

Now global holidays at 40% less cost

PARUL CHHAPARIA

New Delhi

WHILE the world economies struggle with recession and slowdown, the crisis seems to have come as a blessing in disguise for travellers. With over 40 per cent decline in global holiday packages, the Indian travellers are spoilt for choice.

A number of hotels, travel companies in places such as Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Sri Lanka are doling out special incentives to Indian tourists. Due to a drop of around 70 per cent in the US and European tourist traffic to these places, India has emerged as one of the most lucrative markets for them now.

"Hoteliers, airlines and tourists boards are offering us huge discounts for Indian travellers. Rooms that were going at \$100 last year, are now almost half the price," Ashish Kishore, head of hotel and retail businesses, *Yatra.com*, said.

The decline is evident from the prices of the packages. For a two-night tour in Thailand, the traveller has to shell out about 43 per cent less at Rs 19,380 this year against Rs 34,299 last

year. For a four-night experience in Malaysia, the cost ranges between Rs 30,000 to Rs 35,000 depending on the facilities offered. Online travel firm *Ezeego1.com* is offering packages around 25-30 per cent lower than last year.

"Right now, both international and domestic bookings amount equally to our total bookings. With such discounts in place, international bookings will pick up," said an official spokesperson of *Ezeego1.com*.

Some travel companies are also of the view that the Swine flu crisis will further bring down the holiday packages prices. However, it will take a while before the actual impact is seen.

For traditional travel companies such as Cox and Kings, there is hardly any scope for a further decline in prices. "Most of the Indian travellers don't go to Mexico. As far as swine flu is concerned, we have not seen any cancellation. It's too early to say that the prices of holiday packages would dip," said Thomas Thottathil, official spokesperson, Cox & Kings said.

parulchhparia
@mydigitalfc.com