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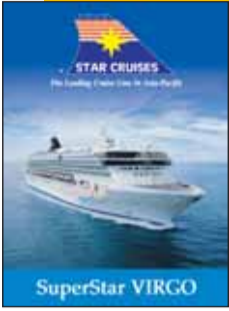
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eTV for 36 more countries

The Government of India is extending e-Tourist Visa to 36 more countries and this facility will now be available at seven more airports from August 15, 2015.

TT BUREAU

The countries being included in the eTV facility are United Kingdom, Ireland, Malaysia, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, Argentina, Netherlands, Seychelles, Andorra, Armenia, Aruba, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, East Timor, Guatemala, Hungary, Jamaica, Malta, Mongolia,



Monaco, Mozambique, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Taiwan, Tanzania,

Turks & Caicos Island, Uruguay, and Venezuela. With this addition, the total count of countries under the scheme will go up to 113. Simultaneously, the Centre is going to add seven more Indian airports as designated airports for entry on eTV from August 15, 2015. New airports being included in the scheme are Ahmedabad, Amritsar,

Gaya, Jaipur, Lucknow, Tirchy, and Varanasi. With this, the total number of designated airports will become 16. Since the launch of the scheme on November 27, 2014, more than two lakh eTVs have been issued till now. It is expected that this substantial addition of countries and airports will give big boost to tourism industry in the country.

Thomas Cook buys Kuoni

Thomas Cook (India) will pay `535 crore for Kuoni Group's businesses in India and Hong Kong and will take on approximately 1,800 employees of Kuoni's business units in both the countries.



Prem Watsa
Chairman & CEO, Fairfax Financial Holdings

TT BUREAU

In a bid to scale up the inbound tour business and expand in foreign markets, Fairfax-owned Thomas Cook has acquired Swiss tour operator Kuoni Group's businesses in India and Hong Kong for about `535 crore. This is the company's second acquisition in a week. It acquired Luxe

Asia, a destination management company, in Sri Lanka as well. As part of the acquisition, Thomas Cook (India) will take on all of the approximately 1,800 employees of Kuoni's business unit in India and Hong Kong tour operating, and will continue to run the business activities as an independent company. The deal will make Thomas Cook

one of the largest tour operators in both inbound and outbound segments.

Giving details about the new development, Prem Watsa, Chairman & CEO, Fairfax Financial Holdings, the controlling share holder of Thomas Cook (India), said,

Contd. on page 20 ▶

'Unused bilaterals'

MEGHA PAUL

According to Civil Aviation Minister Ashok Gajapathi Raju, the 5/20 rule in aviation is a thing of the past and should be re-considered. "The 5/20 rule is a regulation only in India and nowhere else in the world. I am more than convinced that this

commented, "The country's sky had been opened up for SAARC nations. India was amongst the few countries that had satellite navigation and it could help in making our skies safer, travel economical and environment less polluting. The onus is now on the industry to utilise this to its advantage."

Underlining the need to speedily build the country's infrastructure to cope up with the demand and need of the country, Raju said that the tourism sector needed the Centre and state governments to work in harmony with the private sector. He urged the industry to share an actionable paper with his ministry to take forward the agenda of promoting the sector.



Ashok Gajapathi Raju
Minister, Civil Aviation

has pulled or pushed down Indian players. So much so that India has not been able to utilise its own bilaterals," he said.

Speaking at FICCI on 'Tourism Infrastructure and Opportunities for Investment', he urged the industry to employ the under-utilised bilaterals. Exploiting the under-utilised bilaterals and taking advantage of the open sky for the SAARC nations can give a fillip to the tourism sector in India, he said. Responding to the issue of opening the Indian sky, Raju

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GREAT Tourism Week - All India Schedule.

Week 1 - West India

CITY	VENUE	DATE	
Ahmedabad	Radisson Blu	17th August, Monday	1st Wave
Mumbai	Trident BKC	19th August, Wednesday	
Pune	Taj Blue Diamond	21st August, Friday	

Week 2 - North & East India

CITY	VENUE	DATE	
Kolkata	Taj Bengal	7th September, Monday	2nd Wave
Delhi	The Lalit	9th September, Wednesday	
Lucknow	Taj Gomtinagar	11th September, Friday	

Week 1 - West India

CITY	VENUE	DATE	
Chennai	Taj Coromandel	14th September, Monday	3rd Wave
Bengaluru	Taj Westend	16th September, Wednesday	
Hyderabad	Taj Krishna	18th September, Friday	

Tier-II focus for the Philippines

The Philippines has recorded double-digit growth of almost 32 per cent in Indian visitor arrivals in just May 2015 over the same month last year.

TT BUREAU

Verna Covar-Buensuceso, Director and Officer-in-Charge, Tourism Development Sector, Department of Tourism, Philippines, said India currently is the 13th largest source market for the country and is expected to become the 12th largest market in the near future. She was speaking at the last leg of the four-city roadshow by the Philippines in Delhi.



