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from **INTERGLOBE**

Tourism stars in Southern skies



The inauguration ceremony of the South India Travel Awards at the Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach

Air connectivity on MoT's radar



Usha Sharma
Additional Director General
Ministry of Tourism

Usha Sharma, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, says foreign tourists will now get a booklet with tips on travelling around India. Calling tour operators the most important contributors to the growth, Sharma says MoT is also initiating online training programmes for them.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q What is the target of the Ministry of Tourism?

The country has seen a good growth in tourism last year and now we have set a target of one per cent share in the global sector in another two to three years, so that means we need to

double up our figures for FTA arrivals by the close of 2016-2017 and we need to work very hard for that.

Q How is the Ministry working towards that goal?

The e-Tourist Visa has been revolutionary. Currently 44 countries are included in the list and by the close of

the financial year it will be extended to 150 countries, which would probably include most of the countries in the world. We also realise that some destinations have been over exploited and that we need to showcase new circuits. We need to give an incredible experience to tourists when they visit various sites. In two years you'll have

a feel-good factor in all destinations. We realise that connectivity in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities is a major deterrent, we are in talks and we have assurance from the concerned ministries that soon we'll have air connectivity in many such cities. We'll promote less-

Contd. on page 8 ►

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A platter full of Incredible India

India Tourism, Dubai is gearing up to attend Arabian Travel Market 2015. Comprising 20 co-exhibitors, India Tourism Pavilion covers a huge space of around 310 sq metre. Various popular cultural programmes will provide the visitors an opportunity to experience India.



The potential of tourism ties between India, the Gulf and the Middle East region will be witnessed in the presence of tour operators, travel agents, hoteliers, wellness and spa services providers from India during the ATM 2015.

"Because of the size, Reed Exhibitions have given us a very good location. Due to this we will get a very good mileage as well. This year ATM bags, which are distributed every year during the event, are sponsored by us, i.e., Incredible India, India Tourism in Dubai, will give out 15,000 bags," informs IRV Rao, Assistant Director, India Tourism, Dubai.

He emphasizes that India has established itself as a round-the-year destination,

"This year ATM bags, which are distributed every year during the event, are sponsored by us. 15,000 bags which will be distributed this year are sponsored by Incredible India, India Tourism in Dubai."



IRV Rao
Assistant Director
India Tourism, Dubai

offering something for every traveller. This year the tourist flow is more with the decision to extend e-Tourist Visa for tourists from 180 nations.

e-Tourist Visa (eTV) has helped increase in tourist arrivals to India from this part

of the world. eTV facility has been introduced for three countries of the Middle East - UAE, Oman and Jordan. In January 2015, there has been an increase of around 1.77 per cent for the e-Tourist Visa facility which is there for the UAE Nationals. In February the increase was 1.83 per cent.

"Our target is to increase 20 per cent tourists traffic from UAE, Oman and Jordan and we are trying our utmost to meet this target this year," expresses Rao.

Showcasing India

- India is showcasing itself as a round-the-year destination
- The Indian government's e-Tourist Visa (eTV) facility is helping the country to increase its tourists arrival
- In January 2015, there has been an increase of around 1.77 per cent for the e-Tourist Visa facility which is there for UAE nationals



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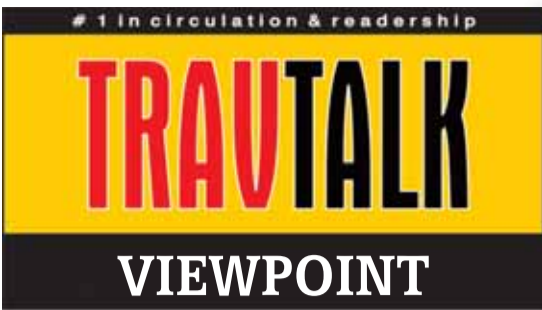
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Indian tourism gets WTTC thumbs up

Research released by World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) forecasts that the industry's GDP contribution will grow by 7.5% and employment by 1.8% this year. By the end of 2015, the travel & tourism sector will contribute ₹ 8,21,500 crore, 7% of India's GDP, and 37.4 million jobs, almost 9% of total employment. **TRAVTALK** gets you excerpts of the report.

Within & Without

With the new government laying stress on Tourism, the industry is extremely expectant and excited. This was the message one got at the Great India Travel Bazaar (GITB) last month in Jaipur while talking to delegates.

With the economy expected to do much better; corporates, exhibitors, associations are stipulated to spend larger amounts, so MICE tourism is expected to boom. At the same time, the younger generation (the working class of today) has much more income at hand, which they are willing to spend on holidays and travel, so leisure and luxury travel will be on the rise as well. It is now for the industry to seriously contemplate how to attract the foreign tourist to India and also keep the domestic traveller within the country.

How do we make the tourist feel safe in India once again? Can we, as a community, create a joint force and help the government clean tourist areas and keep them clean? Are we willing to invest in providing at least the basic amenities?

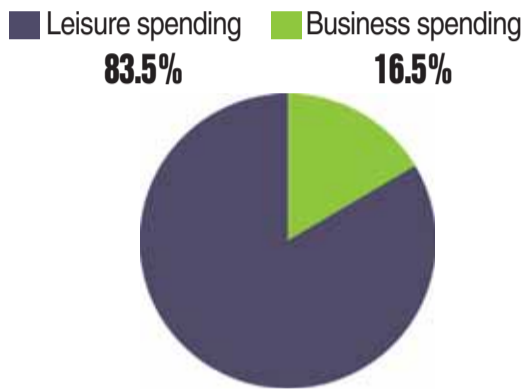
The GITB in Jaipur had about 300 buyers from around the world, looking for new experiences in India. The three-day event saw exhibitors and visitors from across India. The interesting change visible was that we are selling much more than the Golden Triangle and Kerala Ayurveda.

There is Cultural Tourism, Pilgrim Tourism with the Buddhist Circuit; Adventure Tourism is also on the rise, especially from countries like Canada and Australia; Yoga Tourism is becoming extremely popular in Goa, Rishikesh and many other towns; Luxury Tourism with spa experiences, restaurants and nightclubs; Shopping is always popular in India with good exchange rates, and Kerala backwaters and Ayurveda continue to attract the Middle East in large numbers.

If we work towards cleanliness, safety and maintain global standards in our industry, we should definitely progress towards the 'T' for Tourism laid out in the agenda of the government.

Different components of Travel & Tourism

▶ Travel & Tourism's Contribution to GDP: Business vs Leisure, 2014



Leisure travel spending (inbound and domestic) generated 83.5% of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2014 (₹ 5,502.3bn) compared with 16.5% for business travel spending (₹ 1,085.1bn).

Leisure travel spending is expected to grow by 6.5% in 2015 to ₹ 5,859.3bn, and rise by 7.1% pa to ₹ 11,623.6bn in 2025.

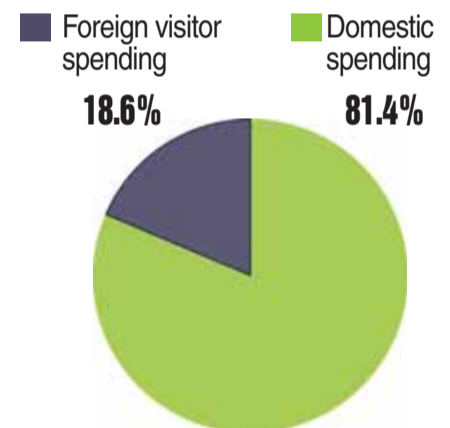
Business travel spending is expected to grow by 7.4% in 2015 to ₹ 1,165.8bn, and rise by 6.6% pa to ₹ 2,202.2bn in 2025.

▶ Travel & Tourism's Contribution to GDP: Domestic vs Foreign, 2014

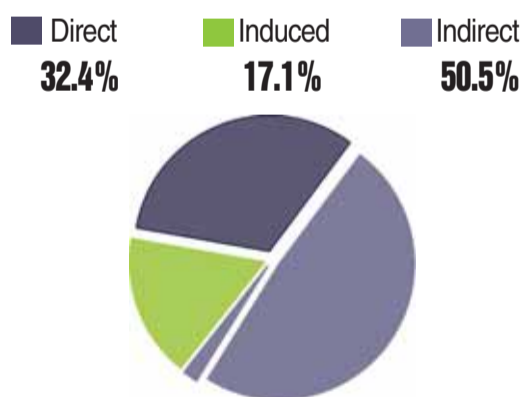
Domestic travel spending generated 81.4% of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2014 compared with 18.6% for visitor exports (ie foreign visitor spending or international tourism receipts).

Domestic travel spending is expected to grow by 7.0% in 2015 to ₹ 5,737.5bn, and rise by 7.2% pa to ₹ 11,448.7bn in 2025.

Visitor exports are expected to grow by 5.2% in 2015 to ₹ 1,287.7bn, and rise by 6.3% pa to ₹ 2,377.2bn in 2025.



▶ Breakdown of Travel & Tourism's Total Contribution to GDP, 2014



The Travel & Tourism industry contributes to GDP and employment in many ways as detailed on page 2.

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is three times greater than its direct contribution.

- (a) Supply Chain **48.7%**
- (b) Investment **0.1%**
- (c) Government Collective **1.7%**

All values are in constant 2014 prices & exchange rates

Source: WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015

Top 10 Source Markets for FTAs in India (2014)

1. USA (17.62%)	3. Bangladesh (10.22%)	5. Australia (4.75%)	7. Malaysia (3.65%)	9. Sri Lanka (2.54%)
2. UK (11.44%)	4. Canada (4.81%)	6. Russian Federation (3.91%)	8. Germany (2.58%)	10. China (2.25%)



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MoT banks on new Tourism Policy

The new National Tourism Policy should help to boost the growth of tourism so that its contribution to the GDP of the economy also goes up from the present 6.8%, says the Tourism Minister. He also believes that the policy should be framed with the participation of all stakeholders to ensure everyone delivers with responsibility.



SAMAPTI DAS

The Union Ministry of Tourism recently held a meeting for formulating the new National Tourism Policy, 2015, with the representatives of tourism departments of state governments and union territories (UTs) as a part of the consultation process with the stakeholders in New Delhi. On the occasion, **Dr Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State (MoS) for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge) and MoS for Civil Aviation,

announced on May 15, it will emphasise on the issues discussed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and shall be a revenue generator as India shares a very little of 0.64 per cent of the international tourism. Dr Sharma also says, "We hope that the policy also becomes an employment generator for our youth.

Tourism involves a lot of women partners and I am sure that this will help in women empowerment also. This new tourism policy will definitely bring a revolutionary change in the tourism industry of our country."

The minister requests everyone to portray our country

on a positive note. Even if any mishap occurs, that should be brought to the Ministry's notice but should not be hyped too much. The Minister concludes by saying that all measures are being taken to prevent any kind of mishaps and every issue will be addressed from time to time with a regular monitoring.

The new National Tourism Policy will . . .

- ➔ Generate revenues for the country
- ➔ Generate employment for the youth
- ➔ Help in women empowerment



Dr Mahesh Sharma
Minister of State (MoS) for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge) and MoS for Civil Aviation

We hope that the policy also becomes an employment generator for our youth. Tourism involves a lot of women partners and I am sure that this will help in women empowerment also

says that the New Tourism Policy should become the instrument for substantially increasing India's share in global tourism.

Dr Sharma adds, "It's a matter of pleasure that we discussed about the new National Tourism Policy 2015, which is being desired for a long time, since the year 2002. On this occasion the chief secretaries and representatives of the states and the UTs gathered together for a two day conference to have deliberations and discussions on the issues related to tourism." The Minister is optimistic about receiving a positive response from the partners and stakeholders. He is also sure that when the new tourism policy will be

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Kerala's best foot forward

With the launch of the 'Visit Kerala 2015-16' campaign, the state expects to receive more and more tourists.



SAMAPTI DAS

Dr Mahesh Sharma, Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) and MoS for Civil Aviation, launched "Visit Kerala" 2015-16, an all-year tourism campaign that promises to present travellers to Kerala, a lifetime experience of the state's natural beauty, cultural splendour, culinary traditions and hospitality.

"Kerala needs to be promoted across the world," says Dr Sharma, who promises central assistance to the state to raise the profile of the state as a top tourist destination in the world. Describing cleanliness, security and hospitality as the three major ingredients of a successful tourism model, Dr Sharma says the country needs to propagate its culture and heritage around the world through tourism.

He says, "Kerala has got a lot of potential in form of greenery and heritage. I promise that the state will receive all kinds of help from the Ministry and the Government of India to promote itself."



A P Anilkumar
Tourism Minister, Kerala

Commnen Chandy, Chief Minister, Kerala, addressed the launch ceremony of 'Visit Kerala' through a video message. He said that visitors to Kerala during 2015-16 would find the state's destinations more attractive and full of surprises.

Dr Lalit K Panwar, Union Tourism Secretary, Govt of India, who was also present at the event, says that creativity and imagination by the state tourism department have sustained the visitor's interest in Kerala over the years.

"Ayurveda and backwaters would be incorporated in Central Government's global

tourism promotion campaign," Dr Panwar says, adding that Kerala has become as a "role model" for other states in promoting tourism through its multidimensional programmes.

A P Anilkumar, Tourism Minister, Kerala, says, "Starting this Vishu (Kerala New Year), on April 15, up to the next Vishu in 2016, every visitor to Kerala will experience the state like never before. Every visitor will take home memories that will last a lifetime."

Anilkumar says that this year the 'Visit Kerala' campaign has been launched to give special packages to tourists travelling to the state. He says, "We are in talks with airlines that will provide special discounted fares to the state to attract more visitors." He informs that only 25,000 foreign tourists arrived in Kerala when the Kerala tourism campaign was started 20 years ago. But recently 9 lakh 35 thousand foreign tourists was declared to have visited the state with the number of domestic tourists touching over one crore.

Connecting smaller cities

► Contd. from page 3

er-known products for the period from March-August to make India a 365-day destination. We are also sensitive towards the issue of safety. We realise that unless we have a one-to-one connect with buyers we will not arrive on the international scene. We are also initiating online training programmes with tour operators whom we feel are the most important aspect of contributing to the growth of the tourism sector. As soon as guests arrive at the airport, we are also giving a booklet which will have all the tips for happy travelling; this is an add-on feature to the welcome card.

QWhat are the new destinations that the Ministry will be promoting?

We now have two great flagship programmes — 'Swadesh Darshan' and 'PRASAD' through which we are showcasing new themes. Under 'PRASAD' we rejuvenate and augment the infrastructure facilities in pilgrimage places, starting from the sites like Tirupati and under this we will ensure that tourists have seamless experience

in visiting the deities. To begin with, we are taking 12 cities where we are dovetailing our funds with 'HRIDAY'; we are now in the process of engaging consultants, who can be international or domestic consultants. The pilgrimage sites include Kamakhya, Varanasi, Amritsar and Amravati. The whole concept of developing a tourist destination should be holistic and we need global standards of infrastructure. Through 'Swadesh Darshan' we are introducing new destinations and have themes like Desert Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Krishna Circuit, North East Circuit and Coastal Circuit.

QHow effective are roadshows in promoting a destination?

Roadshows are one of the most effective ways of showcasing or marketing your country, where we have closed-door meetings with people of the region and we get to gain as these meetings help us understand what are the needs of the travellers.

QWhat prompted the change in name

from eVisa to eTourist Visa?

Earlier the name was Tourist Visa-on-Arrival enabled with ETA. There was a slight confusion, as earlier we had 12 countries getting VoA and later when they switched over to the online system there were some tourists who thought they could just board the flight and get a Visa-on-Arrival at the airport. We noticed that there was some discomfort because of this notion so the Ministry of Home Affairs took a prompt call as the whole idea of eTourist Visa is to provide cent per cent comfort to tourists.

Top of Mind

- ➔ Soon, MoT will ensure air connectivity in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities
- ➔ Need to double up the figures for FTA arrivals by the close of 2016-2017
- ➔ Promote lesser-known products for the period (March-August) to make India a 365-day destination

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Now, 15 reasons to visit Dubai

With new tour packages being introduced online for the India market, Lama Tours hopes to welcome more Indians to the UAE. Kulwant Singh, CEO and Managing Director, Lama Group, tells TRAVTALK about India being one of the most lucrative markets for the UAE and expects the Indian arrivals to grow year on year.



SAMAPTI DAS

Lama Tours recently held their Annual roadshow in four cities and the first one started in Delhi on the April 6, 2015, at Le Meridien, New Delhi. This also happened to be the 13TH year that the group came to India. The event witnessed the presence of big and popular faces from the travel industry both from India as well as the UAE. **Kulwant Singh**, CEO and Managing Director, Lama Group, says, "The roadshow is basically focused on outbound business out of India to the UAE and we have got about 20 co-participants with us who are representing various kinds of products from the UAE such as excursions, lavish hotels, budget hotels that the Indian customers would always like to look forward to."

Talking about the Indian market, Singh added that India is the most lucrative market for them and the passion for the Indian travellers continues. According to him, the highest number of visitors from India visited the UAE last year. Singh says, "This year, in the first quarter, we recorded nearly 22 to 23 per cent growth over last year and we hope that this continues even in the second and third quarter. India is very important for us as the trend of Indian travellers are changing to a three

“India is very important for us as the trend of Indian travellers are changing to a three nights to four or five-night stay with a combination of Dubai and Abu Dhabi.”



Kulwant Singh
CEO and Managing Director
Lama Group

nights to four or five-night stay with a combination of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Hence, it is becoming more and more important for us to target this market."

This year Lama Tours is planning to introduce new products and tour packages online so that there will be inventory available and people will be able to book online packages with live inventory on its system. Besides that, many other combos will

be launched which will be called 'Fifteen reasons to visit Dubai in 2015.' Singh explains, "The whole roadshow is themed around 2015 and fifteen most important reasons to visit Dubai. In that we are going to have 15 most exclusive packages which had not been in the market ever. India market and the travel trade will witness these 15 exclusive packages and will be able to book from Lama Tours in the next couple of months."

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Hong Kong	Harbour Grand Kowloon	Harbour Club Court View Room	Club Room
Dubai	Atlantis The Palm	Deluxe Room with Palm Beach View	Beach View Room
Rome	De La Ville Intercontinental	Executive Room with Balcony & Garden View	Executive Room with View
Paris	Hyatt Regency Paris Etoile	Deluxe Room with Eiffel Tower View	Deluxe View Room
London	Cumberland	Jimi Hendrix Suite	Suite
New York	Waldorf Astoria	Superior Guest Room	Guest Room
Las Vegas	Caesars Palace	Forum Tower Deluxe King Room	Deluxe Room
Los Angeles	Loews Hollywood Hotel	Hollywood Sign View Room	Hollywood Room
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FHRAI Convention in Bhubaneswar in Sept 2015

The Golden Jubilee Convention of Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) will be held in Bhubaneswar between September 25 and 27. MayFair Lagoon Hotel Bhubaneswar will be the venue for the annual conven-



tion. The theme of the Golden Jubilee Convention will be 'Atithi Devo Bhava'. Government of Orissa will be supporting the convention. Being the golden jubilee convention, the Federation is expecting around 1,200 delegates for the convention.

