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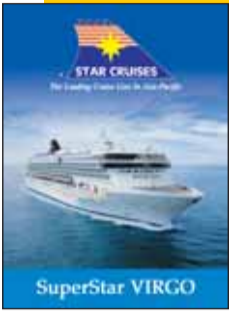
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Now, board for medical tourism

The Ministry of Tourism will be setting up a National Medical and Wellness Tourism Board to boost medical tourism in India.

TT BUREAU

The Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge), Culture (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, **Dr Mahesh Sharma** announced the setting up of a National Medical and Wellness Tourism Board to boost medical tourism in India. Elaborating about the establishment of the board, Dr Sharma says it will help

to bring together and showcase on an international platform the various streams of medicine available in India including Ayurveda, yoga, naturopathy, Unani and low cost allopathic treatments. He added that this will give an organised structure to medical tourism in India with participation of various stakeholders including the private ones. The Minister was speaking on the occasion of the launch of the new

edition of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' television commercials and a brochure titled "India- The Land of Yoga" at a function in New Delhi.

Senior officials of the Ministry of Tourism — **Dr Lalit Panwar**, Secretary; **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary and **Umang Narula**, CMD, ITDC — were also present on the occasion.



(L-R): Umang Narula, Dr Lalit Panwar, Dr Mahesh Sharma, Prasoon Joshi and Suman Billa at the launch of the brochure - 'India- The Land of Yoga'

Nepal-Sri Lanka in Buddhist circuit

In an interview with **TRAVTALK**, Suman Billa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, says the National Tourism Advisory Board with the Union Tourism Minister as its Chairman and state tourism ministers as members, along with stalwarts from the tourism and hospitality industry, will be the highest advisory decision-making body which will have its own Secretariat and its own corpus of funds.



Suman Billa
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q With India setting up a medical tourism promotion board, what will the nature of the board be?

In our country we have a huge amount of opportunity as far as medical tourism is concerned. Very high-quality treatments are available in India at about a fraction of the cost com-

pared to most developed countries. However, there is some sort of disconnect between the medical fraternity and tourism. So far medical tourism basically works with the commercial elements of the hospitals, which does not perform fall into the ambit of hospitality. This is an opportunity which we should not miss, so the idea is that we should get the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of

Tourism along with the service providers to create a strong vibrant mechanism to promote medical tourism. We suggested we should have a medical tourism board which will have representatives from MoT, Ministry of Health and the healthcare industry to take this forward. The idea is to hold roadshows and promote it at various levels to popularise medical tourism in India.

Q The draft National Tourism Policy talks about setting up of a National Tourism Advisory Board. How will this board work?

The tourism agenda in India has to be driven from the states, so the National Tourism Advisory Board seeks to have the Union Tourism Minister as the chairman but it will have representatives from all the states, the tourism ministers of all the

states will be members and we'll also get some experts into the board. The experts will be stalwarts of the industry and connected areas. In essence it will be the highest advisory decision-making body and it will have its own Secretariat and its own corpus of funds. It should not be a platform where people will come and talk and have no follow-up, the idea is to have a continuous engagement with

Contd. on page 32 ▶



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Friday 17 July 2015	Delhi	10h00 - 14h00 • 14h00 - 18h00
Monday 20 July 2015	Jalandhar	09h30 - 13h30
Tuesday 21 July 2015	Delhi	10h00 - 14h00
Wednesday 22 July 2015	Lucknow	10h00 - 14h00
Thursday 23 July 2015	Kolkata	10h00 - 14h00 • 14h00 - 18h00
Friday 24 July 2015	Mumbai	12h00 - 16h00
Saturday 25 July 2015	Pune	10h00 - 14h00 • 14h00 - 18h00
Monday 27 July 2015	Hyderabad	10h00 - 14h00 • 14h00 - 18h00
Tuesday 28 July 2015	Chennai	14h00 - 18h00
Wednesday 29 July 2015	Trichy	09h30 - 13h30
Thursday 30 July 2015	Chennai	09h30 - 13h30
Friday 31 July 2015	Bangalore	10h00 - 14h00 • 14h00 - 18h00
Saturday 1 Aug 2015	Cochin	09h30 - 13h30
Monday 3 Aug 2015	Mumbai	10h00 - 14h00
Tuesday 4 Aug 2015	Nagpur	10h00 - 14h00



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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

Four new circuits for 2016

The Ministry of Tourism will develop Wildlife Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Desert Circuit and Ramayana Circuit in 2016. Helpline for foreign tourists to be made available in 12 foreign languages within a month.



In another important step to promote tourism, **Dr Mahesh Sharma** announced four new theme-based circuits under the Swadesh Darshan scheme that will be developed in the next year. These four circuits are Wildlife Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Desert Circuit and Ramayana Circuit. These four circuits will be in addition to the five circuits already being developed by the Ministry of Tourism.

The Minister was speaking on the occasion of the launch of the new edition of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' television commercials and a brochure titled "India - The Land of Yoga" at a function in New Delhi.

The four films would be telecast on various television channels to spread the message of Atithi Devo Bhava

across the country. The films would go a long way in educating people about the importance of tourism and touristic values. This is a further step in augmenting the efforts made



by the Ministry of Tourism for promotion of tourism.

Dr Sharma said that security, hospitality and cleanliness are the main strengths of tourism in India and the Ministry of Tourism is working

on a mission mode to achieve these objectives.

Explaining the significance of Tourism, the Minister said that it helps generate

employment in addition to earning foreign exchange. It is for this reason it is important to move beyond the concept of 'tourist season' and promote India as a 365-day tourist destination, he explained. Dr Sharma further said that this

can be done by developing various streams of tourism like medical tourism, MICE, spiritual tourism, yoga etc.

The minister said that the Indian Government has launched a Helpline 1363 or 1800-111-363 to help foreign tourists and guide them on their arrival in India. The helpline will be available in 12 foreign languages within a month to facilitate foreign tourists. Currently, the Helpline is available in Hindi and English.

The brochure on yoga includes details of yoga destinations which will help to promote yoga as a tourism product. Speaking on the occasion, **Dr Lalit Panwar**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, said that Yoga Day is our unique gift to the world and it will help in promoting Global Tourism in India.

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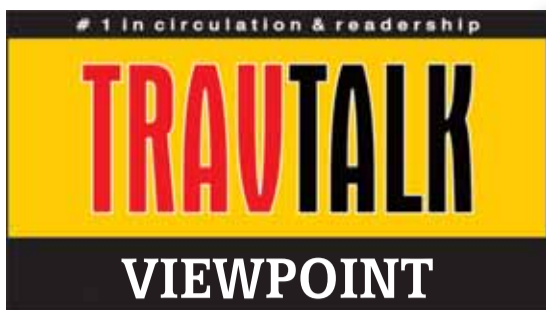
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Tourism is big bucks!

As per MoT, in US\$ terms, FEEs from tourism in 2013 were \$18.445 bn as compared to \$17.737 bn in 2012 with a growth rate of 4%.

Tourism Policy: A catalyst for growth

Right now if there's anything that the Indian tourism industry is waiting most eagerly for, it is the New Tourism Policy. The policy will be a much-anticipated catalyst to drive tourism development in India. The new policy will hopefully aim at value addition over the previous one and will also give a serious thought to the causes of non-implementation of various schemes under the 2002 policy.

With June 21 being observed all over the world as International Yoga Day, we hope that this will further establish the cause of tourism in India making India a hotspot for tourists all over the world. The concept of yoga is in fact an Indian one and we hope that further popularising yoga all over the world will make global tourists visit India to explore more about this concept.

The setting up of a National Medical and Wellness Tourism board as part of the National Tourism Policy is another smart move in making India a 365-day destination for tourists. Medical treatments in India are available at almost one-eighth of the costs that they are available anywhere else in the developed world. However, there is a large disconnect between the medical industry and the tourism industry on this, if this sector is organised then it can reap rich benefits for the Indian tourism industry.

With the Ministry of Tourism working hard to remove impediments and bolster tourism in India, agents are also eager to see how the tourist season fares this year as 77 countries have already made it to the eTV list and the number is only growing.

However, the Lufthansa €16 charge debate is raging and agents want to talk it out with the airlines and find out a way that is not detrimental for either party. We hope a resolution comes fast and hopefully everything is on track.

When Indian tourism is poised for a major change we sure don't want any roadblocks to derail this development.

Month	FEE (in US\$ billion)			Percentage Change	
	2011#	2012#	2013#	2012/11	2013/12
January	1.273	1.681	1.984	32.1%	18.0%
February	1.684	1.729	1.906	2.7%	10.2%
March	1.227	1.559	1.755	27.1%	12.6%
April	1.290	1.305	1.329	1.2%	1.8%
May	1.124	1.023	1.207	-9.0%	18.0%
June	1.213	1.158	1.227	-4.5%	6.0%
July	1.603	1.512	1.442	-5.7%	-4.6%
August	1.264	1.306	1.328	3.3%	1.7%
September	1.208	1.219	1.224	0.9%	0.4%
October	1.424	1.538	1.404	8.0%	-8.7%
November	1.566	1.776	1.703	13.4%	-4.1%
December	1.688	1.931	1.936	14.4%	0.3%
Total	16.564	17.737	18.445	7.1%	4.0%

Provisional Estimates

Months	FEE from Tourism in India			Percentage% Change	
	2012	2013#	2014#	2013/12	2014/13
January	1681	1984	1786	18.0	-10.0
February	1729	1906	1805	10.2	-5.3
March	1559	1755	1662	12.6	-5.3
April	1305	1329	1431	1.8	7.7
May	1023	1207	1210	18.0	0.2
June	1158	1227	1440	6.0	17.4
July	1512	1442	-	-4.6	-
August	1306	1328	-	1.7	-
September	1219	1224	-	0.4	-
October	1538	1404	-	-8.7	-
November	1776	1703	-	-4.1	-
December	1931	1936	-	0.3	-
Total	17737	18445	-	4.0	-
Sub Total (Jan-June)	8455	9408	9334	11.3@	-0.8 @

Advance estimates and @ Growth rate over Jan-June previous year

1st Revised estimates

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India

Year	FEE in US\$ terms	
	US\$ million	% change over previous year
1991	1861	-
1992	2126	14.2
1993	2124	-0.1
1994	2272	7.0
1995	2583	13.7
1996	2832	9.6
1997	2889	2.0
1998	2948	2.0
1999	3009	2.1
2000	3460	15.0
2001	3198	-7.6
2002	3103	-3.0
2003	4463	43.8
2004	6170	38.2
2005	7493	21.4
2006	8634	15.2
2007	10729	24.3
2008	11832	10.3
2009	11136	-3.7
2010#	14193	27.5
2011#	16564	16.7
2012#	17737	7.1
2013#	18445	4.0

Provisional



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Cricketers bat for Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Development Company signs cricketers Dwayne Bravo and Kieron Pollard as their brand ambassadors in India.



TT BUREAU
Cricketers **Dwayne Bravo** and **Kieron Pollard** will now be seen encouraging Indians to travel to Trinidad and Tobago as the country's Tourism Development Company (TDC) has signed the IPL stars as its brand ambassadors in India to promote tourism.

Warren Solomon, General Manager - Marketing, TDC says, "We are excited to have these two world-renowned cricketers on board with us to help promote Trinidad and Tobago as a holiday destination in India. Pollard and Bravo's huge fan following in India and their love for Trinidad and Tobago make them the ideal choice to promote the varied and exhilarating experiences of their home country to the growing number

of Indian travellers who are looking for a unique holiday experience."

Talking about his appointment and highlighting the various facets of his country, Pollard states, "I'm delighted to be partnering with the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Development Company to promote my beautiful country in India. Bursting with spirit and a

heady mix of cultural activities, eco adventure and culinary delights, there is no place in the world quite like our tiny twin-island republic."

Bravo, who was in Delhi for the promotion, and who amused the crowd with his performance on his debut single - *Chalo Chalo*, was equally excited. "I am very excited to be promoting Trinidad and

Tobago in India. We hope to see more Indians visiting T&T to discover the range of sites, attractions and experiences that cater to the needs and desires of many types of travellers. Trinidad and Tobago's close proximity to the US, great flight connections and the fact that visas are not required for Indians make it the ideal destination for Indian travellers," says Bravo.



