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Greener pastures

Anushka Sivakumar, Bengaluru: Nov 19, 2015, DHNS:
Travel revolution




Basking in the warmth of the sun and getting soaked in the rain, far way from the hustle and bustle of the City, is not a mirage anymore.

Travel bugs are capitalising on the growing travel market, pleasant climatic conditions and the numerous weekend getaways around the City to explore places in an otherwise routine-based life. And travel groups are religiously organising trips and adventure tours for City dwellers. Organisers unanimously agree that Bengaluru is embarking on its own journey of a 'travel revolution' as it has become saturated with such groups.


Akif, one of the organisers of Bangalore Mountaineering Club, saw a major turning point in the City's travel industry in 2005, after the IT sector developed here.

"People leave behind their families and come here for job opportunities. They decide to explore the countryside so that they can remember these experiences for a lifetime rather than spending time at a pub or mall. Bengaluru's climate also provides a nourishing ground to travel as trips here aren't seasonal, unlike in North India."


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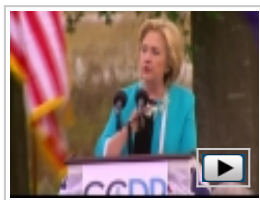
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He adds that internet penetration and social media have allowed a wealth of information, in the form of trek blogs and pictures, to be accessible to youngsters which creates a sense of wanderlust in them.

Malini, founder of 'F5 Escapes', looks at the growth from a social and economic perspective. "Our generation is well-informed and exposed to the global travel scene. Youngsters introspect and start their own groups as easy disposable money and going out with friends look attractive. It is also a lucrative market today where there is growth, returns and scope for innovation."

The surprise in the steady growth of the travel market is that there is a huge risk factor and non-guaranteed safety involved. Thus, Shreyas, one of the founders of 'Madventures', says that organisers double check about safety as they know that they are answerable to their clients later.

"Despite this, it is difficult for travel newbies to get funded because of the risk factor involved here. So one has to rely on their past stories of success when they pitch their idea to an angel investor." He also looks at a shift in the traveller's mindset itself as a reason for Bengaluru as a seat of travel.

"Earlier, travelling to tourist places was a trend but now, people look for adventure and an adrenaline rush after staring at their screen for a week. Bengaluru offers a variety of options for adventure tourism like bungee jumping, white water river rafting and bouldering. It is one of the gems of the Western Ghats and there are many unexplored, pristine places."

Malini adds that though she is from Chennai, she wouldn't have dreamt of starting her company anywhere else other than Bengaluru only because of the variety of places that the City offers.

Diversified options such as couch surfing, cheap travel, back-packing and travelling through travel apps have only strengthened this revolution further.

However, as too many cooks spoil the broth, organisers agree that too many groups in the market can hinder quality and content. The exposure on social media has promoted an attitude of 'travel snobbery'.

Akif says, "If 60 per cent of people travel for pleasure, others do so for Facebook and Instagram pictures. One should be cautious and not disturb the natural habitat

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or locals when travelling alone or with friends as the travel groups face the brunt of such actions. Looking at the aspect of growth, I think the government has to step in, plan and streamline travel companies which are concentrated in pockets so that it increases revenue for the state.”

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