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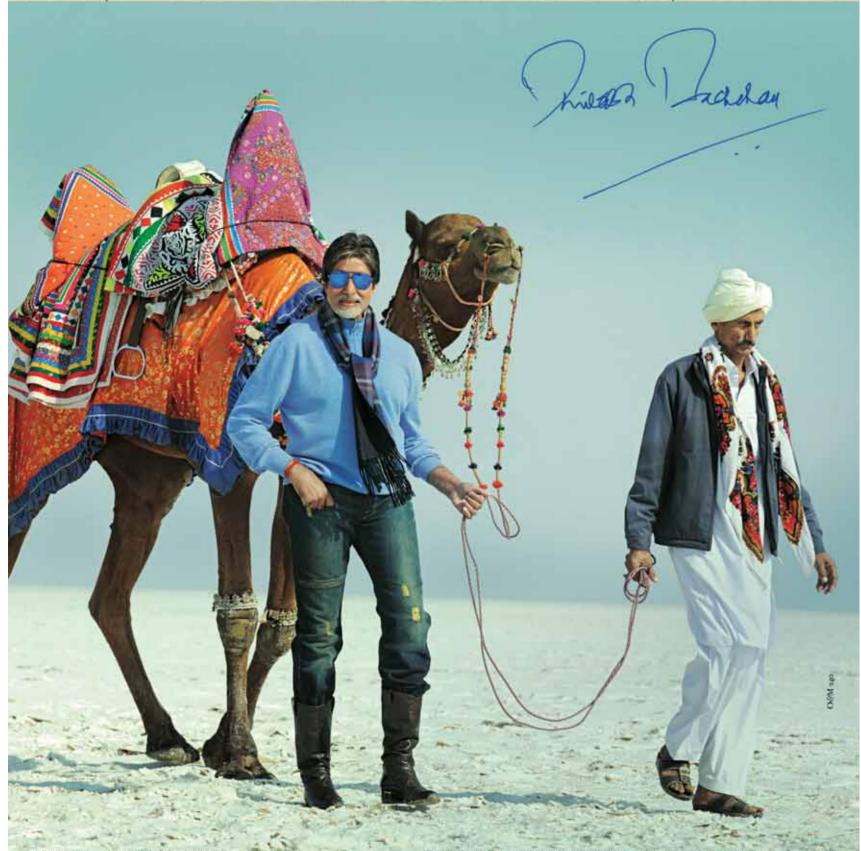


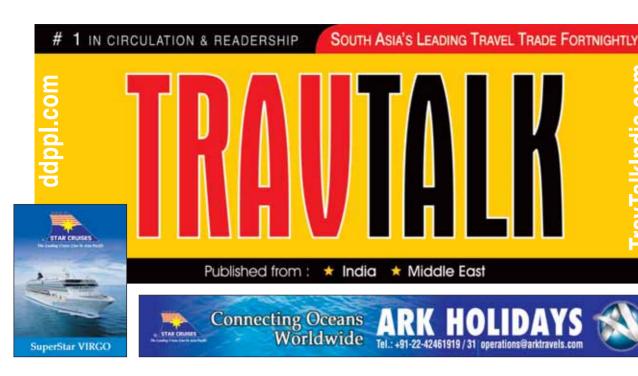


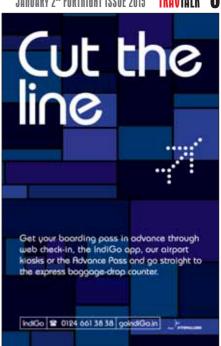
During the Rann Utsav, Gujarat's festival of art, crafts and dance, I saw spinning skirts with mirror work that would make a goddess jealous. The Aari embroidery done



here was so intricate, even the vendors looked sad to part with a piece. The music hypnotised me, the food tempted me, the colours dazzled me. Set against the white desert, I felt as if the festival was our way of showing off to the heavens; almost saying look at what we can do!







Hurray! 7.46mn FTAs in 2014

Forget 7 million, the FTAs in 2014 have now reached 7.46 million. TRAUTALK speaks to the present Tourism Secretary and his predecessors about their thoughts on where tourism is now headed.



receive 1.1bn tourists

India is

in 3 years Dr Mahesh Sharma Minister of State for For complete story, please read pg. 8



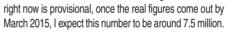
Dr Lalit K Panwai Secretary Ministry of Tourism

We are very happy with inbound figures touching the 7.46 million mark. Ever since its launch on November 27, 2014, more than 26,000 ETAs have been processed till the first week of January. And if the response continues, we expect the foreign tourist arrivals to double in the next three years. This is a great impetus for tourism and the Prime Minister in his speech at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has again talked about tourism.



Parvez Dewan Former Secretary

Indian tourism has finally acquired the momentum where every two years you can expect an additional 1 million foreign tourists, and with a gamechanger like the eVisa, the growth will only be faster. If things remain the same and there are no untoward incidents, I expect the FTA to go up to 8 million in 2015. The 7.46 million figure that we have





RH Khwaja Former Secretary

This is great news. The new government is giving emphasis to tourism. Now is the right time to apply a synergistic approach to tourism, we need to have a single vision where all departments should work towards a common objective. The state governments should all be onboard. Hygiene is also important and campaigns like the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan should help.

By Peden Doma Bhutia

Heralding a tourism revolution

The Ministry attempts to re-launch itself on Good Governance Day. It has launched an e-portal of the Culture Ministry—Swacch Bharat - Swacch Smarak; Welcome Cards for foreign tourists; Incredible India Infoline Service; E-ticketing for Taj Mahal and Humayun's Tomb, etc.

Megha Paul

n a path-breaking initiative, Dr Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State with Independent Charge for Tourism & Culture and Minister for Civil Aviation, Government of India has recently launched the 24-hour Tourist Infoline service. The bi-lingual helpline number 1800-111-363 will be available in English and Hindi currently. Giving more information about the develop-



L to R-Usha Sharma, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Dr Lalit K Panwar, Secretary - Tourism, Government of India; Dr Mahesh Sharma; Ravindra Singh, Secretary - Culture, Government of India; and Dr Rakesh Tewari, Director General, ASI releasing the Welcome Cards

ment, he said, "There was a need for the all-India helpline

number and the ministry was keen to provide the same in the backdrop of harassment and fleecing of tourists at the hands

of touts and other unscrupulous elements. The helpline service is being operational in two languages Hindi and English to begin with. Going forward, the service will be available in 12 other foreign languages, including Russian, German, French and Spanish." Dr Sharma was speaking after announcing a slew of initiatives related to the Union Ministries of Tourism and Culture in Delhi as part of the

Contd. on page 26















Harvey India CEO - Joe Rajan hosts Annual Christmas Brunch

The trendy Copa lounge in Juhu saw a star studded event as Harvey India CEO - Joe Rajan along with wife Rochelle and the entire Harvey India Team played host to their Annual Christmas Brunch.

In attendance were B-town heavyweights, eminent politicos, big names from the Hospitality Industry as well as celebs from the Fashion and Entertainment Industry.

The mood was merry & cheerful as glasses clinked and shoulders rubbed - as guests mingled and savoured the exhaustive brunch menu laid out by the hosts.



































'Festivals of India' beyond ASEAN

The Ministry of Culture will organise similar shows in Malaysia, Indonesia and Myanmar in the next leg after its huge impact in ASEAN countries, says Ravindra Singh, Secretary-Culture, Government of India.

MEGHA PAUL

dentifying areas of convergence between tourism and culture, the Ministry of Culture, Government of India is looking at taking its Festivals of India programme to more overseas destinations this year.

According to Ravindra Singh, Secretary-Culture, Government of India, the department will organise similar shows in Malaysia, Indonesia and Myanmar in the next leg after its huge impact in ASEAN countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, China and Japan. Regarding the number of cities to be covered this year, he replied, "We have earlier covered as many as 22 cities in some countries as well. Thus, the number of cities to be covered in each country will be determined by the size of the country."

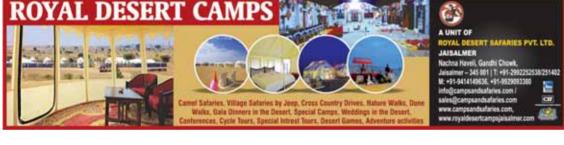
Taking a cue from Swachh Bharat, the Ministry of Culture has also now launched its Swacch Bharat Swacch was speaking at the Good Governance Day celebrations organised by the Union Ministries of Tourism and Culture in Delhi also emphasised on the need to promote important museums as tourist and Humayun's Tomb. Regarding the new initiative, he revealed, "There are around 100 ticketed monuments in the country. All the ticketed monuments will be brought under the e-booking system by April 2015."

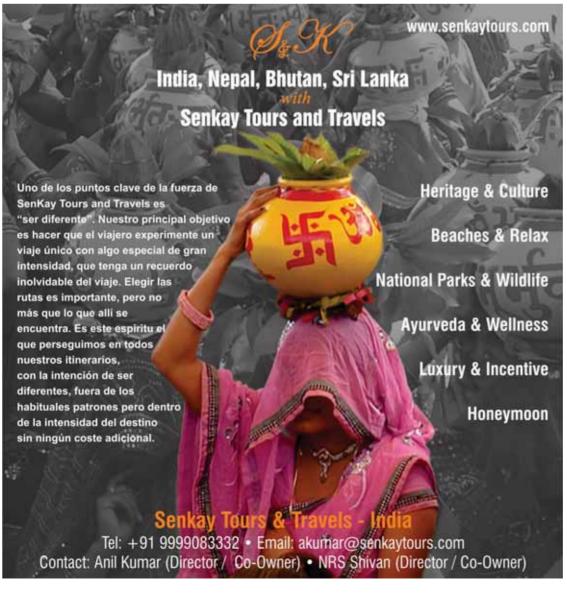
Another programme called the 'Adarsh Smarak' programme will also be implemented on a public-private partnership mode, Singh said. "The Ministry of Culture plans to rope in corporate entities for this programme under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. We want to involve all stakeholders, including tour operators, tourist guides, transport operators, etc., for this programme," he added. The Ministry of Culture has identified 25 monuments in the country to be elevated as 'adarsh' (model) monuments.



Smarak initiative for protecting and preserving the sanctity of monuments of national heritage. Singh who

destinations by integrating the activities of both departments. The Ministry also launched an e-booking portal for Taj Mahal







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VIEWPOINT

Exceeding expections

or those who have been hankering for the magic figure of 7 million, we have news - the Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India for 2014 have gone up to 7.46 million. Yes, that is the number of foreign tourists that we have received in the last one year. And this is just the provisional figure, when the actual figure is out in March 2015, we expect it to cross the 7.5million mark. An achievement indeed for the industry! And now with the government having opened up eVisa facilities to nationals of 43 countries, we expect that this figure will only go up, every year. Add to that we have news coming in that ever since its launch on November 27, 2014, more than 26,000 ETAs have been processed till the first week of January. The industry is buoyant about this new development and we can't wait to see how eVisas will change the face of the Indian tourism industry.

On Good Governance Day, the Ministry of Tourism vowed to revolutionise tourism and boost the industry by focusing mainly on cleanliness, hospitality and safety. Welcome Cards for foreign tourists; a 24-hour Tourist Infoline service in English and Hindi; Eticketing for Taj Mahal and Humayun's Tomb, etc are some of the driving forces that have been launched to work towards bettering tourism facilities and welcoming more foreign tourists to our country.

However, while everyone is so buoyant about the development of tourism in India there are a few issues that still continue to rankle tourists, safety being the most important one. Only if we pay due attention to the safety and security of our tourists, will they feel comfortable enough to visit various parts of the country. The volume of single women travellers is only growing in number and if we are able to tap this segment and ensure their safety and security, we will surely become a favourite.

At a time when everything seems to be going in favour for Indian tourism, we need to make sure that safety and security of tourists is ensured.

Are we ready for this challenge? If the answer is yes, then there's no way anyone can stop us from being the Incredible India that we are!

Leap forward for inbound tourism

eVisas has been the high point for the Tourism Ministry in 2014. Going forward, the ministry has launched welcome cards for foreign visitors and operationalised a long-awaited tourist helpline. TRAVTALK speaks to industry stalwarts to understand how this will boost inbound tourism this year.

Megha Paul

Inbound has been a challenge till now. However, with the government's new initiative of the eVoA, things will be back on track soon. Also, this is in time for the peak tourist season. The new e-visa system will prevent line-ups in front of the visa desks at airports, reduce the workload of staff working at airports, save time for staff at Indian consulates and embassies, provide easier visa facilitation for foreigners that visit India for tourism and business purposes and increase the number of the visitors as well as tourism and foreign trade revenue.







Thanks to the eVoA; we are looking at more international tourist arrivals. We predict 15 per cent growth in inbound. This will help India achieve one per cent of the share of global tourism. Due to enhanced air connectivity, more airlines are also expect-

ed to come forward, with India as their hub in Asia. India will be the choicest destination for MICE, Medical, and Spiritual Tourism. All this will mean big business for the travel agents, tour operators and hotel players.

> Subhash Goyal Chairman, STIC Travel Group



With 0.7 per cent share of world tourism, our country ranks 10th in international inbound in Asia. Going forward, we need to remove roadblocks at policy level. We need to revisit policy to eradicate double taxation and ensure GST gets the much-

deserved level-playing field. We also have to remove the perception of India as an 'unsafe' destination by sensitising the stakeholders.

> **Nakul Anand** Executive Director, ITC

Luxury travel is on the rise from markets such as the US and Far East. Experience, which is authentic, is one of the key drivers for travel and this trend will only grow stronger this year. An important development is the entry of AirAsia and Tata-SIA Airlines in the domestic skies. Also, the introduction

of ETA by government has removed bottlenecks for foreign visitors. We can expect more customers opting for experiential holidays as this is the new trend.

Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent India



With the ETA, we only see happy times for the inbound market. The inbound from many of our conventional markets, especially the US grow tremendously. However, there has been a sharp decline in Russian tourists due to steep fall in

rouble and the Ukraine crisis. Offbeat destinations like North East will see better growth than previous years and so will specialised luxury and wedding segments.

CEO- Destination Management, India & South Asia, Kuoni Destination Management



Our internal research and analysis teams reveal that 2015 is expected to witness immense scope of growth across MICE, inbound, outbound as well as domestic travel. The recent increase in hotel inventory at tourist locations certainly is an encour-

aging initiative. We consider this to be a positive development as this will lead to rate correction at tourist locations and spur demand from the inbound market.

Prashant Naravan

COO and Head-Leisure Travel Inbound Business, Thomas Cook India



New visa regime (ETA) is a big game changer for India as a travel destination. I believe that India need not have wait till 2020 to see the international inbound double. It would happen in the next couple of years. As we predict an increased demand for hotels,

we are looking at opening 10 to 12 new hotels in 2015. We will bring in our luxury brands like St Regis and W into India soon. We also see tremendous opportunities in conversion space this year.

Managing Director-India, Starwood Hotels & Resorts

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More meetings at WTM Africa this year

World Travel Market Africa's (WTM Africa) world-renowned Hosted Buyer Programme offers a unique opportunity for key qualified, travel industry buyers with direct purchasing power to attend WTM Africa. It enables buyers to maximise their time at WTM Africa and engage in as many business discussions as possible.



he WTM Africa Hosted Buyer Programme guarantees the attendance of top-level decision makers to the event by providing their flights, accommodation and transfers. In return, Hosted Buyers commit to attend pre-scheduled appointments with exhibitors of their choice at WTM Arica, which will be held at Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) from April 15-17, 2015.

The Hosted Buyer Programme enables buyers to maximise their time at WTM Africa and engage in as many business discussions as possible during the three days of the show. As a hosted



Paulina Lund Hosted Buyer Manager

Buyer at WTM Africa, you will benefit from; a personalised diary of appointments with exhibitors of your choice, complimentary flights, transfers and accommodation, exclusive formal and informal networking opportunities, access to the VIP lounge and exclusive pre/post WTM Africa tours.

In 2014, WTM Africa received a phenomenal interest from the global travel industry buyers from; Argentina, Jordan, United States of America, India, France and Canada, amongst others. Of the Hosted Buvers interviewed, 95.8% were satisfied to extremely satisfied and 89% are likely to extremely likely to attend the 2015 WTM Africa. Vicky Stirling, Director of Farside Africa, UK describing the Hosted Buyers Programme said. "WTM Africa was a great success and everything worked very smoothly and it was a very good show'. Whilst Bernard Bacle from Club Adventure in Canada said, "The show is excellent! Quality of sellers, the organisations and services are top-notch." WTM Africa Hosted Buyer Manager Paulina Lund says, "We are actively targeting new buyers for 2015. We have also received a great



response from those registering their interest to be qualified as a buyer for 2015. It's encouraging to see that there are key industry players interested in applying, from not only our traditional source markets but also from many African countries. With the WTM Africa vision in mind, we

are confident that we can present a wide variety of buyers to our exhibitors for next vear's event."

