

# Coolcation Calling

The 'coolcation' is fast becoming a summer travel buzzword, and hotels are interpreting and translating this trend into tangible guest experiences.

*By Bindu Gopal Rao*



Coolcation today is less about geography and more about how a space makes you feel.

**TREND**



Deep Vahi, Manager, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu



Ashirbad Praharaj, Cluster General Manager - Operations & GM-Taj Chia Kutir Resort and Spa



Ronan Fearon, General Manager, JW Marriott Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa



Anil Agarwala, Managing Director, Tathastu Resorts

**T**oday's travellers are seeking destinations that offer respite not just physically but mentally and emotionally. A 'coolcation' is no longer defined purely by temperature; it is about choosing environments that feel calmer, greener, and inherently restorative.

**Cool, Cool**

A coolcation today is less about geography and more about how a space makes you feel. For many hoteliers, it is about curating experiences that offer sensory relief from the heat, whether through refreshing poolside offerings or through thoughtfully designed spaces and programming that allow guests to unwind at their own pace.

"This year, for instance, we have specially curated our poolside programming to elevate the summer experience even further. While the poolside itself is designed to naturally

complement the season, we've introduced a dedicated summer menu focused on lighter, refreshing fare made with fresh, seasonal ingredients. Alongside, we've brought in experiential elements such as Thai coconuts, slushies, and a gelato cart. Beyond this, as summer vacations bring in more family travel and staycations, our guest relations team curates multi-generational experiences designed to bring families together meaningfully. Activities such as scavenger hunts, movie screenings, and pizza-making sessions are thoughtfully designed to engage children while allowing parents to unwind, making the stay enjoyable for all age groups," says Deep Vahi, Manager, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu.

**Do Nothing**

While the concept is not really tied to the weather, the idea is to give guests a feel of 'dolce far niente', which is Italian for



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Sumit Mitruka, Founder & CEO,  
Summit Hotels & Resorts



Rajiv Kapoor, General Manager,  
Fairmont Mumbai & Roswyn, A  
Morgans Originals Hotel



Devendra Parulekar, Founder,  
SaffronStays



Design plays a pivotal role in shaping how guests experience comfort

wishing you the guilt-free indulgence of doing nothing. This is where resorts like Taj Chia Kutir Resort & Spa, Darjeeling, come in with their unique advantage. Located at about 6,700 feet in the organic Makaibari tea estate, the resort is both advantageously quick to access and, at the same time, strikingly uncrowded.

“Thanks to the balanced ‘cool’ weather that the location enjoys, guests like to maximise their intake of fresh air and outdoors and the resort is perfectly attuned for the same. From developing the motor skills of children by indulging in the actual art of painting, to tea trails in the morning or stargazing at night from sophisticated telescopes (subject to the celestial calendar and sky conditions) or a simple dip in the heated pool of the J-Wellness Spa, a resort like Taj Chia Kutir offers just the right mix of indulgences so that you can return with a soulful recharge – not to mention a quick and all-year-round escape from the heat,” says Ashirbad Praharaj, Cluster General Manager, Operations & GM, Taj Chia Kutir Resort and Spa.

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## TREND



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### Now Trending

Summer travel behaviour is also changing as guests choose cooler destinations, shorter stays, or more experience-driven itineraries. Travellers today are far more intentional in how they spend their leisure time, with a strong preference for destinations that feel both accessible and immersive, allowing them to disconnect without extensive travel.

“Shorter luxury breaks, particularly two- and three-night stays, continue to gain traction, but expectations within that time are significantly higher. Guests want each day to feel purposeful, whether through wellness experiences such as spa and yoga sessions, quality family time, culinary exploration,

or simply the space to unwind in a serene setting. What is also evident is that travel has become more multi-dimensional. Families, couples, and business travellers alike are seeking experiences that can be tailored to their individual pace and preferences, rather than following a one-size-fits-all approach,” opines Ronan Fearon, General Manager, JW Marriott Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa.