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Owing to the historical ties and/or bilateral agreements between Trinidad and Tobago with India, Indian citizens do not need visas to travel to the twin islands. However, one must procure a UK or a US visa in order to transit from the respective ports for flights into Trinidad & Tobago

Tanzania to soon get eTV facility

Termining Tanzania as an important component in the India-Africa partnership, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has conveyed to Tanzania President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete that India will soon extend e-Tourist Visa scheme to Tanzanian tourists. India inked eight MoUs with Tanzania in various fields including Agriculture, Tourism and Hydrography to expand engagement in different sectors. The agreements were signed after delegation level talks between the Prime Minister and Kikwete in Delhi. The MoUs signed include a loan agreement between Exim Bank and Tanzanian Government on a line of credit for \$268.35 million for extension of the Lake Victoria pipeline project.

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After Clean India, now 'Clean My Coach'

Besides issuing the largest number of railway tickets in the world, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) is on its way to become better with its new ventures and packages, says Dr AK Manocha, Chairman and MD, IRCTC.



SAMAPTI DAS

QWhat do you have to say about the recent amendments in the Tatkal scheme?

Our website which has been designed to book 7200 tickets per minute was getting a workload of over 15,000 tickets per minute, especially between 10-10:15 am every day. So a policy request was made to the Railway Ministry that this time should be stag-

ged and Tatkal booking should be extended from 10 am for upper class and from 11 am for sleeper class. So the Ministry agreed to our proposal and the system has been started from June 15 and there is now a distribution of 5000-6000

QAre the bookings on IRCTC more by individuals or travel agents?

I think 70-80 per cent of the bookings are done by individuals and hardly 10-12 per cent is by travel agents or groups and families. But around 75-80 per cent of the bookings are at the counters and Internet bookings are comparatively lesser. We want to facilitate passengers who have made an effort to come and stand at the counter.

QPlease tell us about the recent tie-up that IRCTC has done with SpiceJet and GoAir for the up gradation of wait-listed railway tickets.



“We have requested the Ministry to make Aadhar cards mandatory for Tatkal reservation so that the complaints of misuse of login ID or website by agents are substantially reduced.**”**

Dr AK Manocha
Chairman and MD, IRCTC

We have already started functioning with GoAir. We give an option to the passenger at the time of chart preparation and an email is sent through which they can access the IRCTC website, fill in their data and get a ticket. These tickets are given by airlines at discounted rates to IRCTC. There is no dynamic pricing despite being a last-minute booking. We have got an encouraging response. We are in talks with SpiceJet and hope to tie up with it soon. We are also talking to other airlines like Vistara and shortly we

will come up with schemes for them.

QTell us about the 'Clean My Coach' App introduced by the Railway Ministry.

This app is being directly handled by the Railway Ministry. As far as I know it is an On Board Housing Service (OBHS). Contracts have been awarded in several trains in which four to five people in every third coach or so have been employed. Through this App, passengers can contact

these people and the cleaning process or any other assistance is done.

QWhat are the new passenger amenities that IRCTC is going to provide at railway stations?

We have supplied wheel chairs in 10-15 stations like Amritsar, Varanasi, Haridwar, Bengaluru and Chennai. We also supplied golf carts to Delhi, Nizamuddin, Lucknow, Varanasi, Ghazipur, Ayodhya. Recently, we have signed an MoU with Regional Railway Manager, Lucknow and Mumbai to provide upgraded passenger amenities at Varanasi and Mumbai stations. At Varanasi we have initiated with an air conditioned food plaza. We are waiting for the ministry's approval to set up air conditioned lounges in 32 more stations. We are planning to provide automatic water vending machine with water of WHO standard which will cost hardly ₹ 1-2 per glass for refill and about ₹ 5 for a bottle refill. We

have plans to put up 6000 such machines in all over India by next summer.

QWhat do you think are the most popular tourist packages?

The most popular are the religious places like Vaishno Devi, Tirupati and the Budhhist circuits. So, all our pilgrimage special trains go full. 'Bharat Darshan' is also very popular. Our Maharaja train has also become quite popular. It is the first luxury train in the world recording profit within three years of its operation.

On Track

➔ IRCTC sees more than 15,000 Tatkal ticket bookings per minute

➔ Air-conditioned lounges and water-vending machines are some of the upcoming offerings from IRCTC



gered and Tatkal booking should be extended from 10 am for upper class and from 11 am for sleeper class. So the Ministry agreed to our proposal and the system has been started from June 15 and there is now a distribution of 5000-6000



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Goa to welcome eTV arrivals from the second list of 31 nations

■ The Goa International airport is set to welcome e-Tourist Visa (eTV) arrivals from the second list of 31 countries enlisted for this facility by the Centre recently, a move that will boost tourism during monsoon. The existing policy had provided this benefit to 45 countries and with the inclusion of 31 more countries, the facility is now available for citizens from nearly 75 countries, while the Centre plans to extend this to 150 by next year, a press release issued by state tourism department said. The airport at Dabolim has already made adequate arrangements for catering to citizens from 75 countries, availing of eTV facility. As on June 8, as many as 16,875 eTVs were issued at the Dabolim airport, it said. The tourism ministry is expecting a good footfall of foreign tourists during monsoons (June-September) as the new trend has set in of foreign tourists arriving to the state as free independent travellers (FITs).

Healthy checks & balances

The account books of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) are currently reflecting a healthy balance, thanks to this year's convention that was held in Bali.



HAZEL JAIN

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) concluded its convention successfully on March 28, 2015, in Bali and with it gave its treasury a much-needed fillip. Unknown at that time though, the accounts of the association are now reflecting a balance that has closed on the right side. **Marzban Antia**, Treasurer, TAAI, says, "The convention has been a great success for the association financially as well. For the first time, the accounts have been ready on time and presented to the Managing Committee with a fantastic surplus."

Sharing his experience of working with the team on the convention, Antia says, "Everything went according to plan even though the government of Indonesia did not sponsor the convention. We pulled it off in just 40-45 days and even made it profitable. We did it from our own internals and our own efforts, our own negotiations, and the TAAI

team did a fantastic job in ensuring that this convention was a success. Everybody has worked round-the-clock with minimum sleep of two to four hours per day only."

ment did not extend its support, TAAI got very good response from the local travel associations as well as hoteliers from whom it got free room nights for pre and post



Marzban Antia
Treasurer, TAAI

He says that the reason for having the convention is so that TAAI can generate revenue to run its establishment costs. These are the supplementary incomes TAAI earns because the membership fee is just not enough.

Antia adds that even though the Indonesian govern-

ment did not extend its support, TAAI got very good response from the local travel associations as well as hoteliers from whom it got free room nights for pre and post

ment did not extend its support, TAAI got very good response from the local travel associations as well as hoteliers from whom it got free room nights for pre and post

Inbound is important

TAAI's motive to promote inbound as well as outbound tourism to and from India was very visible at its Indian Travel Congress and 62nd Convention and ITTE. "TAAI's motive is not only to promote outbound but also inbound. We have members from every segment of the tourism and hospitality industry – from inbound, outbound, car rental companies, foreign exchange dealers, hoteliers, everyone," Antia says.

government, Indonesia could not support that convention in any way. We also wanted certain waivers for visas and taxes which did not come through. But we had the Indian community in Bali who supported us as well as GVK airport. The King of Ubud supported us in a big way by his esteemed presence. We did negotiate very hard with the hotels. I don't think I have seen anyone negotiate as hard as the team did," Antia says.

The convention also saw a lot of firsts. It had about eight international speakers as well as a special presentation on NDC by IATA. It also put a lot of emphasis on non-conventional

tourism like sports and adventure tourism other than the regular touristy things in Bali.

Despite Odds

- TAAI received huge support from the Indian travel community in Bali for its convention
- King of Ubud graced the convention with his presence
- MH, SQ, EK, AirAsia and Malindo Air were very forthcoming with their support

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Driving women to safety

While the Indian travel industry is concerned about women's safety, the car rental industry has to take exceptional care since there is no one else inside the car with a single woman traveller except the chauffeur.

Unlike in the West where self-drive (hiring a car without chauffeur) is the preferred option, Indians prefer the chauffeur-drive model because it is convenient and chauffeurs have knowledge of local routes. This increases the responsibility of companies like ours and therefore in line with our endeavor to provide fool-proof safety to our renters at large, we have introduced multi-level safety measures that make the traveller secure.

registry with bio-metrics where information on all Avis India chauffeurs including documents like residence proof, ID proof, police verification certificates, driving licence, commercial badge, reference checks, etc are stored online and available at the press of a button. Apart from this we have streamlined the process in such a manner that each region will have a Compliance Officer who will manage all necessary documentation

can press in case the need arises. Pressing the SOS button or the panic button triggers an immediate response from our 24x7 Avis Secure Desk.

The Avis Secure Desk consists of a team of executives working 24x7 exclusively dedicated to not only respond to the SOS or panic button but also track the use of an Avis car by any lady traveller. As per the standard protocol, the Avis Secure Team calls each lady travellers twice during each rental, first at the start and then at the end, to check if the traveller has reached her destination safely and if she was inconvenienced in any way.

This emphasis of Avis India on blending global systems with an understanding of local needs has enabled us to achieve market leadership in India. Our growth has been over 30 per cent every year for the past 3-4 years and we continue to maintain our track record of doubling revenue every 3 years. This is twice as fast as the growth of the market as a whole. This is due to many factors but providing a safe, reliable and high quality experience to our customers has been the key one.

The Avis Secure Desk consists of a team of executives working 24x7 exclusively dedicated to not only respond to the SOS or panic button but also track the use of an Avis car by any lady traveller

With Avis, the guest is assured of well-trained and courteous chauffeurs with intimate knowledge of local routes. Our services are fully compliant with local regulations, use IT-driven processes and are backed by safety features unmatched internationally.

Though industry-wide and country-wide guidelines are not in place yet, we at Avis have become the first car rental company to have dual verification of all chauffeurs - once through the police and a second time through an independent third party agency who will do a re-verification of the chauffeurs. These chauffeurs are paid salaries unmatched in the country and are entitled to all statutory benefits. This leaves them with a guest-friendly orientation while serving them.

We have also launched a cloud-based central chauffeur

regarding chauffeurs and ensure that non-compliant chauffeurs are not in-fleeted in our system.

Features introduced by Avis India are global industry firsts. All Avis India cars are equipped with a GPS enabled hand-held device based e-Rental Agreement process that has made the entire guest interaction paperless, tracks kilometres and time automatically through a navigation interface and tracks a car during the entire course of the rental. In addition to the GPS on the e-RA device, all Avis cars are fitted with another independent GPS device in the car, thus providing a built-in redundancy to the system.

As part of the standard service, all hand-held devices are provided with an easily accessible SOS button. There is another physical panic button in each car which the guest



Sunil Gupta
CEO, Avis India

IRCTC to open 'single-window shop' in CP

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) plans to commence a unique Tourist Facilitation Centre in Delhi that will act as a 'single-window shop' for all tourism products. To be located in Connaught Place, the centre will offer a string of rail, land and air tour packages for domestic and international travellers, taking care of their itinerary — from air ticket to visa facilitation and insurance, from special train packages to cus-

tomised tours, from food to accommodation, from cab and concierge services to sightseeing.

"This will be the first of its kind initiative anywhere in the country where the entire travel needs are taken care of under one roof. This is also the only brick and mortar office of the IRCTC where people can walk in to buy a train or air travel package and even get a customized trip as per their convenience," said

Dr. AK Manocha, CMD, IRCTC. "The Tourist Facilitation Centre, to be launched shortly, will be unique as it would facilitate a direct public interface," he added. The facilitation centre will handle all special train packages of IRCTC such as Bharat Darshan, pilgrim trains (Tirupati, Shirdi, Buddhist circuit), the north-east, Kerala and Goa. In addition, there are air packages for J&K, Shirdi and Tirupati.



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The €16 challenge

In response to the €16 charge that Lufthansa will levy on travel agents globally, TAAI has planned to start a campaign that will aim at educating the customers about this move.