It's now a 3-day event

WTM Africa 2015 has been expanded to a three-day event, following the hugely successful inaugural show. WTM Africa launched in spring 2014 as a two-day event in Cape Town and immediately established itself as the leading B2B tourism event in Africa. The inaugural event saw almost 4,000 industry professionals negotiate deals worth \$314 million (£189 million). Following the success of WTM Africa 2014 - and in response to demand among exhibitors and visitors – the event has been expanded by a full day in to a three-day event. Furthermore, WTM Africa 2015 exhibition floor space will be 50% bigger due to increased interest from both private and public sector companies around the world looking to take part. The 2015 show will again take place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) and will run from 15th -17th April

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NEWS

Win for inbound

Contd. from page 6

With the recent clearance of eVoA, we understand the importance of tourism as a strong revenue generator for the country. Goa, over the years, has emerged as a tourist hotspot, for Indian as well as foreign tourists . The cheerful and friendly nature



of Goans has cemented Goa's position as a top tourist destination. Goa has many other things, and our plan for 2015 is to draw the attention of the world to all that Goa has to offer.

Ameya Abhyankar
Director, Department of Tourism-Goa



Weekend trips, corporate team-building trips, incentives, conferences and annual conventions will facilitate the growth in domestic tourism. The trend towards more FITs and ad-hoc groups will continue. We will also see immense growth from the

inbound segment, with the new introduction of the online visas. There has been an increase in room inventory with a number of international hotel chains and brands entering the country as well.

Sunil C Gupta Director, Travel Bureau

'India poised to get 1.1bn tourists'

Presently India receives about 7 million foreign tourists annually and the target is to get one per cent share of the global tourist arrivals which is around 1.1 billion in three years, says Dr Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Tourism.

TT BUREAU

Tourism continues to be one of the most important socio-economic activities globally and it is very relevant for India's economy as well. An investment of `10 lakh generates 18 jobs in agriculture, 45 jobs in manufacturing and 78 jobs in the tourism sector hence tourism plays an important component in the socio-economic development of the country.



Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Tourism,

Dr. Mahesh Sharma

Minister of State

for Tourism (I/C)

Culture and Civil Aviation says that India is poised to receive one per cent of global tourists in three years. Discussing this at Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Dr. Sharma says, "Presently, India receives about 7 million foreign tourists annually and the target is to get one per cent share of the global tourist arrivals which is around 1.1 billion in three years. The Union Government introduced **Electronic Travel Authorization** (ETA) for 43 countries on 27th November, 2014, looking at the progress of this." Dr. Sharma adds, "In the last five weeks, the

total number of visas issued online has crossed the figure of 22,179. These 43 countries covered about 42 per cent of the source market for Indian Tourism at the world level and Ministry of Home Affairs has been requested to include China, UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy also in this list of ETA countries. These countries would bring in

20 per cent of world tourism market for India."

Smashing Records

- In the last five weeks, the total number of visas issued online has crossed the figure of 22,179
- Ministry of Home Affairs has been requested to include China, UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy also in this list of ETA countries

Dubai VISA

In the last five weeks, the total number

of visas issued online has

crossed the figure of 22,179.

These 43 countries covered

about 42 per cent of the

source market for

Indian Tourism



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Coping with the challenge of change

The main focus of the TAFI Convention this year in Jerusalem will be to lift the spirits of its members to enable them to face the challenges that 2015 will bring with it. To facilitate this, the convention committee plans to invite a motivational speaker to address the delegation.



he 'Land of Creation' will soon bear witness to the birth of many ideas in the minds of the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) members. With its theme of 'The Challenge of Change', the convention has planned about six business sessions that will deliberate on what travel agents must do to make the transition to the next level. Speaking about the theme, Zakkir Ahmed, President, TAFI, said, "We chose this topic for this year because the industry is going through a change at the moment. It has become very

Seats filling up fast

Since December 29, 2014, when the registration for the TAFI

Jerusalem Convention 2015 opened, it has already registered around

100 members, said Zakkir Ahmed, President of TAFI. "Due to limited

seats on flights between India and Israel, we have limited number of

registrations available for the convention. That is why we urge our mem-

bers to sign up at the earliest. We have already registered around 100

members in a span of a week. Going by this, we may have to close the

registration before the scheduled date of January 27, 2015."



dynamic, which is not always easy to adapt for everyone. We have therefore arranged for international speakers (apart from Indian speakers) who will be able to give the members their side of the story – a perspective on what is happening in other markets."

Pradip Lulla, the association's National General

Zakkir Ahmed

The Challenge of Change was chosen as theme because the industry is going through a change at the moment

Secretary, who is also part of the TAFI Convention Committee, said, "Our members are currently feeling very demotivated because of the market situation and they have



Pradip Lulla National General Secretary

Our members realised that they will need to make a few changes and deal with the challenges

realised that they will need to make a few changes and deal with the challenges that come with it. The business sessions that we have planned are in keeping with this idea."

TAFI, part of coalition to develop NDC study

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) and a coalition of national travel agent associations (The Group) are collaborating on a study to look at options that could benefit travel agents as the New Distribution Capability (NDC) XML standard is considered for implementation by airlines and technology providers

Technology, Ahmed revealed, will be the main underlying subject. "As we all know, Israel is big on IT and we will probably have someone from Israel speaking on it," he said.

Lulla added that so far the convention committee has not finalised the business sessions or the speakers. "As always, we will have a guest of honour for the opening ceremony. We also plan to invite a good motivational speaker who can give the attending delegation a perspective and inspire them to think out of the box and come back with energy and enthusiasm," he said.

One of the sessions, he added, will possibly be on safety and security "but nothing has been firmed up yet." The Managing Committee will also take this opportunity to decide the associations' focus areas for 2015. When asked why the association had chosen Jerusalem as the destination for its convention, Lulla said, "Israel is much more than a pilgrimage destination; it has a lot of culture. wellness as well as great MICE facilities. Apart from this, it is of special importance to agriculturalists because of their advanced systems. The people are warm and friendly and it is a safe destination. I don't see why it can't gain popularity among Indian travellers."



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A tech boom for 2015@WTM LA

After great results in 2014, the third edition of World Travel Market Latin America, incorporating the 43rd Braztoa Business Event, will this year devote a much larger area for the growing Travel Tech Zone at the event. It will be organised from April 22 to 24, 2015 at Expo Center Norte in São Paulo.

TT BUREAU

argeting technology companies that work with the tourism industry, the section on the exhibition floor will be expanded to meet the demand and showcase the new products that are available. Exhibitors already confirmed for next years' event include TravelClick, QuadLabs Technologies, Mystifly, Illusions Online and Wooba.

Technology seminars taking place over the three days, with well known expert speakers lined-up and a dedicated space for games, applications and live demonstrations which visitors and other exhibitors will be able to take advantage of.

New technologies will be discussed in the Innovation

Zone where companies will present new products and platforms, explaining its operation and affordability. The aim is to educate participants on the importance of technology to the current tourism market.

The importance of travel technology is not only evident



at WTM Latin America. World Travel Market which takes place in London has seen

Travel Technology become the fastest growing section on the exhibition floor over the past few years, so much so, that in 2013 The Travel Tech Show at WTM was launched. It became its own dedicated event and currently holds the position as the

largest dedicated travel tech-

nology event in the UK.

World Travel Market Latin America remains strong in its bid to be a business generator for exhibitors, buyers and industry professionals. This year more than \$341 million was transacted in contracts signed during and after the event. With further growth predicted for 2015.



Gaurav Chiripal QuadLabs Technologies

We find WTM LA a perfect platform to reach our target market. It is a great place to interact with the industry leaders and explore new opportunities

WTM Latin America 2014 Exhibitor Sergio Rosarios, Regional Vice President, Latin America & Caribbean, TravelClick commented, "After the launch and success of the Travel Tech Zone at WTM Latin America last year, we are pleased to be back at the show in 2015. We expect the Travel Tech Zone will be bigger and better and are excited to continue educating Latin American hoteliers on how to increase their revenue."

Travel Tech exhibitor Gaurav Chiripal, CEO at QuadLabs Technologies said, "QuadLabs is happy to be associated with WTM Latin America since its inception. We find it a perfect platform to reach our target market. A great place to interact with the industry leaders and explore new opportunities."

To further strengthen the Travel Tech Zone, a larger focus will be put on the Travel

No matter what, folks do talk behind our back.

We are highly impressed by roomsXML's strong global inventory and their reliable XML. - travelguru.com, India

> It's been great working with roomsXML for over 8 years now. Their service is very efficient and always ready to help. HotelStayUK, UK

roomsXML is a great company to work with. Fiercely competitive worldwide rates, an extensive hotel range linked to a super userfriendly system.

- Hyhohotels, Ireland

Their technology is great because you never see the same hotel repeated, but you do have many room types and different meal plans to choose from.

- Exhibition Housing Services, USA

The roomsXML mobile interface is fantastic. Finding and booking accommodation on the mobile is now a no fuss job. - Al Seraj, Saudi Arabia

roomsXML rivals big name wholesalers for customer service. Their 24x7 support be it via phone or email is outstanding.

Beaumaris Travel, Australia

XML integration with roomsXML in our booking engine was flawless and efficient.

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A glimpse into Swiss hospitality education

Careers in hospitality management are one of the most diverse and dynamic worldwide. What opportunities does a degree-level hospitality education open for graduates? The industry offers exciting career paths all over the world and across prestigious industry leaders. A hospitality degree programme in Switzerland is perhaps, par excellence, the pathway to some of the most elite-level career portfolios in the world.

What makes Swiss hospitality education unique for businesses?

Switzerland is the birthplace of classic hospitality education. Experiential learning is a perfected art amongst hospitality institutes in Switzerland, usually accompanied by a rigorous program of intellectual development.

Experiential learning demands that students manage real kitchens that create high-end cuisine, and master the art of bespoke service, thus developing an intrinsic ability to deliver customer-oriented service with both impeccable aesthetics and precision. More than any other discipline perhaps, Swiss hospitality teaches students to recognise the psychological need of consumers to enjoy an experience, rather than conduct a transaction. The number of high-net-worth individuals in India is expected to rise by 17.1%



2014 to 293, 921 according to the Londonbased wealth consultancy Wealth Insight. This is the second highest rate of growth in the world, and will be accompanied by a commensurate growth in demand for professionals who can provide the quality experiences that these consumers expect.

Experiential learning also implies professional internships and real-life projects within both Swiss-based and international companies. Through these internships, Swiss hospitality students develop a raft of soft-skills, such as leadership and intercultural fluency, which are transferable to any sector and give them a competitive edge over other graduates. By the time they graduate, students Swiss-trained already have an impressive professional resumé.

The reputation Swiss hospitality institutes enjoy is pertinently illustrated by the fact that top-tier companies will conduct regular recruitment sessions on the campuses of the highest-ranked Swiss hospitality institutes. At Les Roches International School of Hotel Management, for example, at least 50 companies visit each semester. It is not unusual for students to graduate with a dilemma: not, 'will I get a job?' but rather 'which job offer shall I take?'

These jobs can vary depending on the courses selected. Some alumni take up Manager in Training positions in wealth management for private banks or estate management. Some will choose to work in marketing or events for the Olympic Games or World Cup, and still others will opt for the travel and tourism sector. This highlights two important points: prospective students need to select a Swiss hospitality institute that offers a) business degrees: and b) course specializations, to tailor

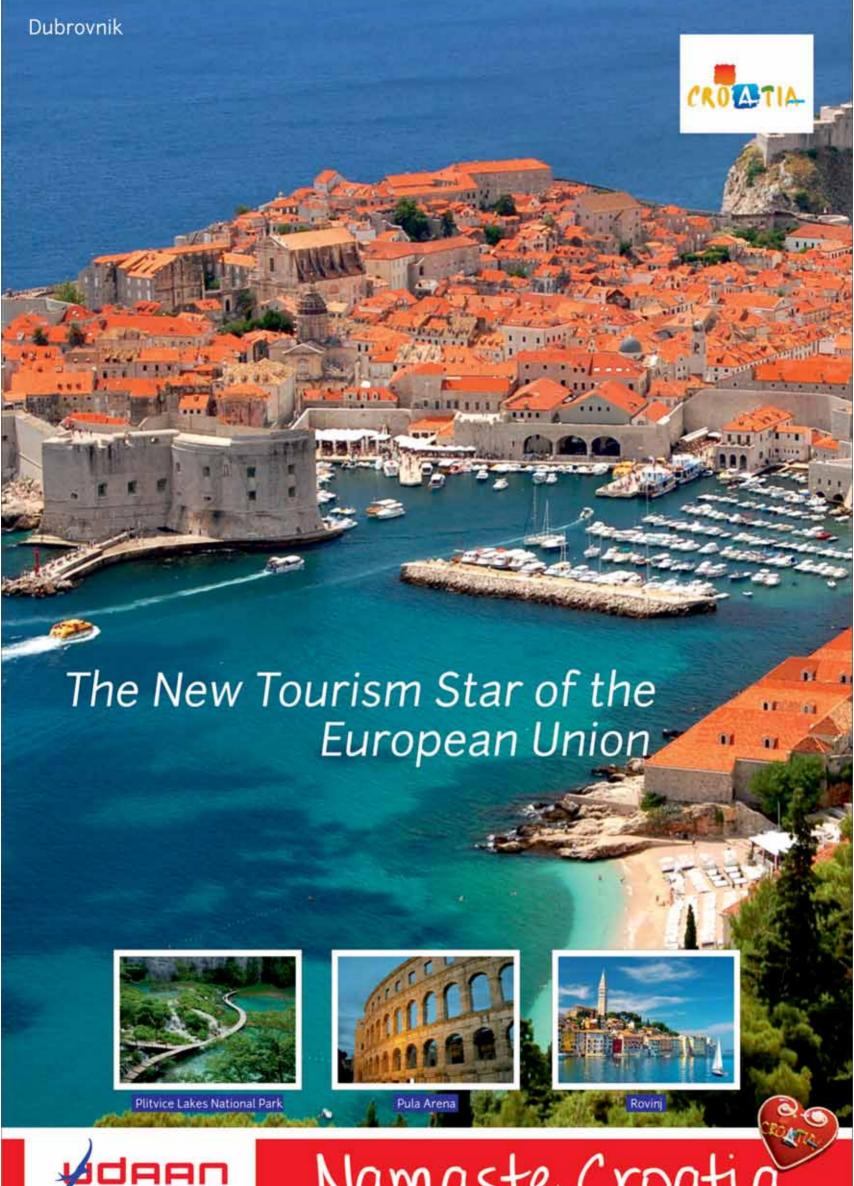
studies to professional objectives. Course specialisations Marketing, Finance, Sustainability, Entrepreneurship, Event Management and Culinary Business Management open a wider range of doors than a simple Swiss hospitality course. They maximise the potential that the training and reputation of a Swiss hospitality education offers.

Contd. on page 14



(Sonia Tatar is the CEO of Les Roches (Switzerland, Spain, China)







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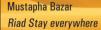
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Delhi route vital for Virgin Atlantic

In an exclusive interview with **TRAUTALK**, Nick Parker- Country Head, India and Middle East, Virgin Atlantic talks about the British carrier's plans for the India market in 2015. He goes on to talk about the significance of the Delhi route and relationship with the Indian trade. Excerpts

MEGHA PAUL

Boeing Dreamliner 787-900 for Delhi route

2015 will bring in exciting times for Virgin Atlantic in India. We will start flying one of our brand new Boeing Dreamliner 787-900 planes to Delhi from new 787-9s. We are seeing growth in the India-US market. The combination of our excellent timing and our products and services is working well for us in Delhi. We are getting excellent load factors in our Delhi route. Going forward, with the enhanced cabin atmos-

The combination of our excellent timing and our products and services is working well for us in Delhi. We are getting excellent load factors in our Delhi route.

Nick Parker

Country Head India and Middle East Virgin Atlantic

the end of March this year. This is a sign of great commitment to India as we bring out latest aircraft straight into Delhi. The airline is currently flying one of the Airbus A330s to Delhi. This will now be replaced by the

phere owing to the launch of the new Dreamliner, our performance in the Delhi route is expected to be boosted further. Thus, even as we trim capacity to the country as part of our overall strategy, we will continue to deliver excellent services and build on our success in Delhi that we have achieved over the last 14 years.