### Follow the Sun

Hotels are redesigning programming, through early morning activities, twilight experiences, or indoor cultural events, to help guests navigate the heat.



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*Climate-responsive hospitality will be a defining focus for the industry in the years ahead.*

“Programming has certainly gained greater time sensitivity. Mornings and evenings have emerged as essential components of the guest experience. Early morning safaris are on the cards, and evening activities such as nature trails, stargazing and storytelling, for example, are becoming crucial. Mid-day has to be planned slow, with indoor programmes such as cultural crafts, wildlife talks, or regional cuisine. Our indoor/covered swimming pools at Pench, Tadoba and Satpura have proved extremely useful, as guests can use them throughout the day, even in summers. At resorts near Satpura National Park, we are also testing an interesting concept of interpretive walks through forests, where guests can gain insights into the forest ecosystem without being exposed to the harsh midday heat,” says Anil Agarwala, Managing Director, Tathastu Resorts.

#### Design Detail

Design plays a pivotal role in shaping how guests experience comfort. It is being considered more functionally than aesthetically. Low-rise construction, thick walls, shady verandas, and non-conductive building materials are some elements that form the basis of the design philosophy.

Sumit Mitruka, Founder & CEO, Summit Hotels & Resorts, says, “Designing the property in hilly regions is inevitably related to comfort. Open designs, along with proper cross-ventilation and use of natural building materials, are given high priority. Landscaping also takes importance where there is greenery, sit-outs with shade cover, and outdoor activities that can take place throughout the day. The interior design keeps the rooms warm and comfortable yet not air-conditioned.”

#### Be Well

Wellness today is no longer an adjunct; it is often central to the travel decision itself. Summer amplifies the need for rest, balance, and restoration.

Rajiv Kapoor, General Manager, Fairmont Mumbai & Roswyn, A Morgans Originals Hotel, says, “Wellness has become central to how guests define a good stay. At Fairmont Mumbai, offerings like cryotherapy or infrared sauna sessions at Blu Xone are not positioned as add-ons but as essential pauses within the stay. They allow guests to reset physically and mentally, which is especially important during the summer months.”

Water-based experiences are a big driver, from private pools to natural water bodies. At the same time, there’s a growing preference for low-effort wellness, spaces that allow you to do very little but feel better. That could mean a shaded sit-out with a view, a quiet reading corner, or a slow, chef-led meal using local ingredients.

#### A Complete Package

A successful package should never feel transactional; it should feel thoughtfully curated and seamlessly delivered. Hospitality today must be more intuitive and responsive. It’s about designing spaces, services, and experiences that naturally adapt to changing climates, whether that’s through indoor-led programming, wellness integration, or simply creating more fluid guest journeys.

Devendra Parulekar, Founder, SaffronStays, says, “A successful coolcation today is a balance of comfort, flexibility, and experience. Curated itineraries help, especially when they are simple and adaptable rather than rigid. Families are a large part of summer travel, so homes that cater to multiple age groups – with pools, indoor entertainment, and outdoor space – perform very well. However, the biggest driver continues to be the quality of the stay itself. If the home offers privacy, strong service, and enough in-house experiences, guests are willing to stay longer and spend more. Value today is not just about pricing; it’s about how effortless and complete the experience feels.”

#### Future Outlook

There is a clear shift towards building and operating homes that are better suited to their environment – whether that’s through design, material choices, or landscaping. Climate-responsive hospitality will be a defining focus for the industry in the years ahead. The challenge extends beyond adapting to warmer summers; it lies in continuing to deliver exceptional guest experiences in a more thoughtful and responsible manner.

“This calls for a long-term approach that brings together intelligent design, efficient operations, adaptive programming, sustainable landscaping, and spaces that remain enjoyable across seasons. Wellness infrastructure, including thoughtfully designed spa and indoor experiences, will play an increasingly important role in this evolution. Equally important is listening closely to evolving guest expectations. Luxury and responsibility are no longer distinct ideas,” avers Fearon. The future of hospitality will be defined by the ability to deliver both seamlessly and with intent. ■