HAZEL JAIN

The hullabaloo caused by the recent announcement from Lufthansa Group has led to one of the key travel agent associations in India — Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) — to act tough. Sunil Kumar, Acting President, TAAI, has said that the association will be starting a 'Save the Consumer' campaign that will involve educating the clients about this charge.



Sunil Kumar
Acting President
TAAI

He says, "Our members are calling us up saying that they don't want to promote any airline that charges them extra for booking on the GDS. The

move by Lufthansa goes against the Consumer Protection Act. Most travellers do not book their international tickets immediately but mostly

after 48 hours. They only block the tickets and confirm it later. Agents will not be able to provide this flexibility to travellers if they book tickets on the Lufthansa website. If agents book it directly on the website, there will be a cancellation fee while changing their dates. In case of the GDS, agents can block the tickets with a fixed price. This move is derogatory to our customers."

"If the extra charge is due to administration cost then it's not fair to levy it on agents. We will be initiating dialogue with Lufthansa Airline as well. IATA will be holding a seminar on July 15 in Mumbai. But we will not bring this up on that platform. In our past discussions, IATA has clearly told us that such issues are between the airlines, the GDS and the agents and that IATA will not be able to do anything," he states.

Kumar adds that TAAI's first step against this is starting a campaign called 'Save the Consumer' where it will try and educate the customers about the repercussions of this move.

TAAI will soon be activating all its chapters and initiating meetings for this campaign. It will include IATA as well as non-IATA agents in this.

I think this is Lufthansa's negotiation tactics. Their objective is probably to renegotiate distribution cost charge with GDS companies.



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

This announcement from Lufthansa is not good for IATA travel agents. The airline is doing it to reduce its cost but airlines should work with us on mutually-beneficial terms. If airlines have made huge profits in the past with the support of the travel agents who promote and sell their air tickets, then they should also think about the benefits of the travel agents. Direct ticket sale by the airlines through their website is not always productive — neither for the agents, not for the customers.



Manish Syngal
CMD, Dimaz Group



Lufthansa has initiated the most disruptive, anti-travel agent and objectionable practice which impacts the overall functioning of the industry. GDS helps the agents to identify the best option for travellers in minimum time. Lufthansa has created one more distribution channel, which will be a logistical nightmare to manage, delaying our services to the customers which will result in massive losses. Our airlines partners who are currently analysing the reactions of this move will eventually replicate the same model which will be disaster for the travel industry.

Deepali Wagle
Director, Meandering Vacations



The trade has brought this upon themselves by not coming together under a single platform to solve a most pertinent issue which was the withdrawal of commission by many international and domestic airlines. Airlines and large service providers have been experimenting with selling directly to the public. This will definitely affect business as clients will not be willing to pay the extra charge. The greater threat is other airlines would jump onto the bandwagon. Then there is the new distribution channel IATA wants to introduce - reportedly nine airlines have already joined the scheme.

Hector D'Souza
President, L'Orient Travels

Lufthansa's response to agents

German airline giant Lufthansa explains its stand on the move to charge €16 from travel agents in an exclusive email response to TRAVELM.

QWhat is the reason behind adding this surcharge?

The various booking channels are associated with sometimes significant cost differences for the airlines. Till date, these costs have been generalised and passed on to all passengers as part of the ticket price. The costs for bookings via GDS, in particular, far exceed those of other booking channels and are increasing significantly again

this year. In future, in the interests of a fairer allocation of distribution costs, part of these costs for GDS bookings will be passed on in the form of a new charge. With effect from September 1, 2015, the Distribution Cost Charge will be incurred by those customers whose bookings are made via GDS. Direct bookings with Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, Lufthansa and SWISS will remain free of Distribution Cost Charge (DCC).

QHow has it been calculated?

The DCC is based on a specific block of costs and is subject to a defined method of

calculation. It is not a free sales element that justifies an incentive since it is applied depending on the sales channel used. The GDS cost LHG stated only base on the real billing from GDS to LHG. LHG has a confirmation by an independent auditor that no other costs are being drawn.

QHow did the airline expect the travel trade to react?

DCC keeps in account the considerations of our key partners, the travel trade community and provides them with the option of booking tickets without the DCC, using its online portal at www.LHGroup-agent.com.

Contrary to the preferred fares program which focused on travel agencies, the DCC does not touch the processes of travel agencies. It will be billed automatically. Further, the DCC gives agents an opportunity to explore differentiation options with regard to their offers to customers.

QHas any association reached out to Lufthansa to initiate discussions?

LHG is in close talks with all of its industry partners. It is our intention to create new offers and solutions in close cooperation with the other players. Our strategy marks the first step into this direction.

Is Default Insurance the future?

Voting for the Default Insurance Program instead of the Joint Bank Guarantee scheme, the IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI) says it is the best option for travel agents.



HAZEL JAIN

After the brouhaha that was created around the Joint Bank Guarantee (JBG) scheme in 2014, which was approved by International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Passenger Agency Conference (PACConf) in San Diego for India, its relevance and viability has come into question.

As a result, the two nodal agency associations in India – Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) as well as Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) – have deferred the

scheme for its members. One of their reasons is the unlimited liability clause mentioned therein.

Meanwhile, the IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI) is trying to make a point of its own. Its national president, **Biji Eapen** has dismissed the JBG scheme altogether and is campaigning for the Default Insurance Program (DIP) instead. He says, "DIP has been adopted by many countries and has a lot of advantages as against the JBG scheme. You don't have to pay premium or provide collateral security or deposit. You

only have to pay a minimum sum of say \$1-2 per ticket issued that has been fixed and then agents pay this only after selling the tickets."

He adds that most biggies like Jet Airways, Singapore Airlines Emirates and Etihad have extended their support for this. "But the industry doesn't seem to want it. This has to be approved through APJC India. We had approached IATA Singapore office but they are just avoiding the issue," Eapen says.

Case against IATA

In a related matter, IAAI had also filed a case against IATA in October 2014 at Gurgaon against the IATA representative, Vinod Malhotra. The association had approached the Delhi court to stop all activities of the present APJC and direct IATA to reconstitute APJC-India as per the new guidelines issued by the PACConf in January 2014 under Appendix 'F'. The new guidelines of PACConf require the IATA Manager in a country to

TAFI, TAAI defer Joint Bank Guarantee for members

Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) and Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) have deferred the Joint Bank Guarantee scheme after doing in-depth due diligence. Confirming this, **Pradip Lulla**, General Secretary, TAFI, says, "We have deferred this because some of the legal terms were not suitable for our members. We are not happy with the unlimited liability that they have mentioned. In all fairness, the liability to our members cannot exceed the bank guarantee. What IATA is asking is detrimental to our members. We will be taking it up at the APJC meeting that will be held soon and ask IATA to revise some of the terms."



Pradip Lulla
General Secretary, TAFI



Marzban Antia
Treasurer, TAAI

Marzban Antia, Treasurer, TAAI, echoes this sentiment. He says, "There are certain terms and conditions that were not in the interest of our members participating in this, specifically the unlimited liability term. TAAI has therefore deferred the joint bank guarantee scheme until IATA clarifies and amends these terms."

“DIP has been adopted by many countries and has a lot of advantages as against the JBG scheme. You don't have to pay premium or provide collateral security or deposit.”



Biji Eapen
National President, IAAI

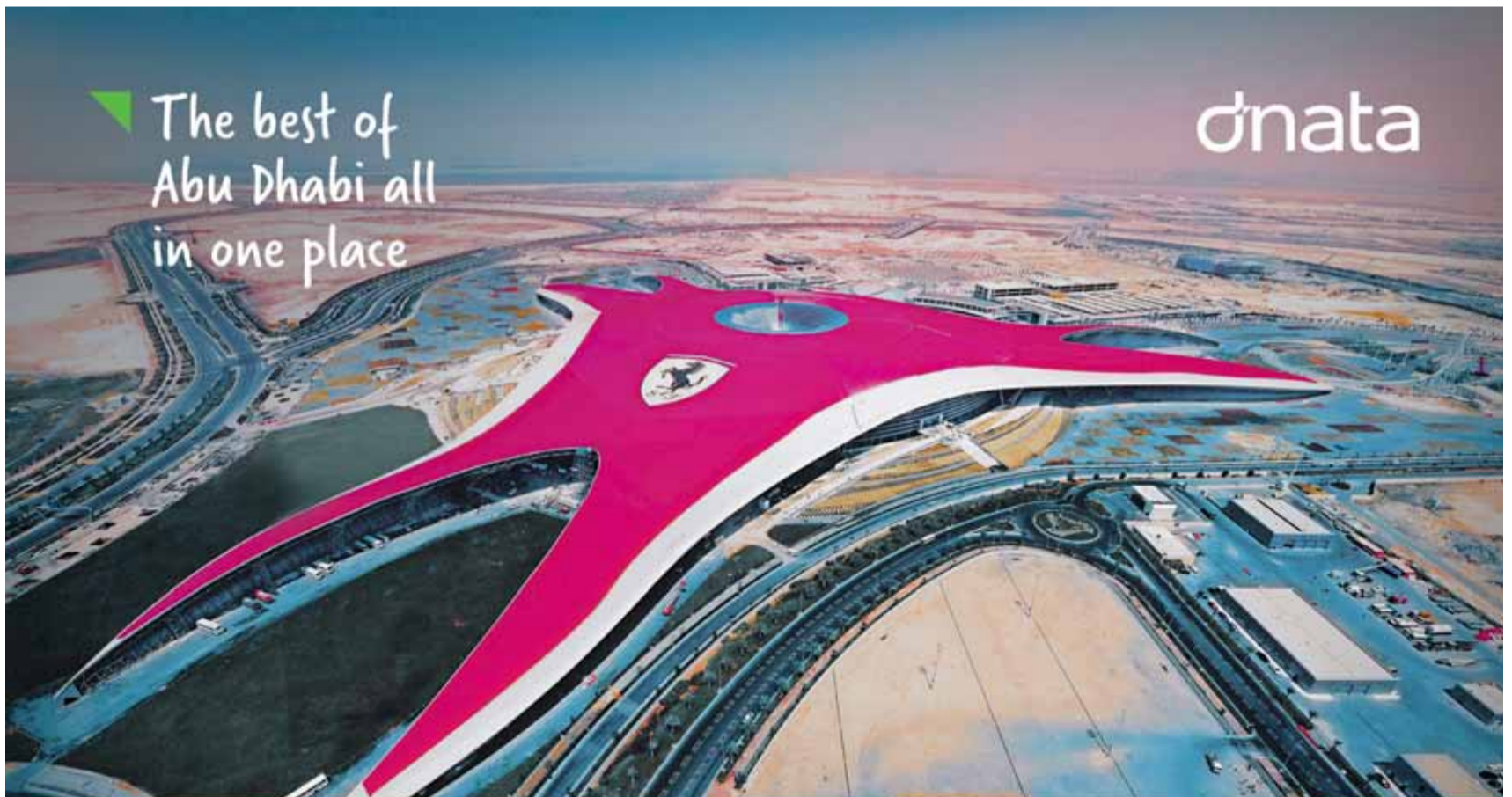
establish APJCs under clearly defined terms that it had allegedly flouted.

Eapen says, "We have been forced to approach the court now. Appendix 'F' is very clear and concise and leaves no room for doubt. It clearly states that every country shall have 18 members equally represented by airlines and agent association and that all the associations

should have equal representation in APJC. We will no more in July as the court is on vacation till July 15. We have asked Tony Tyler, Director-General and CEO, IATA, to investigate the India operations. Let's see if he takes action. We may meet him when he will be India."

Jagdeep Bhagat, President for Delhi State Committee, IAAI, stated that

IAAI had challenged in court that till the new APJC is constituted as per the IATA guidelines, all decisions taken by the prevailing APJC should be stayed to safeguard the interest of the travel fraternity. "Perhaps, as it is not constitutional and legal for the current APJC to implement any policy changes, TAFI and TAAI have refrained to go ahead with the JBG scheme for their members."