Trimming Mumbai route

Last September, we announced to pull out our flight from Mumbai in 2015. We are pulling out from London-Mumbai route from Januaryend 2015. We were projecting a certain kind of growth from the Mumbai route and this did not happen. High levels of capacity combined with stagnant market growth unfortunately impacted our ability to be profitable and our revenues were insufficient to offset our costs. Additionally, our global strategy also changed. The tieup with Delta offers Virgin Atlantic an opportunity to expand the US network. The deal now allows our airline to sell on Delta's flights beyond London to points in the US, as well as on Delta's domestic routes in the US, increasing its revenue possibilities. Thus, trimming the capacity from Mumbai is a part of our

overall strategy to shift focus and flights on to the transatlantic routes.

Commitment to travel trade

Travel trade is an important partner for our airline and we have many long-term partners here. In a market like India, agents are our connection point with the passengers. We will only build our relationship with the travel fraternity further this year. We want to make sure that more travel agents are using the knowledge hub for the travel trade from Virgin Atlantic – vsflyinghub.

New Offerings

- Virgin Atlantic will start flying one of its brand new Boeing Dreamliner 787-900 planes to Delhi from the end of March
- The tie-up with Delta offers Virgin Atlantic an opportunity to expand the US network.

Rajgir Mahotsav: A cultural treat

Rajgir Mahotsav, a festival of dance and music was held in Rajgir, Bihar, from December 28, 2014 to January 15, 2015. The festival was held in the main hanger stage at Rajgir's Qila Maidan. It is a flagship program of the Government of Bihar's Department of Tourism and Bihar State Development Tourism Corporation and was organwith the support District Nalanda Administration.

Given the popularity and the increased footfall over the years, the format of the internationally acclaimed Rajgir Mahosav was extend-



ed from three to 15 days. It was further extended twice at the advice of state tourism minister and on popular demand from visitors and business houses. To assist tourists during the festival the state tourism department had arranged for bus

service from Patna and also made special tour packages available.

A slew of cultural programmes were organised at the event to allow the tourists a peek into the cultural heritage of the state as well as meet artists and artisans from across the country. The Nalanda district administration also organised a film festival for children at International Convention Centre, Rajgir. Other special attractions of the festival included: heritage walk, agriculture fair, food fair and sports festival. The district administration along with the tourism department had also organised a grand craft model village showcasing the handicrafts and textile industries of the region.

The Mohotsav, was started in 1986, as an annual three-day event, at Swarna Bhandar area of the state.

Swiss touch to hospitality

Contd. from page 12

What makes Swiss hospitality education unique for students?

Apart from the issue of career optimisation, studying at a Swiss hospitality institute offers students many other advantages. Switzerland is reputably one of the safest, cleanest, most efficiently-run

countries in the world, ranking among Europe's highest in the OECD's Better Life Index.

Famous for its historical cities and monuments (Switzerland has 11 classified UNESCO world heritage sites), and stunning scenery, as much as its fine wine and dining culture, Switzerland offers students an incredibly rich lifestyle

that creates memories for a lifetime. Those Swiss schools that are based up in the Alps offer a unique experience of winter and summer sports on the doorstep. Students will find themselves becoming experts at golf and skiing in addition to hospitality. The Greek word for the hospitality concept is xenia. It means 'guest-friendship' and herein lies perhaps one of the most valuable outcomes of pursuing hospitality education in Switzerland. The friendships made here – because of the cultural diversity, because of level of practical group tasks – last a lifetime. And in a world where who you know is as important as what you know, the importance of this factor cannot be underestimated.



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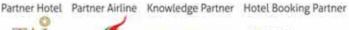


Host States



















































The 'Centennial Effect'

Catherine Oden, Director, Atout France, speaks to **TRAVTALK** about how they managed to up their international tourist arrivals with the help of a coherent strategy.



QTell us about the Centenary of the Great War that was promoted last year.

The Year 2014 marked the Centenary Year of World War. It is interesting to note that the Indian army also played a significant part in this World War. In August 1914, as the German army made rapid advances in to Belgium and France, the Allies found themselves in want of more manpower to guard the Western Front. With its strength of 161,000 men, the Indian army of Undivided India seemed the best option and the Lahore and Meerut infantry divisions were selected for service in Europe. They were thrown into battle near Ypres soon after they arrived in early October and both divisions incurred heavy losses. After the First Battle of Ypres, Khudadad Khan became the first Indian to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

And the contract of the contra

As part of boosting remembrance tourism to various sites, the 'Great War Centenary Destination' was implemented in November 2013. This kick-started an unprecedented collaboration among players in the remembrance tourism industry. A coherent strategy allowed those promoting sites on the Western Front to work together under one banner – 'The Great

War on the Western Front'. By joining forces they were able to achieve a greater visibility on an international level.

What kind of attractions did the visitors get to experience?

Visitors were privy to artistic depictions in the form of installations and exhibitions new site openings and renova-

ber of visitors to memorial sites in 2014. Certain sites on the Western Front even doubled their admission numbers, surpassing the attendance levels for all of 2013 as early as August! This has been a veritable windfall for accommodation providers, who have also seen a rise in reservations for 2015, and even 2016. In addition to an increase in tourists



tions. Visitors also had the opportunity to embark on remembrance trails tracing the footsteps of the war.

How has this boostded the number of visitors to memorial sites?

In 2014, remembrance tourism benefited greatly from the 'Centennial Effect'. The establishment of the Great War Centenary Destination Agreement stimulated a significant growth in the number of international visitors, particularly for sites in the Western Front regions. First World War commemorations boosted the num-

from European countries, professionals have also noticed a notable increase in the number of long-haul visitors.

QHow did you promote this in India?

In order to inform both travel trade professionals and the discerning audience about efforts undertaken in this domain, press communiqués on the activities planned for 2014 were diffused to B2B and B2C press as well. Articles on Centennial events were also published on our website – www.rendezvousenfrance.com

as well as our social media platforms.

STIC: GSA for Saltours International

■ Saltours International has appointed STIC Travel Group as their exclusive India GSA effective December 2014. Established in 1977, Saltours, since 1998, has been distributing and selling hotel bookings and tour packages to travel agents and tour operators in India.

This new collaboration enables Saltours to leverage on STIC's domain knowledge and its national reach across India to further grow its business in the region. Representing Saltours is perfectly in line with STIC's view of future expansion plans in the non-air segment.

Speaking on the occasion,
Imran Salehjee, Group
Managing Director, Saltours
International said, "It's with
great pleasure that we
announce the appointment of
STIC Travel Group as

Saltours International's official GSA in India, both companies share the same values and have been pioneers in the travel industry for 40 years.



Subhash Goyal Chairman, STIC Travel Group

With this partnership, we aim to deliver added value to the travel trade via SALVATION, Saltour's new online booking platform, providing FIT and dynamic rates of our vast inventory of hotels around the world. I would like to thank the travel agents in India for their support."

Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travel Group said, "We are very excited to represent a dynamic and competitive brand like Saltours in India. Saltours pioneered the concept of B2B distribution of hotels in India. We hope to build on this foundation to further revolutionise hotel booking solutions offered to travel agents and tour operators with the new booking platform "SALVA-TION". We will work hard to provide quality service to travel agents and tour operators not only in the main metros but also in Tier-II and Tier-III cities across India. The new Saltours booking system will further empower the agent to increase their income and efficiently service their clients thereby building a robust business.'

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The travel tigresses in India

They are fighters and you can hear them roar! **TRAUTALK** speaks to a few women professionals in the travel industry, which today boasts of numbers too big to ignore, to find out if they face any challenges in the work environment.





"The travel industry requires a person to possess soft skills like passion, patience and perseverance all of which are attributes of a woman. Women are naturally hospitable, courteous and service-orientated, which are

pre-requisites of being in the travel industry. The nature of the industry also allows a woman to take a sabbatical for domestic purposes and when she decides to return, she is welcomed back with open arms. Unlike other sectors such as IT, nothing in our industry becomes redundant. We can literally start-off from where we left off!

The only challenge is the late hours. Working in different time zones becomes inevitable and we are required to be accessible in the local time of the destinations. Fortunately, with technology, it is not difficult to fulfill these requirements. Accordingly to me, a career in travel is extremely rewarding for a woman!

Renuka Nat

Director, Renuka Natu Travel Representations



I don't think it's difficult for women to enter and work in this industry. The idea itself questions a women's creditability. Women, time and again, have been successful in managing and balancing not only home but work equally and effectively.

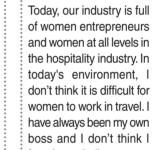
One challenge I face is that sometimes I come across as too serious and to the point. That at times is a problem as one needs to be more approachable in the industry. Overall though, women are often not taken seriously but it is with a focused mind, determination and experience that one can overcome such hurdles.

Jenaifer Daruwalla GM, Maison de Voyage

I would not say that it is difficult for women to enter and work in our industry or any other industry. It depends on how focused we are and what heights we want to reach. The biggest obstacle in creating my own company was figuring out how to get clients. But I soon found out that everyone I knew in the industry was

willing to help me – friends, acquaintances, and even former employers. Many women feel that they will not be successful in this field but that is only because they lack encouragement. To that, I say: surround yourself with people who will uplift you and believe in you. But most of all, believe in yourself.

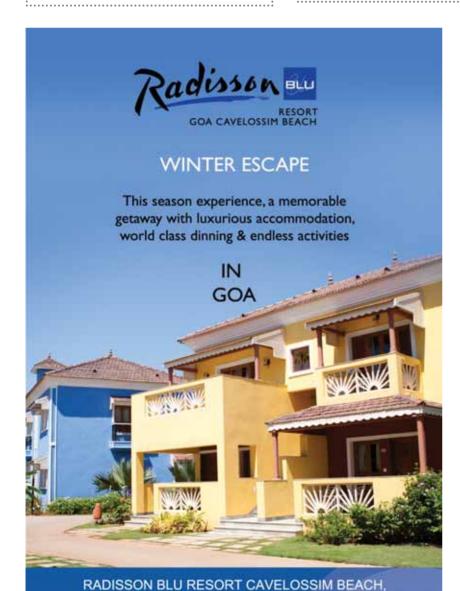
Anjum Lokhandwala
Director, Outbound Konnections





faced any challenges at work. The challenges were on a personal front, balancing home and office. For my part, I have hired mostly women employees in my company and we give them a lot of flexibility to help them balance their family life.

Anju Tandon
Director, ARK Travels



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When I joined the industry, our team had an equal number of men as women. There will always be people who have a narrow mind, but overall the industry accepts women as entrepreneurs or team mates equally. I faced the same problems as any other person would. I would not say it was because I am a woman. Yes, our industry demands long working hours and travelling can get hectic, so family life does get affected. But I have a very supporting family and they have always stood by me.

Dipti Pradhan Thakoor Director, Adventure Holidays

Nothing is difficult till we feel it is. Success in the industry depends on your knowledge and passion for travel and not on your gender. I made sure that I had enough experience before I started on my own. I was lucky to have a supportive husband who pushed me to swim through all the hurdles.

Balancing home and work is challenging but over time I have learned to manage it well. Yet, even today, some men are unable to digest that a woman can run her own business efficiently but that only makes my determination stronger. Hard work and dedication take anyone a long way.



Jyoti Singh CEO & Proprietor, Sailor Travels & Tours and MC member of TAFI (Western Region)

First World Conference on Tourism

■ The First World Conference on Tourism and Culture will be held in Siem Reap, Cambodia, from February 4-6, 2015. This will bring together, for the first time, Ministers of Tourism and Ministers of Culture from around the world, experts and stakeholders from both sectors to explore new mod-

els of partnership between tourism and culture. Over the course of two days, participants will explore different roles and mandates on five key topics – governance and partnership models, cultural preservation, living cultures and creative industries, cultural routes and urban regeneration through cultural

tourism. Confirmed speakers include King Simeon II, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, John Delaney, Senior Vice President of Seabourn, and Elizabeth Becker, award-winning author and former correspondent for the New York Times.

TAAI's tie with Shanghai

TAAI Northern Region wants to work hard to bring back all the luck for the Indian travel industry in 2015. Rajan Sehgal, Chairman, TAAI-NR tells TRAVTALK that the main aim of the association is to bring back credit.

SAMAPTI DAS

he TAAI Northern Region recently organised its bimonthly members meeting

Talking about the year 2014, Sehgal said that the year was a difficult one as the travel trade and hospitality industry went through crisis.



MoU signing by TAAI-NR and Shanghai Tourism

in New Delhi. China Tourist Office was a partner for the evening. Rajan Sehgal, Chairman, TAAI-Northern Region, said, "An MoU was signed by us with Shanghai Tourism Board as the years 2015 and 2016 are going to be 'Visit India' and 'Visit China' years."

But it is a motivation for all in the industry to see the new government and the Prime Minister prioritising tourism. He said, "In the next six months, we will work very closely with the new team."

Sehgal seemed positive about 2015 and added, "We are planning to take our members to destinations both within and outside India to meet different DMCs, hotels etc. and see for themselves, before sending their customers there."

"The two important agendas are to get the credit and the commission back to the Indian travel industry," he added.

Plans for 2015

- The years 2015 and 2016 are going to be 'Visit India' and 'Visit China' years
- It is a motivation for all in the industry to see the new government and the Prime Minister prioritising tourism
- TAAI-Northern India is planning to take our members to destinations both within and outside India to meet different DMCs. hotels etc

Ocean Park HK in India

Nijhawan Group has been appointed by Ocean Park Hong Kong as its Sales and Marketing Representative in India. The group will focus on designing sales and marketing strategies for Ocean Park Hong Kong.

TT BUREAU

The sales and marketing activities include travel trade focussed initiatives to ensure achievement of revenue goals by tapping into relevant market segments.

Ocean Park Hong Kong is a world-class marine-based theme park featuring animals, rides and other attractions. The Park is situated in the Southern District of Hong Kong, and is the city's unique homegrown theme park with over 130 million visitations since its opening in 1977.

Vivian Lee, Executive Director of Sales & Marketing at Ocean Park, said, "Since 2008, Indian guests at Ocean Park have more than tripled, making the country a top-three source market, excluding China. The first half of 2014 has already recorded a 14% year-on-year increase in Indian visitors to Hong Kong. Our partnership with Nijhawan Group to establish our Indian representation is



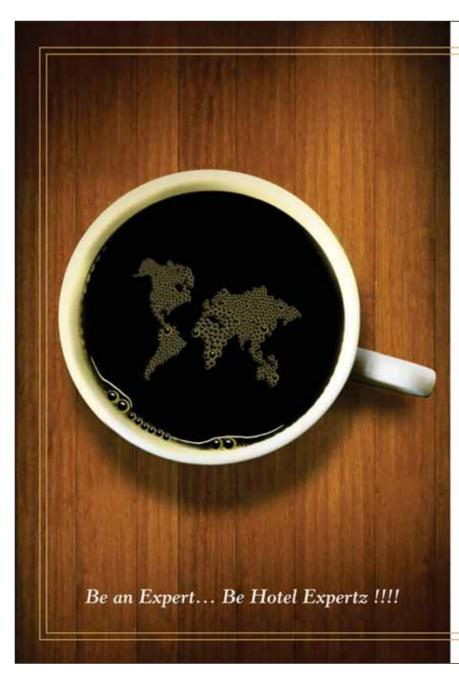
Executive Director Sales & Marketing at Ocean Park



Ankush Nijhawai Managing Director Nijhawan Group

a major milestone for Ocean Park, and signifies the importance we place in this market. As Ocean Park's representative, Nijhawan Group will identify and work with high potential travel agents and tour operators to ensure Ocean Park is incorporated into the FITs (frequent individual travellers), group and MICE itineraries arranged by these agents."

Commenting on the occasion, Ankush Nijhawan, MD -Nijhawan Group, said, "We are delighted with this collaboration as India is one of Hong Kong's five new key markets & the number of Indian visitors to Hong Kong continues to grow. Ocean Park provides all the quests with memorable experiences that combine entertainment and education, while inspiring lifelong learning and conservation advocacy. India is one of the fastest growing markets of outbound tourists, and with an estimated potential of 50 million outbound travellers by 2020 makes it a key market to be captured by Ocean Park." *





52 weeks of Happening Hyderabad

With friendly tourism policies in Telangana, and a new government which is pro tourism, the industry is finally looking up in the state. In coversation with TRAUTALK, Telangana Tourism Managing Director Sumeet Singh revealed that a range of measures are in the piline to meet the surging tourist demand in the young state.

DEEPA SETHI

QWith the formation of new state of Telengana, what are your plans for tourism?