Verna Covar-Buensuceso
Director and Officer-in-Charge,
Tourism Development Sector,
Department of Tourism, Philippines



SanJeet
Tourism Attaché
Philippines

According to Buensuceso, over 61,000 Indians have visited the Philippines in 2014, and the number is expected to rise to around 75,000 in 2015. Department of Tourism, Philippines concluded its four-city roadshow for trade partners based in Nagpur, Chandigarh, Lucknow and Delhi on July 30, August 3, 5 and 7, 2015, respectively. DOT Philippines along with a 15-member delegation interacted with key travel

and tour operators, MICE and up-market leisure operators in the region. This was the biggest contingent from the Philippines that visited India to educate the travel agents about their new offerings.

The aggressive marketing drive is to promote the Philippines' existing and new tourism product offerings. The destination training roadshow saw participation

from over 300 key travel and tour operators, MICE and up-market leisure operators. The programme included presentations by officials of DOT Philippines, DMCs and hotels from the Philippines in addition to Q&A, detailed networking sessions and special lucky draw for the participants

Speaking about the training programme, **SanJeet**,

Tourism Attaché, the Philippines, said, "As a part of 2015 marketing strategy to boost the overall number of Indian travellers, conducting multi-city B2B workshops and education programmes was important. Tier-II cities are important markets for the Philippines as they promise a growing trend of people with the inclination to explore new international holiday destinations. Thus, through these B2B workshops, we intend interacting with a significantly higher number of travel agents, tour operators and even wedding planners."

To emphasise and educate the trade partners, the Philippines Specialist Program (PSP), builds on the theme of "Its More Fun in the Philippines" to help travel agents understand and therefore promote Philippines as an ideal tourist destination.

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TRAVELTALK

VIEWPOINT

Get the show on the road

For many years travellers, leisure and business, have been crying for well-informed front-office staff at travel agencies. People who are selling destinations should know what they are promoting. The Internet in the meantime has definitely made them more knowledgeable, but the questions from the customers have also become smarter. Since everyone cannot travel to all the countries, the industry has found the next best solution...

National Tourism Offices (NTOs) are making the travel community comfortable in selling their destinations through roadshows and presentations. There has been a surge in these in the last few months, with sellers from the home country attending these events to encourage and entice travel agents and tour operators with exciting packages to bring customers to their country.

Travel associations are also taking advantage of this situation by educating their members. It has become common practice to convert association conventions into travel markets, by selling space to various countries at their conventions to promote their destinations and prepare the association members.

There is also a growing excitement about the potential of India as an outbound MICE market, countries are putting in their best efforts to attract Indian groups.

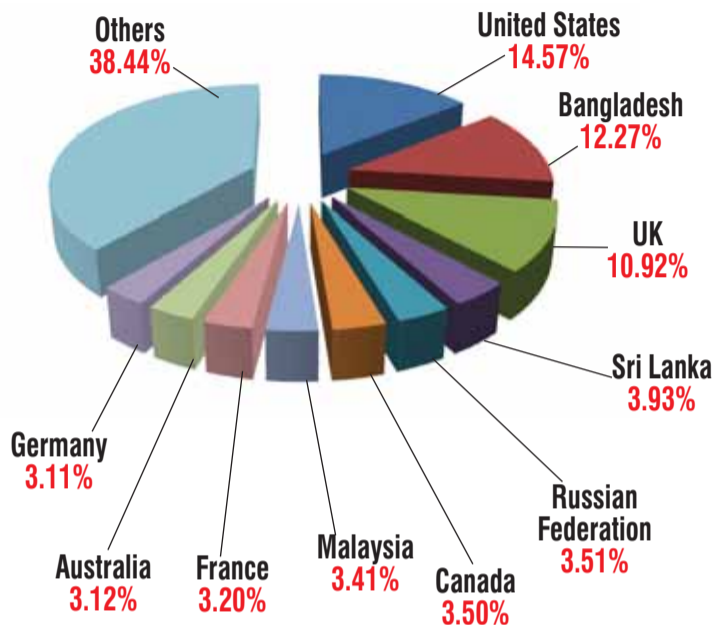
It is, however, as important for us to attract MICE groups into India. Every hotel is upgrading its convention facilities, the government wants to set up a national level body for promoting MICE, they are convinced that state governments should have their own MICE promotion boards. Private firms are being encouraged to build stand-alone convention centres, improve infrastructure around them and create experiences. Indian states too are realising the potential of the domestic market and are presenting themselves aggressively at roadshows and travel markets within India.

Travel is in our blood, come holidays and we're ready to pack our bags and travel to meet distant relatives, or go on a pilgrimage, or a hill station to get away from the heat... history fascinates our people! But, today their demands are more: better food, cleaner places to stay and they are willing to spend better money on entertainment and experiences... If they don't get it here they will find it somewhere else.