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'Atithi Devo Bhava' gets a new spin

Dr Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State with Independent Charge for Tourism and Culture and Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Government of India recently launched the latest edition of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' television commercials (TVCs) in New Delhi. The four TVCs will spread awareness about ways to extend hospitality to tourists visiting India by adopting an honest and helpful attitude, as well as maintaining cleanliness and hygiene. Bollywood actor Aamir Khan is the brand ambassador for these films, which have been directed by ad film-maker Praseon Joshi.



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Tap new members, NTOs

Increasing membership base, tapping new NTOs and understanding implications of GST will be the agenda for OTOAI this year.



MEGHA PAUL

Post the recently held elections of the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) for the term of 2015-17, where Guldeep Singh

isations of a certain size and scale, with recommendations from overseas suppliers as well as national tourism offices, can become members of OTOAI. Formed in November 2011, OTOAI currently has a member-

lems related to outbound travel," he says.

The association also aims to work with a bigger number of National Tourism Boards in India. "Currently, we work with about 15 National Tourist Offices (NTOs). We want to push them to launch new products and initiatives for the Indian market. Our effort will be to provide OTOAI members continuous training in collaboration with the various NTOs to enable them to sell destinations effectively," the president added. Giving further details, he adds, "OTOAI is also taking up the task of promoting short-haul destinations besides pressing other countries to have a uniform visa process."

Getting taxes streamlined will be another objective for the newly re-elected president. "The GST will be unveiled soon. Thus, we want to work on its implications and repercussions on outbound travel and this will an important agenda for us," he concludes.



“Our effort will be to provide OTOAI members continuous training in collaboration with the various NTOs to enable them to sell destinations effectively.”

Guldeep Singh Sahni
President, OTOAI

Sahni was re-elected as president, the association is now looking at a three-pronged strategy for growth.

According to Sahni, the association will look at increasing membership pan-India. "We maintain stringent criteria for active membership. Only organ-

isation base of about 415 outbound tour operators, out of which 300 members are active, including small and mid-sized tour operators, tour operators with pan-India presence and multinational tour operators. Going forward, we are looking at bringing more outbound players to understand regional prob-

Telangana's new roadmap

As the state celebrated its first birthday on June 2 this year, TRAVTALK catches up with BP Acharya, Principal Secretary-Tourism and Culture, Telangana.



TT BUREAU

QWhat initiatives is the state govt taking to promote tourism?

Though Telangana is a new state in the political map of India, its tourism products are not new. Hyderabad is known as MICE destination of India, with state-of-the-art convention centres and world-class airport at Shamshabad. It also has the largest Film City. The modern Hyderabad is a host to many MNCs that have brought collateral benefits to the tourism sector. Beyond Hyderabad, the state will promote heritage sites of the Kakatiya Fort, Rammappa Temple and the Thousand Pillar Temple at Warangal. For the spiritually inclined, we have Lord Sri Ram Temple at Bhadrachalam, Jogulamba Temple (one of the 18 Shakti peetam) Mahabubnagar District, Kolunpaka Jain temple, Mecca Masjid and the Medak Church.

QIs there a new state tourism policy on the cards?



BP Acharya
Principal Secretary-Tourism and Culture, Government of Telangana

The strategy is to encourage private sector investments for new tourism products and in the hospitality sector by way of offering incentives and concessions with special emphasis on development of tourism projects in most of the tourism destinations covering all districts of Telangana. The role of the government would be to be a proactive facilitator and a catalyst. However, the government is in the process of reviving the Tourism Policy which was created during the combined state of Andhra Pradesh.

QWhat is the budget for promotion of tourism in the state?

For the current fiscal year, the tourism budget is ₹ 250 crore. Apart from the State Government Budget, which is mainly for regular promotional activities, we also aim at securing funds under Central Financial Assistance from the Ministry of Tourism, for setting up of tourism projects by creating tourism infrastructure.

QAny agent-specific programmes?

The commercial wing of Telangana Tourism – Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation (TSTDC) – is already operating various packages within the state and also inter-state tour packages such as Shirdi, Tirupati, etc. TSTDC also conducts frequent fam tours for the prominent tour operators. TSTDC has appointed GSAs for promotion and selling the package tours and also create customised tour packages for the tour operators.



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Orritel opens in Talegaon

Orritel's new resort in Talegaon will be able to leverage the huge potential of the vast industrial belt between Pune and Mumbai.

TT BUREAU

Opened in June this year, Orritel Convention, Spa, Wedding Resort in Talegaon is a blessing for the many corporates that have office in and around Talegaon. Right from Mercedes, GE, General Motors, Bosco, and L&T to Mahindra & Mahindra, all top names have their presence here.



Amit Dholakia
Managing Director
Orritel Hotel

Amit Dholakia, Managing Director, Orritel Hotel, says, "When companies have to set up an office or even a division, they have to stay back for at least six months at a stretch. So we are looking at tapping international business travellers during the week and leisure tourists on weekends."

The location, he says, gives him an advantage because the area of Chakan, Talegaon and the upcoming Khed City, MIDC is so huge that it's bigger than Hinjewadi with a lot of potential for MICE.

Orritel has five hotels already in operation – two in

Andheri (Mumbai), and one each in Hinjewadi (Pune), Vagator (Goa) and Talegaon - with a total of 350 keys. "That's why we already have an established network of agents and tie-ups with corporates. Our efforts are now concentrated on tapping the growing Chakan-Talegaon-Hinjewadi belt," Dholakia says.

After Talegaon, Orritel has seven more properties in various stages of readiness that will open over the next three years – three in Mumbai, and one each in Mandwa, Dortoli, Kolad and Roha.

Of the three in Mumbai, one will be a serviced apartment called Sorreto Kia Park that will open by September 2015 in Andheri West. "We will look at long-term leasing of this for very high-end corporates and Bollywood celebrities. All the seven properties will be located at very strategic nodes and I don't expect anyone to come there even for the next five years," he says. Dholakia is aiming to touch about 2,500 rooms by 2019. "My aim is to be good at everything – the spa, the F&B, the art, the service," he adds. The Roha property is slated to have an Iyengar Yoga institute spread over 80 acres.

Offer for Agents

Orritel will give away some complimentary vouchers to agents and event planners where guests only pay 20 per cent of the rack rate. This offer is valid till August 15, 2015.

Go 'kung fu' in Nanhai

Representatives from Nanhai, a region with similar cultural background as India and home to kung fu, were in New Delhi to attract more Indian travellers.

SAMAPTI DAS

Nanhai Tourism Bureau in collaboration with World Holiday Tours held a roadshow in New Delhi to promote the new South China Island destination, Nanhai. Nanhai is the home to kung fu fighting. Besides kung fu, tourists can also enjoy the best Cantonese cuisine there. Nanhai is looking for something new in the India market for the development in tourism and the tourism bureau is happy to help the travel agents to develop new itineraries for Nanhai and the adjoining places.

Xian Fulan, Vice Mayor, The People Government of Nanhai District, Foshan City, says, "Nanhai and India both have old civilisations and have similar history. Nanhai has grown economically and culturally. So, we would like to promote Nanhai tourism in India and vice-versa."

This time it was a full dimension presentation to promote Nanhai tourism. Not only



travel agents and airlines but it is also an effort to make the Indian society aware of the culture and tourism of Nanhai.

Fulan adds, "This is the first time we are doing a presentation to promote Nanhai tourism. We are here to promote one journey and multi destinations. And we want to do more business with India's travel agents and the government."

Paul YL Leung, Managing Director, Holiday World Tours, says that Holiday World has been working in the Indian market for the last 20 years and is doing a lot of

incoming tours to bring all the attractions to the Indians.

Leung adds, "We are trying to promote a new destination, Nanhai which has a great culture. It has a lot of lessons like the Dragon Ball lesson, Kung Fu and the Lion dance practice. We will take care of the visa requirements and tourists can enjoy the culture, beauty and various facilities in Nanhai."

According to **Leung**, Indians know very less about Nanhai and it is something new for them. He adds, "We want to take Indians to Nanhai and tell them what we have to offer."

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Luxury stay, budget price

Arpit Bindal, Director–Sales & Business Development, says that Grand Venizia is a symbol of sophistication and luxury and can match any five star property.



TT BUREAU

QTell us about the positioning of the hotel.

We are a luxury hotel at budgeted price. It's our fifth year of operation and we have been able to carve our niche and it comprises various segments of the market. Be it leisure or cor-

porate, we have got the stupendous support from all the verticals. Our repeated guests are our testimonials.

QFrom which regions do you receive the most Indians?

If I talk about leisure segment, we have most of our guests from Western India i.e.

class. The rooms and residences give a plush and luxurious feeling and it is complemented by the atrium lobby.

QDo you also receive foreigners?

We do have expats, especially from Europe, Middle East and China. They generally come and stay with us for a long duration. The flow of these guests is round the year.

QHave you already opened the new property in Agra?

We have already started the process to step towards Agra and I believe it wouldn't take too long.

QWhat do you think is the future of Indian tourism?

If you talk about the domestic business, it is growing by leaps and bounds. I may not be able to comment on figures but yes, we can see it clearly that the Indian market has not been affected adversely unlike overseas markets and money is being spent. We have a promising future, especially as the MICE business is expected to flourish. ↴



porate, we have got the stupendous support from all the verticals. Our repeated guests are our testimonials.

We are a four star boutique hotel but our services are as good as a five star hotel. Grand Venizia has been accepted very well amongst the different segments because of its

Gujarat and Maharashtra. The hotel is located at a very peaceful location and it has great F&B facilities like customised Gujarati cuisines and also personalised services. We don't intend to make high profits on F&B sale thus it gives an edge to the decision of our guests. If I were to say about Corporate Segment, then our



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Australian Tulip Festival to woo Indians

Now Indians can enjoy special packages at Tesselaar Tulip Festival and Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary. Nayaz Noor CTC, DS, Chief Executive Officer, Safir Tours, tells TRAVTALK that the package will have Indian escorts and multilingual staff. They also plan to start the tours in various other Indian languages.



Why did you decide to launch these India specific packages?

Last year we visited the Tesselaar Tulip festival and saw numerous escorted Chinese groups there. It gave us an idea to create one for the Indian market. Yarra Valley Tourism is very excited about our proposed launch.

We want to attract Indian tourists as well as the Indian residents to see the Tulip festival. So, if they can't go to Keukenhof, they can see it in Tesselaar which is only an hour away from Melbourne CBD. The weekend dates we have chosen for the Tesselaar festival also feature Turkish, Irish, Dutch food, music and drinks.

Secondly, the Great Ocean Road is popular with all Indians and having lived here we know how time consuming and strenuous it can be for the residents to take their relatives on a 12-hour day tour. This tour will give them the opportunity to send their parents/relatives on a tour and not have to worry about them being taken care of.

We have plans to extend these India specific tours to Philip Island and the Mornington Peninsula and Sovereign Hill later. The Yarra Valley tours will continue after the Tulip Season to include cherry picking, wine tasting, and a visit to the Yarra Valley Chocolatier, besides Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary.

What unique features do you offer to the Indian traveller?

We provide an Indian escort to give our Indian travellers a comfort factor and handle queries. An Indian meal is provided for lunch which is not easily available on the GOR or Yarra Valley. We also provide an additional pick-up point in the outskirts of the city for local Indians to reach easily and not have to come to the main departure point. This is an added convenience.

Will the tours be only Hindi speaking or other regional languages as well?

Right now it is in Hindi. If we have a closed group, we can do it in Punjabi, Gujarati, Telugu and Tamil too.

What marketing initiatives are you taking to promote this amongst travel agents?

A direct mailer is being sent to Tourism Victoria reps in India and to all our

current clients. This information will be available on our social networking page as well as the India outbound forum. We are also targeting the local Indians, especially students who probably don't have vehicles but want to take a tour. We will run a lucky dip for one person on the tour to be able to have an animal encounter at Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary during the Yarra Valley Tour which will also include a visit to a cherry orchard to see the Cherry Blossom in Mid-September

“ We have multilingual staff to handle queries. The coaches are booked and the dates fixed. The product will be commissionable to travel agents at 10%. ”



Nayaz Noor
CTC, DS, Chief Executive Officer,
Safir Tours



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- Amphitheatre.