We are a very young state, only a few months old. We have 10 districts with Hyderabad being the biggest There is a lot of demand from the software industry. There are many people, including expatriates, coming for weekends. A lot of things will be happening in Hyderabad – festivals, music concerts. Besides Hyderabad, the other major city is Warangal where we already have a sound and light show.



catch. We have planned 52 weeks of 'Happening Hyderabad' (not only by the government but also private participation) – and have set up a separate organisation to manage this.

There is a lot of tourist demand so we are developing a religious circuit for it. There is also the Yadagiri Temple about 40 km outside Hyderabad. A lot of people visit this temple.

I think Hyderabad airport is one of the finest in the country and it is already becoming a hub. We are concentrating a lot on religious tourism

Sumeet Singh *MD, Telangana Tourism*

What is the mode of transport you will use for travel on these circuits?

It's going to be package tours because the Hyderabad Transport Unit is with us. We still have the USP of selling packages to Tirupati and to Srisailam, now with Andhra Pradesh. We have Mercedes and Volvo buses, our own caravan and other transport. We are now starting a Sikh pilgrimage package tour. A lot of Sikhs come to visit Hazur Sahib Nanded (in Maharashtra) and the Bidar Gurudwara (in Karnatka), but the closest point is Hyderabad, which has excellent connectivity.

With the new airport, do you think it could become a hub for the country?

It already is becoming a hub. I think Hyderabad airport is one of the finest in the country and it is already becoming a hub. We are concentrating a lot on religious tourism; we have one of the biggest and oldest Jain temples called Kulpakji, 40 km from Hyderabad. Then we have the Medak Church built by a British missionary way back in 1920.

How do you think of promoting tourism in Telangana?

We have thick forest cover like Hazirabad where we have started an eco tourism resort. In fact, the largest number of tigers is in the Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary. We are close to the border of Nagpur so the highway passes through Nagpur, Hyderabad and the rest of Telangana. So we are going in for Highway Tourism. Like Haryana Tourism, we are really developing our highways, with cottages, hotels, restaurants and parks on either side of the highways. It will probably take about two years to really come into shape.

How is MICE tourism developing in the region?

MICE tourism is very big in Telangana, with the Hyderabad Convention Bureau which has plenty of hotel rooms around it. We recently had the Metropolis conference, which was a big international conference and we have some more major conferences in the pipeline. We are visiting Barcelona now to market conventions there. For MICE, as we all know, HICC is the biggest Convention Centre in the country and we have plenty of hotel rooms around it. We have heritage hotels and modern hotels, like the Falaknuma, the Palace Hotel run by Taj, two Hyatt hotels and three Taj hotels.



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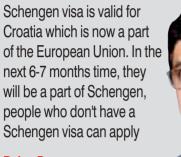
Providing more choice to Indians, Udaan India will promote Croatia. Rajan Dua, MD, Udaan India says they'll promote the destination primarily among MICE and FIT passengers.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

So far, Indians coming to Croatia have just been coming through an arrangement with neighbouring countries like Italy, Austria and Hungary, but now the time has and we welcome Indians to Croatia. We have very long coasts, Croatia is famous for 1,247 islands, so as a tourist destination it is one of the most beautiful countries in Europe with tourists, tradition and capacity. Whoever comes from

players are MICE and FIT passengers. There is a lot of untapped potential, as Indians are always looking to discover a new destination. The countries that have become popular among Indian holidayers in the last 5-6 years are destinations that weren't promoted in India. Croatia's advantage is that it is in Europe and because of this also bookings will pick up. Also, it is a very safe destination, the people are warm, the infrastructure is superb, the heritage culture what they have maintained is also very good. I don't think the country lacks anything."

Talking about visa issues, he said, "Schengen visa is valid for Croatia which is now a part of the European Union. In the next 6-7 months time, they will be a part of Schengen, people who don't have a Schengen visa can apply for a visa in the embassy of Croatia in Delhi, they also have an honorary consul in Mumbai."



Rajan Dua MD, Udaan India

come that Croatia becomes a destination for Indians. This statement by **Amir Muharemi**, Ambassador of The Republic of Croatia to India, set the tone for the launch of Namaste Croatia, an initiative by Udaan India, in association with Uniline to promote Croatia in India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Talking about Croatia's potential as a tourist destination and the India market, Muharemi said, "Croatia is a country that caters to tourists

India falls in love with Croatia. Unfortunately, so far we have not put in so much effort, we haven't worked with tour agents and did not have organised travel from India. But now we intend to make efforts to bring Indian tourists in an organised way."

Even before the launch, Udaan India has started getting queries for Croatia and Rajan Dua, MD, Udaan India, is happy with this positive response. He said, "Our key

1,247 islands

 Croatia is famous for 1,247 islands, so as a tourist destination it is one of the most beautiful countries in Europe with tourists, tradition and capacity

RezLive.com FAM to Turkey, UK, Estonia & Finland



RezLive.com - Kuwait rewarded patronage of their Travel Agents in Kuwait by extending opportunity to familiarise on their top and upcoming designation in partnership with airlines and hotels. The FAM trips were organised to countries like Turkey, United Kingdom Estonia & Finland in order to make the travel agents familiar with the location visited and promote the same to their customers.

New facility at IGI Airport's website

■ Indira Gandhi International Airport's new facility in its website can be used to track real time flight arrivals and departures at Delhi's International airport-also valid for domestic flights on Air India and Jet Airways. For those expecting friends or family from overseas or on domestic segments on Air India or Jet Airways, the website will help track flights at weather affected Delhi. The link to the website is http://www.newdelhiairport.in/liveflight-information.aspx

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Bringing the Oberoi alumni together

The second edition of the Global Hospitality Conclave 2014 at The Leela Gurgaon was an initiative by the alumni of the erstwhile Oberoi School of Hotel Management (OSHM), now The Oberoi Centre for Learning & Development (OCLD). The Conclave organised by the alumni of OSHM/ OCLD (the first batch graduated in 1968) brought together over 100 participants including industry veterans. The objective of the Conclave was to get the alumni together annually and go beyond the customary batch reunions by creating a compelling platform of knowledge exchange, experiences and networking opportunities.



















New Year Celebrations@DDP Group



New Year ushered in DDP with lot of fun and fervour. While the DDP team was seen entering the office premises following a Bollywood theme dress code, there were many other activities keeping the employees' busy. They were seen getting engaged in Ballon blowing, bride making competition, antakshari and 2-minute movie act.



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n December 8, 2014, Star Tours, a London based tour operator, celebrated with style, glamour and grandeur, the opening of their new office in Santa Cruz, Mumbai, and the launch of their new 2015 worldwide brochure. The company invited many of its leading travel agents from across India, on an 'all expenses paid' trip to the Novotel in Juhu, Mumbai, where the function was held. Travel agents from as far as Kolkata, Chennai, Gujarat, and of course Mumbai were there to celebrate in style. Star Tours whose head office is in London, has branch offices in USA- Atlanta, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and a newly-opened branch in Chennai. We asked the Managing Director Mr Hemang Shah about his plans and interest in the Indian outbound market: "We believe India has a huge and untapped potential market, the number of passengers that

we carry from India has been growing steadily over the last When asked about the reasons he said, "We believe in offering competitively priced tours with a good standard of hotels, comprehensive sightseeing and most importantly, mouth watering Indian food during the tour. Of course having Indian tour managers also helps to ensure that our passengers enjoy their European vacation to the most." With an annual turnover of nearly Rs 120 cr and having carried approx 23,000 passengers in 2014, this London based company is certainly gaining more and more popularity. Also present at the lavish function, were the Directors from London: Mr Girish Shah, Mrs Harsha Shah, Mr Dipen Shah, General Manager Mr Rajesh Shetty, Operations Manager Mr Jigar Damani, Vice President (India) Mr Sham Kaleskar and the newly appointed

International Business Development Manager Mr Krishna Samji, who has been in the travel industry for nearly 24 years. When asked about his future plans for Star Tours, especially for the Indian market, Mr Samji said "I expect an annual increase of at least 20-30% of passengers booking on our European packaged tours and a growing number on our customised Gold Star Tours. We have support from a pan India network of trusted travel agents and a set up of our own regional offices. We are also planning to open several more branch offices over the next few years, as we see India as a growing and potential market, especially in the various types of holidays and tours we offer." The event ended with an award ceremony, where some travel agents were given awards, in appreciation of their support and

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HIFI Hall of Fame Award

JW Marriott, Jr., Chairman & CEO of Marriott International Inc., will be conferred with the 'Hall of Fame' award by Hotel Investment Forum India (HIFI) at their forthcoming annual investment meet.



uring his five-decade-long leadership role of Marriott International, JW has taken the hotel company from a family



JW Marriott Jr. Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of Marriott International Inc

restaurant business to a global lodging company with nearly 4,000 properties in over 70 countries and territories

According to the organisers, the award will be received by Simon Cooper, President & Managing Director- Asia Pacific. Marriott International on behalf of JW Marriott, Jr. "HIFI will be honoring JW 'Bill' Marriott, Jr., with the HIFI Hall of Fame Award. A special ceremony presentation will be held in recognition of Marriott on 15 January. Although Marriott himself is unable to attend, we are pleased that the President & Managing Director Asia Pacific, Simon Cooper, will be accepting the award on his behalf," said Jim Burba, President, BHN.

Similarly, another prestigious award by HIFI, 'Aatithya Ratna' award, will be presented to Narendra Somani, Chairman & Managing Director of TGB Banquets & Hotels, a leading company in the food and hospitality business in Gujarat. The awards jury also nominated Nirupa Shankar, Director, Brigade Hospitality for the 'Rising Star' South Asia Award of HIFI. As Director, Shankar was instrumental in driving the hospitality business of the Bengalurubased Brigade Group. 💺

'Pearl' dives deeper for PSAs

Pune-based Pearl Travels, a global wholesaler for packages, is actively looking to expand its network and appoint PSAs across India. It is also busy promoting its website that was recently re-launched with upgrades.

TT BUREAU

Present in the market for over two decades, Pune-based Pearl Travels has tweaked its business model to include ready

like Gujarat, Punjab, Delhi-NCR, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. We do not charge any fee; all we want them to do is to be active in promoting and helping the clients."

It's a myth that OTAs will not let smaller agencies survive because they (OTAs) are effectively a distributor. Clients need a human connection and will therefore fall back on agencies.

Jayesh Ashar Managing Director Pearl Travels

packages and is actively looking to appoint GSAs and PSAs to build its network.

Jayesh Ashar, MD, Pearl Travels, says, "We already have about eight to nine PSAs in South India in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka. We want to sign up more PSAs elsewhere

So far, it has appointed a single PSA in Karnataka and another with multiple locations in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. "Each PSA has exclusive rights as the presence of multiple PSAs could lead to conflict. But for Guiarat and Punjab, we are looking for citywise exclusive PSAs as the market is very congested,"

Ashar says. Pearl Travels copies every transaction to the PSA for transparency. It recently appointed a GSA in Saudi Arabia to look after the country.

Upgraded website for agents

It has also recently relaunched its website for the trade with upgraded features and a new design. Ashar gives more details. "Earlier our focus was mainly on selling room nights to agents. But we realised that they may not necessarily be experts on all destinations and therefore be unable to accurately guide their clients. We have changed our business model to combine every aspect of travel and focus on packages now since our expertise lies in creating itineraries," he says. The consolidator has also just rewebsite launched its (www.pearltravels.com) in November 2014 that reflects its changed business model."

The site has a dynamic homepage that promotes six different destinations every month. He specifies that request for bookings on the new website can be sent online with a copy emailed to the agents. "This kind of automation saves a lot of time and increases the speed of transaction. It doesn't have a payment gateway but most agents prefer bank transfer over paying online by credit card since the amounts are large," Ashar adds.

Market to grow

Ashar is of the opinion that the market is slated to grow at least six to seven folds. "We are looking at an outbound figure of at least 50 million passengers in a few years! What will change is business shifting from larger to smaller agencies that can provide personal attention to clients. Moreover, it's a myth that OTAs will not let smaller agencies survive because they (OTAs) are effectively a distributor. Clients need a human connection and will therefore fall back on agencies that in turn will need to learn how to use technology as a tool," he states. 💺

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FAMILY ALBUM

TAAI rings in the festive times

To ring in the good times for Christmas, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) Northern Chapter organised a dinner for agents. The event was a fun-filled affair that brought together stalwarts from the tourism and hospitality industry.















Relaunch of tourism

Contd. from page 3

Good Governance Day celebrations of the government. A tourist (domestic/inbound) can call the number from anywhere now if he or she wants to lodge any complaint or know about any particular tourism site, he added.

In a major step at tourist facilitation, the Ministry has also launched a Welcome Card, a first of its kind, for overseas tourists. "As part of upgrading security for foreign tourists to India, they will be provided with Welcome Cards with contact addresses of India Tourism offices and the contact persons. A set of eight Welcome Cards have been launched. These Cards will be offered through nine airports in the country," he remarked.

The Minister also launched an e-portal of the Culture Ministry – Swacch Bharat Swacch Smarak (Clean India-Clean Monuments) and eticketing for Taj Mahal and Humayun's Tomb. The facility will be extended to all ticketed monuments in a phased manner. Dr. Sharma also inaugurated the Incredible India Calendar 2015. The other major initiatives which were launched by the Minister

included booklet on Badhte Kadam-Hunar Se Rozgar Tak, Swachh Bharat Swachh Pakwan (Hunar Zayka), Mega Project Destination Development of Gwalior, Braille Book on Delhi monuments and Adarsh Smarak programme in which 25 monuments will be developed as model monuments.

According to Sharma, with these new initiatives, an attempt has been initiated by the Ministry to relaunch tourism and take India's rich cultural heritage to all corners of the world. The Minister said that during the period January- November, 2014, India received a total of 6.8 lakh visitors. This is the highest number of visitors received till November in anv year during the last decade, also showing a commendable increase of 7.1 per cent over the previous year.

Going the eWay

 The Minister launched an e-portal of the Culture Ministry – Swacch Bharat Swacch Smarak (Clean India-Clean Monuments) and e-ticketing for Taj Mahal and Humayun's Tomb

Udaan calls All India Meet 2014





All India Meet 2014 was held at Mapple Emerald, New Delhi on Dec 26-27, 2014. The objective of the meeting was to discuss achievements, expectations in 2015, new initiatives & projects and areas of focus. Udaan has its presence in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Gurgaon and has Sales Representations in Pune and Ahmedabad. Udaan plans to further expand its wings to Tier-II cities in 2015. Namaste Croatia is one of the important projects for Udaan in 2015. It also looks forward to providing technology driven Visa Facilitation Services to its clients as well as a world-class experience.

Draft Civil Aviation Policy discussed with states



P Ashok Gajapathi Raju Minister of Civil Aviation ■ P Ashok Gajapathi Raju,
Minister of Civil Aviation,
inaugurated the Meeting of
Chief Ministers and State
Civil Aviation Ministers in
New Delhi on December 30
to discuss the Draft Civil
Aviation Policy and other
issues related to civil aviation
sector. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said the

civil aviation sector in India has been growing steadily registering a growth of 13.8 per cent during the last 10 years. He said, though the rate of growth came down during the last two years due to the overall economic slowdown, it is recovering fast, with the year 2013-14 showing a growth of 6 per cent. Raju expressed concern that

despite high growth rates, most of the airlines in the country are reported to have incurred losses and some airlines are struggling to stay afloat. He said, though there is a need for helicopter operations in India, helicopter population in the country has not improved in recent years. The number of small aircraft and seaplanes is stagnant.

BREAKFAST WITH A VIEW.

