

INDIA ADVENTURE PRODUCT GAINS STRENGTH!

Adventure travel is growing day by day with lot of Indians travelling on adventure vacations to explore new places and is an upcoming segment in the market.

IRENE SUSAN EAPEN



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Adventure Tourism

The adventure segment is growing these days especially with the great interest among the people in India for indulging in new activities like white water rafting, hiking, cycling, rock climbing and abseiling. The trekking, cycling and photography is prominent in India. Some of the adventure locations in India are white water rafting in Rishikesh or hiking in Ladakh, trekking in the Himalayan regions of Ladakh and Spiti, rafting in Himachal, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal. The Indian market is now experiencing a positive growth in terms of adventure travel.

Pranav Kukreti, Director, Marketing Treks n Rapids, New Delhi says that adventure tourism has a lot of scope and need for localized and regional skill and entrepreneurship development. The local educated youth should be trained on the lines of ITIs, through workshops, seminars and short duration subsidized courses.

"One should get the right to education, training and complete operations of respective adventure sports

and adventure tourism experiences in the respective regions, in complete professional, transparent and productively well monitored manner in order to ensure high safety and hospitality standards which will have multiple, beneficial socio economic benefits on a long term basis," He added.

Kamlesh Lalan, Founder, Ravine Trek - Destination Ladakh stated that in Adventure tourism in India we lack good quality equipment's, good sports or adventure branded stores and there is no insurance cover on adventure tourism in India using walk talky or satellite phones are banned which need to be regularized.

Rohan Prakash, Founder & CEO, The Adventure Bridge said, "Adventure Tourism is an exciting, vibrant, dynamic way to see the world we live in and to interact with people from around the world that gives you so much more than a clicked picture."

Abhijeet Mhatre, Founder-Director, letscampout.com states that adventure tourism is growing day by day with lot of people from broad age

spectrum are signing for it. There should be a body which regulates and certifies and lay down norms for Adventure Tour operator. If managed well this industry has tremendous growth forward. Balaram Naidu, Director, liveinadventures.com says, "In our country there is no firm association to run the sport, mountaineering is established by ex Army guys other than this no other sport has rules and regulated certifications. About scuba diving, many following PADI and SSI are foreign certifications costing more to the Indian client even the equipment of adventure sports are imported."

In the opinion of Kavitha Reddy, Founder Director, Basecamp Adventures, every state has to come up with a good Adventure Tourism policy that promotes adventure professionally to invest and to do business, currently either is adventure tourism is non-existent or over regulated.

Pranav said, "One of the prime movers in the industry, we have witnessed a lot of transitions and developments in the segment since 2002 when we

started off. Adventure sports were largely limited to backpackers and a handful of few internationally exposed or regionally skewed individuals and groups.

"Adventure tourism is much larger, touching a vast segment of travellers, photographers, honeymooners, corporate employees, inbound tourists, children groups and so on, primarily from middle and upper middle class of urban Indians. The expected growth for this segment is 35% to 50% year on year." He added.

Vaibhav Kala, Director, Aquaterra Adventures explains that more people are travelling, more travel is going outdoors and the Indian industry has grown hugely as well. More Indians are attempting Everest than ever before, the awareness and the inclination and most importantly the aptitude of the domestic traveller is changing rapidly. The sector is getting more organized, albeit slowly.

"More and more players have changed the game, safety and eco-sensitivity may have taken a back seat it must be brought back to the



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forefront. Issues like mass trekking, low entry barriers, little regulation still mar the space. Globally, over 60% of travel is turning towards active travel and women are leading the charge." He added.

In the opinion of Kamlesh the market have been stable on adventure tourism not much as it was 10 years back with few self-drive destination have been added but nothing related to mountaineering or expedition happening.

Rohan said, "One of the most exciting things about being involved in the Adventure Travel market in India for Indians travelling abroad is that it is still in a very nascent stage, with regards to outbound travel. Domestically, there has been and there is an explosion of interest in Adventure activities such as white water rafting, hiking, cycling, rock climbing and abseiling."

"People are taking weekend breaks or 3/4 day holidays in order to go and do something exciting and outside of their comfort zone. The market

is very dynamic and exciting at this stage and we are slowly seeing this convert into a thirst for adventure on outbound holidays too. It is still too early to have measured statistics for Adventure Travel for Outbound holidays in India however if worldwide trends are anything to go by then we are looking at very healthy growth over the next few years." He says.