Americans bring in big bucks

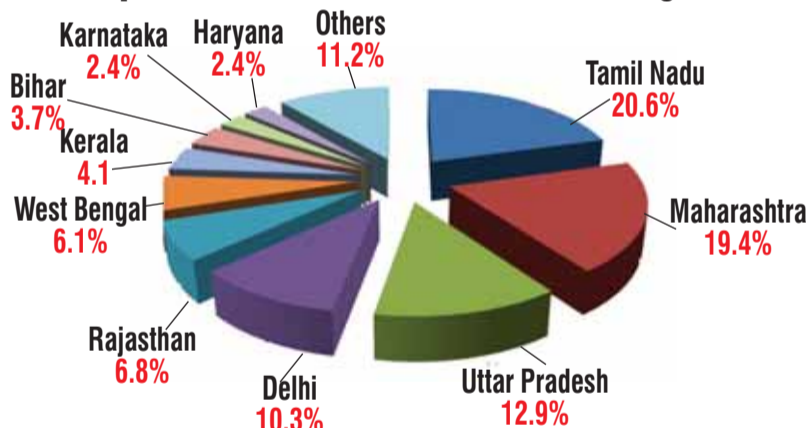
The numbers of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) to India during 2012, 2013 and 2014 were 6.58 million, 6.97 million and 7.68 million, respectively. The US topped the list of FTAs in India with 14.57 per cent, followed by Bangladesh at 12.27 per cent and the UK with 10.92 per cent.

Top 10 source countries for Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India 2014

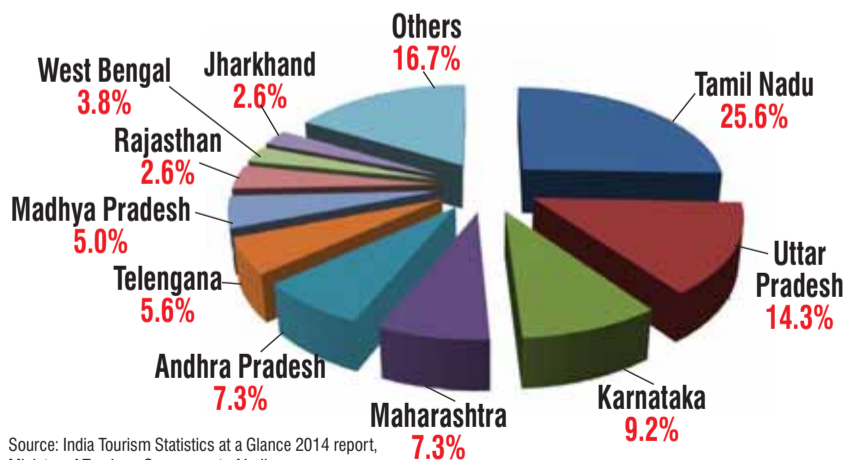


India ranked 41st in the world in terms of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in 2014, up from 42nd rank in 2013 and maintaining that 41st position in 2012.

Percentage share of top 10 States/UTs of India in number of Foreign Tourist Visit in 2014



Percentage share of top 10 States/UTs of India in Domestic Tourist Visit in 2014



The Government of India has sanctioned ` 84,495.62 lakhs to states and UTs for developing tourism destinations and circuits during 2014-15, which includes projects relating to Product/Infrastructure Development for Destinations and Circuits (PIDDC), Human Resource Development (HRD), Fairs and Festivals & Rural Tourism. The revenue generated from tourism sector during 2014 is estimated to be ` 123,320 crore.

Source: India Tourism Statistics at a Glance 2014 report, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.



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More power to committees

Skål International Mumbai is not only gearing up for more educational workshops for its members but it has also formed specialised committees with their own budgets and agendas. The idea is to decentralise.



HAZEL JAIN

Currently at 120 members, Skål International Mumbai is a growing association. It recently introduced two new members at a recent seminar that had guest speaker **Vishal Kedia**, Founder and Director, Complykaro Services, speaking about SME compliance with sexual harassment laws in the workplace.

Speaking about the new activities, **Carl Vaz**, President, Skål International Mumbai, said, "We usually invite people from our own industry to speak at our events. We now want to expose our members to different perspectives so that they can benefit from it."

Consequently, for its next event in August, the association has invited members from Caux Initiatives for Business (CIB) to speak on fair business practices and business etiquettes. "It has its global headquarters in Switzerland with an India chapter operating in different cities and comprises members from large companies like Tata and Siemens as well as academicians. The session will be on how to do business in India without bribing, and bringing fair business practices into the travel industry. They would like to see the travel fraternity also involved and represented in CIB," Vaz said.

Adopting a slightly different strategy for the association, Vaz revealed that he presented a plan to the managing committee and it approved. "We have formed individual committees that are responsible for activities related to their field. So for instance, we have a hotel committee steered by our members who are hoteliers, we have an

airline and cruise committee, we have a travel trade committee, we have a social media and PR committee, and we have a CSR committee that will be working with NGOs. The idea is to decentralise but not just in the manner of having old wine in a new bottle. So the next event will not have me talking; it will be the chairperson of that committee," the president explained.

These committees have a separate budget and their own agenda.

So every month will see an event or a workshop dedicated to one field organised by that particular committee. Vaz adds, "This will achieve two things – it will encourage member participation and enhance their experience. It is what I call ME or Member Experience. The second is to encourage more people to join Skål. We do not lobby with the government or with private players. We are here to do business among colleagues and we are here for friendship."