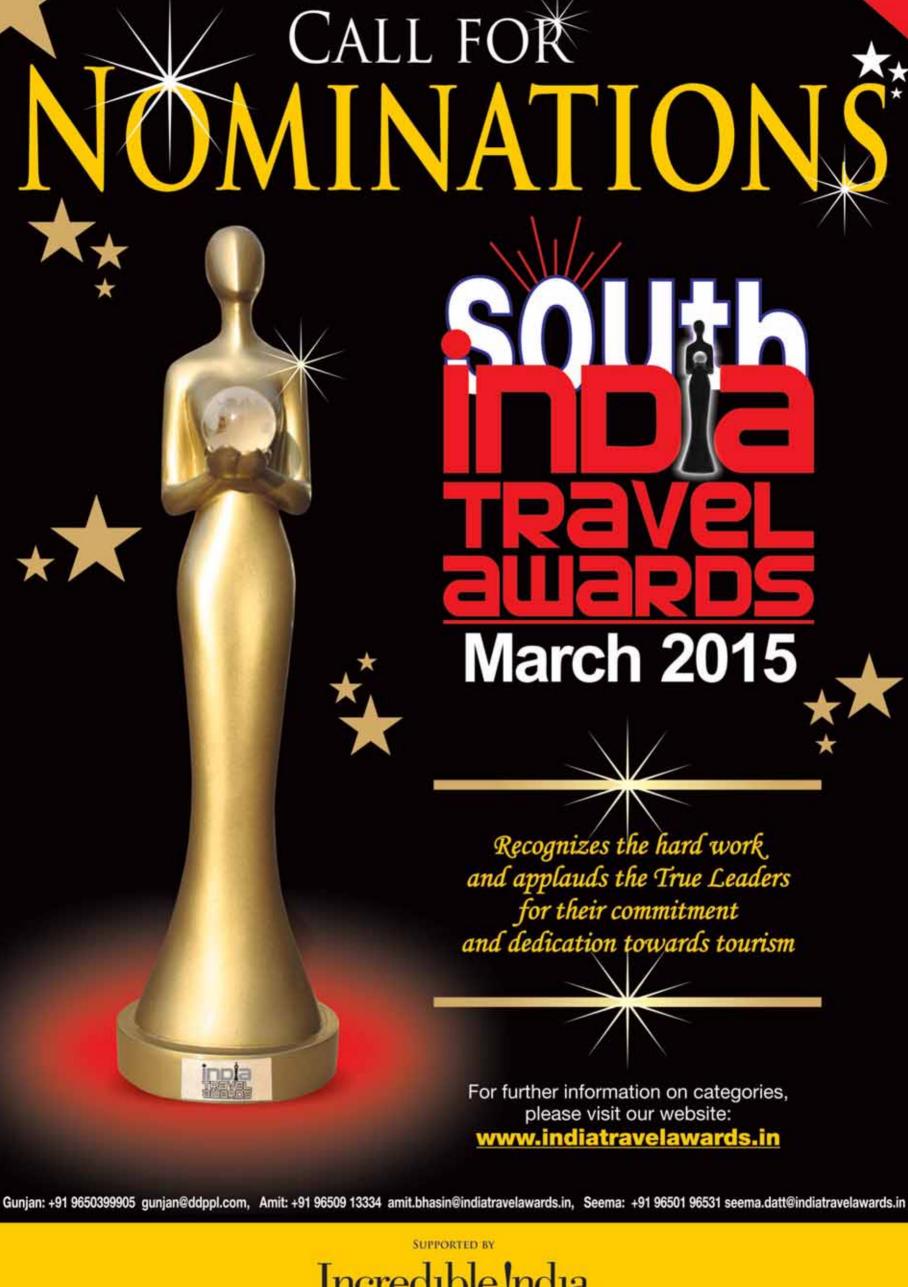


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OT WAI







Visegrad countries lure Indian traveller

The Visegrad countries also popularly known as the European Quartet or the V4 group was in New Delhi recently and TRAUTALK gets in a conversation with the spokespersons of these countries where they disclose about the growth in the arrivals of Indian tourists, their strategies and more!

ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

ndia is one of the fastestgrowing outbound travel markets in the world. This further has been explained by the spokespersons of Visegrad



Ashish Shama PR & Marketing Coordinator Representative Office in India Polish Tourist Organisation

counties when recently they visited the capital. Dora Szaffner, Head of product Development office, Hungarian Tourism, said, "Last year, we had 10,000 tourists from India and we expect 5-6 per cent of growth this year."

Emilia kubik, Project Leader-I like Poland, however



Dora Szaffner Head of product Development office Hungarian Tourism

Last year, we had 10,000 tourists from India and we expect 5-6 per cent of growth this year

mentioned that the growth of Indian tourists in Poland is not high but she didn't show scepticism as far as continuous growth is concerned.



Emilia kubik Project Leade I like Poland

We have about 35,000 arrivals each year and we are expecting growth

said, "Response from Indian market has been slow but it's definitely there. We have about 35,000 arrivals each year and we are expecting growth."



Matei Kristek Department, Czech Tourism Board

Indians now know Western Europe. They are looking for something new,that's where our destinations fit in

Matej Kristek, Manager Marketing Research Department, Czech Tourism Board seemed pleased with the outcome. He further

added, "2014 was much better than 2013. In 2013, we have 28,000 tourists coming from India but in 2014 we reached this number in the third quarter in September and are now reaching 40,000." Indians are becoming experimental as far as travelling to new destinations are concerned. Dora too emphasised on this and said, "I think Indians are open to travelling to new destinations. Countries like Czech Republic, Poland etc. have good combination of new and fresh experiences which Indians are ready to explore now."

"Indians love Europe. Indians have always been fond of Malaysia, Singapore but now they want to discover new options and Europe gives them new experiences," concurs Emilia.

Matei believes that Indians want to explore. He said, "Indians now know Western Europe. They are looking for something new and that's where our destinations fit in."

22k visas

■ The year 2014 will remain a historic year for tourism industry since the Government implemented the first phase of Tourist Visas on Arrival (TVOAs) enabled by Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA). As a result of this, more than 22,000 visas were



processed till December 31, 2014 since its launch. Out of this, 6100 TVOAs are from the US and 3800 from Russia. The Tourist Visa on Arrival (TVoA) enabled with the Electronic Travel Authorization Scheme was launched on November 27, 2014 for nationals of 43 countries whose sole objective of visiting India is recreation, sight- seeing, short duration medical treatment, casual business visit, casual visit to meet friends or relatives etc. for a short stay of 30 days. The Tourist Visa on Arrival facility is now operational from 9 international airports





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Clean India - Clean Monuments

As part of the Good Governance Day celebrations of the government, the Union Ministries of Tourism and Culture organised an event in Delhi. The event witnessed a huge gathering of important government delegates and travel trade stakeholders. The Tourism Ministry launched an e-portal of the Culture Ministry— Swacch Bharat - Swacch Smarak (Clean India - Clean Monuments); Welcome Cards for foreign tourists; Incredible India Infoline Service; E-ticketing for Taj Mahal and Humayun's Tomb; programme to expand Hunar Se Rozgar programme; etc, during the event.



























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| Friday | 6 Feb 2015 | Delhi | 10:00 - 15:00 | Le Meridien | |

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2014 to 2015: Tourism surges ahead

The tourism sector plays a very important role in the economy of the country and India's tourism sector has been contributing greatly to the country's GDP. Foreign Exchange Earnings from tourism crossed `1 lakh crore mark during January to November 2014. The Ministry of Tourism has been making efforts to develop tourism at various levels. Here's what the ministry has been doing so far.

The year that was

Inbound Tourism

India received 65.8 lakh (Provisional) visitors during the period January-November, 2014 which is the highest-ever number of visitors received till November in any year during the last decade. The Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during this period showed a commendable increase of 7.1 per cent over the same period during the previous year. The FTAs for the entire year 2013 were 69.7 lakh showing a growth of 5.9% over the previous year. In comparison, the growth rate in International Tourist Arrivals for the World as a whole was only 5% in 2013.Nearly 16% of FTAs during 2013 were from the USA followed by 11.62% from UK and then Bangladesh with 7.53%.

Domestic Tourists

Number of Domestic Tourist Visits to all states/UTs were-1145 million in 2013 showing a growth rate of 9.6% over the previous year.

Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI)

As per the TTCI, 2013 of the World Economic Forum, India ranks 11th in Asia and Pacific region and 65th amongst 140 countries in tourism competitiveness. Improving ranking of India from 65th to 62nd position in travel and tourism competitiveness has been set as a target in the Result Framework Document (RFD) of M/o Tourism for the year 2014-15.

The Government has also set a target to achieve one percent share in global tourism arrivals during 2015 which is sought to be achieved with the help of a multi- pronged strategy. India's share in global tourism arrivals in 2013 was 0.64%.

Foreign Exchange Earnings

During January to November 2014, the Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from tourism crossed the mark of 1 lakh crore rupees (standing at `1, 07,208 crore) showing a growth of 12.1 per cent over the FEEs of the same period last year. FEE from tourism in terms of US\$ during January-November 2014 were US\$ 17.606 billion with a growth of 5.2%, as compared to US\$ 16.742 billion with a growth of 4.9% during January-November 2013 over the corresponding period of 2012.

Infrastructure Development

The Ministry sanctioned `929.84 cr for a total number of 136 tourism projects during 2012-13 and `1801 cr for 261 projects during 2013-14. During 2014-15 (Till September 30, 2014), 30 projects have been sanctioned for an amount of `205 cr. This includes projects relating to Product/ Infrastructure Development for Destination and Circuits (PIDDC), Human Resource Development (HRD), Fairs and Festivals and Adventure & Rural Tourism for infrastructure augmentation.

Employment

As per provisional estimates, contribution of tourism to total employment (direct and indirect) for the years 2010-11, 2011-12 & 2012-13 was 10.78%, 11.49% and 12.36% respectively. During the 10th and 11th Five Year Plans, the contribution of tourism to total employment (both direct and indirect) progressed from 8.27% to 11.49% and the Foreign Exchange earnings for the corresponding period progressed from 20729 crore to \$94487 crore.

An additional employment of 24.5 million (direct and Indirect) is targeted to be created during the years 2010 to 2016.

Use of Technology for service delivery

The Website www.incredibleindia.org has been upgraded. New features such as Walking Tours, Audio-Tours, Holiday Planner and 360 degree view of monuments have been added on the website. In addition, selection of system integrator for developing new website of the Ministry has been initiated. The Android Mobile Application of Incredible India's official trip planning and destination discovery App Tripigator.com was launched by the Ministry of Tourism this year.

Other important measures this year:

- ▲ The foundation stone for setting up of Indian Culinary Institute has been laid in September, 2014.
- Decision has been taken this year to set up Sector Skill Council (SSC) to regulate and promote hospitality and tourism related education and skill development in the country.
- ▲ Culinary Survey of India for identification and documentation of recipes launched in the current year.
- ▲ Ministry has accorded approval for setting up of Food Craft Institute at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh and has sanctioned Central Financial Assistance of `475.00 lakhs
- ▲ 3 month Tourist Facilitator Training Course organized for the Executives of tour operator members of the Indian Association of Tour Operators in order to overcome the bottleneck of shortage of Chinese speaking tourist guides in India.
- ▲ Six months certificate courses in 4 Hospitality Trades
- ▲ Capacity building programme for Tourist Transport Drivers conducted

Safety Measures

The MOT had advised the State Governments/UT Administrations to deploy Tourist Police at prominent tourist spots. The MOT along with all stakeholders, including the Tourism Departments of all States and UTs, have adopted the 'Code of Conduct for Safe & Honourable Tourism' MOT is running the Social Awareness Campaign on television to sensitize the masses and the stakeholders on the traditional Indian values and concept 'Atithi Devo Bhava'. The campaign consists of two commercials; one on sensitizing against misbehaviour with tourists and the other against cleanliness of tourist sites and streets

Development of Tourism in the North East

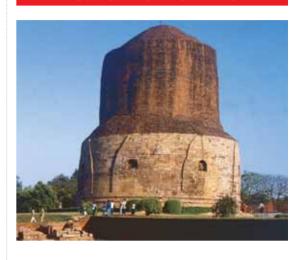
The 3rd International Tourism Mart was held in Shillong in Meghalaya this year and was organised in the North East with the objective of highlighting the tourism potential of the region in the domestic and international markets. Over 50 buyer delegates from ASEAN and SAARC countries participated.

Similarly, the Union Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned 29 projects of Tourism for the North Eastern States till date during the year 2014-15. These include 9 projects in Nagaland, 8 in Sikkim, 5 in Manipur, 4 in Arunachal Pradesh, 3 in Mizoram. An amount of 113.72 cr of plan funds were released in 2012-13 for tourism in the North-Eastern region and 149.16 cr in 2013-14.

Hotel and Restaurants

Guidelines revised for classification / re- classification for the hotels under 5 Star, 4 Star, Heritage Classic - with alcohol service or without alcohol service. Sensitization workshops on Bed & Breakfast / Home stay with all States /UTs and stake holders of tourism industry held. This will add room capacity at tourist destination in the country. List of Bed & Breakfast / Home stay establishment posted on the website of Ministry of Tourism Hotel Classification/reclassification/application system simplified.

Tourism for 2014-15



In the Budget for 2014-15, two new schemes have been announced with the following allocation:

- Rs 500 crore for developing 5 tourist circuits around specific themes. The circuits identified are: Ganga circuit, Krishna circuit, Buddha circuit, North East circuit, and Kerala circuit.
- Rs 100 crore for National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenations and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD).

Guidelines are under finalisation to implement these schemes:

- ▲ 50 circuits have been identified for development in phases
- ▲ The upgradation of Varanasi Railway Station has been undertaken
- ▲ The project for construction of new Passenger Terminal at Marmugao, Goa Port Trust, to promote Cruise Tourism has been launched.

Buddhist Circuits

Following are to be developed as Buddhist Circuits in the country with the help of Central Governments/State Government/Private stake holders:

- ▲ The Dharmayatra or the Sacred Circuit This will be a 5 to 7-day circuit and will include visits to Gaya (Bodhgaya), Varanasi (Sarnath), Kushinagar, Piparva (Kapilavastu) with a day's trip to Lumbini in Nepal.
- ▲ Extended Dharmayatra or Extended Sacred Circuit or Retracing Buddha's Footsteps This will be a 10 to 15 day circuit and will include visits to Bodhgaya (Nalanda, Rajgir, Barabar caves, Pragbodhi Hill, Gaya). Patna (Vaishali, Lauriya Nandangarh, Lauriya Areraj, Kesariya, Patna Museum), Varanasi (Sarnath), Kushinagar, Piparva (Kapilvastu, Shravasti, Sankisa) with a day trip to Lumbini in Nepal.
- ▲ Buddhist Heritage Trails (State Circuits) including those in Ladakh, Srinagar, Ajanta Ellora, Sirpur, Dharamsala, Sikkim, Tawang, Sanchi among others.

Second International Buddhist Conclave in Bodhgaya and Sarnath held from September 26-28, 2014 in collaboration with the State Governments of Bihar and UP. A total of 120 international delegates from 30 countries, 71 domestic Tour Operators and 16 State Governments had participated in the Conclave.

MOT has introduced guidelines for financial assistance to States/UTs for holding Buddhist Festivals in the Monasteries of foreign origin to promote traffic to "Core Buddhist Circuit", specifically at places.

▲ Completion of the Phase –I of the IFC–Development of Buddhist Circuit in UP and Bihar. The strategy 'Investing in the Buddhist Circuit' has been launched.



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TRAUTALK JANUARY 2" FORTNIGHT ISSUE 2015

CRUISES

Multi-entry visa for Indian cruise pax

Dubai Cruise Tourism embarks on a four-city roadshow in India for the first time as part of its overall strategy to promote the city's strengths as a growing international hub for cruise tourism.

Dubai Cruise Tourism undertook a dedicated city tour in India for the first time to promote Dubai as a growing international hub for cruise tourism. Beginning in New Delhi, the delegation from Dubai Cruise Tourism Chennai, travelled to Bengaluru and Mumbai. During the visit, Dubai tourism delegation members networked with 700 key Indian travel trade partners and media, alongside some of the biggest and best known companies operating in the cruise industry worldwide - MSC, Costa Crociere and Royal Caribbean International (RCI).

The roadshows came at the right time with the introduction of a new Multiple Entry UAE visa for cruise tourists. Indian tourists entering the country to take a cruise who require entry into multiple UAE ports - for example Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Khorfakkan - can now apply for the new visa through their cruise line, either at the time or after booking. The visa is valid for 60 days from the date of issue to the first entry into UAE. After the first entry, the visa remains valid for 30 days.

The Indian travel trade fraternity comprising cruise promotion professionals also had the opportunity to learn more of the recently-launched UAE multi-entry cruise tourism visa at the roadshows.

Dubai Tourism, with an overseas representative office in India, has been actively working with India's travel trade to attract a larger number of

Indian outbound travellers to the Emirate of Dubai.

During 2013, a total of 888,835 Indian hotel guests stayed in Dubai, representing growth of 16 per cent over the corresponding period of 2012.

tourism

and specifically the cruise tourism segment.

Commenting on the initiative, Hamad bin Mejrin, Executive Director, Dubai Tourism, said: "Dubai has long and very strong links with India

ment of a new multi-entry visa for cruise passengers, we expect to see a further increase of our share of the Indian outbound travellers, including those within the cruise segment, as this will be an added attraction to visiting the city of Dubai," he said.

