

WYNDHAM HOTEL GROUP LEVERAGES ON DOMESTIC TRAVEL

Daniel Ruff, President and Managing Director, Eurasia, Middle East and Africa, Wyndham Hotel Group, shares the group's expansion plans in India's Tier 2 and 3 cities in the near future.

>> IRENE SUSAN EAPEN



The Wyndham Hotel Group witnessed a growth of 66% in its occupancy in 2015 and it further went up to 68% during this year from January to July. Daniel Ruff, the hotel group's President & Managing Director for Eurasia, Middle East and Africa, expects an increase by the year end. "On a year-on-year, it has

always been from 66% to 68%. The growth is definitely going to be an increase from last year. In 2017 we are excited about this market for a lot of macro transactions. The e-visa and other markets have increased the interest of the foreign markets to come to India. We have grown the market from eight hotels to 34 hotels in the last five years in Eurasia. 2017 is going to be another great year of growth, we are going to grow the portfolio to another 20% to 30%. We are going to add some great hotels and destinations, the quality of the hotels will be added."

He revealed plans to add more hotels in India with at least seven to eight properties in places like Darjeeling, Lucknow, Kumbhalgar

and Trivandrum by the end of 2017. Citing domestic travel as one of the group's core strengths, he asserted that they were one of the biggest players in India. "In other markets we have gone early to build our footprint there as our goal was to be one of the biggest players in their market. We are going to be a real power house in the mid-scale and upscale part of the Indian hotels market."

Marketing Plans

Wyndham has tied up with inflight magazines of Jet Airways, IndiGo and SpiceJet to run its summer promotions which have helped in creating awareness and bringing more reward members. The hotel group taps weddings in India besides MICE, in which it affirms to be the

best player in the world for having acquired, in 2015, a brand called Dolce and looks forward to launching the first Dolce in India.

"Domestic leisure will be a giant focus here in India in 2017. At the same time religious destination is something that is catching up a lot of interest. It is a 100% occupancy destination like our property in Amritsar. We look forward to have a few more properties in religious destinations. We are trying to focus on Tier 2 and 3 cities like Trivandrum, Pali, Lonar, Darjeeling and Jammu and will double our Indian portfolio with 41 hotels over the next three years. We will also focus on corporate groups and medical tourism in Gurgaon, Chennai and Kerala."

NET IMPACT OF CONSUMER SPENDING WILL BOOST MORE HOTELS

Rajiv Raichand, Director – Virtuous Retail-The Waverly Hotel & Residences, says the property has been evoking interests among a number of staycationers during weekends.

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Growth

The Waverly Hotel & Residences was opened in April 2016. "We have been growing steadily over the last few months in terms of occupancy as well as revenues. The Waverly has attracted the corporate traveller on account of the commercial offices in the area. We also have a number of apartments and studios that can be utilized by long stay guests," says Rajiv Raichand, Director -

Virtuous Retail, The Waverly Hotel & Residence. "We have noticed a number of staycationers, who prefer to spend their time with their families lounging during the weekends."

Expected growth

The Waverly Hotel & Residences is establishing firmly on Bangalore's hospitality map as a destination that is seamlessly integrated with retail, world class F&B offerings, luxury spa, rooftop entertainment spaces and co-working space so 2016 and 2017 are expected to be pivotal years.

Marketing and promotional plans

"We have various online promotions planned with the online travel agents - Expedia, Booking.com, Cleartrip, Agoda etc. We are targeting relocation companies as well as other companies that have a potential for

long stay bookings at our various apartments and studio rooms."

It is also promoting events at the Whitefield Arms which is the pub and microbrewery and The Waverly as well as DJ nights and corporate events at the Alt Bar & Lounge. The SkyDeck on the roof top is promoted events space for weddings, Tedx Talks, rock concerts and large parties.

It also offers lifestyle brand partners such as The Tribe, a full service crossfit gym and training center offering personal training and group classes; Spa la Vie by L'Occitane, with luxurious treatment rooms.

Trends

The consumer sentiment is upbeat and is being driven by introduction of unique and new experiences both by

start-ups and existing players. Also, the government's impetus to boost growth in the sector has attracted significant investments from global players.

Rajiv expects the hospitality industry in India to boom in the next five years with a number of new properties. "With increased consumer spending on travel, evolving choices of travellers, development of niche forms of tourism, expected increase in number of foreign tourists and influx of new players in the market - airlines, tour operators, online booking portals; the net impact will be a major rise in the number of new properties across the spectrum - luxury, boutique, business, budget, resorts, homestays, etc and we feel there is room for all to flourish as long as the consumer is provided a sensorial experience," he concluded.