

# When people get travelling, they will take the sustainable route

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Every experience is an opportunity to learn, imbibe and grow. This includes the Covid-19 pandemic, which has impacted many lives, lifestyles and industries, while giving humans a chance to introspect. The pandemic has also been epiphanic for the travel industry, one of the most impacted industries globally. While the industry recovers, it must now be more mindful of the impact on the environment and the need for more conscious, mindful travel. During the lockdown, we witnessed signs of environmental revival with reduced human influence. Such lessons may have a lasting impact on our lifestyle and choices, including when it comes to travel.

As and when travel picks up, people will likely make more conscious choices to explore the world with minimal impact on the environment and communities. Sustainable travel has been on the mind for travellers even before the pandemic. Testa-

ment to this, a recent report stated that 96 per cent of Indian travellers identified 'sustainable travel' as an important aspect of their trip. Coupled with the lockdown experience, this choice is set to be even more prominent in the post-Covid era. The demand for sustainable travel choices is a step in the right direction for the travel and tourism industry.

## Building a travel ecosystem

Sustainable travel can have different meanings for different travellers. Some may practice sustainability by opting for hyperlocal stays to reduce their carbon footprint, while others would consider taking a train to reach their destination rather than a car. For others, it could be smaller steps, such as going plastic-free or carrying reusable bottles.

To meet the varied demands

for sustainable travel, travel aggregators can arm themselves with diverse accommodation and travel options. As a first step, the travel ecosystem must make information easily available to educate travellers at various touch points about the numerous sustainable initiatives one can take.

The report also found that 39 per cent of Indian travellers do not know how or where to find sustainable travel options and half (54 per cent) think there aren't enough sustainable travel options available. This is

an indication that there remains an opportunity for more education.

## The road less travelled

At the end of 2019, the prediction was that second-city travel, referring to the exploration of lesser known destinations in a

bid to reduce over-tourism and protect the environment, would play a big role in the coming year. Of course, Covid-19 has temporarily stunned the travel industry; however, this trend will continue to be relevant as travel returns.

Seeing the positive impact that the pandemic has had on the environment will likely result in travellers wanting to play their part in reducing over-tourism. This may manifest itself in travellers choosing to visit lesser known destinations.

## Local community support

With a motto of preserving and empowering local cultures, local community support is an important element of travelling sustainably. Sustaining communities through local purchases, from souvenirs to cuisines, provides the added bonus of a closer connection with local culture, in addition to community support. Research shows that 68 per cent of global travellers want the money they spend on travel to go back to

the local communities.

In the coming months, we can assume that the appetite for sustainable and responsible travel will gather even more momentum, with the need to give back to local communities both far and close to home.

Travel is one of the fundamental needs of human beings. It may take a while before we experience the world like before, but the pandemic will eventually subside and we will experience the world again, perhaps in a more meaningful manner. As travel gets up to speed, our conscious sustainable travel choices will certainly make the world a better place.

As we transition beyond this pandemic, we know that people will still want to experience the world, perhaps in a more meaningful way than ever before. If we as travellers start focussing on the little things that matter, this can lead to big change.

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