

TOURIST HOTSPOTS IN INDIA FLOODED BY REVENGE TRAVELERS



The Indian Ministry of Health used the term ‘revenge travel’ to express concern about the overcrowding of tourist hotspots in India shortly after a devastating second wave of COVID-19. But what does ‘revenge travel’ mean?

Eager to break free after months of COVID-19 lockdowns and quarantine, people across India have flocked to national tourist hotspots, just weeks after restrictions were eased as the devastating second wave started to flatten.

The situation in India deteriorated to the point that the Ministry of Health was forced to **issue a statement warning against what was described as ‘revenge travel’**. During a press conference, the Ministry assured that “revenge travel... could destroy all the achievements” obtained so far.

All over the world, the phenomenon of people going on trips right after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted is not unique to India, but in this country, it is particularly serious given how severe the outbreak has been this year.

Between 600,000 and 700,000 tourists have traveled to the relatively cool northern Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh just in June, when border restrictions were relaxed, says Amit Kashyap, director of the Himachal Pradesh tourism office.

Images and videos of large crowds in the streets without wearing masks went viral, adding to already raised concerns that a third wave is just around the corner. Doctors and experts criticized people who enjoyed the holidays while many still recovering from the impact of the second wave that began in April.

In Delhi, the same scenes were seen in the markets, forcing the government to close shops in the Central Market of Lajpat Nagar and Rui Mandi of Sadar Bazar on the basis of “serious violations” of COVID-19 guidelines.

A tourism expert Subhash Goyal said the case of the Himalayan states show how “we are advancing into the third wave,” even though he supports the reopening of the economy and the heavily affected tourism industry.

“There is a pent-up demand for travel and I am in favor of opening up tourism and international borders as well, but at the same time, the government and the people must ensure strict compliance with COVID-19 guidelines,” warned Goyal, president of the Confederation of Tourism Professionals of India. “There should be severe fines for those who do not follow appropriate COVID-19 behavior for endangering the lives of thousands of people,” he said.

But what is ‘revenge travel’ exactly? This trend has been studied by travel experts all over the world, with the term ‘revenge tourism’ also being used. The phenomenon has been analyzed in psychology as well as other fields of study, such as compulsive shopping, as a form of self-indulgence in difficult or extreme situations. Simply put, the persons indulge themselves because they think they deserve it

after a bad time or for whatever reasons, and now this trend is taking over the tourism industry.

This travel mindset means that people are more eager to travel and less willing to cancel their vacation plans this year after the coronavirus lockdown. Many have grown tired of being at home, are fully vaccinated, and have been saving money and travel miles for their first trip after the pandemic. As a result, 'revenge travelers' are more likely to visit exotic locations, spend more money to travel, or a combination of both.

"While the term may sound silly, 'revenge travel' refers to the idea that there will be a huge increase in travel as it becomes safer and things open back up," said Eric Jones, co-founder of The Vacationer travel journal and planning guide. "Many Americans and those around the world had their vacations altered or outright canceled last year, so they are all looking to satisfy their travel itch at the same time. The term is also retribution against COVID-19 and how it is losing its power to control our lives, including canceling travel plans."

While dreaming about traveling the world again or for the first time might be fun, it's important to consider more immediate priorities like health, safety, and financial well-being as we continue to fight the pandemic. "With so many people still furloughed or unemployed, and with so many experiencing financial challenges at some point throughout the past year, for many 'revenge travel' is but a distant dream with a job and food security a more real and urgent priority!" said Alan Fyall, interim chair for the tourism, events and attractions department at the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management.

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