Bin Mejrin further commented, "We're delighted to be able to meet the country's leading travel trade professionals alongside our cruise industry partners - MSC, Costa and RCI. In addition to conducting workshops and sharing updates on the latest attractions for cruising in the Arabian Gulf and the wider region, we look forward to understanding from the local travel trade how we can better cater to our Indian quests in the city of Dubai, and onboard cruise ships. We are also pleased that we can share details of the newly introduced UAE multi-entry cruise tourism visa, which will make cruising in the Gulf even more accessible for Indian travellers." 💺

With the announcement of a new multi-entry visa for cruise passengers, we expect to see a further increase of our share of the Indian outbound travellers, including those within the cruise segment, as this will be an added attraction to visiting the city of Dubai **Hamad bin Mejrin** Executive Director Dubai Tourism

Buoyed by the potential that India holds, Dubai aims to

and its people, and from a tourism perspective, the counattract a larger share of try is one of our top three the fast-growing outbound source markets for visitors to our city. With the announce-

Here comes a cruise destination

Investment in new infrastructure – including a new state-of-the-art cruise terminal at Mina Rashid, Dubai's major cruise port, and attractions such as Burj Khalifa, the Palm Jumeirah, Burj Al Arab and worldleading malls packed with international designer brands, make Dubai an ideal cruise destination – and the ideal location for an extended stay at the start or end of a cruise Dubai Tourism forecasts further sustained growth for the cruise sector, spurred by the upcoming opening of an additional new 27,000m2 terminal at the city's main port later this season, the introduction of the new cruise tourism visa and the work of the Cruise Arabia partnership. Cruise Arabia is a collaborative initiative formed by Oman's Ministry of Tourism, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority and Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing to promote the region as a cruise destination.

This season, the number of vessels using Dubai Cruise Terminal as their home port increases to six and these vessels are expected to make a total of 83 trips in comparison to 63 trips in the 2013/2014 season.



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Visegrad countries tapping tourism from India

The Visegrad countries also popularly known as the European Quartet organised a roadshow in the Capital recently where the various spokespersons disclosed their plans for the Indian market and their strategies to promote tourism in their respective countries.













Dubai cruises on a smooth tide in India

The Dubai Cruise Tourism's debut roadshow in India was a huge success as it proved Dubai's strength as the Middle East's leading cruise destination. Dubai Tourism, with an overseas representative office in India, has been actively working with India's travel trade to attract a larger number of Indian outbound travellers to the Emirate of Dubai. The roadshow that kicked off in Delhi travelled to Chennai, Bengaluru and Mumbai. Buoyed by the potential that India holds, Dubai aims to attract a larger share of the fast-growing outbound Indian tourism sector, and specifically the cruise tourism segment.



















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JANUARY 2" FORTHIGHT ISSUE 2015 TRAUTALK 39

Over 7 lakh Indians visit China in 2014

The year 2015 has been designated by China National Tourism Administration as Beautiful China, 2015-Year of Silk Road Tourism. TRAUTALK gives details of the future strategies of the country.

TT BUREAU

n 2014, China National Tourist Office (CNTO) continued its endeavour to tap the Indian market and strengthen tourism links between the two countries. Many events focusing on Beautiful China, 2014 -Year of Smart Travel were held in India. For the year 2014, the total Indian visits to mainland China are expected to surpass the mark of 7 lakh, which is a historical milestone.

relations between countries lie in the close contact of the people. In future, CNTO will continue its efforts in promoting the destination of Beautiful China among Indian general public and enhancing the mutual understanding between the two people of China and India. The support and cooperation of travel media and associations is of the highest value to China Tourism."

Talking about 2015, he added, "Another latest development is that the year of 2015 has been designated by China National Administration **Tourism** (CNTA) as Beautiful China, 2015-Year of Silk Road Tourism. All the tourists from home and abroad are welcome to explore Beautiful China along the Silk Road."

2015 - Year of Silk Road Tourism

The Silk Road is a famous ancient overland trade channel with a total length of over 7,000 km which traverses Asia and links Europe and Asia. The silk road in China is long for over 4,000 km, over half of the total. Jointly applied by China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in June 2014, part of the Silk Road was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The application consists of 33 historical sites along the millenniumold trade route, including 22 in China, eight in Kazakhstan and three in Kyrgyzstan. On September 7, 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at Nazarbayev University, proposing to build 'economic zone of the Silk Road' to strengthen economic ties and deepen more mutual cooperation including travel and tourism industry between European and Asian countries. Another important initiative is the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, a vision put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping in late 2013 to revive the ancient maritime trade and cultural routes between China and its neighbors & partners.



Li Qianguo Deputy Director China National Tourist Office

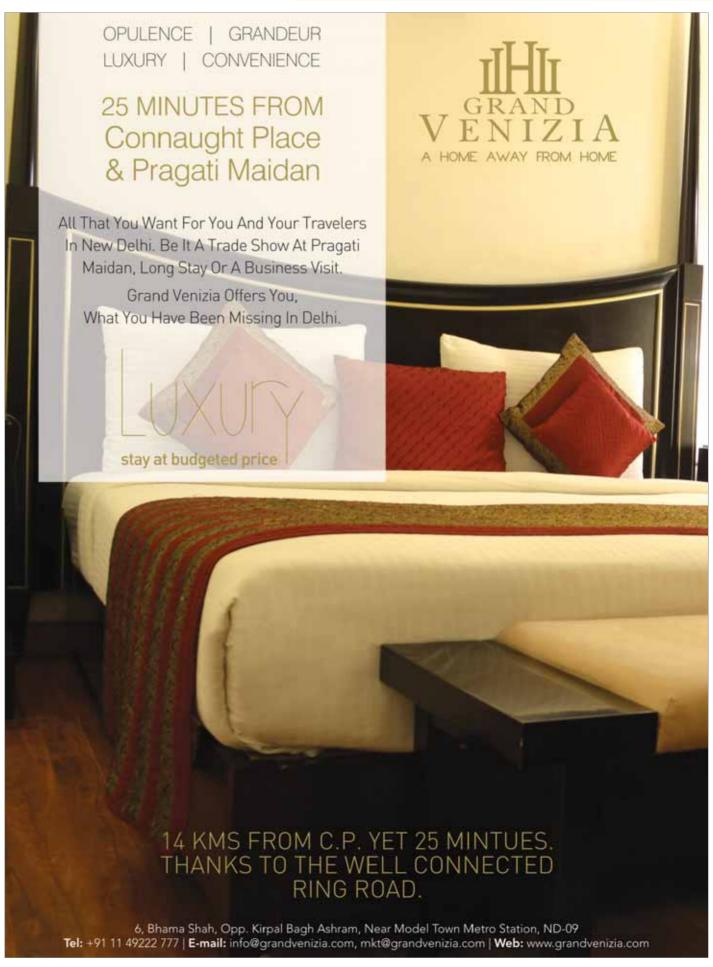
In future, **CNTO** will continue its efforts in promoting the destination of Beautiful China among Indian general public

In September 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to India. The national leaders of China and India designated 2015 as the 'Visit India Year' in China and 2016 as the 'Visit China Year' in India.

Li Qianguo, Deputy Director, China National Tourist Office, said, "Under this, the two sides will carry out a series of promotional activities to boost two-way tourism flows and strengthen people-topeople bonds. The friendly

Travel Ties

- The national leaders of and India China designated 2015 as the 'Visit India Year' in China and 2016 as the 'Visit China Year' in India
- With the Indian visits to mainland China in 2014 expected to surpass the mark of 7 lakh, a historical milestone has been reached



... And the winners hold Maya with pride

India Travel Awards finally reached North India with a zest. The winners held 'Maya' with pride and shared their feelings about how they felt to have the 'Goddess of tourism' in their hands.

I think the award for every region is a great idea. SanJeet has put together something really very nice. It is very motivating to get an award and I think this encourages everyone to work harder in their respective



fields. I am really thankful to TravTalk for giving me this award.

Dr Jyotsna Suri

Winner, India Travel Awards North and Chairperson & Managing Director Bharat Hotels

I think the awards were very wellorganised and it is a good thing to make people



participate in such events because it makes them more competitive and also sets standards for everyone to improve their performances. It is good that the awards are being organised region wise as travel comprise a huge industry and through this each and every region gets an exposure. I am very glad that my office participated in other regions too and bagged an award in the West as well.

Subhash Goyal

Winner, India Travel Awards North and Chairman, STIC Travel Groups

The regional recognition by the India Travel Awards is a great idea. It is a great feeling and a great way to go and over the years, I think, it will be built on. For



any awards, the biggest thing is sanctity and making sure that the awards are given for the right reason and not for the strong lobby one has for the awards. I'm proud that we are here today as we were lucky enough to position ourselves at the right place at the right time.

Ajay Bakaya

Winner, India Travel Awards North and Executive Director Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

India Travel Awards is an amazing idea and I'm delighted that I've received two awards. The Face of the Future Award



is the one for which people are looking up to me and I'm sure that I will be able to live up to this recognition. I am thankful to DDP for organising this grand award ceremony and then organising it in different regions. I'm sure that this is going to grow bigger and better.

Ankush Nijhawan Managing Director Nijhawan Group

Musafir to launch B2B portal

Vijay Kesavan, CEO, Musafir.com says that by the first quarter of 2015, they are planning to launch a full-fledged portal catering to the B2B segment and are also targetting corporate business.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

QYou are venturing into the B2B market, what will you be focusing on?

For us, B2B would be primarily holidays and visas. We've just started building a team a few months ago. We believe it is a huge segment and by the first quarter of 2015, we are planning to launch a full-fledged portal catering to the B2B segment, predominantly for the holidays and visa services that we offer.

Focus OTA

- ◆ The Education ministry has mentioned that about 4.4 million students graduate out of colleges every year
- With potentially 90% of them set to be online customers, over the next 10 years, 50 million new users will come into the market

Which section will you be focusing on?

We are planning to do this for Tier-I, Tier-II and Tier-III cities. We have aggressive plan for all these sections. The business coming from Tier-II and Tier-III cities has been very encouraging.

QThe OTA segment has many players coming in, how do you plan to keep afloat in this business?

In OTAs, many players have come, but only 3-4 have survived. The Education ministry has mentioned that about 4.4 million students graduate out of colleges every year. This is what I keep telling my team that's 4.4 million people are our customers and potentially 90% of them would be online customers. Over the next 10 years, we'll have 50 million new users. The market is huge and this is just the beginning. If you are in the e-commerce business in India, it is a long run. Look how things have changed for China. With 35-40% internet penetration, see where the e-commerce guys have taken off. Online is a scalable model, unless you have a very niche product, but otherwise if you nent and we wanted to grow in different markets, so online was the way to go.

What are you focusing on in 2015?

We are very pleased with the response we have

The market is huge and this is just the beginning. If you are in the e-commerce business in India, it is a long run. Look how things have changed for China

Vijay Kesavan CEO. Musafir.com

are in the trading or travel business it is about scaling. Look at IRCTC, it is a classic case of how they succeeded going online. We planned to launch ourselves all over the Middle East, India, sub conti-

received in 2014. For 2015, we are targeting the corporate business. We have a very exciting corporate booking tool which will give us a unique advantage in the market.

Rwanda woos Indian bizmen

By offering a facility to start a business within a six-hour window, Rwanda is going all out to encourage Indian businessmen. This, along with its recently-opened convention bureau, goes to show that its focus for 2015 is MICE.

HAZEL JAIN

Rarrangements to receive 40 passengers from over 10 countries under its forthcoming finalised about 40 delegates, of which 22 are flying in from India. Rwanda is a hub for East Africa and we are therefore offering facilities to Indian businessmen that allow them to



international business forum called 'Rwanda Calling 2015' which will be held in Kigali from January 26-29, 2015. Of this, around 20 will be from India.

Sharing details about this Clarence Fernandes, India Representative for Rwanda Development Board said, "We conduct this program twice a year – once in January and then in May. This year, we have

start a business in Rwanda within only six hours!"

According to this facility, the entire procedure of setting up a legitimate business can be done at their hotel without them having to visit any government office. Fernandes adds, "In 2015, we will strongly focus on MICE and attracting corporates and businessmen. We recently opened the



Rwanda Convention Bureau (RCB) and are busy getting the state-of-the-art Kigali Convention Centre (KCC) ready. With KCC, we want to position the capital city as a leading MICE destination in East Africa."

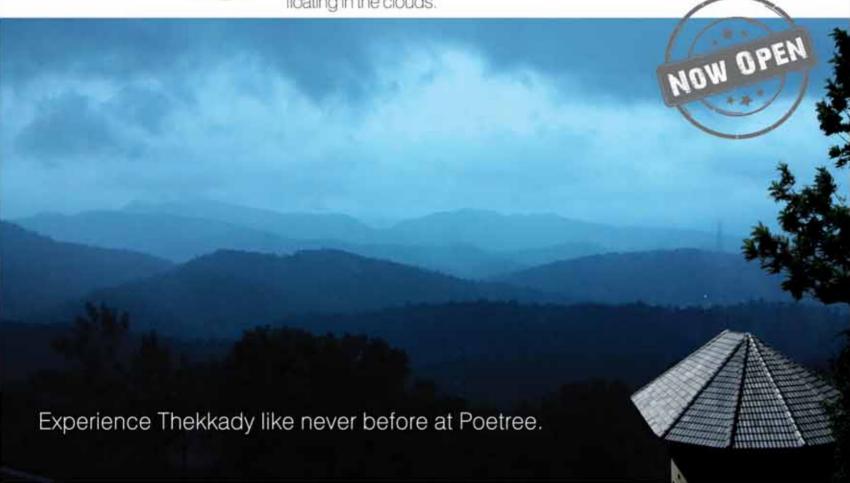
The Rwanda High Commission had also launched its 'Meet in Remarkable Rwanda' campaign in India in 2014 that offers various facilities to companies, trade associations and social organisations.

Fernandes said that Rwanda Tourism will actively promote itself through the upcoming TTF-OTM in February and participate in other expos for corporates. "We will also be making presentations to trade associations and one-on-one meetings with the trade to explain our proposition to them," he said .

About KCC

The Kigali Convention Centre, built at a cost of US\$ 300 million, is due to open in 2015, and will be able to accommodate 2,600 delegates. It encompasses a translucent dome and a multifunctional hall with a maximum capacity of 2,600 pax. In tandem with KCC, a number of five-star hotel brands are under development at Kigali, namely Radisson Blu, Marriott, Park Inn, Sheraton, and South Africa's Protea Group International bringing in about 600 rooms into the market.





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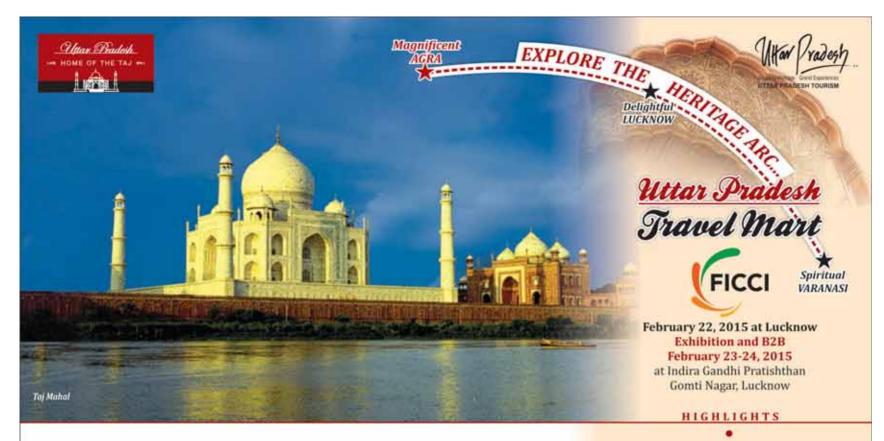


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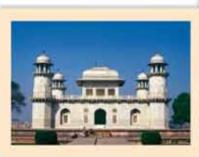
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The biggest Indian FAM to Dubai

With Indians being the second largest source market for Dubai, a total of 440 members from the Indian tourism fraternity from across 16 cities were invited on a mega FAM organised by DTCM.

DEVIKA JEET FROM DUBAI

As part of a marketing strategy to expand the understanding and product portfolio; Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) hosted the largest ever tourism industry Mega FAM trip. A total of 440 representatives of the Indian travel fraternity were provided with a first-hand experience of Dubai.

"This FAM trip was a huge success, we were pleased to welcome and host such a large group from India, which is one of our key source markets.

In the first six months of 2014, India was our second top source market and saw tremendous growth. It continues to be a key focus for us and roadshows to India and FAM trips such as this are a great way to ensure our partners in the market remain up to date with everything going on in Dubai – the first-hand experience is also the ideal way to drive enthusiasm for the



Issam Kazim, CEO, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing and Mark Bennett, Senior Vice President, International Operations, DTCM

destination! In addition, this was a valuable exercise for our stakeholders in Dubai who through face-to-face meetings and networking sessions were able to exchange information and ideas which will prove beneficial as we further strengthen business relationships with our partners in India," says Issam Kazim, CEO, DTCM.

