

## **Hotels run out of rooms as travellers hit the road**

Hotels in short haul destinations from metros as well as premier resort locations were fully booked for the upcoming Diwali weekend with occupancies hitting 100 percent across the most popular properties. Large chains of branded properties, small, stand-alone unbranded hotels and resorts, home stays and timeshare properties have used the surge in demand to revise up prices that have been subdued since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

As per initial estimates provided by hoteliers and tour operators, there has been an increase of 10-15 percent in room rates for the Diwali period which is extending beyond the actual holidays and into the following week as well. To be sure, the increase in rates depends on the property and brand.

Booking trends tracked by tour operators for the period between November 4 and November 7 point to a shift in travel preference for the Diwali week. Traditionally, the holiday booking pace marked a fall during the actual Diwali days as Indians preferred to celebrate the festival with family and friends. This year, however, people are keen to take advantage of the long break.

One key differentiator between Diwali of 2021 and Diwali of 2020 is the number of people who are vaccinated. At 336.6 million, more than 45 percent of India's population is now fully vaccinated.