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Safir Tours will run a lucky dip for one person on the tour to be able to have an animal encounter at Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary

The product will be commissionable to travel agents at 10 per cent

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Vkonecting the MICE way

Organisers tweak the format of the second edition of Vkonect to see better yields for exhibitors and corporate B2B buyers.

MEGHA PAUL

Buyers and sellers will have fixed and uninterrupted interactions at the second edition of Vkonect which will focus on MICE. In a unique format, the Vkonect MICE event on July 10-11 is looking at bringing together the exhibitors and corporate B2B buyers to acknowledge changing perceptions about principals and MICE travel.



Punam Singh
Promoter and Director
Vkonect



Vineet Gopal
Consultant and Advisor
Vkonect

Punam Singh, Promoter and Director, Vkonect says, "Our second edition – Vkonect MICE is specifically retailored to meet the requirements of many exhibitors and corporate B2B buyers. The first day will see interactions between exhibitors and corporate hosted buyers. This is one significant difference. Second day there will be interaction between exhibitors and B2B hosted buyers."

The event this year is also looking at a fair mix of outbound and domestic players and this is a marked shift from its previous outbound tilt. "This

time on popular demand, we have moved from being purely outbound to outbound and domestic segment. First day is more of networking between principals and exhibitors. The second day is extremely focused and will include proper table-top meetings between exhibitors and B2B buyers. We anticipate over 900 meetings that day as well," she adds.

Explaining the close interaction that needs to be developed between corporates and principals, Singh opines, "The corporate hosted buyers will always be in touch with travel

agents. But the idea is what can they get out of their principals directly. Certain destinations can offer better benefits by means of direct access with them. This could be monetary, or by way of VAT claims, new offerings, etc. Our event will aim at connecting them in a direct way."

Vineet Gopal, Consultant and Advisor, Vkonect, says, "Last year we hosted our luxury show. This year our focus is on MICE. The event will be a closed door show. We are looking at a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 40 participants for this event." ↴

RezNext is 'Cool Vendor'

Gartner's research organisation recently recognised India Travel Award Winner RezNext Global Solutions as a 'Cool Vendor' for Travel and Hospitality.

TT BUREAU

RezNext, the real-time enterprise distribution technology company, has been recognised as a 'Cool Vendor' for Travel and Hospitality by

ed by the enterprise across disparate hotel systems and processes to provide a better user experience.

"We are honoured to be recognised as a Cool Vendor

age the benefits of online distribution in a real-time environment. We provide intelligent distribution tools that remove the complexity in the distribution process and level the playfield for any hotel segment irrespective of their size to maximise on the online booking opportunity. Our intelligent distribution platform has helped hotels drive an increase in bookings by as much as 30 per cent," said Mike Kistner, Chief Executive Officer, RezNext Global Solutions. "We believe this recognition will fuel our plans to become the preferred distribution technology company globally."

"We provide intelligent distribution tools that remove the complexity in the distribution process. Our intelligent distribution platform has helped hotels drive an increase in bookings by as much as 30 per cent."



Mike Kistner
Chief Executive Officer
RezNext Global
Solutions

Gartner in its report published on May 28, 2015. The 'Cool Vendor' report recognises companies that provide unique, innovative and impactful solutions. Companies are assessed by the value extend-

for travel and hospitality by Gartner. Within 3 years of our operations we have been able to positively impact the supply of hotels available online by enabling more and more mid-market hotels to quickly lever-

Recently RezNext was also in the news for winning the India Travel Awards for Best Hotel Distribution Technology Company (South region). Backed by New Enterprise Associates, Inc. (NEA), one of the world's largest and most active venture capital firms, RezNext is on a growth trajectory with over 2000+ customers globally. ↴

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New products tilt Axis

Gyanesh Kumar, Director, and Devesh Kumar Thakur, Director, Axis Softech, say they guarantee cheapest fare for tickets of flights, hotels, buses and cars.

TT BUREAU

QHow was the year 2014 for Axis Softech?

Gyanesh: The year 2014 was remarkable and memorable for us. Our products got momentum in the travel industry and a lot of new clients approached the company where the company delivered complete travel solutions with distinguished features at reasonable prices. Clients say that ours is the only company to provide all integrated products including bookings of all types and thus they are able to get more and more profits by using the products provided by Axis Softech.

QWhat are your marketing strategies for 2015? Any new products that you will be launching?

Devesh: We have launched a Safari B2B product campaign. We also have an in-house digital media team, which helps us promote our website on Google and other search



Gyanesh Kumar
Director
Axis Softech



Devesh Kumar Thakur
Director
Axis Softech

engines and social media. We are launching new products that have enriched features where customer can easily book flight+hotel, hotel+car, flight+car and more innovative products.

QHow helpful is your technology for travel agents?

Gyanesh: Travel portals with all integrated APIs provide cheapest fare to travel agents. We also provide customised portals to them where they can add more features to their portals according to their preferences. Our technology helps

them to find best APIs with the product.

QWhat makes you different from other companies that provide travel portal solutions?

Devesh: We are different from our competitors because we provide a range of products which fits the budget and requirement of our customers. We also guarantee cheapest fare for tickets to travel agents and agencies of flights, hotels, buses and cars. We also provide the best of commissions and discounts on our fares industry wide.

Tech drives travel biz

Shivali Khosla, Executive Director, Aman Travels, feels technology has changed people's mindset and has also evolved itself by creating automated process.

TT BUREAU

QHow important is technology in the travel domain?

Technology has become the most important tool for the travel domain. It has brought the world closer and easily accessible. It has helped to speed up the process which leads to time saving, handling more customers and generation of more revenue for the company. The Internet has all the possible details of every destination, airline, hotel etc. making it easier for everyone to plan an itinerary.

QWhat do you think is the impact of technology in the travel industry?

Technology has got a revolution in the travel industry and changed it from a traditional offline business to an absolute technology driven business. Every aspect of travel domain revolves around technology from ticketing, hotels to visas etc. Airlines and hotels can now showcase their



Shivali Khosla
Executive Director
Aman Travels

inventory directly online, which also has brought a rate revolution within the industry.

QHas technology helped grow business for you in the last two years?

Yes, technology has been the most important factor for the growth of our business. It has changed our business from a traditional company to a modern technology driven company. Through technology the reach becomes unlimited and helps in generating volumes which leads to high turnover. GRNconnect.com

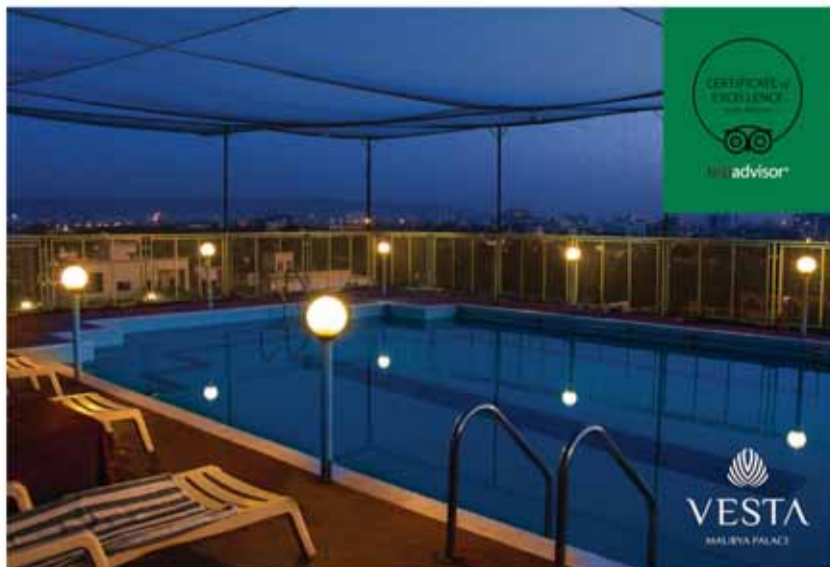
has given us recognition of an online hotel booking company from a regular travel company and helped us reach out pan India and to the international markets.

QWhat are the new trends that you see in the travel industry?

There are various platforms wherein a travel agent can display its inventory and has an ease of reaching to the real-time buyers. Similarly, initiatives taken by companies like OYO rooms and Zo Rooms is quite commendable wherein they have understood the needs of a basic traveller and have managed their allocated rooms and inventory through technology.

QWhat are the new initiatives in your company for this year?

Our focus is to make GRN one of the robust systems for hotel bookings with a high level of technology. We are planning to increase our reach by expanding our hands into Europe and Africa.



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Indian travellers bet big on Austria

Since its re-opening on May 1, the Swarovski Crystal Worlds welcomed about 25,000 guests from India in one month and Vienna saw an increase of 42 per cent in arrivals from India.

As soon as the mercury starts to rise in India, travellers escape the heat and enjoy Vienna's open-air season. The capital's sidewalks cafés spring to life, and the summer bars and eateries alongside the Danube Canal in the center of town opens for business. Both sides of the canal have lots to offer, from Summer stage, where diners can enjoy a wide variety of different cuisines, to the artificial sandy beaches at Strandbar Herrmann, Adria Wien and Tel Aviv Beach. Besides food and drink, there are DJ sounds, live concerts, open-air art installations, sports and even swimming to enjoy. Each summer the main courtyard of the Museums Quartier is transformed into "Sommer im MQ", a popular hang-out offering artistic and cultural attractions, boules, kids' workshops, outdoor cafés and quirky outdoor furniture to relax on.



The 25th Music Film Festival on Rathausplatz is taking place from July 4 to September 6, 2015 with daily showings of top classical and modern opera, operetta, dance and concert performances on a gigantic 300m² screen. Films

begin at nightfall and entry is free. The dozens of food stands on Rathausplatz serve up an amazing variety dishes from numerous world cuisines. In September 2015 after its summer break, the Vienna



State Opera will be broadcasting selected performances live on a giant screen on Herbert-von-Karajan-Platz in front of the Opera House. The Oper live am Platz program aims to give a wider public the chance enjoys the opera house's productions. As one of Austria's

most popular attractions, Swarovski Kristallwelten (Swarovski Crystal Worlds) is celebrating the 120th anniversary of Swarovski and its own 20th anniversary in 2015. In spring 2015, the wonderful crystalline destination reopened its gates after an extensive expansion.

Swarovski has had a history of tradition and success since the family-owned company was founded in 1895. Today, the fascination commanded by crystal is greater than ever. To respond to this large interest, Swarovski created Swarovski Kristallwelten (Swarovski Crystal Worlds) in

1995, a place where crystal becomes a complete experience. Since then, this world of fantasy has delivered moments of wonder to more than twelve million visitors.

The Chambers of Wonder – designed along the lines of the historical Ambras Castle in Innsbruck – have fascinated the public for 20 years. In 2015, a new era of wonder will begin. The list of famous artists and designers who have redesigned these five rooms and their artworks is impressive. Tord Boontje designed a romantic winter landscape with 150,000 sparkling Swarovski crystals; the South Korean artist Lee Bul examines the interaction between visitors and space in her installation; the Chamber of Wonder by the British design duo Fredrikson Stallard includes crystal sculptures of up to 1.86 meters in height produced by Swarovski; and the extravagant Belgian-Dutch designers from Studio Job tell thousands of tales in the form of motion, music, and mirrors.



