

Weddings

The new MICE

As unconventional and themed Indian weddings are on the rise, the need for better and bigger venues and destinations is on the rise too. So has wedding tourism become an imminent part of MICE business and has it been a major contributor of MICE during the years? A few experts shared their opinions.

Vaishali Dar



Elaborate décor, exotic themes, meticulous planners and hospitality specialists, wedding business, especially destination weddings, are gaining popularity amongst wedding planners and hospitality experts. From décor, hospitality specialists to travel and catering, weddings have become one of the most popular segments in MICE. Experts share their opinions on why weddings are MICE:

Rajeev Khanna
General Manager,
Vivanta by Taj,
Surajkund, NCR



Most couples want to treat their wedding day as larger than life saga. Despite the aspiration, the thought of value for money proposition remains and the guest list remains exclusive. Overall, the cost of organising a wedding at a five-star hotel is hassle-free and cost-effective. India has a fairly large wedding business and hotels have service designs and strategies to deal with this large revenue generating source, treating weddings as MICE and also categorised as an important event of the segment. From a welcome experience, the in-stay experience, the dining moments and the pre and post wedding events, attention to detail, and the ability to proactively create experiences, all this helps in creating fond life-long memories.

trending wedding venues

The trending venues for wedding in India are Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Goa, Kerala and international destinations include Bali, Paris, Austria, Italy, Amsterdam, Ireland, Greece, Scotland, Philippines, Mauritius, Prague, Malaysia and Thailand.



Sayyad M.A

Deputy General Manager,
Ranbanka Palace, Jodhpur



Weddings are the most important chunk of MICE business and our hotel is ideal to accommodate large residential weddings keeping the essence, antiquity, luxury, tradition and culture of royal Marwar. At the Palace, we offer luxurious rooms, lavish out-door settings, culinary extravaganza, special concierge services, cultural performances and much more to make it an ideal wedding venue. For a theme-based wedding venue, heritage properties and palaces are the most preferred choices and these wedding groups form a very important part of MICE. Now with celebrity weddings held in such properties, this concept of choosing a heritage venue is gaining momentum. We have been receiving such queries and we have done at least 4-5 large weddings every year.

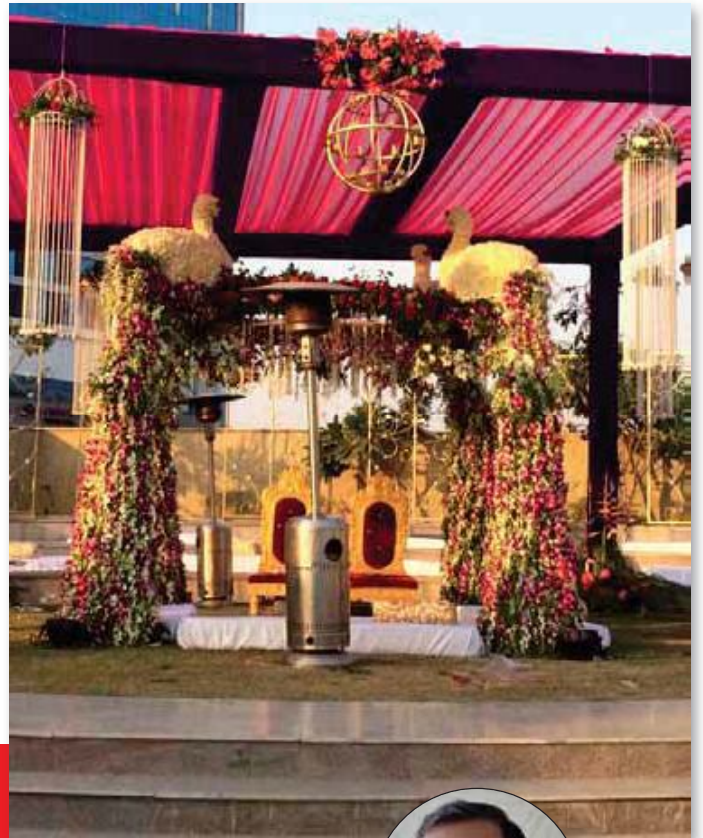


Ana Gorjão Henriques

General Manager, Mandapa,
a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Ubud, Bali



MICE as an important segment can create large impact with happy guests returning to the brand for more leisure. Mandapa is scheduled to open in Q3 and is one of the premiere destinations for private weddings offering 60 luxury suites and villas, four exclusive venues with traditional Balinese decorations. Bali has become a primary option for destination weddings in both short haul and long haul markets. Weddings in Bali are widely varied from the typical beach ceremony to mountain-side. Hotels have their own varying degrees of service, support and signature offers when it comes to weddings. With that in perspective, Bali now has its own Wedding Association to pull the efforts of various hotels, vendors, stakeholders alike. Bali has seen the rise for both MICE and weddings in recent times with its world-class facilities and infrastructure having hosted large-scale events such as APEC and Miss World.



Puneet Kapoor

Crowne Meetings Director,
Crowne Plaza, Greater Noida



A great aspiration for the new generation of millionaires in the country, weddings have high returns to the leading international tourism boards, airlines and hotels that concentrate on targeting this niche market. Crowne Plaze Greater Noida has the largest space in Noida and Greater Noida with 47,000 sq ft of banquet space including a lawn to cater upto 1500 pax, three banquets — each having its own pre-function area, two big lawns, a dedicated vedi. Communication with the guest is very important as it can make or break a function. A dedicated team takes care of wedding segment, from detailing, decoration right until the billing, making it convenient and hassle-free for the guest. For MICE and wedding destination, the banquet contribution in 2014 was 62.80 per cent of the total FnB revenue in the hotel. This is a clear indication of how a hotel like ours thrives on MICE business and the overall contribution to the GOP.