“The idea is to decentralise but not just in the manner of having old wine in a new bottle. So the next event will not have me talking; it will be the chairperson of that committee taking over.”

Carl Vaz

President, Skål International Mumbai



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The Committees

→ The hotel committee comprises **Kuldeep Bhartee**, GM, ITC Grand Central; **Geoff Magee**, VP (Operations), Narang International Hotels; **Partha Chatterjee**, Chief Marketing Officer, Keys Hotels

→ The airline and cruise committee has members such as **Nischal Bhasin**, General Manager-Sales, Jet Airways; **Sachin Nene**, Regional Manager (India), Air Arabia; **Kunal Sampat**, GM (India), MSC Cruises; **Arvind Tandon**, MD, Faraway Places

NZ to invest \$5mn in India

Tourism New Zealand has announced a five-fold increase in its investment in India. Kevin Bowler, CEO, Tourism New Zealand, reveals more on the sidelines of its recently concluded Kiwi Link India show.



HAZEL JAIN

Q*Tell us about your increased focus on India.*

We have been increasing our investment here for the last two to three years now. When I joined Tourism New Zealand in 2010, we had about 23,000-24,000 visitors from India. After five years, we have 44,000. With this increase in numbers we have also increased our investment from about a million dollars a year to about five million dollars. We are confident enough about India to invest so heavily in this market.

Q*What will this augmented budget go toward?*

The three major areas where we will be focusing on with this budget are – working with the travel industry in India and making sure that we share lots of resources and information with them, doing co-operative marketing programmes with the airlines that connect India with New Zealand, and advertising. With this, we expect a double-digit growth.

Q*How are the numbers looking like right now?*

The market is growing at more than 29 per cent with 42,880 arrivals for the year ending May 2015 with an increase in holiday arrivals of 30 per cent over the previous 12 months.

Q*There was a change in format for the Kiwi Link show this year.*

Yes, among the biggest changes this year was that we had booths for each of our exhibitors and the buyers from India moved from one booth to another. Previously, we had the exhibitors moving. From the people I have talked to, I get the sense that it's worked well. We saw a record number of both the exhibitors and the travel trade attendees this time, which is a good reflection on how well

the relationship between India and New Zealand is going. We had 36 suppliers along with four airlines and representatives from Immigration New Zealand. The things that keep coming up in conversations are visas

will continue to use it albeit with a new message that addresses the concern that travellers have in their minds of what they would do in New Zealand and how easy is it to do different things. We use the line

“The three major areas where we will be focusing on with this budget are – working with the travel industry in India and making sure that we share lots of resources and information with them, doing co-operative marketing programs with the airlines that connect India with New Zealand, and advertising.”



Kevin Bowler
CEO, Tourism New Zealand

and air access, so their presence helped.

Q*You also hosted some Indian buyers.*

Last year, we had taken Kiwi Link to Hyderabad and Chennai as well apart from Mumbai and New Delhi. This year we brought people from other markets to Mumbai instead of going there. There were around 80 buyers from markets like Delhi, Punjab, Chennai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Hyderabad. In New Delhi, we only did frontline training. Pune, Coimbatore, Jaipur, Nagpur and Cochin are also some of our key source markets here.

Q*Is the new tagline an indication of a new focus?*

Over the last three years, we have been focused on connecting New Zealand with Middle Earth so the connection with the Hobbiton has been extremely successful for us. For this we use the '100% Pure New Zealand' campaign, which is now 16 years old. We

'Everyday a Different Journey' with it which was launched globally this July.

Q*What is the focus now?*

The Cricket World Cup did wonders for us. We will now increase our efforts to deliver a fully integrated marketing campaign, growing new trade engagement, and a renewed focus on international business events. We have 103 certified 100% Pure New Zealand specialists in India as of now and we are trying to increase that number as well.

Our key focuses in the Indian market are honeymooners, families, and business events/corporate travellers. We have also started offering luxury experiences to visitors from India, and have started focusing on niche groups like solo women travellers, as per the trends that we see in the country. We are also looking at engaging a Bollywood influencer this year and are hoping to make this announcement soon. ↴



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18% increase in Indian visitors to France in 2014

■ According to latest tourism figures shared by Atout France-France Tourism Development Agency, Indian visitor arrivals crossed the 4 lakh mark in 2014. This indicates an 18 per cent increase in 2014 over 2013. This information was shared by **Sheetal Munshaw**, Director, Atout France in India. The measures that were taken to facilitate the issuance of visas, an enhanced interaction with travel companies

and the launch of several multi media campaigns that have promoted France on various platforms, have given a favourable impetus, she added. France welcomed a total of 83.8 million foreign visitors in 2014.

Munshaw took over as Director, Atout France (India) from Catherine Oden from August 3, 2015. She is the first Indian to hold this post.



Sheetal Munshaw
Director
Atout France in India

PATA honours tiger conservationists

With sustainability and eco tourism being the talk of the town, WWF and PATA are doing their bit to encourage conservation of wildlife and nature by honouring people already on that path.