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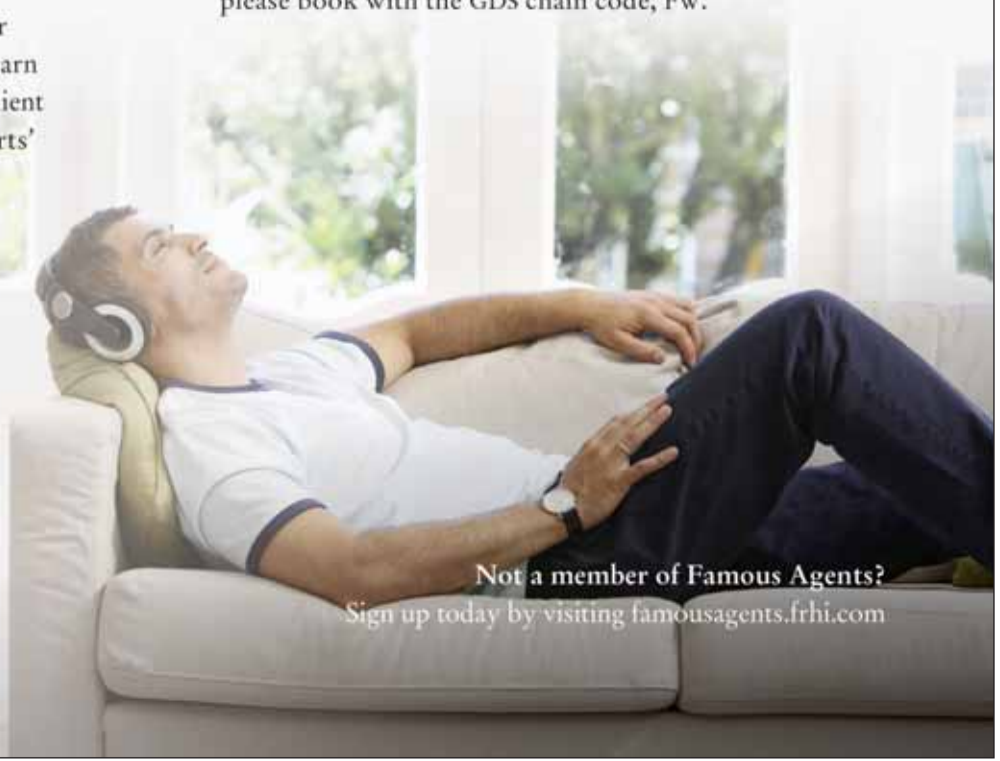
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Brand is King

'Incredible India'; 'God's Own Country'; 'Amazing Thailand'; 'There's Nothing Like Australia'; 'Switzerland – Get Natural'.... Be it a name, symbol, slogan, or a combination of these, the brand is the 'heart and soul' of the tourism industry and its products.



INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA



Tourism products are a collection of experiences, products and images, and a brand brings all these elements together. Creating a strong brand with 'top of the mind recall' is essential. It sells! Kerala and 'Incredible India' are excellent examples of this.

Suman Billa
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Tourism



Branding is strongly linked to status. Tourists want to show off at exotic places, and the hosts use branding for exclusivity. A country can brand its tourism in several different ways, and each can be tailored to appear exclusive. Branding sets standards. 'Brand Israel' has worked because it has brought out and highlighted 'stand alone' destinations, like for instance, Tel Aviv for fun and a racy lifestyle, and Jerusalem as a religious centre.

Hassan Madah
Director India, Israel Ministry of Tourism



Branding plays a vital role as it helps in building a company's unique identity in terms of its products and services. It also establishes an emotional connect which brings the client back and build 'brand loyalty'.

WelcomHeritage for instance, represents fine traditions of heritage hospitality and tourism. Branding has helped WelcomHeritage get recognition and exclusivity.

Sunil Sikka
Marketing Manager WelcomHeritage

Branding is indispensable, as general marketing and general sales have become passé. With the choices vast and methodology easy, potential clients have to be attracted with something special. This is where branding scores. A review of the tourist marketplace clearly shows that countries and regions that are aggressively branding themselves in niche ways have thriving tourism. With its slogan of 'God's Own Country,' Kerala is a prime example of successful branding.



Subha Rajan
Head External Relations, CII

Branding is 'all-important' because brands bring recognition, exclusivity, and quality, and give the destination and service providers a place and status in the marketplace. Today's travellers, especially the young, are very brand-conscious. To be successful, a brand needs to be powerful and have recall value so that it registers in people's mind. It is these attributes that have made 'Amazing Thailand' a very successful brand worldwide.



Runjuan Tongrut
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand

The brand sells first. With tourism resting on intangible elements, branding is crucial as it provides to the intangibility and all related products, a distinct personality. It allows the service-provider an opportunity to offer customers something concrete. For Royal Caribbean, branding plays a pivotal role. It has not only boosted business, but been an instrument of trust and reliability. The future is all about branding.



Ratna Chadha
India Representative
Royal Caribbean Cruises

Touching people's lives

Shoba Mohan, Founder & Partner, RARE Destinations & Experiences, discusses with TRAVTALK about the role of tour operators for her company and also tells that at RARE, it's all about experiencing and touching people's lives.



SAMAPTI DAS

'RARE Destinations and Experiences' is a representation company and a marketing office. It has about 39 hotels onboard now and nine of them are new. Recently, RARE held its annual event to introduce the newcomers. Shoba Mohan, Founder & Partner, RARE Destinations & Experiences, says, "We do events like this once a year for the newcomers who have come on board. It is important for us to take the new bouquet of hotels to the trade. We largely call the inbound tour operators and also do a separate one for the domestic tour operators."

She adds that the travel agents are the people who endorse. If they don't promote what RARE talks about or they don't include it in their itineraries and don't tell their travellers, then all the

"As our tagline says, 'It's about the people', most of the hotels we promote are actually interests of the people who own it. For instance, if the hotel is owned by somebody who loves dance and art, her hotel will be like that."

Shoba Mohan
Founder & Partner, RARE
Destinations & Experiences



work will not be as good as it is. So the success comes from the fact that the tour operators use some of the hotels or all the hotels those RARE markets.

RARE has been propagating interesting itineraries for many years now including

experiential programmes that involve people, their stories, destination and interactive moments. Talking about these programmes, Mohan says, "As our tagline says, 'It's about the people', most of the hotels we promote are actually interests of the people who own it. For instance, if the

hotel is owned by somebody who loves dance and art, her hotel will be like that. Everything hinges on the person who owns the hotel and the property that he sets out. It'll all bear the marks of his character or his interests. So that's why it becomes experiential."

She adds, "It's also the experiential tour operators who will use these or draw them into their programmes, so that they can make an experiential tour programme."

Talking about the new trend in travel, Mohan says, "It's all about experiences. People want to touch lives and interact with the locals. Like, suppose you go to Ladakh and meet a Ladakhi, he will be able to tell you "the culture and things differently than an escort from Delhi, who will tell you his perspective."

Owing to the intangibility of destinations, the traveller's image of destinations plays an important role in his choice. Promoting a destination requires awareness and attracting tourists through special offers, leading to direct or 'face to face' marketing. Efforts to promote Germany rely on strategic branding aimed at highlighting its wide variety of tourist attractions.



Romit Theophilus
Director for India, German National Tourist Office



Branding helps to convey the unique aspects of a destination to potential travellers. It also highlights the strengths and associations that make the brand different, and help it to stand out in the market. The visuals, imagery, copy, slogans and advertising campaigns are

a great way to engage with one's target audience to create awareness about the tourist products on offer. The Tourism Ireland destination branding brings together four different aspects of Ireland — the physical experience of holidaying there; the personality of Ireland; the experiences; and the benefits that tourists receive. These four aspects are based upon culture, destination and people, and branding makes it all effective.

Beena Menon
Representative Tourism Ireland



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**Mansingh Palace,
Agra**

Cherish the luxury of elegantly furnished rooms and relive the centuries-old romance. 100 beautiful rooms. Ripples is the 24-hour coffee-shop and Sheesh Mahal the multi-cuisine restaurant. Tequila, the well-stocked hotel bar, swimming pool and health club to rejuvenate the self as well as soul. A delightful experience to savour for a long time.



**Mansingh Towers,
Jaipur**

An Executive Block with 53 well-appointed rooms & suites, designed to mix business with pleasure, with the provision of personal valet, mini bar and jacuzzi in every suite. Fax machine and PC on demand. There's more an executive lounge, a well-equipped business centre, library, a well-stocked bar and multi-cuisine restaurant Garden Court to delight the palate.



**Mansingh Palace,
Ajmer**

Rejoice in the holy and festive environment of the town and bask in the ancient and majestic ambience of the hotel designed like an 18th century fortress. It's a memorable experience to live in the family suites that are an architectural marvel and to savour Continental, Chinese, Mughlai & Rajasthani cuisines at its Sheesh Mahal restaurant.

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The best shine through

Whether its NTOs or the hotels, India Travel Awards picks out the best and encourages the industry to keep working hard for the development of tourism. TRAVELTALK here features the best NTOs and best of hotels and hospitality personnel who were awarded for their contribution to the travel industry.

Best International Tourism Board



The award was given to Tourism Authority of Thailand and received by its Director, **Runjuan Tongrut**

Best Foreign Destination in the Rest of the World



The award was given to South Africa and received by its Country Manager, **Hanneli Slabber**

Most Popular General Manager

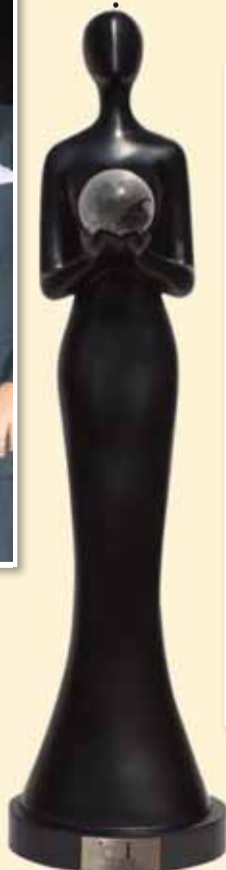


The award was given to **Greesh Bindra**, General Manager, Crown Plaza Greater Noida

Best New Hotel



The award was given to Crowne Plaza Kochi and received by its General Manager, **Sanjay Kaushik** (extreme right), from Dev Karvat, MD, TrawellTag Cover-More



eTV for MICE soon?

► Contd. from page 1

the agenda whatever it is that is decided by the board which is why it will have a dedicated Secretariat.

Q Are there any indications of extending eTV facility to MICE travellers?

As it stands now eTV is only for the tourism sector, but there is a strong case to bring the MICE and conferencing segment also into eTV. Efforts are on to make that happen.

Q With PATA Travel Mart being hosted in Bengaluru, do you think that it is a great opportunity for us to showcase our country to the world?

PATA is a very strong B2B activity it gives an opportunity for our service providers to meet PATA members who are amongst the biggest buyers in the world. It's a good opportunity and it needs to be promoted.

Q The Ministry of Tourism has been talking about the development of various circuits. How will circuits specifically help to develop tourism?

Circuits are an effective way to create itineraries and destinations and send travellers along them.


What we are doing is at the international-level Buddhist circuits will cover sites not only in India but also in Nepal and Sri Lanka. We have already concluded joint working groups with them, similarly, we will also develop a Ramayana Circuit, which will again include Nepal and Sri Lanka, as Sita was born in Nepal. We are at a stage where we are looking at what are the sites that need to be identified and what infrastructure we need so that we can promote these as a joint itinerary amongst all the three countries. We believe that we need to expand the cake rather than look at what size of the pie each is getting. Under "Swadesh Darshan" we are looking at various circuits which will essentially be thematic development. We have the Krishna, North East and Ganga circuits.

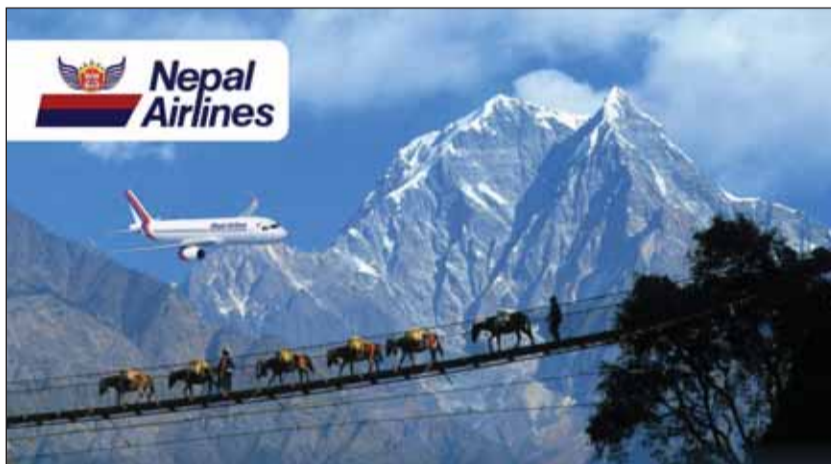
Under this approach destinations will be strung together thematically. This will put money in a focussed manner into infrastructure; there will be some method to it. The viability of the destination in the larger scheme of things needs to be looked at.

