

Deccan Odyssey bookings up

By: Rachna Shetty

New route to be introduced soon Maharashtra's luxury train, the Deccan Odyssey has garnered a better response from tourists this season, with bookings rising up to 45 per cent. The other piece of good news that has Maharashtra Tourism officials smiling is that the train, in fourth season of operation, may rake enough to break-even this year:

"There is a likelihood of that happening. Our bookings have gone up considerably, from 35 per cent last year to 45 per cent this year, and hopefully we will break even this year," said Abhay Yavalkar, joint managing director Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation.

The train, which oper-



ates from October to April, has undergone a periodic overhauling, with nearly Rs 50 lakh spent on renovation and refurbishing.

"The Palace on Wheels too took time to make an impact. These trains have a niche audience and it takes some time to get through to them.

We have been taking part in a lot of travel exhibitions in foreign countries to increase awareness, and we are seeing a

good response. Some of the people who have travelled have responded saying it is better than the Oriental Express. For us, that's a big achievement," Yavalkar said.

Kolhapur was added on the route last year which covers places like Tarkarli, Ganapatipule, Goa, Pune, Aurangabad and Nashik. Added attractions include a display of the Mardani Khel (traditional Maharashtra martial arts) and the forts of Kolhapur.

The one part of Maharashtra that is not included in the seven-day journey is the Vidarbha region.

"We are planning to introduce a similar train on the narrow gauge for the Vidarbha region. That would essentially travel between Tadoba and Kanha national park in Madhya Pradesh.