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Odisha gets ready for 5 million tourists

With the Nabakalebar festival scheduled to be held in July this year at Puri, Odisha strengthens its infrastructure to welcome tourists in large numbers. Along with the domestic market, the state is also looking at increasing foreign tourist arrivals.



TT BUREAU

Odisha has always been a preferred tourist spot for domestic visitors. "In 2013 we welcomed 9.8 million domestic tourists whereas in 2014 the

IAS, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Department of Tourism & Culture, Government of Odisha. While the international tourists also grew by over 10 per cent, Odisha tourism is making

Odisha is developing the critical tourism infrastructure in all the tourist places as well as focusing on safe and honorable tourism," adds Padhee.

This year is special for the state with the Nabakalebar festival being held this year. "Nabakalebar is the periodical renewal of the wooden images of Lord, Jagannath, Bhalabhadara, Subhadra and Sudarshanat the Puri temple. 2015 is the fortunate year, where Nabakalebar is going to take place. This year the Puri Rath Yatra will be renamed as the Nabakalebar Rath Yatra and is going to be special for devotees from across the world. Seeing the new avatar of Lords is in itself a great thing and this festival falls every 12 to 19 years based on Hindu calendar," explains Padhee.



tourist attractions with regular police patrolling.

A drawback in promoting the state internationally is that Odisha has no international air connectivity. "We have been urging the Centre to facilitate international air connectivity to Bhubaneswar in order to boost tourism sector. Although Bhubaneswar was declared an International airport in 2013, international flights are yet to be facilitated from the airport," highlights Padhee.

Along with additions to its infrastructure, the state tourism has also gone for a brand image makeover and is becoming more and more active on social media. Padhee mentions, "We are focussing on the European market and the Buddhist circuit, internationally".

Odisha is also all geared to welcome a large number of hoteliers and host FHRAI's golden jubilee convention in Bhubaneswar, this year.

“Keeping the international tourism standard in mind, Odisha is developing the critical tourism infrastructure in all the tourist places as well as focusing on safe and honorable tourism.”



Dr Arabinda K Padhee
IAS, Commissioner-cum-Secretary
Department of Tourism & Culture,
Government of Odisha

footfall increased to 10.08 million. In the same years foreign tourists were 65,000-67,000 in 2013 and 77,000 in 2014," says Dr. Arabinda K Padhee,

efforts to tap into a larger market share of foreign visitors.

"Keeping the international tourism standard in mind,

Odisha's popular Rathayatra is held in June-July each year and it draws around 3-4 million tourists in a span of 10-12 days. This year the num-

bers are expected to be even higher, with a minimum around 5 million tourists. The tourism department has undertaken several projects to attract more pilgrims and tourists during the mega festival; this includes the construction of toilet complexes and wayside amenities. An interpretation centre and a craft complex are also being built.

sanctuaries and a 480-km long coastline, along with UNESCO heritage monuments, Odisha has something for everyone. The art and architecture can be dated back to the Kalinga war, recreating an important turn of events in India's history.

Beyond religious tourism, Odisha has a lot more to offer. From biosphere reserves and ecotourism spots to natural



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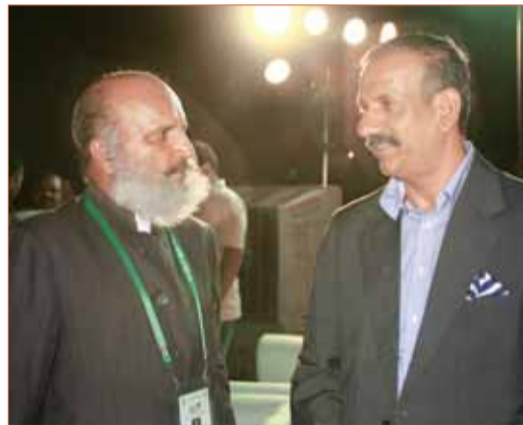
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Back to home turf: GITB 2015

Vasundhara Raje, Chief Minister (CM) of Rajasthan, inaugurated the seventh edition of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB), a B2B inbound travel exhibition, on April 19. GITB 2015 was organised from April 19-21 by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), in association with the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India, and the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan. Till date, GITB has hosted 1,817 foreign tour operators and covered 50 countries.



Luxury family travel on the rise

Special ATM 2015 seminar sessions will evaluate impact and value of the local and global family travel market as 25 per cent of MENA residents opt for luxury accommodation and 20 per cent choose to fly first or business for leisure.

TT BUREAU

The number of wealthy families making travel a high-spend priority is on the rise, and this will be a major focus of the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2015 seminar series as the region's inbound and outbound travel professionals look to capitalise on this niche market opportunity. According to the latest YouGov report, the top three luxury holiday destinations for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) residents are the UAE (14 per cent), Italy (10 per cent) and Turkey (five per cent). Top-end hotels look set to profit from this trend with over a third of MENA residents usually staying in luxury hotels when traveling for leisure.

Looking at a region-wide breakdown, around one-quarter of GCC residents (27 per cent) and Levant residents (23 per cent) stay in luxury hotels compared to 17 per cent of North African residents.

“This trend for luxury family travel offers opportunities for tour operators to create tailor-made packages that take into account not only family needs, but also the cultural considerations unique to the MENA region.”



Nadege Noblet
Exhibition Manager, Arabian Travel Market

Meanwhile, in terms of specific countries, one-third of Bahrain residents (34 per cent) usually stay in luxury hotels – the highest percentage in the entire MENA region.

“This trend for luxury family travel offers opportunities for tour operators to create tailor-made packages that take into account not only family needs, but also the cultural considerations unique to the MENA region, and this opens up tremendous marketing opportunities. Luxury, and family luxury travel in particular, is a

trend to watch, and one that will be covered extensively at this year's show,” says **Nadege Noblet**, Exhibition Manager, Arabian Travel Market.

“Over half of MENA residents arrange all aspects of family travel themselves, yet 72 per cent of MENA residents would book an all-inclusive luxury package if they were available. This is a phenomenon that has not as yet manifested itself in the GCC, apart from the Rixos Bab Al Bahr in Ras Al Khaimah; although it has long been a cost-friendly family

option in Egypt's key coastal destinations,” she adds.

Two ILTM@ATM seminar sessions will look at various aspects of luxury travel: “Biting into Gourmet Travel” and “Luxury Family Travel”. Moderated by Destinations of the World News and featuring a panel of luxury travel specialists, the Luxury Family Travel seminar will take place on May 6 at the Visa sponsored Seminar Theatre. Here they will pinpoint some of the key trends of today's affluent families. The panel discussion will wrap with an evaluation of the impact and value of the local and global family travel market within the overarching domestic and international luxury tourism industries.

Leaning On Luxury

72 per cent of MENA residents would book an all-inclusive luxury package if they were available

Sanjay Datta is Skål Delhi President



The New Committee for Skål International Delhi for 2015-17 has taken over from April 18. The newly elected committee has **Sanjay Datta** as President, **Sunil Ghadiok** as Vice President, **Greesh Bindra** as Secretary and **Ranjit Vig** as Treasurer. The other members of the Executive Committee include **Sanjiv Tyagi**, **Kamal Hingorani**, **Rajat Kumar**, **Ankush Nijhawan** and **Homa Mistry**.

“The new team shall strive hard to continue the legacy and our endeavour will be to ensure maximum participation by all members. Skål is for business amongst friends and we shall give members opportunities for business through this platform,” Datta said.

According to Ghadiok, the club is maintaining second position amongst all Skål world clubs and it will strive to be Number One.

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Sri Lanka's Perfect Moments Betting big on India

Denise Lanz, GM, Sita World Travel Lanka, says that according to the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority, the arrivals from India have increased 21% already for the first two months of 2015.

As one of its biggest sellers of rooms in Hong Kong, Akquasun has pushed sales of Regal Group of Hotels in the last financial year to propel it ahead of the game.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q What is your perception of the Sri Lankan market?

Sri Lanka has a lot of potential for tourism and the businesses are ready to invest. International hotel chains are coming up with their properties in the very near future. I also see a good increase in numbers of small boutique hotels and homestays. But of course, there are still a lot of things which need to be improved, like the quality of the roads in certain areas, the highway construction to the north and a solution for the traffic in Colombo.

The new government is giving the people of Sri Lanka a very positive perception for the future, I have my fingers crossed for the target of 2.3 million tourists in 2016 for Sri Lanka.



Denise Lanz
GM
Sita World Travel Lanka

Q How do Indians respond to the Sri Lankan market?

Indians respond very positively to Sri Lanka as a travel destination. According to the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority, the arrivals from India have increased 21 per cent already for the first two months of 2015 against 2014. This is very promising as the increase of all other nationalities is at 12 per cent.

Q What are the most popular destinations in Sri Lanka?

The Wonder of Asia has a lot to offer. There is so much to explore in Sri Lanka; the heritage sites in Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapuram, Kandy with the Temple of Tooth (very popular in August during Pehera Festival), Scenic Hill Country and the tea plantations around Nuwara Eliya, Wildlife at Yala National Park and then of course, the beaches.

Q What are your marketing strategies for 2015?

We opened the Sita office in February 2015. Sita aims for the best quality products and services, high customer and employee satisfaction combined with healthy growth and sustainable profitability.

Q What is your USP?

Sita focuses on unique experiences and impressions of a particular intensity and profundity which create "Perfect Moments" for our guests and clients.

TT BUREAU

Akquasun Hong Kong, one of the leading inbound companies in Hong Kong, has sold a record number of room nights for the Regal Group of Hotels Hong Kong in the last financial year of 2013-2014 becoming one of their top producers for the year.

Spearheaded by Vien, Akquasun Hong Kong caters to three different market segments namely leisure, group series and MICE. **BA Rahim**, Group Director and CEO, Akquasun, says, "Akquasun Hong Kong has been seeing tremendous growth every year and today stands as one of the leading inbound companies handling the Indian market. It is popular for its services, rates and flexibility that it offers clients."

Regal Group of Hotels has a local GSA office in India represented by Iris Repts and is headed by **Alefiya Singh**. Revealing the kind of growth the hotel group has witnessed,

she adds, "Regal Group has seen a growth of about 20 per cent over last year and we are very happy about it."

Regal Hotels International offers travellers extraordinary services and luxury amenities. With a portfolio consisting of over

Regal Airport Hotel and Regal Hong Kong are a known five-star brand for the elite and corporate travellers. In its endeavor to cater to each strata Regal has introduced I CLUB hotels in Hong Kong which has been awarded as one of the trendi-



BA Rahim
Group Director and CEO
Akquasun



Alefiya Singh
Director
IRIS Repts India

9,300 rooms and more than 100 restaurants and bars, Regal is one of the largest hotel operators in Hong Kong with an expanding presence in mainland China – Shanghai, Chengdu, Xian, Denzhou, and Foshan.

est and green boutique situated close to the business center, thereby fitting the bill for business travelers and the youth segment and clients wishing to stay on the island.



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Accor boosts French connection with India

As India continues to be a key market for growth for the French hotel operator Accor, Jean Michel Cassé, Senior Vice President, Operations-Accor, India talks about its commitment to growing the Indian market in the long-term with plans to strengthen the presence across the Tier 1, 2 and 3 cities with Novotel and ibis brands.



MEGHA PAUL

Q What are your expansion plans in 2015?

India continues to be a key market for Accor with strong demands across the leisure and corporate travellers. It is one of the world's most dynamic economies offering prospective hotel developments. Accor is uniquely placed as the only international hotel chain in India with brands that span across luxury (Sofitel), upscale (Pullman), leisure (Grand Mercure), business (Novotel) to economy (ibis) brands. At Accor India, we currently have a network of 31 hotels and three convention centres in India and we are looking to open 11 new hotels alongside the Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC) — South Asia's largest integrated exhibition and convention centre. By the end of 2015, we will have 42 hotels ranging from upscale, leisure and business to economy across key cities in Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Lavasa, New Delhi, Goa, Kochi and Nashik.

Q What do you think about the domestic and inbound tourism potential in India?

“Close to 70 per cent of our existing network is in the Tier 1 cities and with an advent of better locations emerging from Tier 2 and 3 cities, we are now actively looking for development opportunities in the second generation cities with the Novotel and ibis brands.”

Jean Michel Cassé
Senior Vice President
Operations-Accor, India



India is the second-fastest growing market and one of the key initiatives that we have taken is to expand our footprint in the country. Accor is committed to growing the Indian market in the long-term with our plan to strengthen our presence across the Tier 1, 2 and 3 cities. Close to 70 per cent of our existing network is in the Tier 1 cities and with an advent of better locations emerging from Tier 2 and 3 cities, we are now actively looking for development opportunities in the second genera-

tion cities with the Novotel and ibis brands. India is a dynamic and growing destination and initiatives such as the recently announced eTourist Visa policy, structural plans for airport developments and the boosting of regional connectivity will drive inbound tourism.

Q What are the different destinations at which you receive maximum traffic during different times of the year?

Mid-market and economy hotels form a large percentage of the total inventory, accounting for nearly half of the number of hotel rooms in the country. Accor is expanding rapidly in this segment with the Novotel and ibis brands. Increased domestic travel in leisure market opened up new opportunities for development in cities such as Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Goa and Vishakhapatnam. The key growth driver for India's hospitality industry is based on the study done for demand of over a billion domestic traveller markets.

Q What would you say is the USP of your group?

In India, our hotels welcome a large number of domestic travellers, which further strengthens the brand promises. Accor hotels sit in three segments from budget to luxury which are constantly reinventing our concept to satisfy the needs of business and leisure customers around the globe. We have a unique brand portfolio from luxury to economy in which the group continues to leverage for growth penetration into the India market. Localisation is another important strategy. Consistent with Accor's promise of "Born in France,

Made in India" for all its brands, we have added "Spice It" as the signature restaurant across all ibis hotels in India to cater to the local market. "Spice It" at ibis offers affordable and quality F&B options. It has a unique 8-hour all-day-dining breakfast concept starting from 4am. Given the importance of the MICE segment, ibis also offers meeting rooms and facilities for business and corporate travellers, which is uncommon in the economy hotel segment. Another added feature which sets the ibis brand apart from all other hotels in the economy segment is the fitness facility offerings for its guests.

New at Accor

- By the end of 2015, Accor plans to have 42 hotels ranging from upscale, leisure and business to economy across key Indian cities
- "Spice It" at ibis offers affordable and quality F&B options

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EXHIBITIONS

GPS '16 will be 5-city show

After a successful edition of Global Panorama Showcase in Nagpur this February, Jagsons Travels is busy preparing for a bigger show next year that will travel to four other cities.

HAZEL JAIN

Nagpur-based Jagsons Travels is setting the stage for a bigger and better Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)



Harmandeep Singh Anand, MD, Jagsons Travels and Hon Secretary General, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

We have short-listed the cities and have tentatively planned Ahmedabad in west, Kolkata in east, Trichy in south and Chandigarh in north



Madhu Saliankar, Director EntReps Solutions

Suppliers will have the option to participate in minimum two cities and we will price it accordingly with price combinations

He claims that GPS will be the first show of the year, which will travel to the four new cities back-to-back only in August 2016. He adds, "While Nagpur will be open to every-

from countries that have good connectivity to Nagpur on Air Arabia like Turkey and Russia.

Madhu Saliankar, Director, EntReps Solutions, says that the focus is only to reach Tier II and Tier III cities. "They are the feeder markets to bigger cities. For north it is Chandigarh, Amritsar and Jalandhar. In the west, Mumbai is the gateway even though Gujarat contributes a large chunk of numbers. So we need to concentrate on these feeder markets," she says. The main idea behind a travelling show, Saliankar says, is to increase awareness about tourism products among the trade in smaller markets and get them in contact with the right people. "Their product knowledge is limited and they rely heavily on someone else's experience to sell to their clients. A travel agent sitting in Jhalna, Rajkot or Mehsana does not have too much exposure and access to information, the DMCs or the tourism boards. We want to bridge this gap and bring the information and contacts to them on their home turf," she adds.

Taking the show to multiple cities will ensure participation from surrounding regions as well. "Ahmedabad will be the host city so that we can get agents even

next year. Starting from just one city, GPS 2016 will touch five cities in total in order to cover all regions of India.

one in the trade, the other cities will be by invitation only. Of the exhibitors in Nagpur, 30 per

Harmandeep Singh Anand, MD, Jagsons Travels and Hon Secretary General, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), reveals more. "We have short-listed the cities and have tentatively planned Ahmedabad in west, Kolkata in east, Trichy in south and Chandigarh in north. The show will start from Nagpur on January 8, 2016 and will be a three-day show – two days of trade and the last day for B2C. The other cities will be for two days and only focus on the trade," he says.



(L-R): Harmandeep Singh Anand, MD and Rishiraj Singh Anand, Joint MD, Jagsons Travels at GPS Nagpur 2015

cent of them will be from the city." GPS will also be hosting international buyers this year

from nearby cities like Mt Abu and Udaipur up to Jaipur thereby covering parts of Rajasthan as well. For the east, we can bring in agents from cash-rich Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Darjeeling and parts of the North East as well," she says.

EntReps will start with about 40 suppliers since this is the first time it will be taking the show to four cities. "They will have the option to participate in minimum two cities and we will price it accordingly with price combinations," Saliankar adds. There will be a post-event tour to Pench and other local sites again after Nagpur for all hosted outbound buyers.

Learnings from last year

After considering the takeaways from this year's show, Jagsons has tweaked the format. "We will not mix product presentations with the B2B sessions. In case anyone wants to do a presentation we will organise it before or after the event and invite agents from the local market but not do it simultaneously. We can even do it over cocktails and dinner. The smaller markets are not day markets; they start 11 am and they don't mind going till late," Saliankar reveals.

One challenge in smaller cities for exhibitors, she recalls, is that when buyers see a DMC or a tourism board or even a foreigner, they are intimidated and hesitate to approach them. "They just walk by till someone breaks the ice," she says. Speaking about this year's popular products, she says that Maldives and Mauritius have been very popular in these markets and so is Star Cruises.

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Networking in the land of heritage

▶ Contd. from page 12



Sports Tourism fast coming into play

It launched a B2B portal only in February this year but it has already set its sights high. Fans On Stands partners are looking to sign up more than 400 agents in the next few months by creating awareness about the rising popularity of sports tourism among Indians.

HAZEL JAIN

In its sixth year of operations, FansOnStands.com was a purely B2C product until early this year when it launched

business but we used to get a lot of agent queries as well. Eventually, we decided to synergise with them. Agents are good at what they do and we are good at what we do and it

access to everything without going back and forth with us. The portal is simple and very easy to use. Every time we sign up an agent, our team visits them for training. We also have regular workshops and are working on incentive programmes for the owner as well as the counter staff." The portal has a payment gateway for which FOSS sends an automated link against the invoice for the fulfillment. It has all three options: cheque, RTGS and card payment.