TT BUREAU

WWF India, along with Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and the Global Tiger Forum (GTF), jointly observed the Global Tiger Day on July 29 by organising the WWF-PATA Bagh Mitra Awards, wherein three individuals and two grassroots organisations were felicitated for their exemplary work towards tiger conservation.

The awards, instituted in the 1990s, continue to march on and recognise the work done on the ground level by the custodians of wildlife environment and nature. The ceremony was attended by sustainable tourism, wildlife and eco tourism lovers. There were over a hundred enthusiasts present.

Luminaries including Dr. Karan Singh, Former Tourism Minister, Govt of India, Inder Sharma, Life Member PATA and Member of PATA Foundation, Dr. Rajesh Gopal, Secretary General, Global Tiger Forum, and Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF India. The winners were selected jointly, based on laid down processes by PATA and WWF.

"The tourism sector should step forward to do more such participatory events. Every tourist who comes into a natural experience and sees nature in different phases and its glory and manifestations of wildlife is a possibility for them to convert to be a conservationist in whatever way they can. Everyone should become more aware about nature and do their bit to conserve it," said Ravi Singh.

Three of the winners were recognised for individual contribution and two organisations were recognised for their contribution to the habitat and community. This forum aims to provide recognition and motivation to the winners and inculcate a sense of enthusiasm among the many dedicated soldiers of wild life and eco-tourism.

Runeep Sangha, Executive Director, PATA India Chapter, says, "This event is great as it honours people who have spent their lives to save the tiger and conserve the environment. They are out in the sun, working hard day in and day out to engage people around them to participate and help save the tiger."

He also believes that this is a strong initiative towards growing inbound tourism in India. He adds, "Nowadays people all around the world have become more curious about what nature has to offer and the national parks and the wildlife sanctuaries definitely attract tourists to come to India."



(L-R) Dr. Rajesh Gopal, Secretary General, Global Tiger Forum; Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF India; Dr. Karan Singh, Former Tourism Minister, Govt. of India; Inder Sharma, Life Member PATA & Member of PATA Foundation

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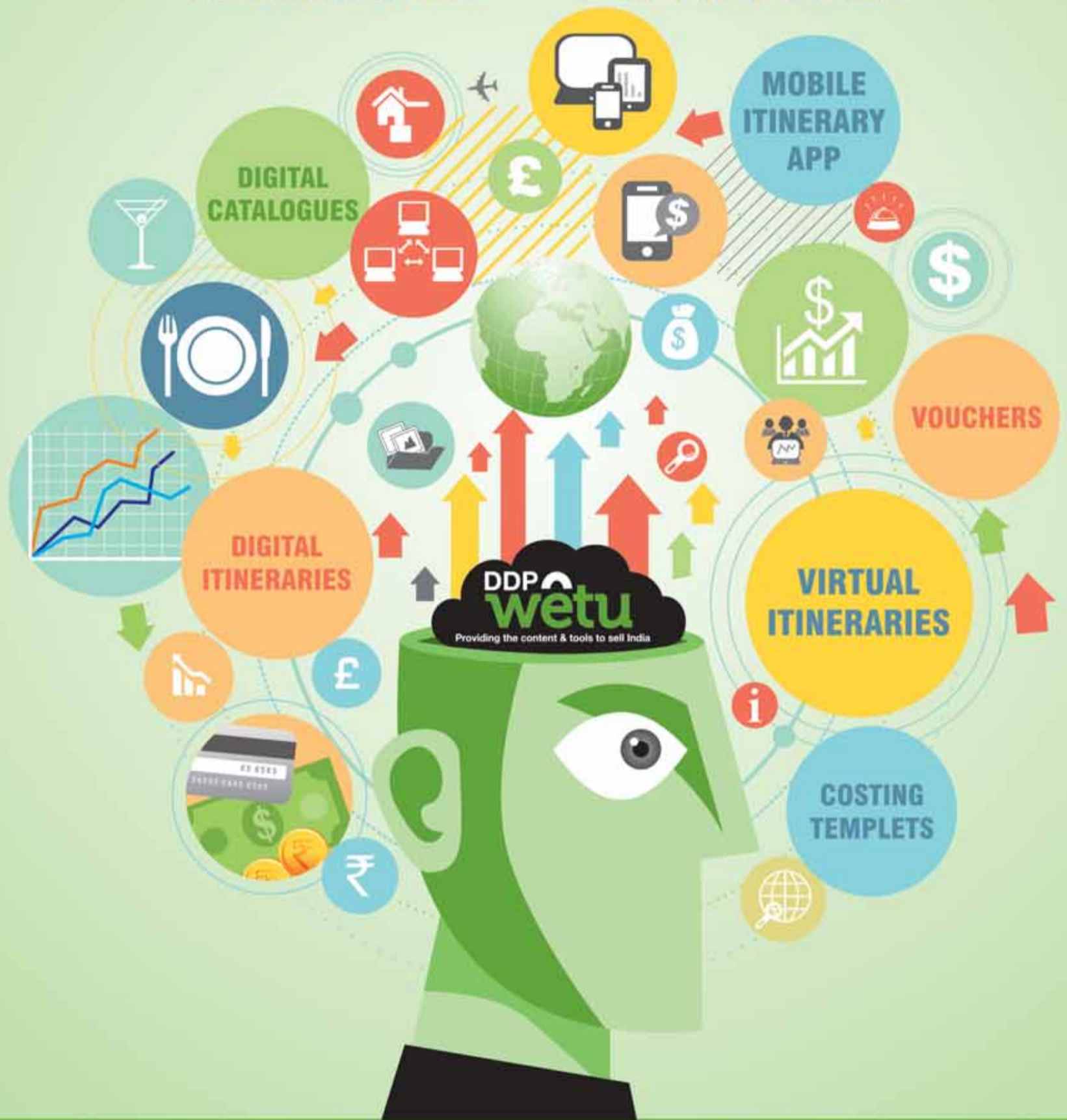
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SAA inks new pact with Jet Airways