In 2013, the total number of Indian visitors stood at 888,835, placing India on the second spot among the top source markets for Dubai tourism, preceded by Saudi Arabia. Aligning with its Dubai's

vision for 2020, Dubai is now looking beyond the clichés and offers experiences for the whole family. Focusing on tourist-centric sectors, Dubai is broadening its portfolio and creating enough knowledge for the same.

In a bid to emerge as a one-stop destination for practically everything, Dubai seems to stop at nothing, "There's so much more to Dubai than just shopping, we are now showcasing a lot more culture, heritage, art and focusing on the overall experience. We are planning to work closely with

DMC's and educate them further on the product offerings in the city. Listening to our tourists and making sure we offer what they want is also important to us," says Mark Bennett, Senior Vice President, International Operations, DTCM.

Bennett talks about the recent success of Happy New Year and hopes it will show great results in the coming year. He adds,

"We are changing the way Dubai has been positioned.

We had all the facilities and products all along but this wasn't communicated well enough. We will very soon grade all the destination management companies. Thus Indian consumers can get the correct range of products and find the right balance and the most appropriate product offering."

To further help the agents sell the destination, "We are now investing a lot on the digital and online platform.

Contd. on page 52

Indian holiday for families

Trans India Holidays is educating agents and operators that India has excellent offerings for families too. The firm has introduced itineraries to keep kids engaged.

7TT BUREAU

or as long as one can remember, India has been regarded as a mature traveller's or couple's travel destination only, and worldwide people have been hesitant about travelling to India with families and young children. Trans India Holidays took it upon themselves to rectify this notion, and educate the travel agents and tour operators that India has excellent offerings for families as well. Talking about the general misconception, Kapil Goswamy, Managing Director, Trans India Holidays remarked. "I had very often heard from FTOs that clients with young and teenage children were hesitant to travel to India, presuming, and quite rightly so, that the children would be very quickly bored of seeing temples and visiting forts and palaces in India." According to him, FTOs always said that clients with young children went to destinations where there were activities to keep kids busy, or where, in addition to regular city tours, they could do at least one child-friendly or, adventurous eraries, specially designed for families with young and teenage children. "Touring in Delhi was modified, to not only have the standard city

Among the new offerings,
there will be skiing holidays
in Gulmarg, easy and
moderate treks in the
Eastern Himalayas, horse
safaris in Rajasthan, and
village walks in the
Himalayas

Kapil Goswamy Managing Director Trans India Holidays

activity a day. Thus, the kids could enjoy the holiday as much as the adults.

Keeping this in mind, during late 2014, Trans India put together a small set of itintours, but to also have activities like the Segway tour. Likewise, touring in Jaipur, of course has the City Palace and Museum, but also have an early morning or late afternoon Hot Air Balloon ride and

a visit to the Dera Amer or the Elefantastic, where the young and old alike enjoy the interaction with the elephants. Touring options in places like Jodhpur, for family audiences now include, beside the usual Mehrangarh Fort visit, the zip line adventure, which is a wonderful way to get a bird's eye view of the Fort and the surrounding city." The family holiday options have proven extremely popular, and according to Kapil Goswamy, the company is in the process of putting together another set of itineraries with destinations and activities, that will be popular with families.

Regarding new offerings planned in the near future, he added, "Among the new offerings, there will be skiing holidays in Gulmarg, easy and moderate treks in the Eastern Himalayas, horse safaris in Rajasthan, and village walks in the Himalayas."





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Vistara takes first flight from Delhi's T3

Vistara's inaugural flight to Mumbai took off from Terminal 3 of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on January 9 at 12:30pm. The event took place in the presence of Dr Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation and several other dignitaries.

TT BUREAU

host of senior executives A host or serior excession the parent companies - Tata Group and SIA - were onboard the first flight of Vistara from Delhi to Mumbai. Amidst palpable excitement Prasad Menon, Chairman, Vistara, lit the ceremonial lamp at the check-in counter along with Mukund Rajan, Mak Swee Wah, Members of the Board of Directors, Phee Teik Yeoh, CEO Vistara, Madhu Kannan, NS Rajan, Tata Sons GEC Members, TK Lim, Singapore HC to India and Prabhakara Rao, CEO, Delhi International Airport and was handed over the first boarding pass. Children from the Salaam Baalak Trust aged between 7-12 years, were boarded first to enjoy their first flying experience ever. They were followed by the rest of the passengers and the dignitaries. The fully loaded Airbus A320-200 branded in royal aubergine and gold then took off for Mumbai's GVK Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport, Terminal 2.



The dignitaries with children at the launch

While congratulating the entire team at Vistara and the executives from Tata and SIA, Dr Sharma said: "Though India is projected to be the third largest aviation market globally by 2020, and the sector opening up to allow 49 % FDI will attract many new players, the focus will be on safety and quality, which is more important. Also it is the Prime Minister's vision to develop India as a leading tourism hub and connectivity is imperative to achieve this. So we welcome Vistara".

Conveying his wishes, Ratan N Tata, Chairman Emeritus, Tata Sons, said, "It has been a long-cherished dream for the Tata group to establish a world-class full service airline in India, in partnership with Singapore Airlines, and today that dream has come to life. I would like to dedicate this day to JRD Tata, the man who started it all, and established India's first international airline. His futuristic vision continues to inspire us and we salute his spirit and dream. I would like to extend

my best wishes to the Vistara team as they embark upon a remarkable journey today."

GM Rao, Chairman, GMR group, said, "Vistara is the latest entrant into our family of partner airlines and we extend our heartiest congratulations and best wishes to the team for everlasting success. Vistara is a promising brand with a strong lineage and I am confident that they will deliver an unmatched flying experience to travellers. My team and I join in celebrating this

momentous occasion together with the Tata group, Singapore Airlines and Vistara."

Goh Choon Phong, CEO, Singapore Airlines said, "India's aviation market has been expanding rapidly and we have been eager to directly participate in and contribute towards this growth story for many years. We are confident that Vistara will help to stimulate market demand and provide economic benefits to India, and are committed to supporting Vistara to deliver on its brand promise to

Indian travellers."

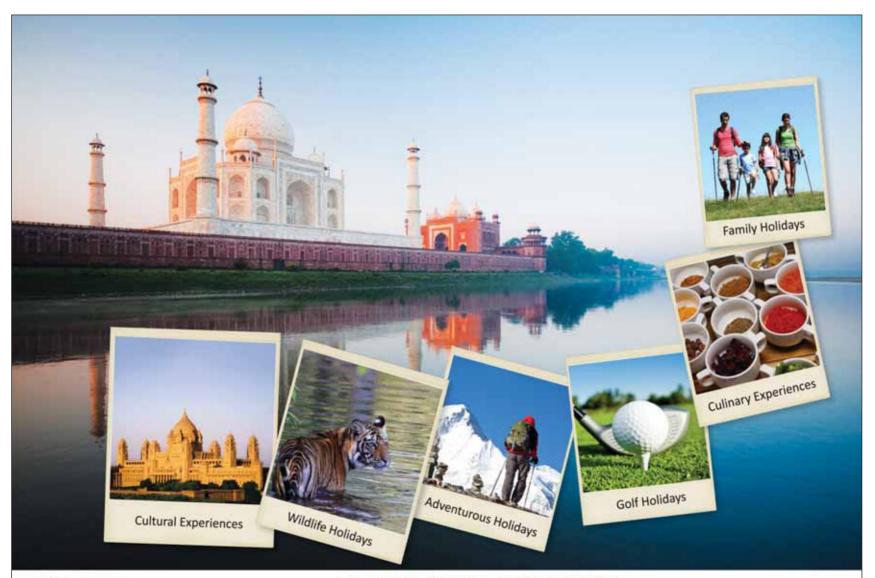
Menon, said, "Today marks the start of the new exciting chapter in Tata Group's history as we take to the skies again. I feel honoured to be part of this journey of Vistara, which has its core philosophy steeped in the same tradition as the Tata group. For long now, we have held on to this particular dream and today I can proudly say that our persistence has been well worth it and has paid off.

Vistara's first flight is a commencement of a unique flying experience."

Phee Teik Yeoh, CEO, Vistara said, "To see Vistara take flight in record time is a matter of great pride to me and my entire team that has been working tirelessly for the past many months. The flight today has re-energized the team which is now focused on ensuring that we live up to our brand promise of a seamless and personalized Vistara experience. Today I would like to invite India to 'Fly the New Feeling' with Vistara."

Lift Off

- Children from the Salaam Baalak Trust aged between 7-12 years, were boarded first to enjoy their first flying experience ever.
- They were followed by the rest of the passengers and the dignitaries.





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AGENTS

Marriott opens second Kochi property at LuLu Mall

■ Marriott International, Inc. has opened Kochi Marriott Hotel, the fifth hotel under the company's flagship Marriott Hotels brand in India. This will be the second Marriott International property in the city and is located



Rajeev Menon
Area Vice President - South

at the LuLu Mall campus Kochi Marriott Hotel offers 274 quest rooms, which include 25 club suites, one vice presidential suite, and one plush presidential suite. Rajeev Menon, Area Vice President - South Asia, Marriott International, said, "Kochi Marriott Hotel is an exciting addition to the Marriott Hotels portfolio. We believe the city of Kochi has tremendous potential for business and hospitality growth, making it an obvious choice for the Marriott Hotels brand."

GPS expects over 80 exhibitors

Nagpur-based Jagsons Travels will yet again host its global buyer-seller meet 'Global Panorama Showcase' from February 8-10, 2015. The second edition of the three-day event will be held at Hotel Centre Point, Ramdaspeth, in Nagpur and is expecting participation of over 80 exhibitors.

TT BUREAU

Armandeep Singh Anand, MD of Jagsons Travels and Hon Secretary General of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), reveals to TRAVIALIA what the attendees can expect from this year's exhibitors and talks about the focus on educational workshops for agents.

How many participants have you confirmed this year?

We are anticipating over 80 exhibitors to take part in GPS 2015. Some of the international participants include Tourism Malaysia, Spain, Thailand Convention Bureau, Bulgaria, Fiji, Canada, Indonesia, Mauritius, Seychelles, Jordan, New Zealand, Germany, and Philippines. Apart from this, we have local and international hotel chains, airlines, DMC, cruise liners, travel insurance, visa service providers and other ancillary service providers participating as well.

Can you shed some light on the workshops that will be conducted?

The workshops are educational in nature and this is an opportunity for the

local agents and tour operators to know more about the destination or product first-hand from the tourism board and DMCs. Apart from senior management and owners, the front-liners and the counter staff who are invited to attend the workshop also end up benefiting from it as they get to know more about

In 2014, we had also allowed tourism and hospitality colleges to attend and get exposed to various workshops and benefit from the same.

Qan you share some details about the pre and post event tours?

With 'Explore the Heart of India' as the theme for GPS 2015, the focus will be on Central India, showcasing four cities – Indore, Bhopal, Raipur and Nagpur — which are high on the radar of economic growth

Harmandeep Singh Anand

MD of Jagsons Travels and Hon Secretary General of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

the products. The workshops are interactive and allow the participants to ask questions relating to destinations, products and visas that will help them in creating itineraries and explaining to their customers better.

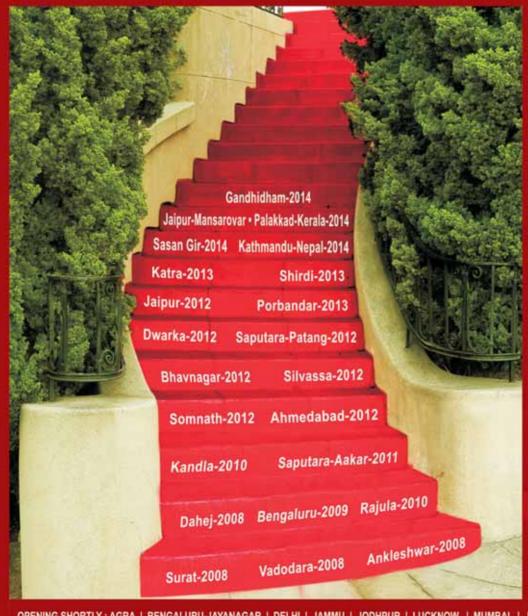
GPS, apart from showcasing international tourism products, also believes in highlighting the tourism products of the region. Wildlife which is a popular tourist attraction in Nagpur will be showcased during the

post tour. Apart from this, people will also be exposed to certain tourist attractions here.

How do you see GPS growing in the coming years?

GPS is aimed at developing the tier II cities of India to get tourism prominence. GPS acknowledges Central India as one of the upcoming and potential travel trade and consumer markets in India. The theme for GPS 2015 is 'Explore the Heart of India'.

Today, the focus is on Central India and we are showcasing four cities - Indore, Bhopal, Raipur and Nagpur — which are high on the radar of economic growth. As the cities progress, the availability of disposable income increases, as the cost of living in the tier II cities is not as high as the metros. The availability of disposable income in turn encourages travel, be it domestic or international. GPS aims at bringing to the doorstep of these cities the wide range of tourism products available so that consumers are directly exposed to them, and in turn can ask their travel agents/tour operators to include them in their packages. *



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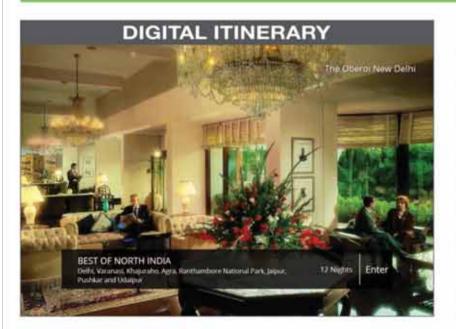
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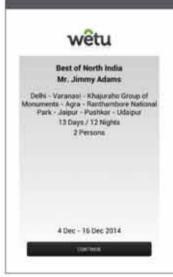
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From Delhi to the city of Taj

Enjoying an ideal location amidst lush greens of North Delhi, Grand Venizia is now all set to open its doors in the city of The Taj, Agra. Arpit Bindal, Director-Sales & Business Development of the Hotel tells TRAVTALK about their plans to open a four star boutique hotel with a special focus on Food & Beverage outlets.



How has Hotel Grand Venizia Ween doing?

The year 2014 has been great for us. We managed to get a budgeted occupancy with the premium in ADR. The focus remained on the corporate segment, sports movement and social segment along with the transit stay as we are strategically located in North Delhi which gives us an edge.

Travellers staying in New Delhi get the luxury at a budget price.

Arpit Bindal

Development, Hotel Grand Venizia

We are a

property at

budgeted

have been

a boutique

luxury hotel

The year 2015-2016 seems to

be bullish as we are already

holding 25 per cent confirmed

reservations. The block com-

prises social, sports and leisure segment and with times, we will

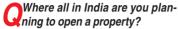
be able to close good business. The hotel offers a panoramic

view of lush green lawns from

price and we

perceived as

luxury



We are planning to open a property in Agra. It is a place where we are keen to open a four star boutique hotel with focus on Food & Beverage outlets.

How are you planning to do the positioning of the property?

We are a luxury property at budgeted price and we have been perceived as a boutique luxury hotel. We continue to strive ourselves to be the choiceamongst budget hotels but at the same time the feel luxury touch will remain the eminent part.





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- Animation & Visual Effects
- Automation
- Food & Beverage
- Safety & Security & more

Visitors Profile

- Architects
- Real Estate & Mall Developers
- · Park Operators
- FEC Operators
- Resorts & Hotel Chain
- Government Officials
- Consultants
- Municipal & Local Authority
- Museums & Science Centres
- Historic / Tourist Attractions

most of its rooms. What are the occupan-Cies of the hotel?

The occupancy in summer hovers between 60-65 per cent and the surge is mostly seen post August, which leads the occupancy to close at 88 per cent.

What are your future 🖊 plans?

We plan to make our facility ultra luxurious to leverage on existing set of room inventory, thus giving us better RevPar. We feel that there is a big gap of services to be looked upon in social segment. We are in process to create the exquisite packages and offers for the social segment guests.

