opportunities to the nearby communities. This dedication to sustainability and responsible tourism not only enriches the guest experience but also contributes to the preservation of the local environment and culture. For Rs 80,000 per night, guests receive an unmatched blend of comfort, adventure, and cultural immersion, making it truly worth the investment for discerning travellers seeking a unique and enriching stay in the heart of the Indian wilderness," avers Deepak Gupta, co-founder, Amaya.

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Yugdeep Singh, Samode Hotels

WALLET FACTOR

With guests appreciating the specialized service and customized attention, premium pricing is auguring well for hospitality. "Nestled along the iconic Juhu Beach, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu offers 358 elegantly appointed rooms and suites with breathtaking views of the Arabian Sea. The premium pricing (the beach suite is priced at Rs 64,000+taxes) reflects our unwavering commitment to luxury, world-class amenities, and unparalleled service, ensuring a truly opulent experience for our guests. Our guests recognize the exceptional value of the premium experience we provide. The personalized service, exclusive amenities, and prime beachfront location are viewed as worthwhile investments by our discerning clientele. Positive feedback and repeat visits underscore their satisfaction and acceptance of our pricing, demonstrating that guests are open and willing to pay for the luxurious and unique experience we offer," says Deep Vahi, Director



Yugdeep Singh, General Manager, Samode Hotels



Deep Vahi, Director of Sales and Marketing, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu

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CHALLENGES IN UPKEEP

While these properties are priced in a premium manner, there is also an increased cost of ensuring they are well maintained. This apart, these properties must continually differentiate themselves to justify their premium pricing. This competitive pressure compels the hotel to consistently innovate and enhance its offerings, ensuring guests perceive substantial value in their stay. "Maintaining our room rates at Aramness Gir does come with its unique set of challenges. First and foremost, we are deeply committed to providing a luxurious and immersive experience, which requires significant investment in high-quality amenities, staff training, and continuous upgrades to our facilities. Additionally, our commitment to sustainability and supporting the local community involves considerable costs in sourcing local produce, implementing eco-friendly practices, and supporting community projects. Operating in a remote location like Sasan Gir presents logistical challenges, including transportation of goods and services, which adds to the overall costs," avers Rathore.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

With the premium price tag, these properties are also doing their bit for the environment. "Prioritize investing in your people and their well-being. Embrace change as a core value, following the example set by Marriott. By putting people first, you build a stronger, more resilient organization. This approach not only enhances employee satisfaction and retention but also drives better customer service and overall performance. The hospitality industry thrives on exceptional service, and that begins with a motivated and well-cared-for team. Investing in your employees' development, health, and happiness will pay dividends in creating a sustainable and successful business," concludes Vahi. ■



Rambagh Palace