Rwanda comes calling




The High Commission of Rwanda in India and Rwanda Development Board (RDB) organised the first business seminar, 'Remarkable Rwanda' in India for travel agents and investors. Ninety travel agents from Delhi-NCR attended the event. The seminar showcased Rwanda as the land of a thousand hills and a million smiles. In 2014, Indians were the second largest visitors to Rwanda after Americans.





With a daily flight from Delhi-Kathmandu, you can explore the cities of the Kathmandu Valley steeped in culture, history and art. Visit the Durbar Squares of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, the palatial residences of the ancient royals that are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Then visit the other World Heritage monuments – Pashupatinath, Swayambhunath, Baudhanath and Changu Narayan. Step into the museums of the valley to learn about Nepal's kings, history, ethnic groups, art and culture. Go shopping. Try your hand at rummy or blackjack at one of the five-star casinos. Savor authentic food at one of the many restaurants. There are countless things to do in Kathmandu. Pokhara, the famous tourist city, provides equally superb cultural tours and activities with its beautiful natural setting, several museums and innumerable restaurants and cafes.

SECTOR	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
KTM-DEL	0800	0940	DAILY
DEL-KTM	1040	1240	DAILY



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Cashing in on MICE

As Pune now evolves as a major MICE destination, Novotel Pune, is looking at hosting more corporate, leisure and sports events.

TT BUREAU

Novotel Pune is cashing in on its strategic location. Talking about the USP of the property, **Rohit Chopra**, Director of Sales and Marketing, Novotel Pune says, "We have three pillars that are our USPs. First is the location

trial hubs like Ranjangaon, Chakan, etc, which makes us an easily accessible hotel. The second pillar is our offering. We have a large inventory of 223 rooms that includes 176 standard rooms, 33 premier rooms and 14 suites. The hotel has a banqueting space of 11,720 sq ft with a divisible ballroom and

etc. The third pillar is the array of scrumptious food options." The property will be celebrating its second year of completion in December 2015. Pune has come a long way from a second innings retirement city to a bustling metro, feels Chopra. "With its close proximity to the financial capital of India, Pune is one of the key cities in India with a large number of companies," he opines.

“We are strategically located in close proximity to various IT hubs like Kharadi, Yerwada and Magarpatta etc, which makes us an easily accessible hotel.”

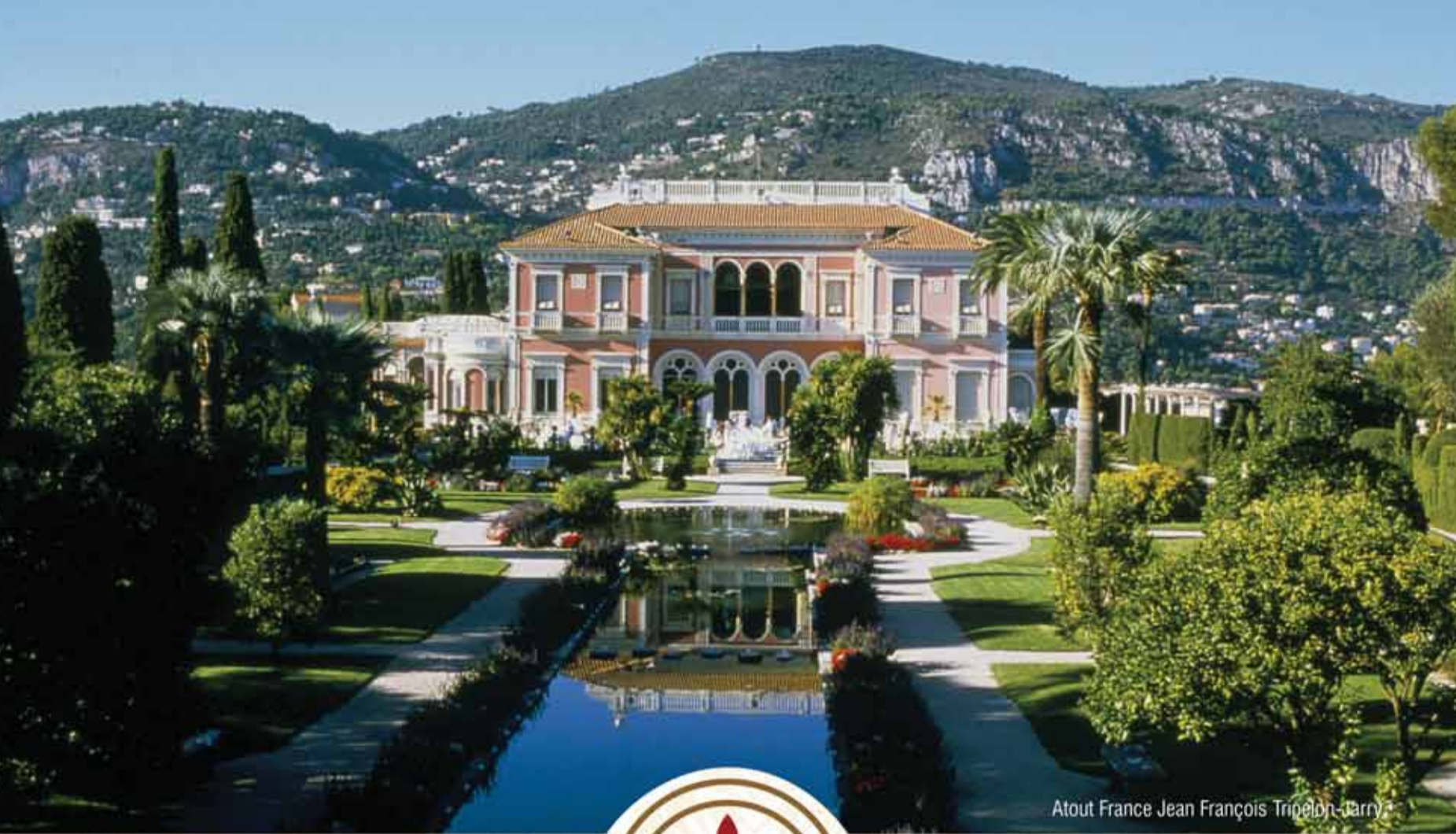
Rohit Chopra
Director of Sales and Marketing, Novotel Pune



as we are located 2.5 kms away from Pune Airport and 500 metres from a shopping and entertainment hub. Also, we are strategically located in close proximity to various IT hubs like Kharadi, Yerwada and Magarpatta along with indus-

six additional breakout rooms. The Virtual Concierge is another unique Novotel user interface designed for a quick and easy access to information about the city and various options like dining, recreation, city attractions, flight status,

With development of the city's infrastructure in terms of better air and ground connectivity, many international chains have launched their hotels and convention centres. Thus, Pune has now become one of the sought-after MICE destinations. With the increase in options for conducting large exhibitions and meetings, Pune has been able to host mega events in medical, sports, corporate & entertainment segment. For example — the city has received business from Indian Hockey League, Indian Soccer League, International Junior Chess Championship, Indian Premier League and large corporate and medical exhibitions.



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EVENT TALK

JULY 2015

NATIONAL

10	Delhi	VKonec MICE : B2C
10 -12	Bengaluru	India International Travel Mart
11	Delhi	VKonec MICE: B2B
13-14	Mumbai	Kiwi Link India workshop, Tourism New Zealand
13	Goa	Learn South Africa
14-15	Ahmedabad	Learn South Africa
14	Delhi	Atout France Presentation
15	Mumbai	Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training
15	Kolkata	Singapore Tourism Board Networking Cocktail Dinner
15	Chandigarh	Atout France Presentation
16	Kolkata	Singapore Tourism Board Networking lunch
16	Mumbai	Atout France Press Networking Dinner
16	Delhi	Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training
16	Jaipur	Learn South Africa
17	Mumbai	Atout France Presentation
17	Delhi	Learn South Africa
17-19	Chennai	India International Travel Mart
17 -19	Kolkata	Tourism Expo India
18	Chandigarh	Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner
20	Jaipur	Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner
20	Jalandhar	Learn South Africa
20	Kolkata	Thailand Road Show
22	Lucknow	Learn South Africa
22	Pune	Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner
22	Delhi	Thailand Road Show
23	Kolkata	Learn South Africa
23	Hyderabad	Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner
24	Vizag	Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner
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
30	Chennai	Learn South Africa
30	Nagpur	DOT Philippines B2B Roadshow
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
3	Mumbai	Learn South Africa
3	Chandigarh	DOT Philippines B2B Roadshow
4	Nagpur	Learn South Africa
4	Kolkata	Tourism Authority of Thailand B2B Roadshow
4	Bengaluru	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
5	Lucknow	DOT Philippines B2B Roadshow
5	Delhi	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
6	Mumbai	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
6	Lucknow	Tourism Authority of Thailand B2B Roadshow
7	Delhi	DOT Philippines B2B Roadshow
7-9	Vadodara	Holiday Expo
10	Mumbai	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Luxury Roadshow
12	Bengaluru	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Luxury Roadshow
13	Delhi	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority Trade & Media Dinner
14	Delhi	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Luxury Roadshow
14 -16	Aurangabad	IITE
17	Ahmedabad	Visit Britain B2B Roadshow

For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com

MEETINGS 2015 means business

Some of the most prominent travel operators from India were invited by Tourism New Zealand to attend CINZ MEETINGS 2015 from June 10-11 in Auckland. The tour operators, who mostly cater to MICE travellers, say that the event as well as the FAM trip gave them first-hand experience about the various destinations to enable them to sell New Zealand more effectively.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA FROM NEW ZEALAND



By meeting the various sellers from New Zealand at CINZ MEETINGS 2015, we have got an idea of the products which they have to offer to our clients. Seeing is believing; once we have experienced the destination ourselves it becomes much easy to explain and sell, so this visit has helped us understand what is on offer and we will be able to convey it to our clients more convincingly.

Homa Mistry
CEO, Trailblazers India

Apart from being a well-organised and a 'larger than life' event, CINZ MEETINGS 2015 was a delightful experience indeed! The focus was on events and experiential travel, which are currently an emerging trend and a top favourite amongst Indian travellers. Thus it complimented our requirements at Thomas Cook India and made it for a truly engaging exercise. While the vendors offered great insights into their offerings with clarity and enthusiasm, what was most encouraging was their willingness and capacity to offer us Indian centric services — especially in terms of gala venues and catering to our huge base of Indian clientele. It marked the need of an in-depth awareness about the destination that a single visit to North or South Island is not enough for any MICE group. Our President & COO — MICE, Domestic & Sports Holidays — Rajeev Kale advocates that the Kiwis' USP lies in their exuberance, warmth and welcoming nature which not only gives them an edge but allows Indian travellers a 'feel at home' experience.



Khushnooma Das

General Manager, MICE, Thomas Cook India



We took part in a seven-day FAM trip sponsored by Tourism New Zealand. After choosing between North Island itineraries to the Bay of Islands or Rotorua, we experienced both South & North Island with a stay in Christchurch / Wanaka / Queenstown / Rotorua & Auckland to wind up. It's great that I can now use my first-hand knowledge with clients. The sheer diversity of the New Zealand countryside was another pleasant surprise. We expect to increase the sales of New Zealand vacations, though we don't necessarily expect overnight results. We have sold New Zealand before, but always in tandem with Australia. Now, I'll expect to send more clients just to New Zealand. Going there was a great experience for my business. Any agent with the opportunity to visit should do so. New Zealand has to be seen to be believed.

Aroop Das

AVP, Zenith Leisure Holidays



It was a phenomenal exposure to meet diverse sellers and to learn more about their products and services. We got an opportunity to experience first-hand the major destinations in North and South Island and the various products and services that are on offer — like farms, Indian restaurants/cuisine etc. We also got to experience various adventure and group activities in particular, which are great for team building.

