

# COMFORT ADVENTURE TRAVEL POISED TO BE NEW THRUST FOR 2018

IRENE SUSAN EAPEN

Vaibhav Kala, Founder & Director - Aquaterra Adventures, foresees interesting developments in adventure travel for the upcoming year.



Specialising in treks and river rafting in the Indian Himalayas, Aquaterra Adventures offers to plan any kind of adventure in India irrespective of how uncommon or wild or difficult the trip seemed to be. With Indian Himalayas and niche overseas adventures continuing to dominate priority levels, Vaibhav Kala, Founder & Director of

Aquaterra Adventures, believes that India will be one of the upcoming destinations for adventure tourism, given the country's diverse forests, lakes, high mountains, caves, skiing and aero sports. Running since 1995, the company believes that good equipment, food and guides are key to making an outdoor trip worth its while. Commenting on the growth patterns from last year, he says, "The year 2016 was a great year for us in terms of growth; but, 2017 is a bit sluggish due to demonetization and the introduction of high GST rates."

Anticipating the company's 'Comfort Series' to lend an impetus to next year's growth, Vaibhav says,

"Comfort adventure travel is going to be the new thrust for 2018, in which we will target guests who wish to savour the outdoors but with lesser rigors that are normally envisaged during the course of an adventure expedition. The Comfort Series include treks, river rafting and kayaking trips taken to your comfort zone. This series also offers personalized training programme for a duration of three months prior to the beginning of the trip."

The Brahmaputra River Rafting Expedition is taking place from 2 - 14 December 2017. "The tour is exciting as it is a different league of adventure. In a little known corner of the country, through thick rain-

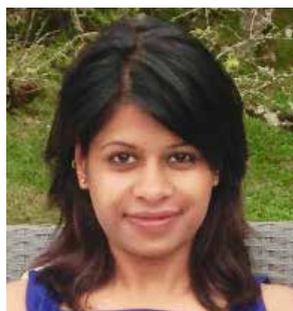
forests and near-zero infra, the trip descends through two famous gorges," he added.

On India's position as an adventure destination five years down the line, he expects more clarity on GST-related issues and foresees adventure tourism gaining more relevance given the fact the segment's role in employment generation and tangible benefits on the economy of a region. "Also, there is a need to change the perception of people about Nepal being the dominant Himalayan destination of choice and the need to move away from the traditional forts, palaces and temples to showcase our natural heritage instead," he signs off.

# SOCIAL MEDIA SERVES AS GREAT INFLUENCE OVER SOLO TRAVEL

Priyanka Jain, Founder, Roaming Clan, notes how social media is driving solo travellers to explore new places.

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Roaming Clan, one of the latest entrants to the Indian travel apps scene, seeks to break the mental barrier of travelling solo, by encouraging people to connect with new people and experience destinations together with unfamiliar but like-minded persons. "It is a membership-based community and most of the travellers on our tours are between 20-40 years of age,"

says Priyanka Jain, the Founder of Roaming Clan. Noting the growth in solo and backpack travel in India, Priyanka observes that there is, however, a discomfort among travellers to explore alone. "We have witnessed a tremendous growth in solo travel. Roaming Clan offers a solution by providing a platform to connect with likeminded travellers as we publish their travel plans in our weekly newsletters and website. Our Facebook group runs different online meet ups for cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore and Hyderabad, to enable travellers to meet and get to know each other."

With the Indian travel market growing exponentially both domestically and internationally, there has been a drastic change in the preferences

of travellers. Priyanka observes a radical change in the behaviour patterns of Indian travellers due to the influence of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, etc. "These days, many Indians want to experience new cultures and traditions. They want to travel to remote destinations, explore the places which are less crowded. We also have experiential trips curated by our experts such as a Banjara-style tour in Rajasthan where one can stay in Havelis, camp in the Thar Desert or stay with the locals in a village near Jaisalmer. There is also a trip to Bali where the participants are taken to a remote backpackers island for scuba diving. "Individuals who do not like to plan their trips all by themselves can join the company's group trips. Some

of the other destinations in our experiential group trips are in Spain, Austria, remote spots in Indonesia and Thailand. We also have trips to Sikkim and Rajasthan and weekend city trips to Amritsar, Jaipur, Pondicherry and Varanasi."

Roaming Clan has around 7000 members associated through meet-ups, Facebook and its website. By the end of this financial year, it plans to reach around 10,000 more travellers. "Our marketing plans are through social media ads, physical meet-ups, email marketing and unique campaigns to create awareness about our concept and products. We have a campaign called '#20before40' to encourage people to travel to 20 countries before they turn 40."