South African Airways (SAA) and Jet Airways (9W) have entered into a new code share agreement that will support the airlines' trunk routes between Johannesburg (JNB)-Abu Dhabi (AUH) and the connections from AUH to the five major points in India.

TT BUREAU

SAA code-shares on 9W's connecting operations between Abu Dhabi and Mumbai (BOM), Delhi (DEL), Bangalore (BLR), Hyderabad (HYD) and Chennai (MAA). In turn, 9W code-shares on SAA's flights between Abu Dhabi and Johannesburg and beyond to Cape Town (CPT) and Durban (DUR).

"We make continuous efforts to make it easier for Indian travellers to visit South



Sajid Khan
Country Manager
India, South African Airways

Our code-share with Jet Airways further strengthens our connectivity with India. This will give our patrons from the country additional flight options to choose from

Africa. Our code-share with Jet Airways further strengthens our connectivity with India. This will give our patrons from the country additional flight options to choose from when planning their trips," said Sajid Khan, Country Manager, India, South African Airways.

Tickets will go on sale post government approval, with travel effective from 13th August 2015.

South African Airways (SAA), Africa's most awarded airline, operates from Johannesburg, South Africa, to 38 destinations worldwide. SAA's code-share agreement with Etihad Airways enables travellers from six Indian cities – New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram to fly to Johannesburg

via Abu Dhabi. Additionally, SAA's code-share with Jet Airways connects Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai to Johannesburg via Abu Dhabi, and beyond to Cape Town and Durban.

SAA's international network creates links to all

major continents from South Africa through 10 direct routes and code shares, with daily flights from Johannesburg to London (Heathrow), Frankfurt, Munich, Perth, Hong Kong, New York, Washington, and Sao Paulo. SAA has code-share agreements with 29 other airlines across the mar-

kets it serves. The airline has extended its code-share agreement with Mango, its low-cost operator, to also include coastal cities in South Africa (between Johannesburg and Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth and George), as well as Johannesburg – Bloemfontein; Cape Town -

Bloemfontein and Cape Town - Port Elizabeth.

SAA is a Star Alliance member which offers more than 18,500 daily flights to 1,316 airports in 192 countries. SAA is the winner of the 'Best Airline in Africa' Award in the regional category for 11 consecutive years.

Sky Connect

South African Airways has code-share agreements with 29 other airlines across the markets it serves

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Targeting Buddhist visitors

God's Own Country is now developing regional tourism with Colombo, Bali and Maldives. The cruise ship linking Kochi, Colombo and Maldives is expected to commence operations from October 2 this year, says P.I. Sheik Pareeth in an interview with **TRAVTALK**.

TT BUREAU

Setting big on its backwaters and rich water transport, Kerala is now developing regional tourism with Colombo, Bali and Maldives. The cruise ship linking Kochi, Colombo and Maldives is expected to commence operations from October 2 this year. This was revealed by **P.I. Sheik Pareeth**, Director - Tourism, Kerala. "A one-of-its-kind product that could give major boost to regional tourism in South Asia, the cruise ship will link Kochi with Colombo, Maldives and Bali and is expected to commence operations from October 2. A Sri Lankan company has come forward to launch a cruise service with a capacity of 500 pax connecting the three ports. The company has already had discussions with Cochin Port Trust to work out modalities and concessions recently," he revealed. The idea is to attract the Chinese and Japanese tourists who visit Sri Lanka, Bali and Maldives but give India a miss. "This cruise product will help Kerala to lure these tourists to their shores for couple of nights. Sri Lanka and Kerala had also recently agreed to work closely to develop tourism circuits and undertake joint



P.I. Sheik Pareeth, Director - Tourism, Kerala

promotions. Joint promotional activities will be conducted by Kerala and Sri Lanka to target travellers from big source markets such as China, Germany and Russia. This will help in bringing more tourists to both these destinations," he added.

