



The Postcard in the Durrung Tea Estate, Assam

# Green Holidays

In 2025, travel is not just about visiting new destinations—it's about travelling with intention, and hoteliers are gearing up to meet the demand.

By Bindu Gopal Rao



The Postcard Gir - Farm to Table



Sand Art at Puri





Toda Hut at Ooty



Akanksha Lamba, Co-Founder and Senior Vice President Operations at The Postcard Hotel



Aasif Baig, Director of Sales, Courtyard by Marriott, Ranchi

According to Booking.com's 2025 Travel and Sustainability Report, 59% of Indian travellers are conscious of travel's impact on communities as well as the environment. There is also a growing desire to give back—63% of Indian travellers want to leave places better than when they arrived. Encouragingly, 74% see tourism as having a positive impact on where they live, but they also recognize the need for balanced growth. So, what are hoteliers doing? Read on to know all about green holidays.

#### Intent Cues

With 96% of Indians believing that travelling more sustainably is important and an impressive 99% revealing they want to make more sustainable choices, Indian travellers are embracing a more thoughtful and responsible approach to travel. Santosh Kumar, Country Manager for India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Indonesia at Booking.com, says, "Interestingly, this evolving mindset is reflected in how Indians engage with local communities. For Indian travellers a mindful holiday today includes engaging respectfully with local customs, supporting small businesses and being conscious of crowding. In fact, 66% of Indian travellers observe that tourists at home respect local customs and traditions and support local businesses (69%), while 77% seek



Santosh Kumar, Country Manager for India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Indonesia at Booking.com

*"A mindful holiday today includes engaging respectfully with local customs, supporting small businesses and being conscious of crowding."*

authentic cultural experiences. Additionally, 68% want the money they spend to go back to the local community, reflecting a deeper desire to travel responsibly and regeneratively."

Indian travellers also recognise the need for investment in their communities—49% call for better waste management, 46% for improved transportation and 42% for environmental conservation. Moreover, they are also proactively reducing their own impact, with 45% seeking to travel at other times of the year and 42% visiting alternative destinations to avoid overcrowding.

#### Community Matters

Travellers today aren't just looking for beautiful stays; they are seeking a sense of place, purpose, and connection. To meet this shift, properties are consciously less in inventory and rooted in their locale, allowing experiences to be embedded directly within the community fabric.

"Active collaboration with local artisans, farmers, and storytellers creates immersive guest experiences – from curated village walks to exclusive farm-to-table meals prepared with ingredients sourced from organic gardens within the hotel. Team members, many of whom are from the surrounding areas, act as cultural



Amaan R Kidwai, Area Manager  
Luxury Hotels (North) & General  
Manager, ITC Maurya



Bhavik Sheth, COO, Evoke  
Experiences



Organic farming, Netravali

bridges, offering guests authentic insights and experiences that go far beyond the typical tourist trail,” says Akanksha Lamba, Co-Founder and Senior Vice President Operations at The Postcard Hotel.

“We treat the community as collaborators, not just beneficiaries. We’ve set up a local liaison board comprising panchayat members, teachers, and youth leaders to guide our tourism impact. For instance, when designing our guest experiences, we first seek feedback from the village elders about what feels respectful and what does not. Instead of just planting trees, we support agroforestry initiatives where guests and locals plant fruit-bearing trees together, which benefits the soil and household nutrition over time,” adds Aasif Baig, Director of Sales, Courtyard by Marriott, Ranchi.

#### Looking Beyond

Instead of focusing on conventional sustainability checkboxes, the goal is to redefine green hospitality by subtly infusing it into every guest experience. For example, at several hotels, guests are invited to participate in guided foraging sessions, heritage seed planting, or forest regeneration walks – turning environmental stewardship into an engaging, memorable part of the holiday. Forgotten local recipes using native ingredients are revived and served, supporting regional

agriculture and biodiversity. Additionally, many properties are housed in restored heritage structures, reducing the carbon footprint of new construction while preserving cultural narratives. The aim isn’t just to reduce impact; it’s to turn it into a story guests become a part of.

“Sustainability at ITC Mughal is not confined within its walls—it extends to the local community and the wider destination. The hotel prioritises hiring from the local workforce and sourcing produce, handicrafts, and décor items from artisans in Agra and nearby villages. ITC Mughal contributes to maintaining green spaces around the Taj Mahal buffer zone, working with civic bodies and NGOs to plant native trees and improve air quality. Guests are invited to participate in community-based experiences, such as organic farm visits and craft workshops, which support rural livelihoods and promote cultural preservation. The hotel collaborates with local schools and institutions to promote environmental awareness, offering tours and seminars on sustainable practices and career opportunities in green hospitality,” says Amaan R Kidwai, Area Manager Luxury Hotels (North) & General Manager, ITC Maurya.

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Aasif Baig

#### Changing Vistas

What has changed is that guests no longer want to be just spectators. They want to feel like they are part of something, something local, honest, and lasting. “At Evoke



Experiences, we have always been known for curating distinctive destinations and crafting experiences that are truly one of a kind. That hasn't changed. What has evolved is our deeper commitment to collaboration with the people and cultures that make each destination unique. From showcasing the intricate legacy of Rogan art to guests visiting the Rann, to taking them through the layered flavours of Kutch cuisine, to creating immersive moments amid the stark beauty of Dholavira, we are focused on designing experiences that are rooted in place and purpose. ROI for us isn't just about numbers; it's about the quality of connection. The most meaningful results often come in the form of community trust, repeat travellers who ask for the same host again, or guests who say their stay shifted the way they think about travel," says Bhavik Sheth, COO of Evoke Experiences.