CP Sharma

Managing Director, Neptune Travco

MEETINGS was a significantly important event where they had invited sellers to showcase their products and experience the best of New Zealand and what the country has to offer to the world of MICE and conferencing. It comprised an impressive display of all the incentive products and the venues for the events with sufficient information about the same. Most of the products were highly flexible in terms of matching the Indian clients' requirements of food, time, venues, etc. This visit has definitely helped us understand how to sell New Zealand with more clarity. Now we know exactly and explicitly what to offer our clients according to their appropriate profile factors, viz. age, designation, and caliber of the delegates travelling.



Rashmi Pisal

Associate Director, MICE & Leisure Travel, Harvey India Holidays



CINZ MEETINGS 2015 helped us to gather database on the various available suppliers for the destination and the product range. It also brought together all the suppliers under one umbrella which was good for networking and getting information easily. The visit helped us to get a first-hand experience of what the destination has to offer to different types of clientele, this would help us in giving detailed information to our clients and converting sales would be easier. It also aids in designing itineraries as per the requirement of the clients while maximising on the products for the destination.

Rajat Awasthi

Manager - Leisure & MICE
FCm Travel Solutions India



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VISA TALK

Hold a Double / Multiple Entry Schengen Visa?

A separate visa (short stay) for the following countries is not required.



Bulgaria

- a) Holders of valid multiple entry Schengen visa, can travel to Bulgaria without obtaining a separate visa.
- b) Holders of valid long term visas or residence permits issued by Schengen countries are allowed multiple entries in Bulgaria for stay up to 90 days in any six month period from the date of the first entry.



Croatia

With a double/ multiple entry valid Schengen visa, one does not require Croatian visa for short stay in Croatia, provided that visit to Croatia is within the validity of Schengen visa.



Cyprus

Holders of a valid multiple entry Schengen visa, can travel with the same without obtaining a separate Cyprus visa provided that he/she has traveled on the issued Schengen visa before or will travel first to the country which has issued the visa for the minimum stay of 2 days.



Romania

Holders of valid double / multiple entry Schengen visa or a long stay visa / residence permit issued by Schengen countries are allowed to enter in Romania without a Romanian short stay visa for 90 days of stay within the 180 day period calculated from the date of the first entry. The duration of stay in the Romanian territory shall not exceed the period granted by their respective Schengen visas or permits of residence.

Visa Snippets:

Embassy of the Republic of Croatia, Delhi has announced that, Croatia visa application will be submitted through VFS centres at following locations: i.e. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore & Hyderabad. For more details kindly logon to www.udaanindia.com

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India Tourism Development Corporation

New Delhi

Umang Narula has been appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director of ITDC. Narula, an IAS officer of 1989 batch, Jammu and Kashmir cadre, was the Chief Electoral Officer of Jammu & Kashmir prior to this role. He successfully conducted the Lok Sabha Elections and the J&K State Assembly elections in 2014. He was Deputy Secretary in the Department of Culture under the Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture during 1998-2002. He also worked as a Director in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). In J&K, he was Deputy Commissioner in Kargil and later shifted to Anantnag district.



Golden Jubilee Hotels

Hyderabad

Aijaz Ali has been appointed as Chief Operating Officer of Golden Jubilee Hotels. The group owns the operational Trident Hyderabad and has Hilton DoubleTree and another five star branded hotel under completion. Ali comes with 36 years of experience in the hospitality industry covering operations, project development, asset management and owners representation. Prior to this assignment, he served as CEO of Hilton Chennai (Empee Hotels Ltd). He has also served organizations such as ITC Hotels, JB Hotels Hong Kong, Ista Hotels, Viceroy Hotels amongst others.



Conrad Hotels & Resorts

Pune

Amit Midha has been appointed General Manager of Conrad Pune that is scheduled to open in Q4 of 2015. The launch of Conrad Pune will mark the global luxury brand's entry into India. Conrad Hotels & Resorts is part of the Hilton Worldwide portfolio of brands. Midha has over 16 years of experience in opening and operating luxury hotels with hospitality companies like The Oberoi Group, Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, Marriott Hotels and the Jumeirah Group. Most recently he held GM positions with Courtyard by Marriott and Jaypee Greens Golf & Spa Resort.



Hyatt Regency

Gurgaon

Roger Wright has been appointed General Manager of Hyatt Regency Gurgaon. He comes with over 30 years of international hotel experience. Wright has led twelve 5-Star and 5-Star Deluxe business and leisure Hyatt and internationally branded hotels across the Asia and Pacific Region. A native New Zealander, Wright first joined Hyatt as pre-opening Director of Rooms of the Hyatt Regency Fiji. He then moved to various Hyatt Regency properties including the Hyatt Monterey in California followed by GM positions at the Hyatt Kingsgate Rotorua, Hyatt Regency Mumbai, Hyatt Regency Cheju, South Korea and the Grand Hyatt Beijing.



Keys Hotels

Mumbai

Somusundaram Thevar has been appointed as General Manager by Keys Hotels. Thevar, who holds an MBA from the Institute of Technology and Management in Thane, has spent over 15 years in the industry. He began his career as a trainee with the Oberoi and has since worked with some of the most renowned names in the hospitality space such as the Taj and the Royal Caribbean, gaining experience in all aspects of Food & Beverage, hotel operations, administration, budgeting and statutory compliance processes. He joins Keys Hotels from Royal Palms.



Keys Hotels

Ludhiana

Ajit Abraham has been appointed as General Manager by Keys Hotels to head its property in Ludhiana. Abraham's experience in hospitality industry spans over 13 years in which he has fulfilled several roles like front office operations, Business Development and excellence in Guest Satisfaction. He began his career at the Pride Hotel, Ahmedabad and has since worked at the Flora Grand Hotel in Dubai, Hotel Inder Residency in Udaipur and the Lords Group of Hotels, Gujarat. He joins Keys from Ginger Hotels where he was General Manager at Delhi NCR Hotels.



Novotel Imagica

Khopoli

Srinivas Srirangam has been appointed as General Manager of the soon to be launched Novotel Imagica Khopoli. The property is scheduled to open its doors in July 2015 and is located adjacent to India's only International Theme Park - Adlabs Imagica and Aquamagica. With an extensive 20 year experience of working in hospitality Srirangam will be spearheading the operations of Novotel Imagica Khopoli. He has extensively work experience in countries like Dubai, Egypt, Abu Dhabi, Canada, Bermuda and the Caribbean. Within the country too he has successfully opened Novotel Hyderabad Airport and Launched Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences.



Meandering Vacations

Mumbai

Janhavi Daxindas has been appointed as Manager-Operations, Meandering Vacations. She brings with her a decade of experience in the tourism industry. Prior to her new role, Daxindas served as Senior Manager FIT operations in Mercury Travels. She has also served as Thomas Cook in various capacities. In her new role she will be independently responsible for the entire operations of Meandering Vacations.



TotalStay Group

New Delhi

Ajay Rohila has been appointed as Business Development Manager - India by TotalStay Group. He possesses 12 years of experience in the hospitality industry in business development vertical. Rohila holds an MBA and Masters Diploma in Tourism Management from Institute of Management Studies, Ghaziabad. He worked with TransHotel for five years before joining the TotalStay Group. The Group was launched in the UK in 1999 and has grown into one of the largest and most successful accommodation providers, used by thousands of tour operators, travel agencies and technology platforms across the globe.



TALKing People

Jugal Ray, Founder Director, JASSNOW Hospitality Services, says, "I use yoga to relax, it shifts my mind into a different world, and yoga practice helps greatly to transform both mentally and physically. I am active on social media networking sites. I also like to be either with the books or playing with my two lovely daughters. I read a lot. I have been in hotel industry since last 15 years, worked with renowned 5-star hotels, have travelled a lot on business and personnel trips to overseas and within the country. I am very fond of travelling to European countries and would love to travel whenever get opportunity. I am passionate about driving not just cars, but motorcycles, too."



Michael Siebert, Consul General, Federal Republic of Germany, Mumbai, says he isn't overly stressed at work. "Working is generally nice in Mumbai and people are nice, open-minded and hospitable. If I do feel the need to de-stress, I like to do yoga. I discovered it here I've been doing it regularly for the last one year," he says. Siebert has travelled extensively within India and that is why he can't really pick one destination as his favourite. "I've been crisscrossing this country with the family, from Amristar to Madurai and from Rann of Kutch to Konark Sun Temple. I've seen so many places that it's difficult to say which is my favourite," the Consul General adds. Few people know that he has been a journalist before he started a career in foreign office.



Paul YL Leung, Managing Director, Holiday World Tours, says that he has to travel a lot due to his work but when he is not working he prefers to be at home. He has travelled to many cities in India and feels that it is different from many other places. He likes the Taj Mahal. As far as food is concerned, he likes all kinds of cuisine. Leung, being a travel agent, has to travel a lot and he enjoys all sorts of food wherever he goes. He says that in India there are so many things that one can try and to know what is good or bad one must try everything.





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Canada welcomes Indian travellers

In an exclusive interview with **TRAVTALK** at RVC 2015, **Siobhan Chretien**, Regional Managing Director, Americas, Asia, Destination Canada, appears upbeat about growth in Indian tourist numbers to Canada.



DEEPA SETHI FROM RVC NIAGARA FALLS

QWith Air Canada starting direct flights to Toronto, are you expecting business to grow?

Our job is to get people interested in travelling to Canada. With an airline now flying directly to Canada, it's a huge advantage for us. It will definitely be one of our priorities to try and help Air Canada

working with many more companies that actually sell Canada.

QWhat is the reason for the change in name from Canada Tourism Commission to Destination Canada?

We are actually not rebranding the organisation or changing our look and feel or changing our imagery. It's not a

A broad-based market strategy



"The importance of the announcement by the Canadian Government for a grant of \$30 million over two years for Destination Canada, for marketing in the US, is that we can continue to invest in a broad-based market strategy instead of diverting a lot of our existing resources to the all important US market. It gives us the ability to work with a balanced approach and continue the good work we're doing in emerging and some of our more traditional markets."

David Goldstein
President & CEO, Destination Canada



"I know Canada has not always been an easy destination to sell but you have delivered and much more... Thank you for your efforts. Canada welcomes all Indian travellers and we look forward to some great years ahead."

Siobhan Chretien
Regional Managing Director
Americas, Asia, Destination Canada

as much as possible. It's a difficult route to fly, so we will definitely help them with joint marketing efforts, more importantly with the travel trade in India and the key accounts that we work with. Make sure they are trained on the flights and that they are incorporating the flights in their tours and packages. It will be mutually beneficial.

We will have a better idea closer to the launch of the Toronto-Delhi flight in November and then we can decide about the kind of marketing that will be required. We will also involve the Canadian High Commission. It's super exciting for us to see the new plane, the 787-600 that will be used to fly on this long haul route to and from India.

Canada Tourism rebrand, we are just changing our operational name. We have had the name Canada Tourism Commission (CTC) for a decade, and it still remains our official name, but we did not feel it reflected a marketing organisation. We felt Destination Canada was more representative of the industry we work with so we have made it our name.

Even though we are a marketing organisation that is funded by the government, we are promoting Canada as a destination and we feel it is more reflective of the industry that we deal with. It's easier to recall and it's tourism related. Also importantly, it's the same in both languages, English and French.

QDo you see tourist numbers growing?

Yes. We finished the end of last year with an increase of 19 per cent and India is continuing that trend of usually 8-12 per cent in each month. The value of the Canadian Dollar being lower helps and people are becoming more familiar with Canada; they travel here and talk a lot about it when they go back. Also, we have done a lot of agent trainings and are

QHow has Rendez-vous Canada been for you this year?

There were a record number of more than 24,000 appointments this year and we had a great group from India, who were busy through the three days transacting business, networking and experiencing the region. Niagara Falls and the Niagara region is beautiful and easy to get around, and the weather has been perfect.

QDo you have a message for the travel fraternity in India?

Thank you for your efforts. I know Canada has not always been an easy destination to sell but you have delivered and much more... Canada welcomes all Indian travellers and we look forward to some great years ahead.

Canada Booming

- There were a record number of more than 24,000 appointments at Rendez-vous Canada
- The end of 2014 saw an increase of 19% in tourist numbers to Canada
- Toronto-Delhi flight to be launched in November

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