Speaking their tongue

In order to train guides in the Chinese, Japanese, and Russian languages, Kerala Tourism will soon commence training sessions at Kerala Institute of Tourism & Travel Studies (KITTS). A batch of 50 students will be trained in one batch, and meritorious students will be sent to the respective countries for a period of three months to hone their language skills, Pareeth informed. To tap new source markets, Kerala will undertake more marketing and promotional activities in China, Japan, Russia, etc. Kerala Tourism had organised its maiden roadshow in Shanghai last month, and will be conducting another round of pro-

motional activity in the city next month, he added. "We have invited the Chinese Ambassador to India as the Chief Guest for this year's Nehru Trophy Snake Boat Race, which takes place in August every year," Pareeth confirmed.

Unleashing 'medical' potential

As part of the Visit Kerala campaign, the state is working towards lucrative Medical Tourism opportunities with major hospitals going for JCI accreditation. "Kerala is planning to leverage the growing medical travel segment for modern medicinal procedures. With leading hospitals in the state going for Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation, the State Tourism Department is positive about tapping this emerging segment in the coming years. Also, the State Tourism Department will be organising a Medical Tourism Conference in Kochi in October 2015," he informed.

Milestones in 2014

- Foreign tourists' arrival up by 7.6%
- Domestic tourists' arrival up by 7.8%
- Increase in foreign exchange earnings by 15%
- Total Revenue `24,885.44 crore

Tourism forex earnings cross `60K crore from Jan-June, growth of 6.2 per cent

The Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) to India during January-June, 2015 were 3.85 million with a growth of 3.4 per cent over corresponding period of 2014. The Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) through tourism in India during January-June, 2015 were `60,302 crore with a growth of 6.2 per cent over corresponding period of 2014. The Foreign

Exchange Earnings (FEEs) through tourism in India during July, 2014-June, 2015 was `1,24,488 crore with a growth

rate of 8.05 per cent over July, 2013-June, 2014. The Ministry of Tourism does not compile the exclusive data of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Buddhist sites. However, 12819.52 lakh Domestic Tourist Visits and 223.35 lakh Foreign Tourist Visits to different States/UTs, including the visits to Buddhist sites during 2014 have been reported.



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Spain eyes biz and luxury travellers

After the success of its seven-city roadshow in June, Spain is engaging travel trade in Delhi and Mumbai through B2B meetings with Spanish supplier, familiarisation trips with focus on luxury and MICE travellers.

HAZEL JAIN

Since the release of Bollywood movie *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* in 2011, Spain has been reaching out to the travel trade in India in a big way. This time around, it is looking to attract a different traveller segment – a wealthier segment of MICE and luxury travellers. Arrivals in 2011-2012

showed a tremendous increase of 79.9 per cent. Numbers grew the following year too with 2012-2013 recording a growth of 21.6 per cent and 2014 seeing an increase of 8.36 per cent over the previous year.

Ignacio Ducasse Gutierrez, Tourism Counselor, The Embassy of Spain in India and

Director, Spain Tourism Office in Mumbai, said, “We will be promoting Spain for both MICE and leisure travel. We will also be working on niche markets such as luxury, shopping, honeymooners, active holidays, nightlife, fly and drive, etc.” Spain recently participated in third edition of the MICE India and Luxury Travel Congress

(MILT) that was held in Mumbai in July.

He revealed that the tourism office will now focus on arranging B2B meetings between interested Spanish suppliers and the Indian travel trade in Mumbai and New Delhi. A familiarisation trip to Barcelona and the Catalonia region for key MICE tour operators is also planned.

“We will be working to promote Spain as a destination for both MICE and leisure travellers. Good weather, hospitable people, great street life suitable for every type of visitor and great culture, gastronomy and heritage are our strongest resources.”

Ignacio Ducasse Gutierrez

Tourism Counselor of The Embassy of Spain in India and Director of Tourism Office of Spain in Mumbai



“Participation in key travel exhibitions will be ongoing. On priority is promoting high-speed trains and festivals in Spain,” Gutierrez said.

Tourism Office of Spain recently concluded its successful seven-city roadshow in India with the theme ‘Why Spain?’ – as if in answer to a question travellers may ask their travel agents. It covered Bengaluru, Kolkata, Pune, Hyderabad, Kochi, Chennai and Ahmedabad.

Gutierrez said that there were no suppliers from Spain participating in this activity and the presentations were solely conducted by his office. “We got excellent response in all cities, especially Bengaluru that saw about 123 agents attending. On an average we recorded about 90 guests in each city. Through these presentations, we educated the trade and gave them multiple reasons for promoting Spain to their clients,” he said.

Speaking about the 2015 numbers from India, the director said, “We have already received 37,256 tourists to Spain from January-June 2015 which is a substantial increment compared to the same period last year when we received only 10,726 Indian tourists. Taking this year’s upswing trend into account, we expect to increase the numbers from India to at least one lakh by 2015 end and up by 20 per cent. Our Consulate is also looking into visa facilitation to make it simpler for Indians to apply.”