Outlining geographical potential points, Raghu earmarks Tier 2 cities as having big chunks of prospective customers. "Unfortunately, only a small percentage of this is aware of such products. We will now be focusing on creating awareness in places like Nagpur, Chandigarh, Kolhapur, Coimbatore, Kochi, Ahmedabad, Baroda and Surat. We will close this gap and get closer to the customers through our agent partners," he says.

Explaining their plans for this year, **Afraaz Masters**, Senior Project Manager of FOSS, says, "Over the past couple of months of launching FOSS Partners, we have taken

The company is currently focusing on making the Indian travel industry sit up and take note of how sports tourism could be a serious contributor to the outbound tourism market

bers it did for the ICC World Cup. Without divulging numbers though, he says, "Our strategy for the World Cup was to focus largely on selling hospitality tickets to our network of corporate customers and servicing any incoming queries through our B2B platform."

What's next? "We are completely focusing on Singapore F1, BNP Paribas WTA Finals in Singapore followed by the UEFA EURO 2016. The commission on the Grand Prix tickets will be between seven to 15 per cent," Masters adds.



“Retailing to corporates and HNIs was our core business but we used to get a lot of agent queries as well. Eventually, we decided to synergise with them.”

Arun Raghu
Director, FOSS

FansOnStands Sports (FOSS) Partners exclusively for the travel trade in February 2015 at the Global Panorama Showcase in Nagpur.

Speaking on why this move, **Arun Raghu**, Director, FOSS, says, "Retailing to corporates and HNIs was our core

would be another revenue channel for both."

The B2B platform — FOSS Partners — gives the registered agents complete access to the ticket inventory worldwide. Raghu explains, "We decided to develop a platform wherein the agents could get



“Over the past couple of months of launching FOSS Partners, we have taken the time to understand the feedback we get from our partners.”

Afraaz Masters
Senior Project Manager
Fans On Stands

the time to understand the feedback we get from our partners and we're working on a new release that would incorporate a number of features that would help the travel agents communicate details of events to their customers and allow them to be able to package these events better."

if pushed appropriately. "We firmly believe that FOSS Partners is the perfect tool to do that. We are looking to sign up over 400 agents across metros over the next few months," Masters reveals.

The popularity of sports tourism is evident by the num-

FOSS benefits

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New hopes flourish at new venue

► Contd. from page 18



HOTELS

MICE & leisure get together

In a freewheeling interview with **TRAVTALK**, T P Sreejith, General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Agra, speaks about the evolution of the Agra hospitality segment and what new does the hotel launched in December last year bring to the table.

MEGHA PAUL

Upscale positioning

The trendy upscale DoubleTree by Hilton Agra is set in the heart of the city and is minutes away from the Taj Mahal and is among the few hotels offering view of the magnificent mausoleum. It is also near the popular attractions and shopping districts, including the Agra Fort, Akbar's Tomb, Jama Masjid, Ram Baghand Kinari Bazaar. Thus, DoubleTree by Hilton has an exceptional location. Guests driving from Delhi can easily access the hotel from



T P Sreejith
General Manager
DoubleTree by Hilton Agra

air area; a 1,820-square-foot Coronation Room divisible into three that accommodates up to 200; Concourse, a multi-

the next big destination for conferences, meetings, social events and grand destination weddings. The improved connectivity of the city with the country's capital, New Delhi, with the Expressway has eased its accessibility for short vacations and MICE business. However, leisure continues to be the main demand source, unaffected in volume by the day-return possibility, via the Expressway. The focussed promotion on heritage arc additionally promises to bring in footfalls domestically and internationally.



the Delhi-Agra Yamuna Expressway. Moreover, complemented by the DoubleTree by Hilton brand's signature offerings, we have become one of the most sought-after upscale hotels in the city.

Cashing in on MICE

Our hotel has extensive conference and event facilities that include a 3,840-square-foot Grand Ballroom which can accommodate up to 425 people. It is connected to an open-

function hall, for up to 75 people; two boardrooms and a 24-hour business centre. This is complemented by state-of-the-art audio visual facilities and inspired catering services, providing an ideal setting for exclusive business events, social gatherings and grand weddings.

Leisure: The mainstay

Agra is one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in India. It has become

Best of Both

- DoubleTree by Hilton Agra is minutes away from the Taj Mahal, and other tourism hotspots are easily accessible too
- The hotel has extensive conference and event facilities boosting MICE

The Fern opens in Mundra, Gujarat

■ The Fern Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of The Fern Residency, Mundra a mid-scale business hotel in the Kutch district of Gujarat. The hotel has 74 rooms, multi cuisine restaurants, state-of-the-art banquet hall and meeting room. The Fern Residency is the only branded chain of hotel in the vicinity of Mundra Port. The hotel is managed by Concept Hospitality & is a unit of Hotel Aarti International.



Mundra in Gujarat is one of the largest private ports in India and is becoming a hub for all the major exports and imports from India. Gandhidham is located 55 km from Mundra and is easily accessible from Kandla Port and Tuna port, which is one of the biggest petrochemical activity centres in India. The hotel has air connectivity through Bhuj Airport which is 60 km away and well connected to all major parts of Gujarat.



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GITB thrust to inbound tourism

► Contd. from page 20



Sayaji's Effotel opens doors

Sayaji always claims to be standing out of the crowd due to their tagline 'Yours Truly.' Vishal Kumar, Group Head Sales and Marketing, Sayaji Group of Hotels, tells about the group's future plans and the USP of the properties.

TT BUREAU

What are your upcoming ventures and momentum of Sayaji in the Indian hospitality industry?

We have our properties in five major Tier 2 cities in India. We have recently launched our business hotel brand, Effotel, in Indore and we have many projects in the pipeline. Instead of increasing the number of properties, we believe in enhancing our brand credibility. In cities like Indore, Pune and Vadodara, where we are operating for more than a decade, we have become one of the most preferred hotels.

What is the main USP of the properties?

We are different amongst others due to our tagline – 'Yours Truly'. More than being the hosts ourselves, we try to make our guests comfortable and feel like home.

Guest Centric

Sayaji has been operating for more than a decade in cities like Indore and Pune and is one of the most preferred hotels

The company is eyeing growth in Tier 1 cities like Amritsar, Delhi – NCR, Manesar, Jaipur, Bengaluru and Hyderabad

“We are different amongst others due to our tagline – 'Yours Truly'. More than being the hosts ourselves, we try to make our guests comfortable and feel like home.”

Vishal Kumar

Group Head Sales and Marketing
Sayaji Group of Hotels



We believe in 'You' centric hospitality where guests' comfort is priority. We have a special team to analyse every guest's suggestions. Great food is Sayaji's forte. Be it Awadhi, Mughlai, grilled, continental, oriental or region specific, our food is ought to be unforgettably delicious.

When and where are you planning to open up new properties?

We are coming up in Kolhapur and looking for further expansion in cities like Raipur, Ujjain and Vadodara. We are doing major renovations at all our existing properties. We are looking forward to grow in Tier 1 cities like Amritsar, Delhi – NCR, Manesar, Jaipur, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

What are your observations on the performance of hotel chains in the Indian hospitality scenario?

In the last couple of years, though hospitality industry has experienced a slight

slowdown in growth, occupancy levels have been steady. The hotel chains had to slash room rates. However, the chains are putting in extra efforts to attract different sections of occupants by enhancing quality services and elaborate branding. Many prestigious global hotel chains are optimistically eyeing India as it is the world's second fastest growing hospitality market after China.

Do you think hotel chains are a growing market in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in India?

Certainly. Most of the Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are emerging commercial centres in their respective states and are witnessing a growing demand from the business and corporate sector. These cities are also witnessing the formation of micro markets with the emergence of budget, mid-market and upscale hotels. This is why the big players in this industry have launched and are launching their budget hotel brands in these cities.

Zone by The Park unveiled in Jaipur

The Park Hotels, pioneers of luxury boutique hotels in India, launches the second property of its Social Catalyst brand 'Zone by The Park' in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Unveiled within three months of the first property launch in Coimbatore, the brand will expand to other cities such as Mahabalipuram, Chennai and Raipur in 2015 itself.

The 47-room property is centrally located at Madho Singh Road, Bani Park, easily accessible from key points in the city. Drawing from The Park's design spirit, the concept envisions an interactive series of buzzing spaces using the best of contemporary design, with creative and playful interiors, multifunctional spaces, great restaurants, bars and vibrant nightlife. Creative elements such as the cool Zone Auto, a Street Cart, a Smoothie BAR and an outdoor terrace, are among the few attractions of Bazaar. Playa by Zone, a vibrantly hued poolside play area for adults, serves quirky cocktails and delicious small plates in a relaxed ambience.



The hotel will be the hub of social interactivity and a preferred choice of stay for contemporary, business, MICE and leisure travelers.

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Xperience Bharat the Cox & Kings way

The Bharat Deko division of Cox & Kings believes that India has a lot to offer to travellers. Prompted by the idea, it has launched 'Xperiential Holidays' that will give tourists the opportunity to explore the unexplored side of India. Yusuf Poonawala, Head - Bharat Deko, Cox & Kings, talks about the thought behind this product.

TT BUREAU

QWhat prompted C&K to launch this unique product?

We have observed that the new-age traveller wants to try out new experiences as they have visited the usual tourist destinations. They also make informed choices about the type of accommodation and the cuisine that they prefer. Seasoned travellers, today, come to us with very specific demands and they are very clear about the kind of experience they seek out of a particular holiday. Regular tour packages may not be able to match up to the expectations of a discerning traveller.

Coinciding with the launch, we have also released a coffee-table book on Xperiential Holidays that describes the different travel experiences and the locations associated with every experience.

QWhat is the kind of response you expect from this?

More than just amenities and comforts that go beyond the must-see

attractions, we aim to create timeless experiences for travellers. Be it camping in the sand dunes of Jaisalmer, a week-long rejuvenation at serene destinations like Coorg and Vythiri or the perfect setting for travellers to soak in the local culture at Hemis Festival, Khajuraho Dance Festival or Goa Carnival, every experience is matchless and worth cherishing. We are very confident about the product and we are already getting a lot of enquiries for the same.

QHow do travel marts in India help the travel trade?

Travel marts, exhibitions, etc. provide an opportunity to bring about a face-to-face encounter with the travel trade, corporate consumers, the burgeoning middle and upper middle class including the elite segment, with the requisite purchasing power. These shows help airlines, National Tourism Organisations, hotels and resorts, transportation companies and tour operators like us to reach the target audience be it the travel trade or the end consumer. The top travel trade fairs have witnessed an increase in participation

“Adventure sports, spa and wellness are becoming popular with travellers. There is also strong acceptance of weekend trips, corporate team-building trips, incentives, conferences and annual conventions.”

Yusuf Poonawala
Head - Bharat Deko
Cox & Kings



over the last few years and this demonstrates the increasing popularity of such events.

QWhat domestic travel trends do you see emerging this year?

The growth in the domestic leisure sector has been phenomenal over the last couple of years. Boost in disposable incomes amongst the emerging middle class, increasing awareness of spending quality time with family and friends, shorter but more frequent breaks such as over a long weekend are the

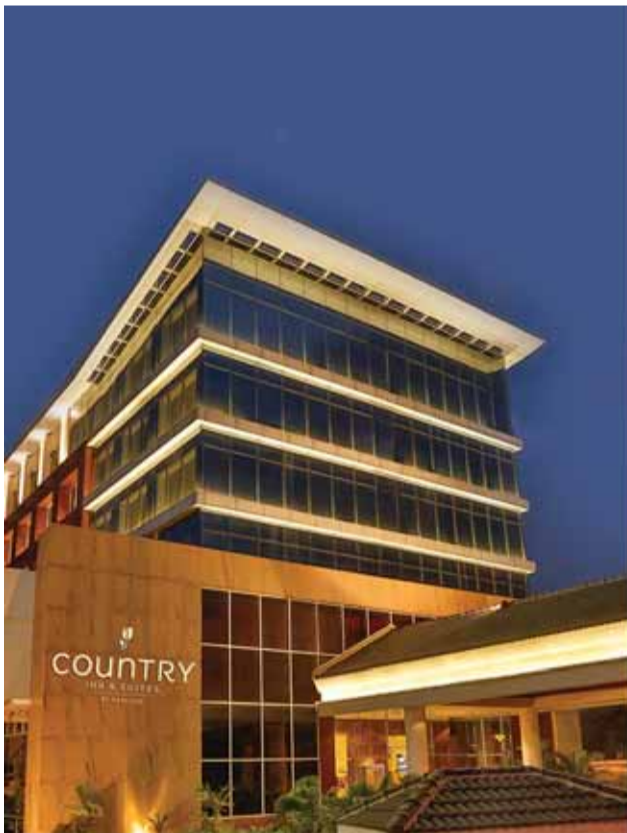
emerging trends. One of the catalysts has been increase in flight connectivity between metros and tourist gateways such as Kochi, Delhi, Jaipur, Bengaluru and the North East.

We expect more customers opting for Xperiential Holidays as this is the new trend. Adventure sports, spa and wellness are becoming popular with travellers. There is also strong acceptance of weekend trips, corporate team-building trips, incentives, conferences and annual conventions.

Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, North East, Goa, Himachal, Bhutan, Gujarat and Andaman are among the top favourite destinations and will continue to enjoy adequate tourist footfall. The Golden Triangle—Delhi, Agra and Jaipur will maintain its popularity this year too.

A glimpse

- Camping - Chamba Camp in Thiksey, camping in Rishikesh, sand dunes of Jaisalmer
- Photography - in Paro (Bhutan), Munnar (Kerala), Pangong (Ladhakh), Ajanta & Ellora
- Heritage - Khajuraho, Hampi, Chail and Konark
- Rejuvenation - Hrishikesh, Sattal, Coorg, Vythiri, Jaipur and Ooty



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Rail Europe, Inc and Rail Europe 4A merge

Rail Europe, Inc and Rail Europe 4A have now consolidated into one business unit — Rail Europe — that will be led by Fabrice Morel. Rail Europe will continue to operate as the largest distributor of European Rail products in the Americas, Middle East, Africa, Oceania and Asia.

TT BUREAU

Rail Europe, Inc and Rail Europe 4A have announced their consolidation into one business unit: Rail Europe. Effective immediately, **Fabrice Morel**, CEO, Rail Europe, will lead the combined organization. Rail Europe will continue to operate as the largest distributor of European Rail products in the Americas, Middle East, Africa, Oceania and Asia.



“We are excited about this consolidation as it will allow us to best serve our partners and customers. With a global staff, we will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, covering the Americas, Middle East, Africa, Oceania, and Asia.”

Fabrice Morel
CEO
Rail Europe

Rail Europe offers an extensive array of European rail products, from rail passes and train tickets, to reserva-

tions, sightseeing tours and travel packages. Rail Europe, Inc is the largest distributor of

European rail products in North America and the one-stop shop for travellers and travel agents to plan and book European rail travel by combining the maps, schedules and fares for more than 50 different train companies across Europe. Rail Europe 4A is the largest distributor of European train tickets and rail passes in Asia, Oceania, South America, Africa and the Middle East.

Under one business unit, Rail Europe, Inc and Rail

Europe 4A will continue to exist as two legal entities, with an ultimate goal to grow the business faster as one consolidated organization. This new approach will allow for a more effective and efficient business model, with the ability to maximize respective strengths and is fully supported by the shareholders of both entities, the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) and VSC Group, the distribution subsidiary of the French National Railways (SNCF).

Morel says, “We are excited about this consolidation as it will allow us to best serve our partners and customers. With a global staff, we will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, covering the Americas, Middle East, Africa, Oceania, and Asia.”

Both entities will continue to offer the best service to their customers, from facilitating the preparation of the trip with useful information and innovative tools, to an unmatched level of after-sales support. When booking with Rail Europe, travellers are guaranteed to receive service in their local language and to pay for their tickets/passes in local currency, and e-ticketing options help to avoid long waiting times at stations once in Europe.

Morel has more than 20 years of travel industry experience, including leadership roles at both Rail Europe, Inc in White Plains, New York, and Rail Europe 4A in Paris. His

extensive rail experience includes the roles of Director of International Business Development at SNCF-Voyages (TGV branch of the French National Railways) and Managing Director of the Rail team alliance of European high-speed rail operators. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of VSC Group.



Full Steam Ahead

➔ Rail Europe will continue to operate as the largest distributor of European Rail products in the Americas, Middle East, Africa, Oceania and Asia

➔ Under one business unit, Rail Europe, Inc and Rail Europe 4A will continue to exist as two legal entities





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Looking to book market share

Hoping to set sales offices in Delhi, Jaipur, Lucknow, Bengaluru and Mumbai and an international office in Bangladesh, Book My Vacationz and Book My Hotelz are looking forward to grow faster. Ravi Barua, CEO and Co-founder, Book My Vacationz and Book My Hotelz, tells about the journey so far and the road ahead.



TT BUREAU

Q Tell us about the products and the services offered by your company.

Book My Vacationz and Book My Hotelz are two new brands launched under the flagship of Sandal Travels. Under Book My Vacationz we book international and domestic holidays. We provide travel solutions to our B2B partners and corporates who have a long association with us. We are into ticketing, hotel booking, cruises, holidays, visa services, MICE, event management and representation business. Book My Hotelz is purely live B2B online hotel booking portal used by our travel partners to facilitate their customers.



“So far, we are satisfied with our expected growth and response we are getting from our North India travel trade. I see bright future and good growth in the coming days and our team is working too hard to meet all the targets.”

Ravi Barua
CEO and Co-founder
Book My Vacationz and Book My Hotelz

Q How is the response from North India?

North India is a tough market. It took a lot of effort for our sales team to visit every agent of the region and teach them offline and online packages. So far, we are satisfied with our expected growth and response we are getting from our North India travel trade. I see bright future and good growth in the coming days and our

team is working too hard to meet all the targets.

Q Potential of online travel agents in Delhi, Punjab and North India?

New Delhi is a huge market. It has no comparison with Punjab. Punjab was a ticketing hub for long for sectors like Europe and the US. Many companies are jumping into

online business which is creating tough competition. We support our associates to get the best rates in the market. If online business needs to survive they need to stick to certain margins.

Q What's the percentage of business booked online?

It all depends upon the sector and services for the online business.

Like today 70 per cent FIT booked through online portals like Europe, the USA, Thailand, Dubai and Australia. Today offline bookings are only for the MICE where customer requires VIP land services and some contact point at each location to take care of the services. For hotels, 100 per cent bookings are done through online portals only.

Q What is your USP?

We are the only professional tour operator of our region which has experience staff at senior level from trade leaders like Thomas Cook, TUI, Yatra etc. This experience helps our trade partners to understand the packages and serve their clientele with better products at lowest possible price. We are helping our trade partners to earn more from single passengers.

Q Any new initiatives that you are planning to take this year?

This year we are reworking on our package website www.bookmyvacationz.com and soon will launch it with 'make your own packages' fea-

ture. Initially we are starting with Thailand and Bali and will keep adding new destinations in the system every month.

