

Hoteliers betting big on Ayodhya



CROWD-PULLER: Visitors to Ayodhya at the recently opened Maharshi Valmiki International Airport. The city is expected to see tourist footfall in lakhs

More Than 125 Projects Are On The Launch Pad This Year

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Once public darshan begins at Ram Mandir from Jan 23, Ayodhya will see lakhs of daily visitors. The first week is likely to bring 3 lakh to 7 lakh people a day, and the number is likely to stabilise above 1 lakh over the next few months. It's a huge opportunity for the hospitality industry that has 125 hotel projects in the pipeline this year, including India's first 7-star vegetarian hotel.

"More than 1,000 applications for homestays have been received in the past few weeks, along with requests for starting at least two river cruises, eco-resorts, four dharamshalas, 66 budget hotels, 5- and 7-star hotels, tent cities and cottages, and one amusement park," UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath had said at a recent Times Group conclave on Ayodhya.

But expect "surge pricing" for now as a two-day stay at a premium hotel is listed at Rs 28,000 per night on MakeMyTrip. At least 16 hotels, including 2- and 3-star facilities, are charging over Rs 10,000 per day, including taxes, for one person.

Ayodhya divisional commissioner

Gaurav Dayal said more than 100 intent agreements worth around Rs 18,000 crore were signed for tourism in Ayodhya at last year's UP Global Investors Summit, and about 50 renowned brands, including Taj, Marriott, Ginger, Oberoi, Trident, and Radisson, are building large hotels in the city.

The total investment proposed in hospitality and allied sectors in Ayodhya has gone up to Rs 45,402 crore, which could generate employment for 53,472 people, an official said. Hotel industry sources said 10,000 direct and 20,000 indirect jobs have been generated in the hospitality sector in Ayodhya in just the past six months.

Prateek Hira, state president of Indian Association of Tour Operators, said Ayodhya is being developed as India's newest tourist hub and it has immense scope for growth. Lack of facilities in the city at present is in fact helping places like Lucknow. "This is the lean season but hotels are full in Lucknow, from where you can travel to Ayodhya in less than two hours, spend about five hours there, and return. Leela Group is looking to set up a property there, Taj is setting up two, and there are several homestays and budget hotels being developed as well."

Hira said the government needs to offer more activities in Ayodhya so that tourists spend at least two nights there. "If the focus is only on one temple, which you can visit within a few hours, it won't be financially viable for hotels and similar facilities," he said.