



Mohiniattam at Gateway Bekal

Hitting the Festive Highs

Hotels are announcing special packages designed to align with the festivals and celebrations, which are creating new revenue streams for the sector.

By Bindu Gopal Rao

With options such as festival room packages and culinary experiences along with cultural activities, hotels are making the most of festival tourism. Experts weigh in.

Festive Fervour

Festivals such as Durga Puja, New Year, Poila Baisakh and Christmas significantly enhance hotel bookings by attracting many tourists, encouraging longer stays and fostering unique

cultural experiences. Additionally, music festivals, concerts and other events are also pushing demand. Hotels leverage this opportunity by offering special room packages, cultural experiences and food and beverage promotions, leading to higher occupancy rates during these festive periods.

“At Altair, we customise and curate multiple activities and offerings, including room festival packages, themed decorations, a special festive menu, themed food promotions and more. We create something for everyone, such as relaxing

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- Tarun Gulati

staycations, festival celebrations and musical events at our hotel. We develop our operational plan based on expected guest movements and prepare additional resources to ensure we provide an equal experience to each guest. However, a surge in demand may result in longer wait times for dining guests who have not made advance bookings,” says Nitin Kohli, Wholetime Director, Altair, Ambuja Neotia Hospitality.

Getting Ready

Festivals also create an opportunity to build deeper connections with guests through immersive experiences rooted in tradition,



Nitin Kohli, Wholetime Director, Altair, Ambuja Neotia Hospitality

sustainability, and local culture.

“At ITC Grand Central, festival periods are planned well in advance. This involves aligning our culinary, service, décor, and experiences to reflect the festive spirit. For example, during Ganesh Chaturthi, we curate sustainable décor, festive hampers, and special menus while also ensuring operational readiness to handle increased demand. Planning also extends to staffing, vendor tie-ups, and ensuring our eco-conscious ethos is maintained across offerings in adherence to ‘Responsible Luxury initiatives’. Marketing is tailored to highlight the unique festival offerings and experiences at the



Hoteliers ensure that marketing activities are designed to create experiences



Food and beverage is the main attraction of any festival



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hotel. Campaigns are curated across multiple platforms—social media, digital campaigns, print media tie-ups, and influencer collaborations. The emphasis is always on storytelling that blends luxury hospitality with authentic festive traditions,” says Kunal Pahwa, General Manager, ITC Grand Central.

Seasonal Surge

Festival tourism is one of the most powerful demand drivers for the hospitality industry. Whether it's traditional religious festivals like Diwali and Holi, international yoga gatherings in Rishikesh, or contemporary music and cultural events, festivals attract travellers who are seeking both an experience and a stay.

“For destinations like ours, festivals significantly extend the seasonality curve—ensuring that occupancy levels remain healthy not only during peak holiday months but also across shoulder seasons. In many cases, festival-driven travel also

results in longer average lengths of stay, higher F&B spending, and repeat visits. We have also seen a surge in guests arriving for wellness retreats, music festivals, and even weddings timed around auspicious dates—each of which has festival-like energy. We design festival-specific packages that combine stay, dining, and curated experiences. These could range from guided walks to local markets, yoga sessions during spiritual festivals, river aarti experiences, or exclusive festive dining. The idea is to create a holistic experience where the festival is not just an event outside the hotel but also seamlessly woven into the guest's stay,” avers Tarun Gulati, Director, Ganga Kinare Resorts & Hotels.

Promoting Right

Most hoteliers ensure that their marketing activities are designed around creating an experience rather than just



Kunal Pahwa, General Manager, ITC Grand Central, Mumbai

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- Surajit Chatterjee



Surajit Chatterjee, General Manager,
Novotel Goa Panjim



J Gopalakrishnan, General Manager,
Gateway Bekal

promoting a stay. This involves digital campaigns themed on specific festivals, collaborations with influencers, and partnerships with travel platforms. There is also a clear focus heavily on storytelling, highlighting how a guest's festival experience at a property is enriched by the setting, cultural immersion, and curated local experiences.

Surajit Chatterjee, General Manager, Novotel Goa Panjim, explains, "Marketing during this period requires a balance between visibility and relevance. Guests coming to Goa are already primed for celebration; our role is to connect with them through clear narratives and consistent presence across digital channels, PR, and local partnerships. Our approach to festival marketing is rooted in anticipating traveller behaviour and aligning with the cultural pulse of the season. Goa offers a

much broader festive canvas – beyond traditional celebrations like Diwali and Christmas, it is also home to high-energy occasions such as Carnival, music festivals, and New Year's Eve, all of which are strong travel triggers. Rather than focusing only on tactical promotions, our approach is to highlight the hotel's positioning and the experiences that set us apart. This ensures that we remain top-of-mind not just for immediate bookings but also for repeat and referral business."

Bonding Big

In India, festivals are not just about events but about how families choose to travel together during celebratory breaks and long weekends.

"Our festival planning rests on key pillars of connecting guests to local traditions through authentic experiences, personalised activities for patrons including backwater adventures such as kayaking and houseboat journeys that showcase Kerala's natural beauty, and the enchanting evening ritual of traditional lamp lighting accompanied by the graceful Mohiniyattam performance at the lobby that creates a spiritual ambience," says J Gopalakrishnan, General Manager at Gateway Bekal.

Looking ahead towards the festival season, they will focus on four core elements, which include culinary excellence with grand festive menus that celebrate regional flavours, comprehensive wellness programmes featuring rejuvenating Ayurveda treatments, outdoor activities that allow families to connect with nature, and cultural immersion through Kerala's traditions. This approach ensures every festival celebration becomes a journey of discovery, relaxation, and connection with the culture.





Sharad K Upadhyay, General Manager,
Crowne Plaza Greater Noida

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Culinary Delights

Food and beverage is the main attraction of any festival; therefore, hotels strive to create a memorable experience for guests.

Shatrughan Tomar, General Manager, Radisson Hotel, Sohna Road, Gurgaon, explains, “Themed dining experiences are central to festivals. From Diwali thalis and mithai hampers to Christmas brunches and Holi mocktails, our chefs curate menus blending tradition and innovation. Promotions include live counters, festive high teas, and hampers. Culinary events drive revenue, attract locals, and enhance celebratory guest experiences during festivals. Also, festive packages combine stays with curated dining, gala events, and value-adds like spa credits or hampers. Diwali packages focus on family activities, Christmas includes brunches with Santa, while Holi brings poolside celebrations. Bundled offers enhance stays, attract locals for staycations, and maximise guest engagement with authentic festive experiences.”

Smoothening Operations

Festival surges challenge service consistency, staffing, and

supply chains. Managing full occupancy, crowded outlets, and guest expectations requires reinforced resources, cross-trained teams, and smart technology. Balancing pricing strategy is critical, optimising revenue without harming goodwill. Operational pressure is high, but careful planning turns challenges into opportunities to showcase excellence.

Sharad K Upadhyay, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, says, “The primary challenge isn’t just managing volume but maintaining service quality standards while optimising revenue. We have learnt that proactive staffing, technology integration for communication and updates and dynamic inventory management are crucial. The key is balancing guest satisfaction with commercial performance—ensuring we capture maximum revenue without trading off the guest experience that drives repeat business and positive reviews.” These curated experiences allow travellers to witness local festival traditions firsthand and immerse themselves in the festivities with complete joie de vivre. 