Q Anything else that you want to share with us.

Market is growing and we are looking for bigger growth in the market. If all goes well, we hope to have our sales offices in Delhi, Jaipur, Lucknow, Bengaluru, Mumbai and an international office in Bangladesh.

Being The Best

- ➔ Book My Vacationz is the only professional tour operator of the region which has experience staff at senior level from Thomas Cook, TUI, Yatra etc.
- ➔ They are reworking on a package website and soon will launch it with 'make your own packages' feature



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Travel trade v/s the Internet

The travel industry finds itself standing at the crossroads as it ushers in a new era of business with the rise of the Internet alongside the maturing of the discerning traveller.



HAZEL JAIN



Travel agencies are suffering losses in the market due to the new rival – the Internet. We are being increasingly threatened by its popularity specially when it comes to ticket sales by airlines and hotel room bookings. Airline debit memos for reservation rule violations by IATA travel agents are another challenge we are facing. The penalties for reservation rule violation can add up to thousands of rupees when agency employees make such bookings in order to get lower fares.

Manish Syngal
CMD, Dimaz Group



Our main challenge remains creating more revenue streams for our businesses and adopting technology instead of shying away from it. As part of TAFI though, we are educating our members to face these challenges head on. Selling tour packages, hotels, and cruise packages is one option. We are also trying to get onboard technology companies so that members can take advantage of their expertise. Here, I'm referring to smaller agents for whom the costs are very high. The bigger agents are already doing that by themselves.

Zakkir Ahmed Kalarikkal
MD, Trust Travel & Tours & President, TAFI



Too much information on the Internet is a big challenge for us. Clients come to us with limited knowledge and they keep changing their choices as they are unable to make up their mind. I think it is a question of too many options available minus the expertise as to how to plan an itinerary. It is high time we start recognizing the worth of our services and charge a fee for processing the quotes and itineraries. We are travel consultants first and booking agents later.

Anju Tandon
Director, Ark Travels

Every industry has its own set of challenges and so does ours. The top-most challenge according to me faced by large or small-sized travel companies today is lack of well-trained and experienced staff. Since we focus only on FITs, getting staff with experience in both sales as well as operations is rare. We therefore invest time to train them so that they are able to provide good service to clients.

Haresh Koyande
Founder and MD, World Travel Studio
(Winner of Best Tour Operator (West), India Travel Awards)



Tourism is highly taxed in India. Tourists have to pay taxes on airline, hotel and rented cars separately, making it a luxury commodity for majority of Indians. It's time we look at reducing the tax load and bring tourism within their reach. It will definitely help expand the domestic market. Differential taxation across all states in India also impacts inbound traffic. Uniformity will bring in transparency and build confidence amongst foreign tourists.

Amita Nair
Director, Meandering Vacations



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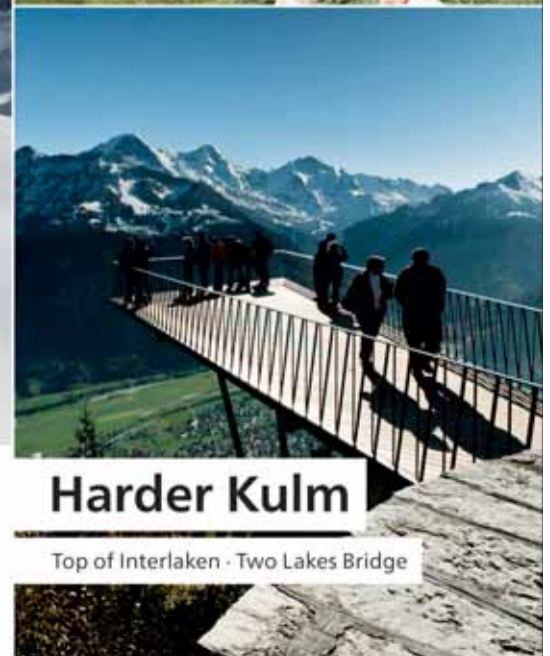
On the journey, this engineering masterpiece of the century, which celebrated its 100th birthday in 2012, awards simply stunning views from the middle of the famous Eiger North Wall. A wonderworld of snow and ice on 3454 metres above sea level.

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From house of brands to a branded house

In a time when every hotel company is launching new brands that target specific demographics, Preferred Hotels has launched a new branding strategy to elevate core awareness of the brand, drive strategic growth of its portfolio and improve market share for its member hotels

 MEGHA PAUL

Chicago-based hotel operator Preferred Hotels Group recently announced its move from a multi-branded business model to one master brand, Preferred Hotels & Resorts. The global provider of sales, marketing and distribution services to

independent luxury hotels will leverage this rebranding to represent the company's commitment to a new consumer-focused approach.

The new approach is designed to elevate core awareness of the brand, drive strategic growth of its portfolio and improve market share for

its member hotels by making it easier for travelers to identify the singular hospitality experience that meets their needs and life and style preferences for each occasion, says **Lindsey Ueberroth**, President & CEO, Preferred Hotels. "In a

expectations and changing travel trends, our new brand architecture creates stronger clarity for the Preferred Hotels & Resorts brand within the marketplace and allows us to elevate and focus attention on our world-class collection of

opportunities to reach more guests, she added.

Effective from now on, all of the company's 650 member hotels and resorts across 85 countries are represented by the Preferred Hotels & Resorts

of five new collections—Legend, LVX, Lifestyle, Connect, and Preferred Residences – which provide a more intuitive way for consumers to search, consider, and book their lodging based on the type of luxury experience they are seeking.



Lindsey Ueberroth, President & CEO, Preferred Hotels (Left) and Saurabh Rai, Area Managing Director-South Asia and Middle East, Preferred Hotels & Resorts

India's Preferred route

Post the rebranding, the group is also looking at expanding its portfolio in India by 2018. "In three years' time we are hoping to take the number of independent hotels in our group to 45 from 30 at present, which would mean 50 per cent growth," **Saurabh Rai**, Area Managing Director-South Asia and Middle East, Preferred Hotels & Resorts points out. Throwing more light on its strategies in the country, Rai elaborates, "We are going for the organic route under which we will grow as our business partners build or acquire new properties." The company, which comprises more than 650 independent luxury hotels, resorts, residences, and hotel groups across 85 countries and entered India in 2002 with one property, partners hotel companies to provide them global reach for marketing, sales and distribution. "The business has been sluggish during the last five years and we have seen de-growth in our business in India," he says. "But now with the economy recovering and India seeing a stable political regime, we hope that we would be able to grow in India at a much higher pace."

time when every hotel company is launching new brands that target specific demographics, we are doing the opposite by transitioning from a house of brands to a branded house. Driven by evolving consumer

independent hotels and resorts," Ueberroth reveals. By defining hotels based on experiences versus brands or stars, we are creating stronger positioning for the group's member hotels and expanding their

brand. The company is now represented by one brand website www.PreferredHotels.com. Understanding that travellers have different objectives for each individual trip, each property has been aligned with one

An Overhaul

The new approach is designed to elevate core awareness of the brand, drive strategic growth of its portfolio and improve market share for its member hotels

Effective from now on, all of the company's 650 member hotels and resorts across 85 countries are represented by the Preferred Hotels & Resorts brand

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Jim Corbett National Park



VisitBritain looks at Hollywood packages

After appointing actor Saif Ali Khan as spokesperson for its 'Bollywood Britain' campaign, VisitBritain is now mulling over creating similar packages based on Hollywood movies filmed there. Sumathi Ramanathan, VisitBritain's Regional Manager for Asia Pacific & Middle East, speaks to TRAVTALK.



HAZEL JAIN

Q What is the reason behind 'Bollywood Britain'?

VisitBritain has a long-standing history of working with Bollywood and we have been focusing on marketing in India mainly through film tourism.

Q What is this campaign about?

"Bollywood Britain" focuses on romance, targeting honeymooning and young couples but not restricted to them. We are working with TUI to showcase five packages ranging from a three-day to a nine-day itiner-

Q What do you want to achieve with this?

Most travellers forget that a single UK visa includes four countries of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. Ninety per cent of visitors go to London, one per cent to Wales and nine to Scotland. So there is so much scope.

Q What's the next step on film tourism?

We are looking to promote the locations where Hollywood movies have been filmed in the UK.

Q What kind of numbers does UK see from India?

Britain welcomed over 375,000 visitors from India (10 per cent increase from previous year). This touched 312,000 in 2014 between January and September that was a straight 2.6 per cent increase from the same period in 2013. This makes India the biggest source market for visitor numbers from the BRIC countries.

Q Which cities are doing well?

We see that Tier 2 cities like Kochi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune,

Saif Talks

"I love the weather in England. I love taxicabs in the rain, walking in the park, visiting its amazing restaurants. It can also be a quiet city if you want it to be. That's why it's romantic. It has many of my favourite pubs. I used to frequent many pubs in Kensington specially the one called Coach and Horses. I went to school in England but I don't think I have a British sense of humour. I think I have a pretty Indian sense of humour."

Saif Ali Khan

Spokesperson for 'Bollywood Britain'



“Britain welcomed over 375,000 visitors from India (10 per cent increase from previous year). This touched 312,000 in 2014 between January and September that was a straight 2.6 per cent increase from the same period in 2013.”

Sumathi Ramanathan

Regional Manager
VisitBritain, Pacific & Middle East

The concept of set-jetting - when people travel to film locations - has become very popular with Indians. So this campaign is just an evolution of what we have already been doing since the past few years in India.

ary to see different locations where Bollywood romance movies have been filmed. This is the first time we have worked with a tour operator to develop Bollywood-specific itineraries.

Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Chennai are showing very good response. The awareness about Britain is low here so there's real opportunity.

Q Can we expect this year's DestinationBritain to be bigger?

The eleventh edition of DestinationBritain will be bigger this year with at least 60-70 suppliers. It will have three major themes: Countryside, Culture, Luxury.

Q Are you making filming in Britain easier?

Filming in the UK is being handled by our sister company called UK Trade & Investment in Mumbai. It has a creative section under which films fall and they have been working very closely with the new Deputy High Commissioner in terms of making it easier for Bollywood producers to film in the UK. ↴

A change for the better

Jaal Shah, Founder, RezLive.com Group, Managing Director, Travel Designer Group, tells TRAVTALK about the company's growth, existing products and new offerings.



TT BUREAU

Q How has the year 2015 been for RezLive so far?

The growth has been dramatic. On an average we are growing 50 per cent year-on-year for the last three years. But most important, we are profitable with a healthy balance sheet and we would keep our focus on growing steadily with sustainability in the years to come.

Q What are your views on the Indian market, in terms of inbound and outbound?

The global travel industry continues to see significant growth in emerging markets like India and China, both in terms of outbound and domestic travel. This is a trend that is set to continue. The emergence of middle class is a key factor behind the growth, as is the growth in secondary and tertiary cities in India. Better policy implementation from the Centre will also make a huge difference on the Indian travel industry and will benefit both inbound and outbound traffic.

“The global travel industry continues to see significant growth in emerging markets like India and China, both in terms of outbound and domestic travel. This is a trend that is set to continue.”



Jaal Shah

Founder, RezLive.com Group
MD, Travel Designer Group

Any new products launched by your company?

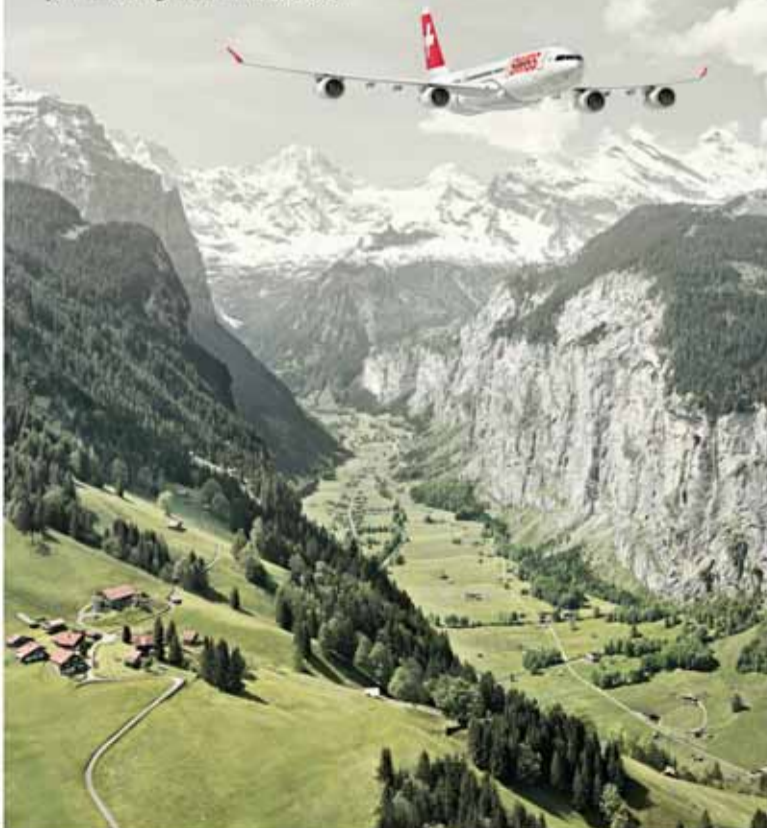
We recently launched the new version of RezLive.com and the response about the same from all our markets has been more than encouraging. And in my opinion it's only going to get better. We are also working extremely hard to pump up our inventory and offer more options to our travel partners for different cities at best net rates. Furthermore, we are also working out on few key features that we will be rolling out this year pertaining to RezLive.com.

Q What is your QUSP?

We are a cent per cent B2B company that provides our travel partners the option to book hotels, sightseeing and transfers under one interface. When travel agents connect with us they get access to mapped inventory around the world. This is important and is one of our many USPs. We are a very focused organization and as a result of which, we need to be extremely good with our offering-be it inventory, user-friendly interface or rates. ↴

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Visa outsourcing is growing

Rajan Dua, MD, Udaan India, tells TRAVELTALK that with other outsourcing agencies giving healthy competition to Udaan, it is a sign that the industry is growing at a fast pace.

TT BUREAU

What are your expectations from ATM this time?

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) is the region's leading travel trade event which unites tourism destinations from six continents to unlock business potential through showcasing a diverse range of accommodation options, tourist attractions and new airline routes etc. Going by the ATM trend, we look forward to maximum participation from upcoming destinations and considering potential of outbound Indian market, good offers and pricing is the expected.

What are the new plans that Udaan is planning to implement this year?

'Namaste Croatia' is one of our new initiatives and FRRO is the domain which Udaan is focusing in the coming financial year and there are also plans to promote upcoming destinations or lesser known tourist destinations. Also we are soon opening up a branch office in Hyderabad. In our endeavour to provide Visa Services powered by technology, we look forward to add more features on our portal and launch a mobile app.



Rajan Dua
Managing Director
Udaan India

How has the travel trends changed since you've got into business?

Tremendous changes have come in the visa scenario. Earlier it was more manual, the documentation was tedious. Now, as Indian traveller is among the top five travellers in the world, a lot of countries have introduced Visa-on-Arrival, e-visa option to frequent Indian travellers/ who has UK/US/Schengen visas and even documentation has become less tedious. More countries are following the trend and visa norms will become more traveller-friendly in the future.

What kind of competition are you facing?

Visa industry has grown a lot in the last years. A lot of

travel agents have also started providing visa services as a separate vertical. VFS or other outsourcing agencies are also giving competition. It is a healthy competition and shows that the industry is growing at a fast pace.

What are your impressions?

Visa fraternity has to work as one and become organised. Reducing the pricing to gain edge over each other creates unhealthy competition. Today Indian travellers looks forward to good Visa Facilitation Services and don't mind paying extra for good services. The business is bound to increase in the coming years as Indian outbound market is on boom and everyone should work together and make the most of it.

Scaling Heights

- 'Namaste Croatia' is one of Udaan's new initiatives
- The company plans to add features to its portal to provide visa services powered by technology

WTM Africa means business

The show witnessed over 570 exhibitors, 82 per cent new buyers from over 45 different countries and over 7,600 pre-scheduled appointments.

TT BUREAU

The second annual World Travel Market Africa (WTM Africa), which forms part of Africa Travel Week, was concluded on April 17, 2015, at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC). With more than 570 exhibitors, 82 per cent new buyers from over 45 different countries, more than 7,600 prescheduled appointments before the show began, as well as an 18 per cent increase on 2014 visitors and 39 per cent increase on overall travel professionals at the show, WTM Africa certainly meant business this year, with remarkable results recorded. All numbers stated are prior to the official audit.

The WTM Africa halls at the CTICC were abuzz for all three days with participants taking opportunities to engage in valuable business conversations, meet new contacts, exchange ideas and share best practices. The South African government significantly expressed their support with Tokozile Xasa, Deputy Minister of Tourism, joining Executive Mayor of Cape Town in the ribbon cutting ceremony which opened WTM Africa on April 15, 2015.

Carol Weaving, MD, Thebe Reed Exhibitions, expressed her delight regarding the success of the show and receiving the support from the South Africa government and the City of Cape Town by saying, "WTM Africa provides a platform for the travel and



Carol Weaving
MD
Thebe Reed Exhibitions

tourism industry to grow the economy in the region, and the partnership of the public and private sector is critical to the success going forward. We have been overwhelmed with the positive feedback we have received this year, and we look forward to taking this event from strength to strength in the future for the benefit of the industry and the economy in Africa."

Responsible Tourism was high on the agenda for

WTM Africa 2015. This was further enhanced by the 11th Responsible Tourism (RTD11) conference running alongside WTM Africa on April 15-16. RTD11 presented an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved in Cape Town, South Africa, and elsewhere around the world, documenting good practices applied by different producer groups, as well as set the agenda for change for the next 10 years.

WTM Africa forms part of Africa Travel Week which comprises three co-located industry events namely International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM) Africa, International Business Travel Market (IBTM) and WTM Africa.

Doing Their Bit

- Responsible Tourism was high on the agenda for WTM Africa 2015
- WTM Africa forms part of Africa Travel Week which comprises three co-located industry events

Tourism New Zealand targets 50,000 arrivals from India

Tourism New Zealand has announced its joint venture partnership with Singapore Airlines and Auckland Airport to accelerate high value New Zealand travel out of India. With booking validity till May 15, 2015, the special promotional fares of the campaign will be applicable for the travel period of May to October 2015.

Steven Dixon, Regional

Manager-South and South East Asia, Tourism New Zealand says, "We have recently seen a surge in Indian visitors to New Zealand during the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015. The mega sporting event was the ideal platform for us to showcase New Zealand to aspiring travellers from India. The partnership with Singapore Airlines aims to further increase the rise of interest among Indian travellers to visit New Zealand. With

the stunning scenery, diverse experiences and warm hospitality it offers, New Zealand is the perfect getaway for Indian travellers seeking a story to tell." Through this campaign, the collaboration between the three parties lays foundation to deliver 50,000 arrivals from India on the India-Auckland route. The campaign will focus on travel from the cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai,

Ahmedabad, Vishakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Coimbatore, Kochi and Trivandrum.