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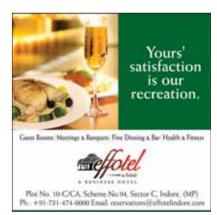
















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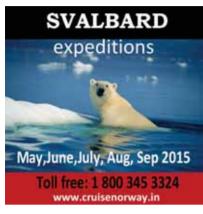






















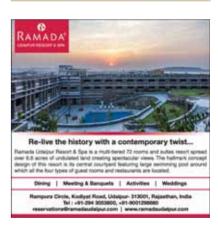






















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JANUARY 2015

NATIONAL

| 16 -18 | Bengaluru | Travel & Tourism Fair | |
|---------------|------------|--|--|
| 16 -18 | Kochi | India International Travel Mart | |
| 19 | Mumbai | Gray Line Latin America 2015 Roadshow | |
| 19 | Kochi | Dubai Tourism Roadshow | |
| 20 | Hyderabad | Gray Line Latin America 2015 Roadshow | |
| 21 | Kolkata | Gray Line Latin America 2015 Roadshow | |
| 21 | Ahmedabad | Dubai Tourism Roadshow | |
| 22 | Delhi | Gray Line Latin America 201 Roadshow | |
| 22 | Nagpur | Dubai Tourism Roadshow | |
| 22 - 24 | Mumbai | Hosts | |
| 23-25 | Nagpur | India International Travel Exhibition | |
| 23 -25 | Coimbatore | Holiday Expo | |
| 29-31 | Delhi | SATTE | |
| INTERNATIONAL | | | |

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|----------|--------------|--|--|
| 2 | Mumbai | South Africa Tourism Board Road Show | |
| 2 | Delhi | Tourism Fiji Road Show, | |
| 2 | Mumbai | Austrian Tourism Media Launch | |
| 2 | Kolkata | Dubai Tourism Roadshow | |
| 3 | Kolkata | Tourism Fiji Road Show | |
| 3 | Mumbai | Austria Tourism B2B Workshop | |
| 3-4 | Mumbai | SATTE | |
| 4 | Ahmedabad | South Africa Tourism Board Road Show | |
| 4 | Chennai | Austria Tourism B2B Workshop | |
| 4 | Mumbai | Tourism Fiji Road Show | |
| 4 | Chennai | Dubai Tourism Roadshow | |
| 4-6 | Mumbai | Outbound Travel Mart | |
| 4-6 | Mumbai | Business Travel And Mice | |
| 4-6 | Mumbai | Travel & Tourism Fair | |
| 5 | Bengaluru | Dubai Tourism Roadshow | |
| 5 | Bengaluru | South Africa Tourism Board Road Show | |
| 5 | Delhi | Tourism Fiji Road Show | |
| 5 | Delhi | Austria Tourism B2B Workshop | |
| 6 | Delhi | South Africa Tourism Board Road Show | |
| 6 | Chennai | Tourism Fiji Road Show | |
| 6 | Delhi | Austria Tourism Media Lunch | |
| 6 | Mumbai | Dubai Tourism Roadshow | |
| 10-12 | New Delhi | Outbound Travel Mart | |
| 10-12 | Delhi | Travel & Tourism Fair | |
| 11 -13 | Mumbai | IAAPI Amusement Expo | |
| 12-14 | Raipur | India International Travel Exhibition | |
| 20 -22 | Kolkata | India International Travel Mart | |
| 20 -22 | Bhubaneshwar | Indian Tourism Fair | |
| 20-22 | Guwahati | Holiday Expo | |
| 22-24 | Lucknow | Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart | |
| 21-23 | Ahmedabad | India Travel Mart | |
| 26 -28 | Mumbai | Maharashtra International Travel Mart | |
| 27-1 Mar | Vijaywada | India International Travel Exhibition | |

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| 22-24 | Jerusalem | TAFI convention |
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For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com

Country Club eyes travel agents

Country Club Hospitality & Holidays is keen on exploring newer grounds. After renaming and re-branding itself, the company is looking to team up with travel agents to exclusively sell their membership.



Previously known as Country Club India, the 25-year old leisure infrastructure conglomerate is expanding its worldview to include travel agents in its sales spectrum. Y Varun Reddy, COO, Country Club Hospitality & Holidays, who joined the company around eight years ago, revealed this.

"We are always looking for Direct Selling Agents (DSAs) in India to sell our membership. To this effect, we are also actively looking to include travel agents to exclusively sell our membership. We have never focused on them in the past. We plan to expand our membership base from the current 3.5 lakh to 10 lakh over the next five years," Reddy said. The company underwent re-branding process and it now promotes



four verticals: Holidays, Fitness Centres, Clubs and Events. "We promote ourselves by participating in international trade shows like ATM Dubai," Reddy added.

Focus areas

The young COO revealed that corporates is one of the top

focus areas for the company this year. "We have MICE and wedding facilities along with outdoor team-building activities and they are significant revenue generators. Also, corporate memberships come with a lot of flexibility in the sense that they can change the name (of the employee and their family)

any number of times they want to in any city they want," he said.

Another focus area for the company is to create synergies with the hospitality industry. One of the ways it will do this is by dealing with its long-term debt that stands at `400 crore. Reddy said, "We have no capex plans for the next few years and our entire focus now is to reduce debt."

He added that to match its demand, the company also leases hotel rooms from reputed properties to give its members more choice. In Goa, it offers 200-plus rooms but only 50 are owned. "We add rooms on a monthly basis and are always looking to lease out more rooms, floors actually, in places that are driving distance from any major city," he adds.

C&K defined innovation in 2014

A look at Cox & Kings' activities in the year gone by shows that it mapped an uncharted course with innovative products and tie-ups. **TRAUTALK** reviews its step-by-step progression chronologically.

TT Bureau

Official FIFA 2014 agent

Towards the end of January last year, Cox & Kings announced to India that it had been awarded the official rights to promote hospitality packages for FIFA World Cup 2014, which was to take place in Brazil from June 12-July 13, 2014.

An adventurous twist

Later that year in March, Cox & Kings Ltd together with Ezeego1.com, the online travel site, put a spin on adventure tourism in India. They formed an alliance with G Adventures, the largest small-group adventure travel company in the world that offers socially and environmentally sensitive travel.

Tie-up with Liverpool FC E.L.I.T.E.S

The next month, Cox & Kings Ltd entered into an agreement with LFC E.L.I.T.E.S (Education & Learning Initiative Training Entrepreneurs in Sport), which is the global education and training partnership between Liverpool Football Club and London School of Business & Finance (LSBF).

Culinary holidays

In May that year, Cox & Kings introduced special culinary holidays for Britain. This holiday included an opportunity to interact with award-winning MasterChef Pankaj Bhadouria, the first ever winner of MasterChef India. The holidays offered clients the opportunity to learn the secrets of using herbs and spices.

Sale of HBR's camping division

A month later, Cox & Kings Ltd decided to take a step towards consolidation and announced the sale of the camping division of Holidaybreak for `892 crore. Of this, `855 crore was to be made payable in cash on completion and the rest deferred relating to a tax refund. Peter Kerkar, Director of Cox & Kings, had said at the time, "Our main focus is on education and leisure markets. This sale is consistent with our strategy. Our net debt stands at `4,200 crore and the cash from this sale will go straight towards its reduction."

Outsourced partner for Deccan Odyssey

By August, Cox & Kings was appointed as Maharashtra

Tourism Development Corporation's (MTDC) outsourced partner to operate the luxury train, Deccan Odyssey from October 2014. The agreement is for a period of five years with scope for extension for another five years.

`1000 crore through

The holidays education travel group announced towards the end of 2014 that it had raised around 1,000 crore through Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP), of equity shares of face value of 5 each. According to Kerkar, "Bulk of the proceeds will be utilised to pare down the debt and this will further strengthen the Group Balance Sheet."

Dubai takes on digital platform

Contd. from page 43

Our app, which is rolling out, will help consumers identifying with Dubai and building their own itineraries. This will make it easier to approach Dubai as a family destination and iden-

tify one's interests. Another innovative initiative is #MyDubai. It encourages residents and visitors to post photos on social media with the hashtag MyDubai to create a dynamic and intimate sketch

of the city," says Kazim. Overall developing the destination and preparing for the influx of tourists, Dubai also identified its shortage of midmarket hotels and is now developing this sector as well.

Having incentivized setting up of mid-market hotels, growth is not far. If the hotel becomes operational by 2016 or 2017, the government will waive off its municipality fee for two to three years.

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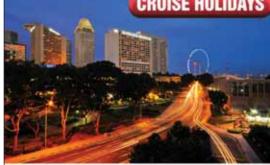
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MOVEMENTS

VFS Global

New Delhi

Vinay Malhotra has been appointed as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for South Asia effective January 1, 2015. South Asia is an

important region for VFS Global and his key focus areas include evolving business strategy, managing key client relationships and business development. Malhotra will be based in New Delhi. He holds an MBA degree from Bradford University, UK and his experience spans over two decades in the travel industry. Malhotra will also continue in his role as the Global Head for Dubai Visa Processing Centre (DVPC). He has been a part of VFS Global since 2013 and has been honoured with several awards and accolades.

Six Senses Samui

Samui

Gary Antony Henden has been appointed as the General Manager of Six Senses Samui. Prior to this posting, he held the same position

at Six Senses Ninh Van Bay in Vietnam. Gary joined Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas in 2005 as an executive chef, quickly climbing through the ranks of operational and executive management in its Asian and Indian Ocean properties. His tenures include the former Six Senses properties Soneva Fushi in the Maldives and Soneva Kiri in Thailand followed by Six Senses Ninh Van Bay, Vietnam before moving to Six Senses Samui, Thailand.

Aakar Lords Inn, Saputara, Gujarat

Saputara

Prabir Chaki has been appointed as Operations Manager in Aakar Lords Inn, Saputara, Gujarat. He brings with him more than 14 years of rich experience in the hospitality industry with

specialisation in F&B Operations. Prior to his new role, he served as Executive Assistant Manager at The Duke Retreat. He is a Hotel Management graduate from IHRM, Kolkata. In his new assignment, he will be independently responsible for the entire operations and F&B of the hotel.

Marriott Hotels India

Abhijit Chitnis has been promoted to Market Director of Sales & Marketing - Pune for Marriott Hotels India. After a successful two-



JW Marriott Pune

Pune

Mallika has been promoted as the Director of Sales and Marketing for the JW Marriott Pune. With over 10 years of experience in hotel

> sales. In her new role, she will lead the property sales & marketing team, and will be responsible and oversee reactive and proactive sales functions as well as the PR and Marketing portfolio for the hotel. Having been with Marriott for about 6 years now, Mallika has been a key member in the opening of Courtyard by Marriott Hinjewadi and Courtyard by Marriott City Centre. In her free time Mallika enjoys travelling, listening to music and reading

Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet Marriott Executive Apartments

Mumbai

Gaurav Aggarwal has been appointed as Director of Catering Sales at the Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet Marriott Executive Apartments. Aggarwal has been an indispensable part of the Marriott family, leading the role of Director of Sales at Fairfield and Courtyard before joining Renaissance Mumbai. He has been a strong asset for the company, strengthening the motto of providing impeccable services that Marriott hotels stands by.

Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre and Courtyard By Marriott

Hyderabad

Jomy Abraham has been promoted as the Director Food & Beverage at The Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre and Courtyard by Marriott, Hyderabad. He has worked with the Marriott in Hyderabad for the last 19 months and has over 11 years' experience in the hospitality business. He started his career with the Renaissance Mumbai Hotel & Convention Centre in 2001 and since then has grown tremendously with the Marriott.

Star Tours

Mumbai

Krishna Samji has joined Star Tours as International Business Development Manager. He has 25 years of experience in the diverse fields of the travel industry. Over the years, he has been managing jobs related to sales, marketing teams, developing



JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort and Spa

Mussoorie

Sunil Kumar has been appointed as the Executive Chef at the 115key JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort and Spa that is slated to open in October 2014. Chef Sunil is

a graduate from the Asan Memorial Institute of Hotel Management in bakery & pastry as well as western cuisine. Chef Sunil started his career with The Oberoi, Bangalore in the year 2000 as a commis chef. After spending three years at The Oberoi, Chef Sunil moved to PNO Cruises from 2003 to 2005. In April 2011 Chef Kumar moved to the Goa Marriott Resort and Spa as the Executive Chef.

TALKing People

Sajid Khan, Country Manager (India) for South African Airways, loves spending time with his daughter during

the week. "On most weekends, I go paragliding in Kamshet. That's why I love Himachal Pradesh; its Bir-Billing area is a popular site for paragliders, both Indians and foreigners," he says. Not many know that Khan also loves to iive. Internationally, he loves France. "Not Paris but the outskirts of France are beautiful. You get a sense of history there. The chateaus are still functioning and they give you an idea of how people used to live there years ago," Khan adds.

The best way for Rajesh Menon, Regional Sales & Marketing Manager (South Asia) for Cathay Pacific Airways, to de-stress is by playing a sport. "We are lucky to have a provision for table tennis in our office and I use



An IIM Bangalore alumna, Gauri Jayaram, founder of Active Holiday Company, is a traveller at heart. Her favourite holiday destination in India is Pelling in Sikkim. "Though I love all places with tall snow-capped







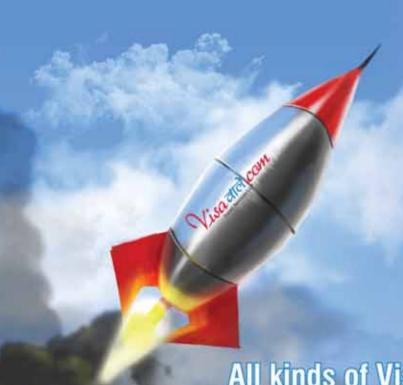


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FITUR to diversify & specialise

With health and shopping tourism attracting travellers, FITUR 2015 will devote two specialised sections to these two sectors. Ana Larrañaga, Director, FITUR, says the trade show will welcome the worldwide tourism industry with the most comprehensive exhibition of proposals and destinations.

turn itself into the greatest business platform for the tourism sector. The workshop

formula will take centre stage here.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Considering the government as well as the private sector, how big is the share of India in the FITUR pie?

Relations between both countries have increased and there are now around 60,000 Spaniards travelling to India each year, according to industry data. Spain is

focused on incentivising agreements between potential investors and growing markets such as Africa, which will advance its business opportunities through the INVESTOUR Africa B2B Workshop. These specialised sessions will also have their own workshops, such as "fITH Network, financing technology in hotels" within FITURTECH and "Managing Big Data in the Tourism Industry" in FITURGREEN, among others. Added to them is the 5" Hosted

Spaniards make more than 100 million overnight stays per year outside our country and holiday trips involve an average stay of nine nights, double the figure of overnights in domestic trips. Furthermore, the type of accommodation is another differentiating characteristic of outbound tourism given that tourists who head for foreign destinations use hotels as their main accommodation to a greater extent. For all these reasons, the quality and service of hotel is crucial in attracting Spanish visitors. But this is also the case with the diversity, specialisation and possibilities of each destination's offering. For example, health and shopping tourism is attracting more and more tourists. This is why this year at FITUR we will devote two



FITUR 2015 will showcase the latest trends presented by companies and institutions from all over the world. Present in these spheres and actively participating in them will be institutions and business representations from India.

Ana Larrañaga Director, FITUR

also highly attractive to visitors from India, who, according to the Spain-India Council Foundation, value aspects such as security, a pleasant environment and nature, well-organised tourist packages and quality accommodation. FITUR 2015 will showcase the latest trends presented by companies and institutions from all over the world and will also host the largest tourism business and promotion forum on a worldwide scale. Present in these spheres and actively participating in them will be institutions and business representations from India. Furthermore, at FITUR 2015, India will be showing some of its major landscape and cultural attractions such as Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

What are your criteria for buyers and do you plan on developing them further?

We will place every facility at the disposal of buyers. The Trade Show will welcome the worldwide tourism industry with the most comprehensive exhibition of proposals and destinations and will

The Innovation and Tourism Technology Forum will have its own showroom dedicated to the tourism of the future. How important do you think technology is for promoting tourism?

The symbiosis between technology and tourism is ever increasing, and technological developments have changed the way we plan and make trips. For example, according to the air transport specialist SITA and Air Transport World, 47 per cent of travellers use their mobile devices to book a trip, and 37 per cent to purchase their flight ticket. At FITUR, we will be able to view the present and the future of technology in the specialised FITURTECH section, in a special showroom dedicated to the tourism of the future (proposals combining design and new technologies will be presented) and in the stands of a large number of exhibitors.

What do you think countries should look out for while trying to woo Spanish tourists?

specialised sections to this - FITUR HEALTH and FITUR SHOPPING. The Trade Show will also demonstrate the growing interest in gastronomic, sports, nature, cultural, gay, leisure and other types of tourism.

What is the way ahead for FITUR? Any expansion model that you'd like to share

Diversification and specialisation will determine the future of tourism and will become one of the principal tools available to the different actors in the industry in promoting and developing their business. In achieving this goal, they will have the wholehearted collaboration of the International Tourism Trade Show, which in its 35th staging will again this year become the largest worldwide tourism business and promotion forum, with the presentation of numerous projects seeking to dynamise the way the sector is run. The Trade Show will offer its participants a unique space in which to promote and market their latest tourism products.