"In the years between 2013 and 2014, it has been said that 65% of all holidays taken by people from North and South America and Europe involved Adventure tourism in some form or another. This converts into a \$263 million dollar per year industry. Following on from this, the continuous growth in outbound tourism from India year on year, coupled with the domestic markets increase in adventure activities and holidays, indicates that it is only a matter of time before the Indian market picks up on Adventure Travel abroad and really runs with it. There are really exciting times ahead for Indian travellers." He added.

Abhijeet said that the market has



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grown considerable amount over period of 4 years with movies/social media and internet penetration which makes youth more aware about adventure and offbeat holidays. The market is expected to grow more as we are seeing people of all demographics signing up for these kinds of adventure holidays. With easy dispensable money and hectic life style people are aiming to different than regular holidays.

Balaram observes that adventure traveling seems to be improved in India, there is lot of growth of this segment as most of the youth settling in good jobs and earning good amount, you know India has no.1 populated youth in the world, youth is always crazy about adventures.

Kavitha says that the adventure travel market has not only been overshadowed by the larger tourism market, but also focused more on foreign travellers/tourist. Even though the segment has been growing significantly natural calamities does drag it down every 2 years. Adventure travel in the Himalayas has not yet fully

recovered after the Uttarakhand disaster; many states have still not formulated Adventure Travel policy that can facilitate growth, so in short it has been a tough trail for Adventure Travel professionals.

Main activities of adventure tourism Pranav says, "Trekking expeditions, hiking, camping, white water rafting, para gliding, hot air ballooning, wild life safaris, birding which is one of the most promising and fast growing segments and nature photography, rock climbing, mountaineering and motor biking tours.

Vaibhav states that India is the year round active travel destination. The Indian Himalaya is more than a third of the entire range, and we have some of the best treks, and the most varied valley systems. These valleys provide all year adventure possibilities, even during the monsoon months, the Trans Himalayan regions of Ladakh and Spiti offers great avenues. In the winter, low altitude trekking trips offer clear bright days. Spring and autumn offer climbing, hiking, rafting options in Himachal,



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Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal.

“High Altitude Self Drive, Expeditions, Winter Chadar Trek, Homestay, Short treks,” added Kamlesh.

Rohan said, “Everyone can have a different idea on what constitutes adventure tourism. Some people feel that when you say adventure it implies something very challenging, physically demanding and super high energy like sky diving or bungee jumping or trekking at Everest, but actually the definition that we like to use for adventure tourism, and one that is used throughout the industry is basically an activity which takes you out of your comfort zone and gives you a positive experience.

“So for one person that might be scaling Everest, but for another person, it is travelling to a country where you don’t understand the language, interacting with local people and eating local food. As long as there is an experience and that experience is different for you then it can be classed as adventure. Typically you will find Adventure tourism being divided into 2 categories - Soft and Hard Adventure. So you can add scaling Everest to the “hard” adventure category and eating with a local family into the “soft” adventure category. Thats one of the best parts about Adventure

Tourism - there is no end to the activities one can partake in!” He added.

In the opinion of Abhijeet, “Adventure tourism has multiple facet we provide fort treks, lesiure treks, adventure trek, paintball in jungle which is one of its kind, archery, adventure camping, lesiure camping & glamping. Rope activities such as rappelling, zip Line & rock climbing, Water based activities such as kayaking and raft racing is what we provide. Apart from this we are also into Stargazing Camps where we have specifically dedicated campsite for Stargazing.”

Balaram says that scuba diving, open sea diving, parasailing, rappelling, rock climbing, paragliding, bungee jump and skydiving.

Kavitha said, “Adventure tourism included land, air, water based activities, some of them popular in India are. Land: trekking, mountaineering, skiing, rock climbing, cycling, camping, safari, trails etc. water: rafting, kayaking, water skiing etc. air: sky diving, para gliding, bungee jumping etc.

Marketing and promotional plans

Pranav said that the Treks ‘n Rapids is planning to come with a further ex-

citing new brand identity and a larger presence on internet and technology platform, while maintaining our core focus on guests and adventure travellers from around the world. We also plan to launch various sub-segment products and packages this year, which shall include specialised adventure holiday packages for ladies, children, people with special needs and so on.

Vaibhav says, “We are reaching out to more and more adventure travellers.”

In the opinion of Kamlesh we are marketing through exhibitions, tourism offices, social media and print media and most booking through references.

Rohan said, “For the rest of 2015 we intend to continue our marketing through social media. Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, etc are where we feel we will find our target travelers. We are planning to participate in couple of more trade fairs in the coming months too.”

“The digital marketing is the way forward for adventure tourism.” Abhijeet added.

Balaram says, “ We are doing social

marketing through Facebook, search engine optimizing and meet ups.