David Lau, General Manager India, Singapore Airlines, says, "Our recent alliance with Air New Zealand provides additional, seamless connections to New Zealand. Auckland is a perfect gateway to Middle East and these special fares facilitate ease of travel to our customers who are looking

to explore the wide diaspora of this country."

"We have seen impressive growth from the Indian market recently. For the year ending February 2015, New Zealand saw 39,168 visitor arrivals from India, an increase of 24.6 per cent on the previous year. Of these, 18,464 were holiday arrivals, a 26 per cent increase on the previous year," says Norris Carter, Auckland Airport's

general manager aeronautical commercial. "This collaboration with Singapore Airlines and Tourism New Zealand will help further stimulate this growth."

For the year ending February 2015, New Zealand's visitor arrivals from India were 39,168, an increase of 24. per centon the previous year. Of these, 18,464 were holiday arrivals, a 26 per cent increase on the previous year.




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More Indians Europe-bound this summer

More Indians are travelling overseas this summer, be it for entertainment, shopping, leisure, business or family reunions, compared to last year. A weaker euro has led to around 10% drop in package costs to Europe in comparison to last year and tour companies are witnessing growth of about 20% in bookings. TRAVTALK speaks to outbound tour operators to find out about the hottest selling destinations this summer.

MEGHA PAUL



A weaker euro has led to around a 10 per cent drop in package costs to Europe in comparison to last year. Thus, there is a clear price benefit for customers who chose to go to Europe this year.

Trends: The interest in European holiday is not restricted just to Switzerland or Paris with customers seeking new destinations.

Top 3 destinations: Scandinavia, Czech Republic and Greece
Most expensive destination: New Zealand
Cheapest destination: Dubai

Karan Anand
 Head-Relationships, Cox & Kings



Indians love shopping, nightlife, and entertainment. Common cuisine complimented with direct and cheap connectivity to overseas destinations in close proximity in South-East Asian spots are drivers pushing this outbound volume.

Trends: Besides the usual hotspots, Indians are even ready to spend Rs 1 lakh per person for a week of combined travel to Greece and Istanbul, thanks to Bollywood using these destinations.

Top 3 destinations: Czech Republic, Greece, Italy
Most expensive destination: Canada
Cheapest destination: Malaysia

Ashwini Kakkar
 Executive Vice Chairman, Mercury Travels

Till last year, we were betting big on Far East and Europe. But the US and Canada has picked up since last year.

Trends: Fresh new short-hauls have been introduced, keeping in mind the evolving Indians' demand for engaging new experiences.

Top 3 destinations: UK, US, Dubai
Most expensive destination: US, Canada
Cheapest destination: Thailand



Homa Mistry
 CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India



India's outbound travel pie is getting bigger and this is evident from the more than 25 countries and cities opening their tourism offices here in the past couple of years.

Trends: More advance bookings, last-minute bookings for long weekends such as Easter

Top 3 destinations: Greece, Poland, Czech Republic
Most expensive destination: Pacific Islands
Cheapest destination: Thailand

Guldeep Singh Sahni
 Managing Director, Weldon Tours & Travels



Indians believe in 'introduce a destination and we'll go', and simply enjoy every penny they spend, be it in malls, casinos, restaurants or on massages. More number of Indians are asking for spas and massages followed by shopping options.

Trends: More advance bookings, last-minute bookings for long weekends such as Easter.

Top 3 destinations: UK, US, Italy
Most expensive destination: Australia
Cheapest destination: Indonesia

Harmandeep Singh Anand
 Managing Director, Jagsons Travels

With benefits in package cost due to prevailing rates impacting travel spends, tourists are eager to re-align their holiday budget allocations. Consequently, Indian travelers are spending more on shopping and leisure experiences.

Trends: We have also seen a rise in demand for inclusion of ancillary services in the basic packages. These services could range from adding a few nights to travel itineraries for certain destinations, to booking exotic fine dining or unique local experiences

Top 3 destinations: South Africa, Vietnam, Eastern Europe
Most expensive destination: New Zealand
Cheapest destination: Thailand



Rakshit Desai
 Managing Director India, FCm Travel Solutions

There has been a sluggish growth in outbound travel sector. This is due to the low market sentiments on the back of slowdown in the economy.

Trends: South East Asia will be getting the maximum number of Indian travellers. We are also witnessing an increase in the honeymooners and self drive segments.

Top 3 destinations: Canada, Singapore, Italy
Most expensive destination: New Zealand, Canada
Cheapest destination: South East Asia



Vineet Gopal
 Managing Director, Engee Holidays



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Italian luxury@Nira Montana Painting the town Red

Luxury hotel group Nira Hotels and Resorts' new hotel-Nira Montana in La Thuile, Italy is just steps away from the ski slopes and hiking trails of the Italian Alps.

TT BUREAU

The 55-room luxury hotel, that opened last year, houses an authentic Italian restaurant, serving the finest ingredients sourced from across the country. Its bar

ports of northern Italy including Milan, Turin and Genoa, as well as to Geneva in Switzerland.

Built in the style of the valley's traditional houses, the attractive, three-storey Nira Montana is constructed of

The new hotel joins the group's three existing properties: Shanti Maurice in Mauritius (2010), Nira Alpina in St. Moritz (2011) and Nira Caledonia, Edinburgh (2012).

MPS Puri, Chief Executive, Nira Hotels & Resorts, says, "We're delighted to launch this new property under the Nira brand, bringing our portfolio to four. I'm confident that it will be a great addition, providing our guests with more choice of where to enjoy the Nira experience."



boasts an extensive wine cellar as well as an alfresco area — perfect for an après-ski or post-hike drink. The hotel also houses extensive wellness facilities, including an indoor pool, a large spa with sauna and steam rooms, four treatment rooms plus a private spa with double treatment room, and a Technogym fitness centre.

Easily accessible, La Thuile is close to the major air-

wood and stone, uses energy saving systems. In keeping with the philosophy of Nira, the new hotel places heavy emphasis on service, a high quality food and beverage offering and demonstrates good value for money. Rates start from approximately 200 euros per room per night, inclusive of breakfast, use of the Nira SPA and Wi-Fi, and is the only five-star hotel in La Thuile.

Hidden Gem

Tucked away in a mountain village, Nira Montana is just steps away from the ski slopes and hiking trails of the Italian Alps

The property has an authentic Italian restaurant, a bar that boasts an extensive wine cellar and well-equipped training facilities

MEGHA PAUL

US-based hotel group, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, is looking at unveiling its new upscale lifestyle brand, Radisson Red, in the Indian market. The leading hospitality chain had added this new brand into their global portfolio few months ago, with one signed property in China already. Talking about their plans for the India market, Kirschke says, "The time is appropriate to explore a new formula, contract models, as well as bring more brands into the market considering the new growth path the country is taking under the new political leadership."

According to Kirschke, Radisson Red is a "perfect fit" for the India market and can be adapted to a city, resort, or an airport location. "The economic outlook is optimistic and the demand for rooms in India has been growing by double-digit percentages over the past decade and this is expected to continue for the next few years. Domestic travel is growing and international arrivals are on the increase. Thus, there is scope for Radisson Red hotels in key markets in India over the next

"Our intention is to leverage the brand equity and legacy of Radisson brand in the country and expand its reach into additional segmentation. Radisson RED is pitched at upscale segment with a lifestyle element."

Thorsten Kirschke
President-Asia Pacific
Carlson Rezidor Hotels



couple of years," he adds. Radisson Red offers a differentiated guest experience, with lower construction and operating costs than traditional upscale hotels. Radisson Red also gives owners the flexibility to customise the specifics to cater to the unique demands of each locale, he remarks.

Giving more details about the new brand, he points out, "Our intention is to leverage the brand equity and legacy of Radisson brand in the country and expand its reach into additional segmentation. Radisson RED is pitched at upscale segment with a lifestyle ele-

ment. We want to capture the evolving consumer demand in terms of technology centric layout combined with contemporary interior design and much more efficient use of space. This largely addresses both the consumer demand as well as the investor outlook." Carlson Rezidor Group is "well placed" to take the growth forward in India, Kirschke adds. The company has 74 operating hotels in India currently and another 43 under different stages of development. "Our goal is to have 170 hotels under operation and development in India in the next couple of years," he reveals.

Golden Tulip Hotels and Resorts opens doors in Vasundhara, Delhi

Golden Tulip Hotels adds a new address to its repertoire with its fourth property - Golden Tulip Vasundhara Delhi NCR in the premium and luxury category. Launched in 2007 in India, Golden Tulip Hotels South Asia now has 17 operational properties all over the country and three new properties opening under four and five star categories this year, which also includes Bangladesh. As their fourth property in the north India, Golden Tulip Vasundhara is a contemporary business hotel in Delhi/ NCR that offers

162 rooms along with a multi-cuisine restaurant, rooftop grill restaurant bar and lounge and 10000 sq ft banquet space. A convenient 20 mins drive from Connaught Place, walking distance from metro station and 45 mins from IGI Delhi Airport the hotel is strategically located in the residential, industrial & IT hub of Noida, making it an ideal choice for business and leisure travellers. Commenting on the expansion plans, **Vimal Singh**, Managing Director, Golden Tulip Hotels & Resorts, South Asia says, "Backed by an inter-



national legacy, our aim is to create a portfolio of hotels across the world, with a distinct identity but incorporating the local flavours of each region. It is our constant endeavour to provide business and leisure travellers a personalized and meaningful experience to the cities they travel to. We are looking to position ourselves amongst the leading hotel chains in the country with these new launches."

The company is looking at aggressively expanding in

the next few years across South Asia thereby increasing its market share and establishing itself as a leading hospitality chain in the region. Adhering true to its motto - 'International standard, local flavours', each property be it in India or abroad successfully retains the charm and traditions of the local culture of the city and aesthetically blends it with high service standards backed with latest technology and modern amenities.

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		Travel Domain Expertise	\$ 2500	\$ 2500	\$ 0
		Integration Cost	\$ 750	\$ 3000	\$ 0
		Server Cloud	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 0
		Server MMC	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 0
		Tech Upgradation	ADC	ADC	\$ 0
		API MMC	\$ 1000	\$ 1000	\$ 0
		Total Amount Per API	\$ 19750	\$ 0	\$ 0
		Total OTA Cost	\$ 22750	\$ 27000	\$ 15000
2	VENTURA'S USP	Per Transaction Cost	\$ 5	\$ 2	\$ 0
		Inventory Management	NO	NO	YES
		Corporate Travel Management System	NO	NO	YES
		Tech Support	NO	NO	YES
		Customer Support	NO	NO	YES
		Best Prices on Products	YES	NO	YES
		Support in Multiple Countries	NO	NO	YES
		Secured & Streamlined	YES	NO	YES
		User Friendly UI	YES	NO	YES
		R & D -Content Upgradation	NO	NO	YES
3	DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL	STAFF Overhead Cost	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
		B2B - Sub Agency Business	YES	YES	YES
		B2E - Corporate Business	NO	NO	YES
4	TRAVEL PRODUCTS	B2C - Direct Consumer	YES	YES	YES
		Generic	1	4	7
		Original	0	0	2
		Value Added Services	0	0	5
5	PROMOTIONAL TOOL	Total Products	1	4	14
		Campaigning Software	NO	NO	YES
		Couponing Software	NO	NO	YES

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Taking South India by storm

The captains of the travel industry were felicitated at the second edition of South India Travel Awards, held in Visakhapatnam. Some of the awardees spoke to TRAVTALK to share their joy and pride.



E M Najeeb GALLERY OF LEGENDS

South India Travel Awards was well organised and also well presented. It's a great way of recognising the people who have contributed for the growth of tourism in South India. I thank the farsightedness of SanJeet for instituting this award and I would like to convey my regards to all the members of DDP Publications.

*Chairman and Managing Director
ATE Group*



Vallurupalli Prabhu Kishore DDP TRAILBLAZER

I am very honoured to be recognised by the DDP Group and India Travel Awards. The city of Visakhapatnam is being recognised through this award. This is an important initiative that has been taken as I always felt that this city is no less than Goa. Our dream is to now make it a water sport city and boost tourism here. I'll definitely play my part in it.

*Chairman, Varun Group and Owner
Novotel Visakhapatnam, Varun Beach*

G V Sanjay Reddy DDP GAME CHANGER

I am honoured to be recognised with the DDP Game Changer award this year. This magnanimous recognition by the industry for all of the collective accomplishments is both humbling and an encouragement to me personally to make every effort to take my vision to greater heights. I'm grateful to receive an award that felicitates individuals that have exhibited innovation, success and organisational growth.

*Vice Chairman, GVK and Managing Director
Bangalore International Airport Limited*



Rajeev Kumar G FACE OF THE FUTURE

The industry is going through a major revolution at the moment in the distribution space. 10 years back when the Internet transformed the online distribution, the airlines were left out of an opportunity that they could have more innovatively reached to their customers. After receiving the 'Face of the Future' award a lot of responsibility has been put on me. It feels nice, and is a humbling experience.

*Founder, MD and CEO
Mystifly Consulting (I)*



Nikhil Dhodapkar BEST HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONAL

I would like to congratulate SanJeet and his team for thinking regional. I think that is the need of the hour and going regional is not only about the awards but it is also about giving the regional teams the kind of impetus that they need to further develop tourism. So, I think it's a brilliant idea.

*Regional Director, Sales & Marketing-India
ACCOR*



Mittu Chandilya BEST AIRLINE PROFESSIONAL

I am humbled by this award from India Travel Awards and thank the organisers for this honour. It is indeed rewarding to be acknowledged by peers and industry veterans for my work. The Award for AirAsia India as the best emerging airline is a confirmation that we are indeed on our way to revolutionising aviation in India. We intend to work pro-actively with the various central and state ministries to stimulate tourism and boost infrastructure across India by providing seamless and affordable air connectivity using our expanding network.

*CEO
AirAsia India*

Praveen Shetty TOURISM AMBASSADOR OVERSEAS

I am proud to be awarded the Tourism Ambassador award. I would like to convey my humble regards to DDP and South India Travel Awards for bestowing me with this honour. My joy and pride has doubled as I have received this award here in South India.

*Chairman
Fortune Group of Hotels*



Novotel Hotel Visakhapatnam BEST MEETINGS & CONFERENCE HOTEL

We are honoured to host this award. This gives our hotel an opportunity to showcase that we can cater to both business and leisure travellers. Visakhapatnam also receives both leisure and MICE tourists. This is a great thing that has happened in this part of India.

*Madhav Bellamkonda
General Manager*



AirAsia BEST EMERGING AIRLINE

South India has a huge potential for growth and I am sure that things will get better in the coming days. AirAsia will be a pioneer in a lot of things and with the changing trends in the market the aviation market has a lot of potential. This award will definitely encourage us all to carry on with the hard work.

*Bhanu Kaila
Head- Sales & Distribution*



RezNext Global Solutions BEST HOTEL DISTRIBUTION TECHNOLOGY

I would like to thank TRAVTALK. I am also grateful to South India Travel Awards for this award. This gives us an opportunity to do a lot more and encourages the whole RezNext team to work harder. This is a responsibility given to us. So you are going to hear from us more in the technology space.

*Surender Balasubramaniam
Sr Vice President Sales*



Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru BEST AIRPORT

I think it is terrific when you give recognition to airports and the travel industry at large. It is a great initiative and I think we should have more of this.

*Raj Andrade
Vice President, Business Development
Marketing and Strategy*



Shanti Travel BEST BOUTIQUE TOUR OPERATOR

We are very proud and thankful about receiving this award. This is the 10th anniversary of Shanti Travel and receiving the 'Best Boutique Tour Operator' award means a lot to us. We are trying to give a wonderful experience to our guests in India, especially South India as we love the destination. So, this encourages us to go even further.

*Maud LE BRAS
General Manager India and HR Group Manager*



Air India and Adria Airways ink pact

The delegates of Republic of Slovenia came together to launch the Air India-Adria Airways code-share operations to Ljubljana, the capital and largest city of Slovenia, in New Delhi. The event witnessed the who's who of the travel fraternity in New Delhi.



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China Southern Airlines facilitates agents

China Southern Airlines organized an 'Agency Get-together' in Jalandhar. Chen YongGuang, General Manager, and Liu ZhenHua, Deputy General Manager, China Southern Airlines, India along with Seema Sabharwal, General Manager, and Bijji Mathur, Head of Sales, Condor Air Services, GSSA, facilitated the agencies during the Cocktails, followed by Dinner. The function was well-attended by all the key decision makers of agencies along with their respective sales and operations teams.



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Purchasing travel online

In this new digital era, Internet and e-mails have practically eliminated the cost of communications, says India Travel Award winner Meenu Sachdeva, Co-Founder and Managing Director, TI Infotech.

TT BUREAU

Websites are becoming responsive, mobile phone users are growing in bulk each year. So, with all these rapid changes taking place, one can comfortably say that the technology is continuing to rise due to changing consumer behavior. "Keeping pace with today's travel planning and booking process, our most comprehensive product Travel Cloud Suite offers a highly customisable Internet Booking Engine for an end consumer to come and fulfill the travel needs by being connected with multiple GDS and third-party suppliers for fetching the worldwide content," Sachdeva says.

The company has recently launched a new product – Corporate Self Booking Tool – a robust, user-friendly web based solution designed to run a smooth liaison between corporate clients and travel houses. It has a user level function which allows employees to easily plan, book and purchase

their travel itinerary within their company policies.

Talking about the USP of the company, she reveals, "We follow Total Solution Approach in providing technology solutions specific to travel industry.

Our two world-class comprehensive software solutions- TravelAssist and Travel Cloud Suite implemented for our global clients gives them a resilient reason to keep coming back to us."

Regarding how business has grown over the years, she points out, "We have grown immensely in the last couple of years. We have penetrated and developed more in our current market and also have explored and diversified in new market segments. The special features and benefits of our products have led to an increased customer database. Our sales have



Meenu Sachdeva
Co-Founder and Managing Director
TI Infotech

been increasing year-on-year and we can clearly see a growing demand for our product and services." Mobile apps and responsive sites are the emerging trends in travel industry. Whether used for travel, communication, entertainment or lifestyle; mobile technology has been metamorphosed from a mode to a medium. These applications have become all-encompassing among the mobile users. Social networking, mobile search and mobile payment systems are another few examples of emerging trends in travel industry, she highlights.

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RAILEUROPE

Starwood India Expo hosts over 35 hotels

Starwood Asia Pacific Hotels and Resorts recently hosted the ninth edition of their annual roadshow, Starwood India Expo 2015 across five key cities in India. The shows were held across Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore, and Kolkata. This year's expo showcased over 35 hotels from across Asia Pacific, Europe, Africa, and Middle East and North America.



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Taking further the decision and commitment of "Make In India" Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in partnership with FICCI and Tourism Finance Corporation of India Ltd. is organizing the first ever **Tourism Investors Meet (TIM)** on July 22 - 23, 2015 at Federation House, FICCI, 1 Tansen Marg, New Delhi.



