

Cab operators focus on inter-city routes

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Christin.MathewPhilip
@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Limited inter-city train and bus services and reluctance to take flights have prompted cab operators to change track. They are now focusing on inter-city routes instead.

While intra-city cab rides have reduced due to virus scare and the work from home option, more people are opting for cabs to travel between Bengaluru and other cities. Cabs provide dedicated personal space, door-to-door connectivity to reduce exposure of high-risk places and some have facilities like fibreglass partition, Covid-19 insurance, cashless travel, masks and sanitisers.

"There is a surge in demand for car rentals as people are looking for safe commute options for emergency/essential travel needs," said Gaurav Aggarwal, founder and CEO, Savaari Car Rentals.



SILVER LINING: Cab operators say demand for inter-city rentals has been rising with people looking for a safe mode to travel

Ram Prasath, CEO of Ezi Drive, said the popular routes to and from Bengaluru are Chennai, Salem, Coimbatore, Chittoor, Vijayawada and Tirupati and intra-state routes are Mysuru, Tumakuru and Madikeri.

"With Bengaluru being a hub of working professionals and millennials, who are looking to take a break from the city or even return to their hometowns, we are seeing a large number of requests for both inter and intra-state travel," said an

Ola spokesperson.

"With more cities relaxing lockdown norms, the demand for inter-city travel has gone up. We have witnessed an increase in our bookings from Bengaluru to cities in Tamil Nadu and Hyderabad," said a spokesperson of Meru Cabs.

An Uber spokesperson said their inter-city service is showing positive signs of recovery with a significant increase in rider demand.

Tough to get passes

"Inter-city routes to and from

Bengaluru saw a 4X growth in demand in June-July compared to April-May. While it is relatively easy to obtain an e-pass from Karnataka's Seva Sindhu portal (24 to 48 hours), getting one from states like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra may take longer," said Aggarwal.

"We can't deploy a vehicle unless the customer gets an e-pass with our vehicle number. Currently, we have zero requests for any leisure travel," said Prasath.

"Getting a state pass is difficult, especially if the ride is to Tamil Nadu or Kerala," said a Meru Cabs spokesperson. "Of the booking requests we receive, we service nearly 33% of the rides in a day. This is mainly because the customers would have failed to get a travel pass," he added.

"Booking data have shown that nearly 80% of the outstation bookings over the last few weeks have been for one-way trips," said the Ola spokesperson.