

EXOTIC DESTINATIONS SEE RISING INTERESTS FROM DINKS

Arjun Sharma, MD, Le Passage to India, observes how today's Indian traveller is opting for different travel holiday options in the midst of a demanding lifestyle.

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With surplus income, Indians are shunning group travels and turning to independent travel in search of privacy. Please comment.

The Indian traveller has certainly evolved; today vacations are more about spending quality time with the family and hence the increase in individual travel. With the middle class expanding exponentially, we certainly

see more Indian travellers taking vacations. The aspiring lower middle class and easy availability of plastic money have increased the size of potential market thereby creating a larger Indian tourist base. Double incomes lessen the burden and independent travel is more flexible.

Trend of multiple short holidays

The trend of multiple holidays is sure to stay. In my opinion one of the key reasons for this is to compensate for the lack of quality family time spent in the daily routine through these close-knit multiple vacations. It is seen that the shorter holidays are usually domestic with 2-3 day breaks and longer holidays range from five -10 days. Most weekends coupled with a holiday always have huge bookings within the region.

Are the Indian tourists taking both short and long holidays compared

to the past especially to foreign countries like Thailand?

Yes, the trend of both short and long haul holidays is very much there. The Far East is very popular with Indian tourists as the price point of most holidays in the region is affordable and it's within 5-6 hours of reach. Increases in flight connectivity, especially with the advent of Low Cost Carrier and Indian carrier to the region, has added to more and more tourist visiting the region. Tourism Boards like Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong are very active, aggressively promoting themselves in India, realising the potential of the Indian tourist, this has also added to increased awareness thereby demand.

Trends of top executives and DINKS (Double Income No Kids)

DINKS is a fast growing segment with one of the highest disposable incomes for leisure activities. Having

travelled to the run-of-mill destinations, most on their official travels, they look for difference destinations for vacations; so, most often the choice is exotic. Also, being focused more on the quality and value of the experience they look for niche and off beat destinations. The unseen places are now happening in the adventure segment and the hills to a large extent.

Other trends in this segment

The Indian traveller is certainly more attuned to explaining requirements. Many are experimenting with local cuisine. Quality instead of quantity seems to be the key word, quite literally meaning they prefer to visit fewer destinations in a single trip than cramming many cities like in the earlier times. Three to four destinations on a nine-10 day tour are today preferred, over the previous six to seven places in a 10 day tour.

Flight Talk

ASIAN REGION WILL ACCOUNT FOR 45% OF GLOBAL PASSENGERS BY 2032

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Asian region is expected to account for 45% of global passengers by 2032, says a study by Airbus on the comfort demands of Asian economy class passengers. 'The Future of Comfort: Asia' conducted by global future consultancy Future Laboratory, revealed new insights into the evolving demands of tomorrow's increasingly influential Asian air passengers.

The research reveals two emerging typologies of Asian travellers who, due to the rise of social media and shared global online experiences, have an increased knowledge of flying and will demand an enhanced level of comfort:

• **New emerging affluent travellers** are first time careers, aged between

18 and 34, highly knowledgeable and wowed by services and add-ons. High income frequent travellers are more experienced flyers, in the middle of their career and focus on personal time and comfort in the strictest sense, with seat width playing a key factor in their perception of comfort. Common factors they place importance to are:

• **Sleep, wellbeing and relaxation lead to higher productivity.** This is of particular relevance in Asia, where emerging markets are opening up business opportunities and 70% of travellers in economy class are flying for business in Asia (highest percentage globally**). Asian passengers believe that the chance to rest on a flight unlocks higher

levels of productivity as opposed to the western view of seeing this time as a chance to catch-up on work. A productive flight is seen by the Asian flyer as one where they can relax (78%), sleep (58%) and then work (56%) – in that order. Asians would pay more for more seat space as it symbolises improved comfort and brings more relaxation. 58% of Asian consumers believe the seat itself is the top factor affecting their comfort when flying. 60% believe wider seats are the top requirement for 'improved standards of comfort' and 42% would pay more for increased seat width. Wider seats improve views of onboard productivity (53%) followed by more legroom (48%), adjustable seating (43%), quiet zones (42%), and increased arm room (37%).

• **Service levels** motivate Asian economy class passengers to book a flight with a particular airline brand. Better cabin service is the top factor influencing future booking decisions.

The report also identified future trends demanded by Asian market:

• **The Always on Cabin** - Wifi enabled cabins with telephone and conference calling facilities.

• **3D technology** - 3D is expected to offer more immersive film and shopping experience on board.

• **Energizing Cabin** - Asian Flyers agree that greater in-flight wellbeing allows them to relax. Air quality, quietness, mood lighting and seat space are areas where Airbus will promote heightened passenger wellbeing.