The TWO day event will focus on Interactive meetings where by exhibiting destinations will be showcasing their policy and facilities with respect to soliciting investment in Tourism Infrastructure through pre scheduled structured face to face business meetings between the State Governments and prominent investors.

The Investors from the following sectors will be present

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Adria Airways enters India

From April 1st, there are daily flights to Ljubljana with a stopover in Frankfurt. Air India is the operating carrier for New Delhi to Frankfurt while Adria is the carrier from Frankfurt to Ljubljana.

MEGHA PAUL

The national carrier of Slovenia, Adria Airways, and India's national carrier, Air India, have entered into a Free Flow Code-share Agreement effective March 2, 2015. Adria Airways would code-share as

Bavdaž Kuret, recently launched the Air India, Adria Airways code-share operations to Ljubljana, the capital and largest city of Slovenia, in New Delhi.

Talking about the flight frequency and capacity within

Delhi to Ljubljana with a stopover in Frankfurt. Air India is the operating carrier with its Dreamliner 787 for New Delhi to Frankfurt while Adria will be the carrier from Frankfurt to Ljubljana."

According to Music, Slovenia unfortunately has minimal presence in India currently. "We have lost some of our traditional markets due to the euro zone crisis. Entering India is thus, a significant strategic move to build new key markets. Our main target here will be to increase the business traffic to Slovenia via the new route. We are targeting the MICE and leisure segment from India in a big way," he added.

"We are hopeful the air traffic between both the countries will witness an increase with the new route, thus strengthening our tourism ties."

Robert Music
Deputy Sales Director
Adria Airways

a marketing carrier on Air India-operated flights on the Delhi-Frankfurt sector and Air India would code-share as a marketing carrier on Adria Airways-operated flights from Frankfurt-Ljubljana. The Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to India, **Darja**

India, **Robert Music**, Deputy Sales Director, Adria Airways pointed out, "We are hopeful the air traffic between both the countries will witness an increase with the new route, thus strengthening our tourism ties. The airline will have daily afternoon flights from New

Aiming High

The airline is targeting the MICE and leisure segment from India in a big way

No SAA flight from Mumbai

Announcing the discontinuation of its direct flight from Mumbai, South African Airways has cushioned the blow to travel agents by launching six non-direct flights via Abu Dhabi through Etihad.

HAZEL JAIN

Opting for six non-direct touch-points instead of a single direct flight between India and South Africa, South African Airways has undergone network optimization with a codeshare agreement with Etihad Airways. The six Indian

connect six points in India to South Africa via Abu Dhabi instead of just one direct flight from Mumbai. Etihad also has a daily flight from Abu Dhabi so passengers have a choice of two connections from Abu Dhabi to Johannesburg. The new flights are already on the system."

The code-share entails...

As part of the agreement, SA will codeshare on select EY flights to and from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram while EY will codeshare on SA279 from Abu Dhabi to Johannesburg and SA278 from Johannesburg to Abu Dhabi. In addition to the codeshare flight, fliers could also use EY's alternate service between Abu Dhabi and Johannesburg.

cities include Mumbai, New Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and Trivandrum.

Sajid Khan, Country Manager, South African Airways, says, "The new code-share agreement with Etihad is a positive step. We will now

The direct flight went offline on March 29 and the new flights started from March 30. It will be with the same aircraft – the A340-300. "We also plan to sell code-share soon. We have included only six cities as the bilaterals between the two nations allow



Sajid Khan
Country Manager
South African Airways

only so much. We will now do joint sales calls to travel agents with Etihad Airways in the next two months to show our union and solidarity. The codeshare has no expiry date," Khan reveals.

He adds that the plan is to work alongside Etihad. "In a month's time when things settle down, we will go all out into the market and put our plans into action. We will do joint sales calls with our codeshare partner in key cities across India about these new connections," Khan says.



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Celebrating 11 years of Alliance

Alliance Hotels & Resorts is celebrating 11 years of the company's establishment this year. The hospitality marketing franchise company recently concluded its Annual National Meet 2015 in New Delhi. In the two-day meet, all executives from different regional offices came together to discuss the past year performance, existing market challenges and growing competition.






Airline Promotion Group, more popularly known as APG is the Network for Airline Services. APG launched its interline E-ticketing platform through Heli Air Monaco, YO-747.

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Fostering better tourism ties

Nguyen Van Tuan, Chairman, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, visited India recently along with a delegation of top travel agents from Vietnam and met with travel agents in Delhi.

TT BUREAU

India and Vietnam have many avenues to increase co-operation in tourism but there are two bottlenecks – lack of direct flights and the limited information about tourism opportunities between the two countries. The potential for tourism between India and Vietnam is still untapped because while 2.5 million Indian tourists visited South East Asia last year, only 50,000 Indian travellers travelled to Vietnam.

This was the concern voiced by **Nguyen Van Tuan**, Chairman, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, when he visited India recently along with a delegation of top travel agents from Vietnam.

“When Jet Airways opened flights there was a boost in the number of tourists from Vietnam visiting India for Buddhist tourism, but direct connectivity is still an issue. People spend a lot of time in transit. The increase in number



Nguyen Van Tuan
Chairman, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism

Direct connectivity is still an issue. People spend a lot of time in transit

of tourists will benefit tourists too, we will continue to work with airlines for boosting direct connectivity between Vietnam and India. After Jet Airways, we are working with Vietnam Airline and VietJet Air for direct connectivity,” Van Tuan said.

The roadshow in Delhi organized by the Embassy of the SR of Vietnam, in association with OM Tourism, was also attended by **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

Tran Quang Tuyen, Deputy Chief of Mission highlighted the special relationship between Vietnam and India. He said the roadshow was well-timed as it has happened when both India and Vietnam are looking to enhance tourism.

Suman Billa affirmed that as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia are favourite destinations for Indian tourists, they should also visit Vietnam. He said that while roadshows are an efficient tool to promote tourism, one roadshow in Delhi is not sufficient and Vietnam has to promote tourism in other states of India as well. “Tourism is a trillion dollar economy and it provides jobs to one billion people around the world. Certainly, Vietnam and India can’t lose this opportunity,” he added.

Agents get visa breather

Travel agents are set to benefit from the special visa regulation that South Africa has just launched, which will allow business travellers, that includes agents as well, a three-year multiple entry visa into the country.



HAZEL JAIN

As an interesting spin-off to the special dispensation that South Africa has provided to Indian businessmen travelling to the country, travel agents will also get to benefit from this scheme.

Announcing this program, **HE Pule Malefane**, Consul General of South Africa in Mumbai, said, "There is a special dispensation that has been arranged for business executives which includes travel agents. They are now allowed a three-year multiple entry visa provided they don't overstay in a single visit for more than 30 days. We have introduced this because their work dictates that from time to time they make short or long trips to South Africa. It has already been introduced and agents can avail of this."

This special dispensation will be provided on a case-to-case basis. The step is possibly to attract more investments to the country from BRICS countries. South African Tourism had recently organised a day-long 'Tourism and Investment Conference 2015' in partnership with the South African High Commission in New Delhi to provide information on tourism and investment opportunities in the country.

It had also announced a new South African Immigration Policy at the event which allows certain categories of business executives a three to ten-year multiple entry visas. "We don't make a public announcement for this because we don't want to attract the wrong kind of people. We have therefore communicated this with those



HE Pule Malefane
Consul General
South Africa in Mumbai

Agents are now allowed a three-year multiple entry visa provided they don't overstay in a single visit for more than 30 days



Hanneli Slabber
Country Manager
South African Tourism

We are very optimistic about the Indian market and are expecting a double digit growth of about 12% this year

who interact with us on a regular basis," the Consul General added.

With this, the country also expects a spurt in Indian arrivals. **Hanneli Slabber**, Country Manager, South African Tourism, said, "We have consistently increased our marketing spends in India to promote tourism as it is slated to become the biggest market for South Africa tourism by 2020, when we expect five lakh travellers. We are very optimistic about the Indian market and are expecting a double digit growth of about 12 per cent this year."

VFS Global recently opened seven new Visa Application Centres for South Africa in Jaipur, Gurgaon, Kolkata, Goa, Pune, Ahmedabad, and Bengaluru.

Speaking about the challenges that this program might pose to the destination, Malefane said, "Each country faces with its own sets of challenges, be it crime, human and drug trafficking, or espionage activities. So we will have to ensure that all visitors are legitimate."

Going Global

VFS Global recently opened seven new Visa Application Centres for South Africa in India in Jaipur, Gurgaon, Kolkata, Goa, Pune, Ahmedabad, and Bengaluru



Mohammed Husary
UAS Co-founder and Executive President

Naturally, UAS will be there, on the ground, to meet the demand," says **Mohammed Husary**, UAS Co-founder and Executive President.

UAS International Trip Support opens India office

UAS International Trip Support has announced the launch of a new regional office in India to further enhance services and provide better international connectivity on the Indian Subcontinent. Located in New Delhi, the regional office will enhance UAS' proximity to its regional client base and increase market penetration in the region as part of a sustained expansion strategy.

The office at Indira Gandhi International Airport becomes the newest link in

UAS' global network of headquarters and regional offices providing the highest quality international trip support, executive travel and air charter services to clients worldwide.

This investment is an acknowledgement of the rapidly growing economy of India and a clear demonstration of UAS' commitment to the sub-continental region. "It's a great time for the Indian economy, the growing vitality of the entire sub-continent is clear. It's also a rapidly growing business jet market.

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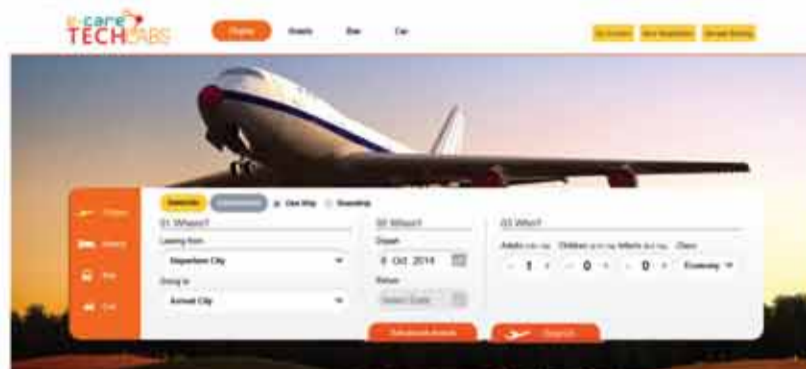


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It's a tale of 3 cities with CTC

The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) organised meetings and education program in three cities for travel agents in Mumbai, Kolkata and Bengaluru. The sessions were held at Four Seasons Hotel in Mumbai, The Lalit Great Eastern in Kolkata and the Taj Vivanta in Bangalore. Some of the participating Canadian sellers include Air Canada, Banff Lake Louise Tourism, Cal Tours, Fairmont, Hornblower, among others.



BENGALURU



KOLKATA



MUMBAI

Not competition but 'coopetition'

Bin Ali Tourism believes in 'coopetition' rather than competition. Working together with fellow companies is its mantra to success. Jeetu Frantz, Managing Director, Bin Ali Tourism, says that in business, success doesn't require others to fail – there can be multiple winners.

TT BUREAU

QWhat are the special products and services you provide?

Bin Ali Tourism is a one-stop travel shop that offers a comprehensive range of travel solutions from air charters to memorable personalised holiday experiences. It is especially recognised for offering value added products and services including hotel reservations for FIT and groups, ground handling, MICE, leisure travel, visa arrangements, tours, excursions, helicopter charters, yacht charters and limousine rentals.

Social media includes web-based and mobile technologies used to turn communication into interactive dialogue between organisations, communities and individuals. Businesses currently refer to social media as consumer-generated media.

QHow has it changed since you've gotten into business?

Well it hasn't changed a lot. Social media is still considered to be one of the best platforms in mass outreach. E-services have been overtaken by m-services, mobile technology which is currently the most accessible solution for our trade. We are working on a mobile app to enhance our offering of customised holiday experiences.

QWhat kind of competition are you facing?

The key word in our strategy is not 'competition' but 'coopetition'. It occurs when companies work together for parts of their business where they do not believe they have competitive advantage. You don't have to fight your competitors for their audience; working together can often be much more efficient.

On the Anvil

- ➔ Bin Ali will launch an online booking engine www.globalhotelz.com
- ➔ A mobile app is also being worked upon for booking customised holiday experience



Jeetu Frantz
Managing Director
Bin Ali Tourism

You don't have to fight your competitors for their audience; working together can often be much more efficient

QAny new initiative planned for this year?

Keeping up with the growth of the online travel space, we are working towards launching a very special online booking engine www.globalhotelz.com. This travel portal will help travellers search, plan and book a personalised travel of hotel stays, holidays, car rentals, adventure tours and in-destination activities and attractions. This portal will offer quality packages in some of the world's best hotels and travel destinations.

QWhat do you think are the new trends coming up in the travel industry?

The rise of e-tourism, the democratisation of travel and the tendency to book and to make up one's trip online has stood out with regard to the new traveller's preferences.



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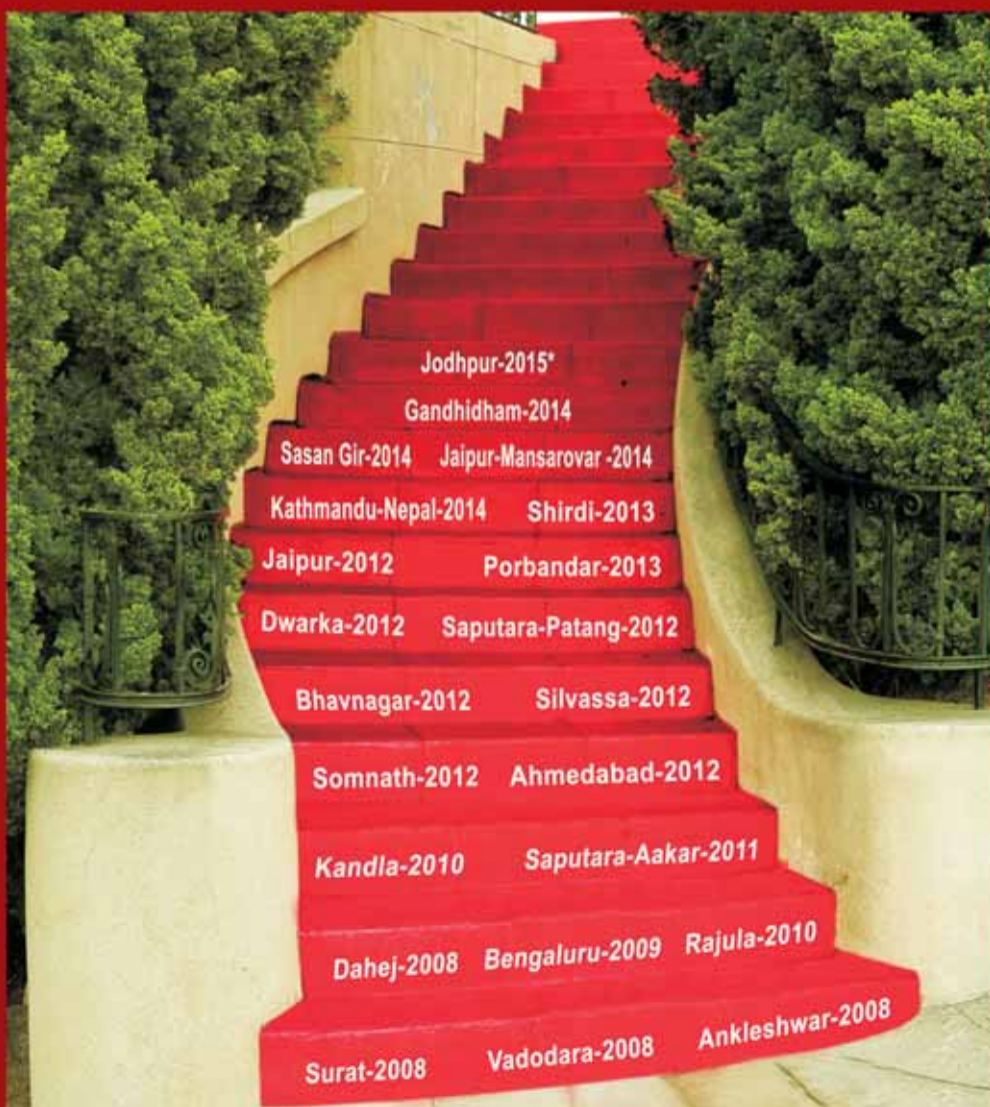
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Seychelles records 120% growth in Indian arrivals

■ Seychelles Islands has recorded an increase of 120 per cent in tourist arrivals from India in the first quarter of 2015 compared to first quarter of 2014. Direct flights between the two nations, year-long tourist season and

both the countries and we are grateful for their support and hard work.” **Lubaina Sheerazi**, COO- Blue Square Consultants, Seychelles Tourist Office – India says, “120% increase is a significant achievement and we expect the trend to continue. We have been very focused in our approach



Sherin Naiken
CEO
Seychelles Tourism Board



Lubaina Sheerazi
COO- Blue Square
Consultants, Seychelles
Tourist Office

visa online and gratis have been the other key factors that boosted the tourist arrivals from India. **Sherin Naiken**, CEO, Seychelles Tourism Board says, “2015 has got off to a great start in terms of the growth in tourists numbers from India. This increases our confidence in the India market. The country has responded really well to our efforts and we are committed to developing it into a key emerging source market. Huge credit goes to the private sector of

while promoting the destination targeting only the well-educated, well-travelled, high income customer segments. Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore and Chennai will continue to be the main markets. However, the office will also take initial steps in tapping cash rich cities like Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Nagpur, Raipur, Indore and Jaipur.

India on South Korea’s mind

With huge prospects that India offers in terms of MICE as well as leisure tourism, Korea Tourism has increased its stake in the country with an infusion of budget that is 10 per cent higher than 2014.

HAZEL JAIN

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) has increased its stake in the India market with a 10 per cent increase in its budgets this year over 2014. **Byungsun Lee**, Director, Korea Tourism Organisation, India, says, “We have increased our budget for India and will soon be doing a lot of trade and marketing activities.”

Lee says that a lot of activities for the trade have been planned including familiarisation trips starting May 2015. “We will conduct one trip for agents every quarter with 15 agents per group. We will also be going all out to conduct intensive training programs in key cities,” he adds.

It recently conducted a sales mission in New Delhi, Punjab (Chandigarh and Amritsar), Bengaluru and Goa. KTO will also promote its online training program that was launched this February.

Also on the cards are joint marketing ads with big tour operators. The increased budget will also go towards OOH ads. The

and are actively talking to directors and production houses to shoot their films in Korea. Shooting in Korea is

146,000 Indian travellers out of which nearly 25 per cent travelled for MICE. This was a 20 per cent increase in growth compared to 2013 and the country is aiming for similar growth in 2015.

