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Now, you can enjoy a royal vacation aboard the world's most luxurious train

K. Balchand



The Hindu Restaurant in Maharaja Express, the luxury train run by IRCTC. The train has two bars, two restaurants, one kitchen. Photo: Kamal Narang

If there is a marriage in the family and you want to celebrate it with pomp then you have to just make a wish to the Indian Railways and you can have a princely marriage excursion on the most luxurious train in the world — the Maharajas' Express.

The railways are proposing this novel idea even as it seeks to broad-base its commercial viability. Alternatively, the Maharajas' Express, which provides five star amenities, can now be chartered for royal event launches primarily during the off season period between April and September.

IRCTC MD M.P. Mall told a select group of journalists, who were taken around the luxury train, that no other such train in the world could match the facilities and comforts on board the 18 coach, half-a-kilometre-long enchantment on wheels.

The train has been awarded the coveted World's Leading Luxury Train Award by World Travel Awards for the last two years running. Launched in 2008 in collaboration with a private player, the

Maharajas' Express is owned and operated by the IRCTC, a subsidiary of the Indian Railways, following a court litigation settled in its favour.

It is also the latest in the series of five luxury trains in India. The other four are run by the State governments of Rajasthan and Karnataka.

The IRCTC promises to customise the entire gamut of rituals associated with an Indian marriage, including the "baraat" procession with excursions and getaways on a trip of one's choice and duration. Guests will be received royally at every point. It will almost be a romance on wheels for those preferring a big fat marriage for a group of 88 persons, who would have 43 spacious cabins for a merry and relaxing vacation.

The 448 sq. ft. Presidential Suite is of five-star quality with a double bedroom and a twin room. The magic of an open star-lit night sky is cast on the double bed of the suite to heighten the bliss of togetherness.

Depending upon your destination the panoramic windows of the two lounges and two dining cars, each with a seating capacity of 42, will endear the rural landscape while ensconced in stately comfort and safety.

The fire proof pantry car is manned by chefs deputed by the five star hotel to which the job is outsourced. Executive chef John Stone says the motto is not to refuse any request of the passenger be what the time of the day.

"We are here round the clock and can dish out Indian, Continental, Caribbean, European, Thai, Japanese, Burmese, Mediterranean on 18 carat gold plated plates, gold polished cutlery and silver thalis," he exuberates.

The pneumatic suspension ensures that even as the train cruises at 130 km per hour, you can enjoy the comforts of satellite television, Wi-Fi internet facility and a visit to the souvenir shop. It is the only train with an online water purifier facility.

"We will arrange exclusive events like elephant polo or a tiger safari or a sun down cocktail on sand dunes — as the Sun goes down the lights come up with your combination of liquor," says Vineet Singh, in-charge of the luxury train.

The IRCTC will take care of accommodation and transportation arrangements besides decking up the place that the customer might choose to hold the wedding.

One of the maharajas of Rajasthan actually made enquiries for organising a marriage trip but the limited capacity of the train proved an impediment.

But the charter business is taking off. Stanford University has booked a trip in November 2015-16, the train is booked for a Japanese group in April and in August a group from the Middle East will be enjoying the razzle-dazzle of their preferred round trip.

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