

Q&A-session

India webinar, 19.1.2021, organized by Visit Finland

Is Visit Finland planning to take part in ITB India virtual this year? What do you think of the event in general, what is Your activity plan for 2021 in terms of workshops, fairs, events, online and offline?

Tarja: We are actually doing our activity plan right now. We currently have our strategy ready for 2021, and from next week onwards we are starting to plan our activities for 2021. When it comes to ITB India, we have not made decisions yet, but we are discussing the same if we are going to attend it or not. Since it is the first ITB India edition, so it will be first time for us to be there if we participate. Also once we have our activity plan ready for 2021, naturally we will publish them and inform You, but they are not ready yet.

Question about the statistics. You showed that Northern lights and winter are on top of interest, but according to 2019 statistics show only 19% overnights were registered in winter. How do you explain this?

Tarja: The study what I went through was more about brand image of Finland as a travel destination in India: what do Indians think about Finland. Study was conducted for high-spending FITs, what are their associations about Finland, what do they think first when they think about the Nordics and Finland, so that was more about the winter. Nevertheless, the reality shows different numbers. It is good, that we get travels from India that is widely spread all over the year between the seasons. This is very good source market.

Is Finland seen as a safe travel destination? And is it more likely, that Indians will travel only to Helsinki area, or will they travel within Finland as well? Do Indians in general rent cars, or do they choose flights and trains within the country?

Sara: In the Indian mindset the entire Nordic/ Scandinavia region is considered safe as a whole. When Indians travel [to Finland], Helsinki is the main hub for arrivals. But as we spoke before about luxury travelers and luxury placement of Finland, the location is often actually in the Lapland. Tourists want to try Lappish experiences. It depends also how we position Finland, how easily we help local travel agencies for Lakeland and Archipelago for product development post Covid-19.

Loveleen: I think that Indians would perceive Finland as a very safe destination to travel, as it is now positioned in Indian market. Like Sara says, I think that Indians would like actually to visit also other regions than Helsinki. Of course Lapland, but I think that there are many perceptions in India about Winter travel and that COVID is more strong in colder places hence I think that summer should also be doing great, if the travel will resume by summer.

Sara: Also there is a question about self-drive. Many Indians prefer self-drive, especially adults, they would be interested to do self-drive in Finland and Europe. They like to rent cars and travel on their own.

Are we going to participate in SATTE 2021 event?

Tarja: At the moment, we are planning our participation in events and concrete plans for 2021 are in process. So at the moment, I can not surely say if we are going to attend there or not.

Are online meetings with travel agencies and tour operators planned?

Tarja: Yes. Hopefully we will have one event before summer. The plans will be finalized later in Q1.

Do You think that Finland will be more highlighted destination for Indians in the future after COVID, compared with other preferable Southern Europe destinations for Indians who suffered so much during COVID.

Loveleen: If the graph continues, I think it will do very well in fact. There will be probably huge change in usual popularity of destinations; the COVID was a big shake for their traditional order. For example Spain have traditionally done well for India, but I think this is going to change now, as it is typically crowded area, so people would like to move outside it. I think Finland will become a better highlighted destination for sure.

What are main expectations and demands that Indian tour operators have from Finnish DMC's and marketing destinations?

Loveleen: Thanks for asking! Finland is not an easy destination for a travel designer to understand without going there. It means that there is more work involved for you as well as for us. And as earlier there was no other way to learn about destination except to come there, but now we have power of webinars and all of us are very good with them.

When You create new product, that You feel will suit Indian market, it is very important to go into very details: for example transport, how are You going to transport people, costs of it. We know that private travel & transport is expensive and price of products is higher for individuals than groups. We sell lots of private product to destinations of the Europe, so people are used to the pricing, but it is a challenge, how to put all those costs together through one local partner.

If You offer a new product, for example to Lakeland area, I need to learn about it and it would take time from my side to understand how everything works. Webinars could help us to receive new information and learn more about the regions. Also news and newsletters are important for receiving the information, as well as general information what kind of clients will the destination suite best for.

Questions from the clients have recently increased, so they want to know all the details before the trip.