The annual roadshow “Korea Incentive Night 2015” saw more than 150 MICE agents, event planners and corporates attend the event. Among the nine exhibitors from Korea were two regional tourism boards namely Busan Tourism Organisation (BTO) and Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The NTO’s training program called the “Korea MICE Specialist Program” was recently launched and so far more than 70 agents worldwide have signed up for it with additions everyday. Once the registrations are over, 30 best-scoring agents will get a chance to visit Korea as gratification and will receive their certificates.

“Our main goal will be to promote Korea as a reasonably priced leisure destination as it is already well-known for its MICE facilities. We also want to use Bollywood for this.”



Byungsun Lee
Director, Korea Tourism Organisation,
India

Korean delegation also participated in the MICE Travel Mart in Mumbai.

“Our main goal will be to promote Korea as a reasonably priced leisure destination as it is already well-known for its MICE facilities. We also want to use Bollywood for this

very, very easy because the Korea Film Commission extends complete support in terms of permissions, clearances and recces in a very systematic way,” Lee says.

Last year South Korea received approximately

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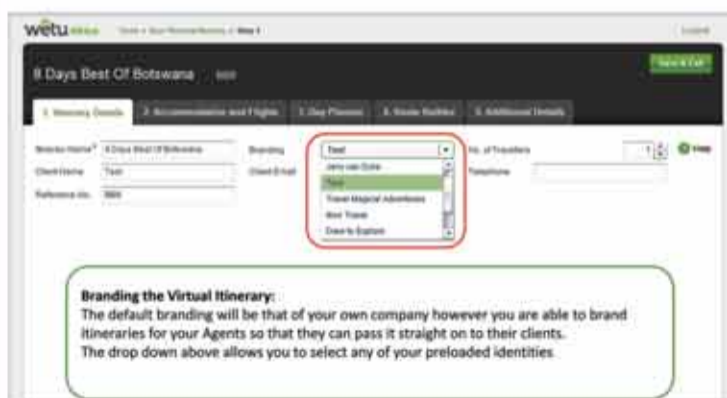


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Serenity by the Ganges

Raga on the Ganges, a hotel nestled in the Himalayas promises rejuvenation of the body, mind and soul. Part of the Anantara brand, this property promises breathtaking views at every nook and corner.

TT BUREAU
The road to Raga, 32 km uphill from Rishikesh city, makes an ideal prelude to an unforgettable holiday. The gin clear waters, fine white sands

the unforgettable cuisine. This is also the only transit point enroute to Devprayag (Char Dham Yatra)," says **Manish Palicha**, Head, Leisure Sales, Anantara hotels & Resorts. If all this is not enough, the

at the Teertha Spa with a range of wellness and rejuvenation treatments.

In today's competitive age, the distribution and marketing costs of a property can be crippling specifically if you are a standalone establishment. By being part of the Anantara group, one gets access to a superior infrastructure and wide network. Anantara has sales offices in key source markets within India as well as Europe, primarily covering Germany & United Kingdom. "Our trade promotional activities include, participating in travel trade fairs globally, organizing road shows and hosting trade partners for familiarization trips," adds Palicha.

Anantara Hotels & Resorts continues to offer a chain of experience-driven boutique resorts and private hideaways across India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan & South East Asia; and Raga on the Ganges is a prime example of that.

“Our trade promotional activities include, participating in travel trade fairs globally, organizing road shows and hosting trade partners for familiarization trips.”



Manish Palicha
Head, Leisure Sales, Anantara hotels & Resorts

and lush green valley's welcomes you at every turn building suspense to the beauty of the resort. "The property has many unique features but the ones worth mentioning include its serene environment, tranquil ambience and

Raga promises to be a place that can be action packed or leisurely spa vacation. Choose from a range of activities that encompass adventure activities like white water rafting, rappelling, trekking, cycling and canoeing or indulge

In the quest for heritage

Ranbanka Palace boasts of 71 carefully preserved and renovated heritage rooms. It is a perfect place to sit back and rejuvenate for heritage lovers, away from the maddening city life.

TT BUREAU
Built at the turn of the last century for Maharajahdiraj Sir Ajit Singh ji, Ranbanka Palace captures the prevalent colonial influences of its time and immerses them in the echoes of another bygone era. Acknowledged by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India as Jodhpur's first Classic

offers accommodation and experiences across a wide range of budgets as it boasts of 71 carefully preserved and recently renovated heritage rooms.

The multiple dining venues at Ranbanka Palace offer an array of cuisines including the most delectable Rajasthani specialities. From traditional

array of cultural performances. It offers an exotic journey into another era and features artists belonging to families that have perfected their art for the royal courts. The 'Spa by the Baradri' offers signature Rajputana therapies for complete relaxation.

Ranbanka Palace is ideally suited for pre-wedding and wedding functions. The hotel also provides robust concierge services for seamless delivery, including a highly experienced wedding coordinator who ensures expert advice, local assistance and flawless execution of the minutest details. From a lavish delicious buffet to impressive sets and regal décor, from royal accommodation to cultural entertainment;



Heritage Hotel, Ranbanka Palace enables its guests to soak in the flavours, history, luxury, dance, music, arts and culture of Royal Marwar. It

music recitals, kaalbela dancers and langa singers to exciting puppet shows, the central courtyard transforms every evening with a myriad

Ranbanka palace offers a plethora of services for a grand wedding in Jodhpur. Embark upon an exotic journey, into another era.

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Charting out new roadmap for inbound

The industry's optimism has doubled after the introduction of eTV. Eagerly awaiting the release of the New Tourism Policy in May, industry stalwarts speak to TRAVTALK about how this will boost inbound arrivals.

 MEGHA PAUL

Inbound has been a challenge till now. However, with the government's new initiative of the eVisa, things will be back on track soon. The new eTV 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.

Jyotsna Suri
India Travel Award Winner and President, FICCI



With the recent introduction of eTV, we only see happy times for the inbound market. The inbound from many of our conventional markets, especially the US will 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. Other segments which will see good growth are the adventure and sports segments. Educational travel and incentive travel will show significant increases as compared with the previous year.

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



The PM was talking about tourism even before he came to power. The good news for us is that he understands our sector. But now we are a trifle disappointed as we continue to see the flattening of the tourism curve. Investors are still not too encouraged. The mood is right but we need to see more momentum on the ground.

Arjun Sharma
MD, Select Group



Luxury travel is on the rise from markets such as the US and Far East. An important development that we should watch out for is the entry of AirAsia and Tata-SIA airlines in the domestic skies. Also, the introduction of eTV by government has removed bottlenecks for foreign visitors planning to come to India. We can expect more customers opting for experiential holidays as this is the new trend.

Vikram Madhok
Managing Director
Abercrombie & Kent India

Contd. on page 68 ▶

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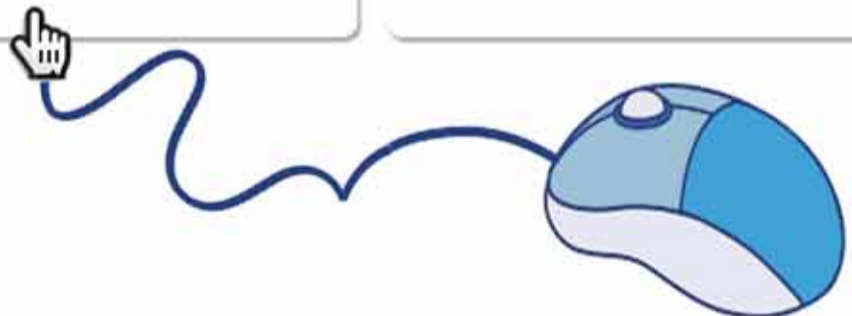
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Cautious optimism in the air

► Contd. from page 66

Indian tourism has reached a stage wherein we should be now talking about ease of doing travel to the country. On the experiential front to the ultimate spenders, we still are not responding well enough to their aspirations. There should be a mechanism in place to improve it. In today's age, we truly need to see a new version of Incredible India. We should work on safety-related apps and helplines on a pan-India basis in this technology age.

Priya Paul
Chairperson, The Park Hotels



With the recent clearance of eTV, 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. Traditionally, Goa's unique amalgamation and fusion of Indian and Portuguese cultures has made it a very unique and special state. The cheerful and friendly nature of Goans, along with its inherent natural beauty and historic monuments has cemented Goa's position as a top tourist destination. Since the late 60s, Goa has been associated with beaches and parties. While that association continues to be made, we see ourselves as



a place which offers a world of experiences to the tourist in some 3,702 sq kms of space. 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, such as its rich arts, its fusion of Indo-Portuguese cuisine etc.

Ameya Abhyankar
Director, Department of Tourism-Goa



This year 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 encouraging 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.

With the entry of newer carriers and eTV introduction, there is huge potential of creating a huge competitive space – both a challenge and an opportunity – overall a positive development with correction in pricing, rationalisation and a balanced perspective.

Though there is a need for more government initiatives and relaxed taxation policies on products and services, the eTV for travellers from 43 countries will definitely provide an added boost in the right direction.

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



New visa regime (eTV) 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 to 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. Hopefully, 2015 will be one of the most successful years after 2007 for Starwood Hotels in India.

Dilip Puri
Managing Director-India, Starwood Hotels & Resorts



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9-11	Durban	Indaba 2015, South African Tourism
21-23	Dhaka	Bangladesh International Tourism Fair (BITF)
26-29	Ontario	Rendezvous Canada 2015, Canadian Tourism Commission

NATIONAL

8-10	Kochi	Hoteltech Kerala
25	Chennai	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office
27	Bengaluru	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office
29	Delhi	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office

JUNE 2015

INTERNATIONAL

9-11	Chicago	IBTM
21-25	Melbourne	Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)

NATIONAL

1	Mumbai	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office
10	Kolkata	Why Spain? – Presentation & Networking Dinner for Travel Trade
11	Ahmedabad	Why Spain? – Presentation & Networking Dinner for Travel Trade
11-13	Pune	India Hospitality Expo
12	Pune	Why Spain? – Presentation & Networking Dinner for Travel Trade
25	Kolkata	East India Travel Awards

JULY 2015

NATIONAL

10	Delhi	VKonect MICE : B2C
10-12	Bengaluru	India International Travel Mart
11	Delhi	VKonect MICE: B2B
13-14	Mumbai	Kiwi Link India workshop, Tourism New Zealand
13	Goa	Learn South Africa
14-15	Ahmedabad	Learn South Africa
15	Mumbai	Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training
16	Delhi	Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training
16	Jaipur	Learn South Africa
17-19	Chennai	India International Travel Mart
17-19	Kolkata	Tourism Expo India
20	Jalandhar	Learn South Africa
20	Kolkata	Thailand Road Show
22	Lucknow	Learn South Africa
22	Delhi	Thailand Road Show
23	Kolkata	Learn South Africa
24	Mumbai	Thailand Road Show
24	Mumbai	Learn South Africa
24-26	Hyderabad	Travel & Tourism Fair
25	Pune	Learn South Africa
27	Hyderabad	Learn South Africa
29	Trichy	Learn South Africa
31	Bengaluru	Learn South Africa
31-Aug 2	Kolkata	Travel & Tourism Fair

AUGUST 2015

INTERNATIONAL

5-7	Beijing	CIBTM
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NATIONAL

1	Cochin	Learn South Africa
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India largest volume-based market

Along with increasing market share in India, which is the largest volume-based market in Asia for TrawellTag Cover-More, the company is also introducing new products for the market by the end of this year. **TRAVTALK** gets more details



Cover-More made its presence felt in India through collaboration with TrawellTag and now offers hassle-free travel insurances. A combination of TrawellTag's local knowledge and established distribution with Cover-More's global experience and track record in customer service made India a prime market for this travel insurance giant. TravTalk speak to George Sanders, CEO-Asia, Cover-More Group, and discuss their plans.



“Another important development in India will be the launch of our global SIM cards in the next six-nine months. This will allow you to stay connected and is cheaper than a normal phone.”

George Sanders
CEO-Asia, Cover-More Group

Presently the conversion rate from India is 20 per cent, which means that 80 per cent Indians still don't buy insurance before travelling. Of this, 90 per cent of the insurance in India is sold through travel agents.

In India, because of the size of the agency business, the agents continue to be an essential arm for the insurance providers. We are only entering the online market now but with respect to the agency business we have a market share of 30-35 per cent, making us the second largest.

Q What new products will you bring to India this year?

We plan to bring more advance pre-existing medical products to the marketplace. We have just introduced a limited cover for first aid treatment in the market and we are looking to expand that. In Asia, insurance is not a common thing and it's becoming imperative for us to cover the condition of aged people. We are working on enhancing customer service and offering duty of care to the best available. It's important that travel insurance covers more than the basic requirements.

Cost of medical care in the US

A simple case of appendicitis and a two-night stay in a New York hospital could cost a traveller more than \$75,000 according to Cover-More. Or worse, if you are involved in a car accident in the United States and require intensive care, the medical bill could climb to more than \$300,000. Plus if you require lengthy hospitalisation, be prepared for a medical bill approaching \$1 million.

Q Do you see the Indian market maturing?

The efforts we are putting in India are now about the transformation in the mindset. It's very important to get the appropriate assistance while travelling. The focus is to educate the traveller about the importance of insurance and getting the right assistance.

Q How important is the Indian market in terms of overall growth strategy?

Today, to be a global player one needs to be in the Chinese, South East Asian and Indian markets. Therefore

our expansion into India was an important part of the overall growth. It brings volume to the business and adds credibility to our name.

While Cover-More, an Australian company, exercises

The Ashok dons a new hat

The Ashok, New Delhi recently hosted a FAM and Cocktail dinner in order to showcase upgraded and renovated rooms and suites at the hotel. The event was graced by various travel agents.





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- Happy Hours 5pm to 7pm

Terms & Conditions :

- Extra person will be charged Rs. 3000 in Deluxe Room & Rs. 4000 in Suite.
- Children above 6 years will be charged full rate.
- Prior reservation is necessary. Check in time:- 2 pm / check out time:- 12 noon
- This offer cannot be clubbed with any other offer.
- 3rd Night stay includes only room & breakfast.
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Summer Packages

Stay 2 nights & get 3rd night complimentary
(Valid from 1st April, 2015 till 30th September, 2015)

Room Type	Special Rate MAP
Deluxe Room	Rs. 10,999 + taxes
Premier Room	Rs. 11,999 + taxes
Villa	Rs. 12,999 + taxes

*Above rates are applicable for Single & Double occupancy
Stay for 2 Nights & get the 3rd Night complimentary.*

The above package includes :

- Welcome drink
- 3 Breakfasts & 2 Dinners.
- 2 bottles of Mineral water complimentary in the room per day.
- Complimentary use of all Indoor games.
- Happy Hours 5pm to 7pm

Terms & Conditions :

- Extra person will be charged Rs. 3000 in Deluxe & Premier Room & Rs. 4000 in Villa.
- Children above 6 years will be charged full rate.
- Prior reservation is necessary. Check in time:- 2 pm / check out time:- 12 noon
- This offer cannot be clubbed with any other offer.
- 3rd Night stay includes only room & breakfast.
- All other standard terms & conditions apply.

VISA TALK



Colombia Update

Embassy of Colombia, Delhi has announced that, Indian nationals do not require Colombian Visa for stay up to 90 days provided they comply with one of the following conditions.

- Hold Type C (less than 90 days) or Type D (more than 90 days) Schengen Visa or hold any type of US Visa except C-1 Transit Visa.
- Hold resident permit in any of the Schengen member states or in the United States of America.



Approval from MINAFFECI needed for DR Congo Visa

Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo has announced that, all visa applications submitted at the Embassy will be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFECI), DR Congo for approval. Post approval from MINAFFECI, the visa applications will be processed. Hence, the processing of visa application may take up to 10 working days.



Jurisdiction for Hungary Visa Applications

Embassy of the Republic of Hungary, Delhi has announced that with immediate effect, applicants need to lodge their Hungary visa applications as per the jurisdiction below.

Applications from Northern & Eastern zone of India will be processed from Delhi and applications from Western & Southern zone of India will be processed from Mumbai.



Additional Requirements for Dominican Republic Visa

Embassy of the Dominican Republic, Delhi has announced that applicant has to provide all the supporting documents (Covering Letter, PCC, Bank Letter, Medical & Birth Certificate etc) in Spanish or along with its "Spanish Translation", when applying for Dominican Republic Visa. Udaan can assist in translation at an additional cost. For more details, kindly contact at udaan@udaanindia.com



Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey in Hyderabad

Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey has commenced its operation in Hyderabad at following address: Plot No 656, Road No 34, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad.

For visa requirements, visa fees & processing time etc, kindly logon to www.udaanindia.com

Visa Snippets:

- Indian nationals can obtain Northern Cyprus visa, officially the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus from Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, Delhi. The High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus does not issue visa for North Cyprus
- Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh, Mumbai has been relocated to Jolly Maker, Bungalow no.8 Cuffe Parade, Opposite World Trade Centre, Mumbai - 400005
- Embassy of the Republic of Madagascar, Delhi has been relocated to A 18, Ground Floor, Mayfair Gardens, August Kranti Marg, Main Road, Hauz Khas, New Delhi - 110016

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- Should be able to work on Excel

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- Should have knowledge about destinations, costing and preparing itineraries
- Good communication skills



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A Leading Hotel Company wishes to sell 2.35 acres at Sriperumbudur, Chennai. The land is on the Chennai-Bengaluru Highway, opposite Saint-Gobain in Sipcot. 168 room hotel construction plans are fully approved.

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The Ritz Carlton

Bangalore

Debanjan Kundu has been appointed as Director of Sales and Marketing at The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore. He will be heading the Sales & Marketing department which encompasses sales, catering, marketing, public relations and revenue management. With over 12 years of experience, Debanjan joins The Ritz-Carlton from his role as the Director of Sales & Marketing at Sheraton Bangalore. Prior to joining Sheraton Bangalore, he was the Director of Sales at Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, Debanjan has also worked in Sales at The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata.



Park Hyatt Chennai

Chennai

Kumar Shobhan has been promoted as Director of Operations at Park Hyatt Chennai, where he will be responsible for the operations of Food & Beverage and Rooms, including Spa and Security. He was appointed as the Executive Assistant Manager for Food and Beverage, at Park Hyatt Chennai in March 2014. With Kumar Shobhan at the helm, the Food & Beverage department excelled in their already established culinary offerings and service styles in the restaurants, most notably the award-winning, The Flying Elephant.



Hyatt Place Gurgaon/Udyog Vihar

Gurgaon

Reema Dhawan has been appointed as the Director of Sales of Hyatt Place Gurgaon/Udyog Vihar. Reema is a graduate from the Institute of Hotel Management, Gwalior. She has also done her Bachelor's degree in Humanities and holds a Master's degree in English. Reema started her career in Front Office at The Trident, Udaipur and then moved to Taj Palace, New Delhi where she was working as a Front Office Executive. Later she shifted from Front Office to Sales with The Oberoi, New Delhi. Her last assignment was with The Oberoi group as the Regional Sales Manager-National Sales Gurgaon.