Gaurav Mudgal, Managing Partner & Vice President Commercials, Aamaghati Wildlife Resort, avers, "Today's traveller seeks purpose as much as comfort, and at Aamaghati Wildlife Resort, Ranthambore, we've woven conservation and community partnership into our very foundation. We measure return on investment in multiple dimensions: operational savings from energy; the number of local people employed or upskilled; tangible reforestation and habitat restoration figures; and, of course, the depth of guest engagement, repeat stays, survey scores on meaningful experiences, and the personal stories guests share about how their visit changed them. Travellers now regularly ask about wildlife corridor preservation, staff wellbeing, and community impact."

### Destination Focus

Guests are choosing guided nature trails over all-day pool lounging, opting for zero-km meals and kitchen gardens, and even requesting longer housekeeping cycles to conserve resources. As the demand for greener getaways grows, Sterling

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**Akanksha Lamba**

Holidays is doubling down on regenerative travel, not just sustainable travel.

"We have reimagined our resorts as gateways to local engagement. From tribal foraging walks in Ooty to coastal fishing trips with village communities in Karwar, our guests are encouraged to step out and connect. Our promise, 'Sterling Discoveries and Experiences', ensures every resort showcases the art, culture, history and cuisine of the local micro-community and leads initiatives that directly benefit the surrounding community—be it through cultural immersion, education, or sustainability-linked activities," says Harinath M, Sr Vice President Marketing and Communications, Sterling Holiday Resorts Ltd. For instance, Sterling Palavelli Godavari supports Burra Katha, an oral storytelling technique in the Jangam Katha tradition, performed in villages of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in India by way of employing them and indulging in performances twice a month. From showcasing tribal foraging in Ooty to reviving the ancient Weavers Wall in Mussoorie, they provide platforms for local art, craft, and culture.

### Responsibility Impact

Conscientious hoteliers ensure all stakeholders—the team, suppliers and vendors, the surrounding communities, the guests, and promoters—are all part of the sustainability story. At CGH Earth, community-focused tourism is woven through the very fabric of the offering. Many of their properties, such as Coconut Lagoon, Spice Village, Marari Beach, and Visalam, have been designed in harmony with the region's traditional architecture and built using local materials.

"This approach naturally



Gaurav Mudgal, Managing Partner & Vice President Commercials, Aamaghati Wildlife Resort



Harinath M, Sr Vice President, Marketing and Communications



Tribal Museum



Gardens at ITC Mughal, a Luxury Collection Resort &amp; Spa, Agra

engages skilled craftsmen, masons, and carpenters from the surrounding villages. At Marari Beach, Spice Village, and Spice Coast Cruises, we continue to collaborate with local communities for ongoing maintenance, whether it's replenishing coir mats and candles, producing waste bin liners and natural fibre panelling, weaving bamboo and coir for our boats, or thatching the roofs of our cottages. In places where local weaving communities exist, such as at Visalam, we source textiles for décor, towels, and staff uniforms directly from them. Many of the articles placed in our rooms and public spaces are crafted by local artisans and small-scale entrepreneurs and often are handmade in-house by our own team members," says Mridula Jose, Vice President, Marketing & Product Development, CGH Earth.

### All Heart

Hotels are working on getaways where every footprint is light, but every memory is vivid. By making community and culture central to their offering, they are ensuring that guests don't just take home souvenirs; they take home stories and a sense of stewardship for the places they visit.

Gaurav Miglani, Area Director, North Goa and General Manager Taj Holiday Village Goa, explains, "Our signature 'Village Saunters' programme is a great example. It allows guests to interact with local artisans, learn age-old Goan crafts like pottery and coconut weaving, and understand the stories behind them. We've also introduced 'Dining with Home Chefs', an offbeat culinary experience where guests share a traditional meal at the Beach House, which is our Portuguese-inspired Goan food restaurant. These moments are deeply personal, and they anchor the guest in the heart of the

Mridula Jose, Vice President,  
Marketing & Product Development,  
CGH EarthGaurav Miglani, Area Director, North  
Goa and General Manager,  
Taj Holiday Village Goa

community. We also partner with meaningful local interactions with some of the largest Goan homes to integrate the historic architectural impact on Goan culture – be it a high tea at Figueiredo Mansion or a trip to Divar Island or the sacred forests of Goa with local experts. All of this is embedded into our luxury hospitality framework, without compromising comfort."

One of their most impactful initiatives is the 'Living Heritage' landscaping project. Instead of manicured lawns, their gardens feature native flora curated in consultation with local botanists and elders. Guests can scan QR codes across the resort to learn about the native trees, herbs, and their uses in traditional Goan households. This living garden not only reduces water usage but also revives indigenous biodiversity and inspires curiosity.

### In Conclusion

There has been a noticeable shift in guest expectations. Today's travellers are far more informed and intentional about the environmental impact of their choices. "We have seen rising interest in initiatives like our Zero Mile Water, linen reuse programmes, and locally sourced menus. Guests often enquire about our sustainability efforts before booking and appreciate transparency in our operations. Many now consider environmental responsibility a key factor in their hotel selection, not just an added bonus. Their preferences drive us to continuously innovate and enhance our green practices," says Kunal Pahwa, GM, ITC Grand Central, Mumbai.

The goal is simple; when guests leave, they don't just feel they have taken a vacation, they feel they have added value to something bigger than themselves. ■