



Revenue of ₹4.25 trillion is likely to be earned from 3.5 million weddings in the November to mid-December period. ISTOCKPHOTO

Weddings spark a bill shock, from venues to flowers

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Wedding planners and venues in India are gearing up for the peak wedding season that runs from November to March, after the year's slow first half which saw just a handful of dates between April and July. Industry professionals are optimistic that the upcoming months will see a surge in bookings, with rates for venues and catering rising faster than in earlier years.

According to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), in 2023, weddings generated ₹4.25 trillion in business over 23 auspicious days. Stock broking firm Prabhudas Lilladher estimates revenue generation of a similar ₹4.25 trillion in less than two months, from November to mid-December 2024, from around 3.5 million weddings.

The peak season typically extends from November to March, and India sees about 10 million weddings in a year, as per industry estimates.

The optimism has translated into a seller's market for the vendors, particularly for high-demand dates. Hotel catering charges have risen 30% com-

pared with 2022 and 10-15% from last year, to between ₹6,000 and ₹8,500 per plate (not including taxes), according to industry estimates.

Facing the brunt of the market's upturn is Nikita, an NRI member of a Delhi-based family, and her beau Allan, who are to marry in mid-January. The couple has spent several weekends searching for a venue in the Delhi-NCR area for a small, intimate ceremony with about 100 family members.

Despite selecting a "non-auspicious" date, the deals they anticipated have not materialized. A farmhouse being considered in Gurugram will cost ₹2 lakh for rental alone for one night. This excludes additional services, meaning the overall wedding budget could reach about ₹30 lakh, not including jewellery.

Such expenses are becoming common as couples navigate a competitive market.

Hotel companies are optimistic that the segment will see considerable growth this year and in the coming years. Monisha Dewan, vice president sales and distribution for South Asia at Marriott International, said weddings kept the hotel industry afloat during

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covid, and the segment only seems to grow further each year.

“We’ve also seen growth over last year; there’s also been growth in bookings as well as revenues (some of that could also be inflationary),” she said, adding that people are now willing to pay more than ever for gastronomical meals and experiences.

Chalet Hotels, which includes venues such as JW Marriott in Mumbai and Westin Powai, is optimistic about the upcoming season, as many weddings from the first half of the year have been pushed to this period, leading to increased activity.

Sanjay Sethi, managing director and CEO of Chalet Hotels, said that each peak season (November to March) typically has about 60 dates, often resulting in two-night hotel stays if there are buyout or in-house stay weddings. This can translate to 120 days of business for such types of hotels.

According to wedding platform WedMeGood, the hospitality sector has seen a 25-30% increase in demand over the past two years, particularly for venues, catering, and destination weddings. Photography is the only exception, with new entrants lowering prices and established professionals reducing their fees, co-founder Mehak Sagar Shahani told *Mint*.

However, WedMeGood projects that December will see an 18.8% decline in weddings compared with November, but what would help is that the overall season has lengthened, running through April.

At the same time, Wedding-



People are willing to pay more than ever for gastronomical meals, experiences. ISTOCKPHOTO

wire.in, a vendor e-marketplace, anticipates December might still see some growth. “As we approach the end of October, many couples are still finalizing their December services, and we expect stabilization or modest growth in bookings,” said Anam Zubair, director, consumer marketing for India for the company. The platform expects the year to end on a solid note, as it has noted a 16% year-on-year increase in weddings for November.

Meanwhile, wedding planners are raising concerns about rising costs. Mukta Kapoor, a Delhi-based wedding planner who runs Yuna Weddings, said that while venue rates

have remained steady, inflation has led to increases in production costs. Customizations and decor rates are up by 40%, with essential items such as flowers and labour costing far more than last year.

Flower prices continue to rise, too. Vikaas Gutgutia, founder of Ferns N Petals Pvt. Ltd, said there has been an annual increase of at least 20-40% depending on the variety of flowers. Many couples are prioritizing quality, opting for smaller weddings rather than large celebrations.

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