Fortune Select Dasve

Lavasa

Avijit Chaturvedi has been appointed as General Manager by Fortune Select Dasve, Lavasa. He comes with a rich experience of 22 years, having worked with the Taj Group of Hotels, and HRH Group. He joined Fortune Park Hotels to lead the project team in Pahalgam & Srinagar in 2013. In his present role, Chaturvedi aims to capitalise on the renewed enthusiasm and feel good factor regarding Lavasa. This will help in boosting hospitality revenues and take guest experiences to loftier heights.



Sayaji Hotels

Indore

Vishal Kumar has been appointed as Group Head Sales & Marketing for Sayaji Group of Hotels. Kumar brings with him almost 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry. In his current role he would take care of Sales & Marketing for the entire group, planning and strategising the marketing plans for the hotel, directing all the Sales and Marketing efforts towards achieving the operational goals of the hotel. Kumar's experience ranges from corporate, travel trade and online business. He has worked with The Grand New Delhi, Intercontinental The Grand and Eaton Smart – New Delhi Airport Transit Hotel.



Cash Sales & Partner Network

Bengaluru

Shashikant Jugran has been appointed as General Manager and Head-Cash Sales & Partner Network. He comes with two decades of experience in the travel technology vertical, and possesses rich understanding of corporate strategy, development and implementation. Previously, he held the post of VP -Operateration at Reznex.



Golden Tulip Vasundhara Hotel & Suites

Vasundhara

Golden Tulip Vasundhara Hotel & Suites appoints **Kingshuk Chakraborty** as General Manager. Kingshuk joined Golden Tulip Hotels in November 2014 to launch Golden Tulip Vasundhara, Delhi NCR. A stalwart in the hospitality industry, he brings with him over 20 years of experience from his previous stint with leading hospitality groups including The Oberoi Group, Carlson Rezidor, HHI Hotels and Kenilworth. Prior to joining Louvre Group of Hotels, Kingshuk held the position of an Executive Assistant Manager with Carlson Rezidor- Park Plaza Noida.



The Westin Sohna Resort and Spa

Sohna

Animesh Barat has been appointed as Executive Assistant Manager at The Westin Sohna Resort and Spa. Animesh joins the resort with a vast experience in hospitality industry, spanning over 35 years. He was previously associated with key brands such as Marriott, Hyatt and Renaissance. Prior to joining The Westin Sohna, Animesh was part of the pre-opening team of The Westin Velachery, Chennai. In his current role, he will be over seeing operations at The Westin Sohna.



Representation World

Delhi

Neha Johri has been appointed as Head Destination Sales with Representation World - India Marketing Partner Reunion Island Tourism. She brings with her 11 years of experience in Travel trade & Aviation industry. Neha omes with a very strong airline background. The Reunion island is an exceptional destination in the Indian ocean at the heart of southern hemisphere with so much of diversity. Neha will be responsible to brand the destination in Indian market through aggressive sales & marketing.

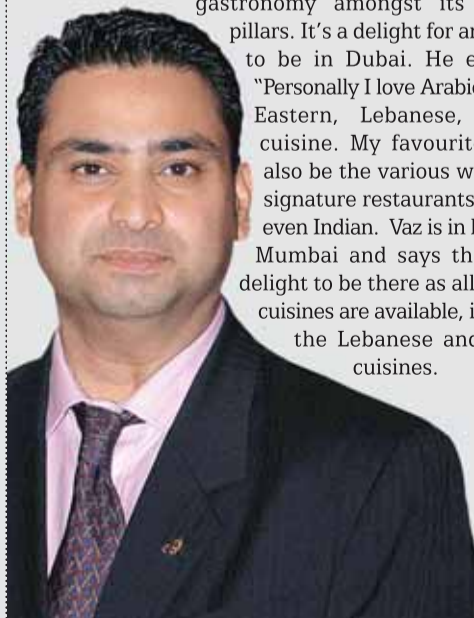


TALKing People

Kulwant Singh, CEO & Managing Director, Lama Group, says he loves to play golf when he is not working. He says, "I generally travel 15-20 days a month for work but I definitely try to have at least one vacation with my family in a year during the Ramadan season. I also do a two to three days holiday to a nearby destination within the UAE with my children." London is Singh's favourite destination followed by Australia, especially Melbourne and Sydney. Besides that he also loves the Far East.



Carl Vaz, Director, Dubai Representative Office in India, says that he loves scuba diving in Dubai. Talking about food he says that Dubai prides itself in gastronomy amongst its various pillars. It's a delight for any foodie to be in Dubai. He explains, "Personally I love Arabic, Middle Eastern, Lebanese, Iranian cuisine. My favourite would also be the various wonderful signature restaurants that are even Indian. Vaz is in love with Mumbai and says that it's a delight to be there as all kinds of cuisines are available, including the Lebanese and Arabic cuisines.



Tekla Maira, Director, Global Sales, FRHI Hotels & Resorts has to travel a lot as a part of her work and has begun to enjoy it. She also loves savouring different cuisines from different countries. This is something she loves experimenting with all the time. Maira says, "I love Middle Eastern food and oriental food. So, there are two extremes in terms of cuisines that I like. Indian food is soul food so, it is always very welcome. But for a change it's nice to take a break from Indian food twice or thrice a week."



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GITB hosts 1,817 FTOs till date

After a gap of one year, the 7th edition of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar returned to Jaipur. Held at the Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC) from April 19-21, the mart hosted 277 foreign buyers from 45 countries. With more than 10,000 pre-scheduled meetings, the mart this year recorded a new high.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

In its seventh edition, the Great Indian Travel Bazaar has now become a prominent feature in the calendar of every travel professional. With a total of 277 foreign buyers from 45 countries and 199 exhibitors spread across 253 booths and

more than 10,000 pre-scheduled B2B meetings, the mart this year experienced a new high. Organised jointly by the FICCI, Ministry of Tourism, India and Rajasthan Tourism, the event this year moved to a new venue - Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC) at Sitapura, Jaipur. While opening the mart

at Hotel The Lalit on April 19 in Jaipur, **Vasundhara Raje**, Chief Minister, Rajasthan, also announced that GITB 2016 will be held from April 17-19 in Jaipur. A Knowledge Report by FICCI and Ernst and Young on 'Unexplored Tourism Destinations of India' was also launched on the occasion.

Tourism indispensable part of Resurgent Rajasthan Summit

Talking about GITB returning to Jaipur, Rajasthan Chief Minister **Vasundhara Raje** said that Rajasthan has become synonymous with tourism. The tourism sector, she said is an important part of business for the three-day Resurgent Rajasthan Summit, scheduled to be held in November in Jaipur later this year. Raje said, "Rajasthan has dearth of air connectivity and we are working on an internal airline where we hope to work with government support and in fact trying to get people to move faster across the state. I'm prepared to do good things with VAT and air fuel. We want to encourage young aviation companies to come and work within the state and allow travellers to move from place to place within a short period of time. Jaipur Airport will also provide eTourist Visa facility to tourists. Tourism contributes 13 per cent to the state's GDP. Last year we saw 33 million domestic tourists and 1.5 million foreign tourists representing a growth of 9.17 per cent and 6.15 per cent respectively. We expect foreign tourist arrivals in the state to go up by 2.5 million and domestic tourists to go up to 50 million over the next three years." She has invited investment for new hotels, new circuits and tourism related infrastructure.



GITB covers 50 countries till date



Dr. Jyotsna Suri, President, FICCI, while giving the welcome address at GITB expressed her delight at the tourism mart's return to Jaipur. She said that in the last 8 years, GITB has hosted 1,817 foreign tour operators and covered 50 countries with 1,661 exhibitors, 1,868 stalls and 57,815 pre-scheduled B2B meetings. She said, "It feels good to be back. As always we have had a full house and a large number of foreign tour operators with more than 10000 pre-fixed B2B meetings. There is a lot happening for tourism."

Best time to be in Indian tourism



Dipak Deva, Co-Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee, was the moderator at the inaugural session. Lauding the government's efforts to boost tourism, he said, "The eTourist Visa facility has been a game changer for Indian tourism, we need to take eTV and now move into the space of promoting various destinations. Incredible India 2.0 concept should be in play. The infrastructure, hotels and air liquidity all exist so I'm very confident about the positive shift that will continue to happen. In my years of being in Indian tourism this is the best time to be."

GITB is back to where it belongs



SK Agarwal, Principal Secretary (Tourism), Rajasthan, talked about how happy they are to host the Great Indian Travel Bazaar. The event this year moved to a new venue - Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC) at Sitapura, Jaipur. Next year too, Jaipur will host the event from April 17-19. He said, "GITB has returned to where it belongs. This is the best way to showcase Jaipur, and the exposure that we get is incredible and very useful to us. We now want to promote Rajasthan as an activity based tourist destination."

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Maya waves on Vizag shores

In its second edition, the India Travel Awards-South 2015 gathered the best known faces and brands of the tourism industry at Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach. The event brought together more than 120 attendees for an exciting evening celebrating excellence in tourism. The auspicious event sought to give recognition to the best in the travel industry through a global industry vote.



The winners of the South India Travel Awards with their trophies at Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach



MEGHA PAUL

After the grand success with its first edition, India Travel Awards recently now travelled south to the Vizag shores this April. The second edition of the India Travel Awards honoured the achievers of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry from the region. Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach hosted the first-of-its-kind event.

The awards were graced by **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Human Resources Development Minister of Andhra Pradesh and **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary-Tourism, Andhra Pradesh along with a list of distinguished personalities who came together, to acknowledge the contributions of the best in the travel and tourism industry in South India. The awards were presented to achievers from different segments of the industry which included aviation, domestic and international tourism boards, hotels and resorts, travel agents, tour operators and technology.

Hailing the efforts of the organisers of the award in recognising the initiatives of those working hard to raise the standards of tourism facilities in the country, Rao highlighted the state's role in boosting tourism. He highlighted that Andhra Pradesh government is keen on exploiting the untapped tourism potential of the state, especially the numerous Buddhist sites, and generating employment on a large scale. Referring to the large number of Buddhist heritage sites in the region, Rao said these sites would be showcased to attract both domestic and international tourists by developing them as a circuit. "Amaravathi, the new capital of the state, is also the oldest Buddhist stupa in South India. Also, there are plans to set up a Disney World in the city and ropeways at Araku and Paderu in the district," he pointed out. The state government has already started work to develop beaches between Bheemili and Visakhapatnam at a cost of Rs 50 crore, which will be completed soon, the HRD Minister added.

Talking at the event, Prasad revealed the new Andhra Pradesh has the largest coastline in India after Gujarat. But it was unfortunate that except in Visakhapatnam there were hardly any tourist facilities in the rest of the State. "The backwaters of Konaseema, Eastern Ghats, hills, jungles, waterfalls, Buddhist sites and the temples at Tirumala offer a lot of scope for tourism," he added. Prasad also mentioned that a mission document is under preparation as part of the tourism policy of the state government. "The new Tourism Policy is 'most investor-friendly' and entrepreneurs are assured of speedy clearances," he revealed.

Optimistic about the industry's reaction to the awards, **SanJeet**, Mentor, India Travel Awards remarked, "These awards in their second year signify the growth of the industry which has developed immensely in the last few years. We are proud to have been instrumental in helping it flourish, and will continue with our endeavour." Over 448,140 votes were received from 68 coun-



(L-R): Neerabh K Prasad, Ganta Srinivasa Rao, Sindhura Kaviti and SanJeet unveiling the special publication on South India at the Awards ceremony

tries, including Canada, UK, Germany, France, UAE, Thailand, Australia Saudi Arabia, US etc. In India, votes were received from all 29 states and maximum came from Tamil Nadu, he added.

The Gallery of Legends award went to **E M Najeeb**, **Vallurupalli Prabhu Kishore** received The DDP

Trailblazer award. **GV Sanjay Reddy** won the DDP Game Changer award and **Rajeev Kumar** won the Face of the Future award. **Praveen Shetty** won the Tourism Ambassador- Overseas award, **Nikhil Dhodapkar** won the award for Best Hospitality Professional and **Mittu Chandilya** won the award for Best Airline Professional. ✈







Gallery of Legends



E.M. Najeeb Chairman and Managing Director, ATE Group joins the 'Gallery of Legends'. He is felicitated by **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Sindhura Kaviti** Miss Vizag and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group

DDP Trailblazer



Vallurupalli Prabhu Kishore, Chairman, Varun Group and Owner of Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach receives the 'DDP Trailblazer' Award from **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh

DDP Game Changer



On behalf of **G V Sanjay Reddy**, Vice Chairman, GVK and Managing Director, BIAL, **Raj Andrade**, Vice President Business Development Marketing & Strategy, Bangalore International Airport Limited receives the 'DDP Game Changer' Award from **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Sindhura Kaviti**, Miss Vizag and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group

Face of the Future



Rajeev Kumar G, Founder, Managing Director and CEO, Mystifly Consulting (I) Pvt. Ltd. receives 'The DDP Face of the Future' Award from **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Sindhura Kaviti**, Miss Vizag and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group

Tourism Ambassador



Praveen Shetty, Chairman & Managing Director, Fortune Group of Hotels receives the **Tourism Ambassador** Award from **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Sindhura Kaviti**, Miss Vizag and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group

Best Hospitality Professional



The **Best Hospitality Professional** Award was given to **Nikhil Dhodapkar**, Regional Director, Sales & Marketing - India, ACCOR from **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Sindhura Kaviti**, Miss Vizag and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group

Best Airline Professional



The **Best Airline Professional** Award was given to **Mittu Chandilya**, CEO, AirAsia India Pvt. Ltd., received on his behalf by **Gaurav Rathore**, Commercial Director, AirAsia India Pvt. Ltd. from **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Sindhura Kaviti**, Miss Vizag and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



Best Global Distribution System (GDS)



The award was given to **Travelport Galileo** and received by **K.S. Ganesh**, Associate Vice President - South India

Best Airport



The award was given to **Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru** and received by **Raj Andrade**, Vice President Business Development Marketing & Strategy, and **Lokesh Matta**, Head of Airlines Marketing (Passenger & Air Cargo Network)

Best Meetings & Conference Hotel



The award was given to **Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach** and received by **Madhav Bellamkonda**, General Manager and **Varun Mehrotra**, Director of Sales & Marketing

Best State Tourism Board



The award was given to **Andhra Pradesh Tourism** and received by **G. Venkateswarlu**, s.e. APTDC

Best Tourist Attraction



The award was given to **Ramoji Film City (Ushakiron Movies Ltd.)** and received by **Rama Krishna**, Dy. General Manager, and **Pavan Kartheek**, Front Officer Manager

Best Green Meetings and Conference Venue



The award was given to **Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre** and received by **Gorav Arora**, Director Sales & Marketing, Novotel & HICC Complex and **Anmol Pancholy**, Director of Sales - Corporate, Novotel & HICC Complex

Best International LCC Airline



The award was given to **Tigerair** and received by **Surya Kuchibotla**, Assistant Manager Marketing Sales and Marketing and **Alka Jha**, Area Sales Manager - Sales & Marketing

Best Hotel Distribution Technology



The award was given to **RezNext Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd.** and received by **Vishesh Khanna**, Sr. Vice President - Business Development and **Surender Balasubramanian**, Sr. Vice President Sales

Best General Manager



The award was given to **Rajneesh Malhotra**, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills





Best Boutique Tour Operator



The award was given to **Shanti Travel** and received by **Maud LE BARS**, General Manager India and HR Group Manager

Best Luxury Wedding & MICE Resort



The award was given to **Clarks Exotica Resort and Spa, Bangalore** and received by **Balaji**, CEO and **Vivek Kumar**, MD

Best Luxury Resort



The award was given to **WelcomHotel Raviz Ashtamudi Resort and Ayurveda Spa, Kollam** and received by **Ravindranath.M**, Brand Manager

Best Leisure Hotel



The award was given to **Hyatt Place Hampi** and received by **Ankur Bhandari**, First Assistant General Manager and **Rohith K**, Director of Sales

Best Business Hotel



The award was given to **Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Mysore** and received by **Pankaj Saxena**, General Manager

Best Debut Mid-Market Hotel



The award was given to **Holiday Inn Express & Suites Hyderabad Gachibowli** and received by **Ranganath Budumooru**, General Manager

Best Global Consolidation Services



The award was given to **Mystifly Consulting (I) Pvt. Ltd.** and received by **Preetham N**, Chief Operating Officer

Best Emerging Airline



The award was given to **AirAsia** and received by **Gaurav Rathore**, Commercial Director, AirAsia India Pvt. Ltd.

Best Corporate Hotel



The award was given to **Novotel Chennai SIPCOT** and received by **Mohammed Shoeb**, General Manager





Best Luxury Wedding & MICE Destination



The award was given to **Ramoji Film City (Ushakiron Movies Ltd.)** and received by **Rama Krishna**, Dy. General Manager, and **Pavan Kartheek**, Front Officer Manager

Best Debut Hotel



The award was given to **Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Mysore** and received by **Jimlet Jose**, Executive Chef and **Nirmala Azavedo**, Executive Housekeeper

Best Transport Company



The award was given to **Parveen Travels** and received by **A Sadiq**, Director and **A. Afzal**, Chairman and Managing Director

Best Airport Hotel



The award was given to **Novotel Hyderabad Airport** and received by **Javed Parvez**, Director of Sales and **Maverik Mukerji**, General Manager

Best Airport Aviation Marketing Team



The award was given to **Bangalore International Airport Limited** and received by **Lokesh Matta**, Head of Airlines Marketing (Passenger & Air Cargo Network)

Best Travel Management Company



The award was given to **UAE Exchange and Financial Services Ltd** and received by **Akula Srinivas Kumar**, Branch Head, Visakhapatnam

Best Emerging Destination



The award was given to **Reunion Island** and received by **Vineet Gopal**, Head India, India Marketing Partner

Best Leisure Resort



The award was given to **Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere** and received by **Prashant Venugopal**, Manager - Sales & Marketing

Best City Hotel



The award was given to **Marasa Sarovar Premiere Tirupati** and received by **Rishu Roshan**, General Manager

Best Digital Marketing Campaign



The award was given to **ibis Bengaluru City Centre** and received by **Samit Kazi**, Director of Sales, India





Partner State



The award was given to Andhra Pradesh Tourism and received by **G. Venkateswarlu**, s.e. APTDC

Official Beverage Partner



The award was given to **Sula Vineyards** and received by **Sreenivasa Reddy Chinipilli**, Assistant Sales Manager

Hospitality Partner



The award was given to **Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach** and received by **Raj Kiran**, Sales Manager, **Varun Mehrotra**, Director of Sales & Marketing and **Madhav Bellamkonda**, General Manager

Airline Partner



The award was given to **AirAsia** and received by **Bhanu Kaila**, Head - Sales & Distribution



Chief Guest **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh being honoured with **Pearl Trophy 'Maya'**



Guest of Honour **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh being honoured with **Pearl Trophy 'Maya'**



Thanking **Sindhura Kaviti**, Miss Vizag for her support to India Travel Awards



Maya, Travel Goddess, smiles



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in the second edition



South takes centrestage



in Maya's second sojourn



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