In the opinion of Kavitha, “We have been focusing largely on Karnataka, Goa, NE States, Uttarakhand, HP, J & K, Nepal and Bhutan. Being a pure player we will be focusing at core terrain Adventure travel like Trekking, High Altitude Treks, Hiking, Rock Climbing, Adventure Camps, Mountaineering and Skiing. Our marketing plans are both online and offline, we have a good presence in the social media but we also have a large existing clients base. Based on the feedback and demand we have put in place and our adventure calendar for Himalayas for 2015 and will focus on marketing the same.”

Trends

Pranav says that the segment is ever growing, with culture development contribution from the media - print, TV, movies, internet/social media. In short term, the new travellers may seek and get attracted towards ‘deals’ and discounts, however adventure tourism, also having higher risk content activities and experiences for the certain niche, eventually the brand reputation and professionalism of the outfit matters to the more stable and regular customers. There is also an increasing interest in



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Abhijeet Mhatre, Founder-Director, letscampout.com

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adventure gear and camping equipment in India. Cheaper digital cameras and smart phones with better photography abilities are also fueling interest among the first timer adventure and nature travellers, to go out and explore.”

Vaibhav states that the positive trends are more and more people are wanting adventure travel as their main vacation. 70% individual travellers are also women, so it is deemed as safe travel very positive especially in India. Mass tourism and regionalism are the two negative trends seen recently. Forgetting that adventure travel is niche, small, personalized will be the biggest hurdle in a country like India. The fine line between eco-tourism and regionalism is being crossed in several regions, and poses one of the biggest threats.

In the opinion of Kamlesh, “Adventure tourism is growing but needs a centre and tourism board support to grow more better and better association as IMP and ATOAI been active till certain limits as every state in India there is lots of Adventure tourism can happen but from State or Centre government there is not much support if they start support in from of advt or marketing then India will rise in Adventure tourism too.”

Rohan states that the trends in this segment are currently towards customised holidays with adventure components added as per the wishes of the individual customer. We are also look at creating a parallel trend by providing small group adventure based holidays for people. Our small groups are only for up to 12 people which keeps the groups size small enough so that everyone gets to know each other but large enough that you can also have your own time as per your needs. It is about creating a community of likeminded travel enthusiasts from India, from all the 4 vast corners of India, and bringing them together in one group and taking them on an adventure holiday. There are so many people who love to travel and experience the world in such a way and we want to bring those people together and share our experiences with them.

Abhijeet said that the overall trend in this segment is upward North (growth) as people are willing to try next level of adventure. We have seen people trying out adventure activities and gradually trying more thrilling adventure activities next time. Everybody wants to come out of comfort zone and get that adrenaline rush.



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“The trends are more on being adventurous and about experiences. Adventure seeker prefers less comfort and more adventurous activities, so today Adventure Travel companies are designing experiences and not just packages. The trend of experiences is here to stay and indeed it’s a welcome trend.” Kavitha added.

Exploring new activities and places Pranav said that the white water rafting has been extremely popular, largely due to excellent connectivity of Rishikesh with air, rail and road networks from across the country, and also because of immense promotion and highlight by media over the last one decade; we see a lot of growth in serious trekking across the Himalayas. The more serious and devoted adventure travellers are exploring Garhwal Himalayas, Ladakh, Sikkim and Bhutan like never before. In addition to these Rappelling, Rock Climbing, Aero Sports, Bird Watching and Wild Life Safaris are growing pretty fast. Scuba Diving in Andamans and Goa has witnessed a lot of surge over the last two years. Last but not the least, camping as an adventure holiday experience possibly are one of the largest since just about anyone can experience it and enjoy a bonfire night under a star studded sky.

“The new places seems to dominate as more people wish to climb 6000 m peaks or undertake challenging expeditions Peru, Chile, Bhutan, Africa, New Zealand are in demand.” Vaibhav added.

Kamlesh says that people are showing more interest towards J & K and North East States.

Rohan said that we have seen within India is a huge appetite for something new, something different. You just need to google white water rafting in Rishikesh or hiking in Ladakh to see how many operators there are offering such activities to understand the demand from people locally for such experiences. There is a large growing enthusiasm, especially amongst the young professionals segment, to try new experiences on their holidays. As the desire grows within India, we will see and do see this desire growing for places abroad where one can try out such activities.

Kavitha concludes that people in India are indeed very keen to explore, we always focused on India as a market. We are growing younger as a nation and more and more people are looking at different avenues to relax or as hobbies and outdoor/adventure is indeed the most preferred option.