Jai Kishan

General Manager, Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences



Novotel Kolkata promotes modern French roots with an impeccable blend of Bangaliana and French chic. Rooftop banqueting facilities, custom-made local tours, ethnic touches of local art as mementoes, live performances and infusion of local cuisine in the menu make the hotel a preferred venue for most weddings. Many guests love the local flavour of the region, both in culture and cuisine, so the hotel is best equipped to manage such intricate details. Novotel Kolkata is eastern India's largest hotel with 347 rooms, ideal for larger wedding groups. The property has many firsts to its credit like the city's first in-house serviced apartments, ideal for destination weddings and extended stays, rooftop banquet.



Soraya Homchuen

Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Mumbai



Thailand remains a much sought after location for weddings from India as the cost is comparable with a location in India. It is short-haul, visas are stress-free, available on arrival, weather is favourable and the locals are familiar with Indian customs/culinary requirements. Weddings are no longer a rarity in Thailand and spin big numbers. Such events have made the industry well-versed with customs and traditions related to weddings. Hotels have found a way to work with their revenue management teams and get sufficient rooms for such a large group released. Countless hotels have played host to Indian weddings in Bangkok – 120 during 2014 alone. For such destination weddings the tourism board helps with information, recommendations for venues/service providers depending on their individual needs and contacts. So weddings represent a sizeable chunk of arrivals to Thailand.

Daniel D'souza

Head of Sales – Tour Operating, Kuoni India



Weddings add an element of fantasy when you travel to an exotic destination for your D-Day. Luxury travellers are opting for royal weddings in palaces of Rajasthan, Jaipur and Udaipur which are perfect destinations for various celebrations and sacred ceremonies. Such destinations provide a unique backdrop and value add to the wedding that cannot be found at home. Beach weddings have become the latest wedding trend as Goa, Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andaman are fast emerging as dream wedding destination for couples, thus contributing to groups which add to the social events business. Couples want to explore something out-of-the-box to make their wedding unique and memorable. Many wedding-worthy resorts offer planners to help couples so whether the event is for two or 200 and an abundance of packages keep things simple while still giving options to customise.

Vikram Malhi

Managing Director-Asia, Expedia



Weddings are very much part of MICE business and the increased purchasing power of the rising middle class has created weddings as the most popular and emerging segment in the convention space. More people plan a wedding in a way that they get a break as well as attend the wedding. Destinations like Rajasthan, Goa, Kerala, Andaman & Nicobar and Himachal in India and Maldives, Europe internationally are MICE destinations preferred for weddings. The family members and friends go on a 7-10 day tour for venue recce, book yachts/cruises in Mediterranean, hot air balloons for small groups for ring ceremony and champagne celebrations. Old castles, palaces, islands, countryside, orchards are the hot favorite locations for such weddings. The idea is to have a holiday and a wedding together.

Rajeev Jain

Director, Rashi Entertainment, Delhi



Weddings are treated as larger than life event. Logistics, hospitality, ticketing, venue management, entertainment, catering, all these elements are important and we offer the best support to these services. For a superb experiential event, many people prefer plush resorts and boutique hotels in and around the city where they are living as this serves the purpose of a destination wedding. Amongst the international destinations — Thailand, Mauritius, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Dubai are the ones among the favourites of many clients. HNI's plan weddings, so budget is rarely a constraint and it really lends to the destination's growth in terms of increasing tourism and in and out movement in that country. Indian weddings are all about celebrations so if a high profile artist is also part of the wedding then it adds value to the hotel and country profile. Thus, making it a successful MICE event.



Anupama T V

IAS, Additional Director (General), Kerala Tourism



Kerala offers many conducive elements for weddings like beautiful and diverse locations, large and convenient properties, allied services, accessibility, venues of all kinds and sizes at backwaters, beach, hill station destinations, transportation, all kinds of cuisine, allied services like planners, rooms, conventions. As a specialised sector, you need many supporting services, better and advance planning, state's destinations are more attractive and full of surprise, and can be customised as per the customer's need. About 50-60 weddings have happened in Kerala last year and the number seems to increase every year. A promising sector for Kerala tourism, the groundwork done by the department as a destination has helped in leveraging the opportunities in the wedding sector and thus becoming an important sector for MICE. Unique destinations and hospitality sector definitely make the right platform. Beach weddings at Marari, Kovalam, Cherayi, Backwater/houseboat weddings at Kumarakom and Alappuzha, Munnar, Wayanad are the favourites among the visitors.



Lalita Raghav

Vice-President, Ferns N Petals, Weddings & Events

People are looking at a unique and inimitable way of exchanging vows and treat weddings as an intimate affair with not more than 300-400 guests. With a rise of 35-40 per cent in destination weddings over the past two years and has been increasing year on year, adding to the major chunk of MICE business, we help plan all functions, co-ordinate with vendors for on-site execution. Nowadays, hotels are offering attractive packages to entice clients to gain from this revenue generating sector. From venue selection, invites, décor, catering and banqueting services, entertainment, hospitality, photography, trousseau, vender management to accommodation, approvals from local authorities and services, and exceptional entertainment services for guests, there is a complete package on offer. The reason to choose a specific destination is purely out of choice and season driven. For expensive wedding affair heritage properties available throughout Rajasthan, Agra, Gujarat and for a modern casual affair beaches with light set up are the ones mostly preferred.