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Indian arrivals in Spain

2011:	33,591
2012:	60,444
2013:	73,493
2014:	79,639
2015:	37,256
(till June 30)	

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Exhibiting Dubai for MICE

Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Indigo Airlines and Ajman National Travel Agency (ANTA) Holidays came together to organise a FAM trip to Dubai recently. The Sheraton Grand Hotel hosted acclaimed corporate travel agents from Delhi. The hotel signifies the first new-build for Sheraton in Dubai in more than 30 years. Indigo Airlines, the airline partner, is also looking at cashing in on Dubai as the evolved MICE destination for Indian travellers.



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Rent luxury on wheels in Europe

Catering to high-end families travelling to Europe, GI Rentals offers the option of renting luxury vans for road journeys across Europe.



TT BUREAU

Switzerland-based GI Rentals is paving the way for a comfortable family road trip within Europe. Offering the option of renting chauffeur-driven luxury mini-vans across Europe, GI Rentals is targeting families that want to go on a relaxed and luxurious holiday.

Jenaifer Daruwalla, GM, Maison de Voyage, a GSA for GI Rentals in India, says, "This product is not for the masses. The travel agents can include this product in the itinerary for families travelling to Europe. The vans will be with the family throughout their travel and the more the number of days they rent it out for, cheaper will be the total cost. They can even create van packages around this product because van tours are really picking up right now."

GI Rentals has a fleet that includes 10 luxury mini vans (Mercedes, Sprinters and Vianos) along with two high-end, four-wheel drives — Audi and BMW. The vans can seat five people plus driver and eight persons plus one driver, depending on the model. "The capacity is huge. Sprinters and Vianos can actually take up to 13 people but we have configured it in such a way so that there is more room for the legs and luggage because Indians travel with a lot of luggage. These are all less than four-year old, well-maintained vans," Daruwalla says.

The ultimate proof of it being an exclusive product is that the drivers don't stay in hostels while on the road. "We charge the client for accommodation for the drivers and this is included in the total cost. We can also offer special treatment for guests if informed in advanced," she adds.

Speaking about the quality of drivers these vans come with, she adds that they can even act as guides who speak fluent English. "They are all certified drivers and all Europeans. They can even suggest Indian and vegetarian restaurants on the way if we are informed in advance about it," Daruwalla says.

Maison de Voyage has started promoting this product



"The travel agents can include this product in the itinerary for families travelling to Europe. The vans will be with the family throughout their travel and the more the number of days they rent it out for, cheaper will be the total cost."

Jenaifer Daruwalla
GM, Maison de Voyage

among the agents which has seen an increase in numbers of almost 50 per cent in the period January to June 2015 as compared to the same period last year. "The growth has been brilliant and it has been possible only through the agents. It is a purely B2B product with one standard rate for everyone in the industry. We see a lot of potential for this product. The only problem is that travellers in India confirm at the last minute by which time all our vehicles are booked," she says.

According to her, GI Rentals does good business even in August and September despite it being low season. Her team conducts sales calls regularly along with sending emailers to its trade partners. The team also has dedicated operations staff so every query is reverted within a couple of hours. "Its not just Mumbai, we are getting queries and confirmations from north and east as well. We are also part of the OTR roadshow," Daruwalla says.

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Kuoni's 1800 workforce with Thomas Cook

► Contd. from page 3

"Our acquisition of Kuoni's tour operating and retailing businesses in India & Hong Kong as well as the Indian Inbound business reaffirms our belief in the India market potential, as also our strategic intent to explore viable geographies, including the larger Asia opportunity." Thomas Cook will finance the transaction with equity infusion, internal accruals and debt.

Peter Meier, CEO, Kuoni Group stated, "With the sale of the tour operating activities in India and Hong Kong, we have completed the sale of the outbound business as announced in January. I'm very pleased that we found forward-looking solutions for the units in India and Hong Kong."

In January, Kuoni Group had announced its intention to

sell tour businesses in India and other parts of world to focus on online travel, destination management and visa processing services. Initially, the Swiss company planned to retain its destination management business (inbound travel) in India, but even that has now been sold to Thomas Cook. "The Kuoni brand is licensed to the acquirer for one year in India and for five years in Hong Kong. All other brands such as SOTC, Sita and Distant Frontiers are transferred with the business," Kuoni said.

According to **Rajeev Wagle**, Managing Director, Kuoni India, this is a natural coming together of two trusted travel brands with a long history both outside and within India. "So while we will continue to operate as two separate companies and brands, a part-



Peter Meier
CEO
Kuoni Group

I'm very pleased that we found forward-looking solutions for the units in India and Hong Kong



Rajeev Wagle
Managing Director
Kuoni India

A partnership like this - where each partner brings complementary strengths and capabilities to the table



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

I am very excited about the long-term growth opportunity that this new partnership brings with it

nership like this — where each partner brings complementary strengths and capabilities to the table — has the potential to create a far more capable, more innovative, more efficient and most importantly — an organisation that can add more value to travellers in the markets we serve," he added.

Dipak Deva, CEO-Destination Management, India & South Asia, Kuoni Destination Management, pointed out, "I am very excited about the journey that we are embarking upon and the long-term growth opportunity that this new partnership with Thomas Cook India brings with it. I expect the significant strength, reach, efficiency, expertise and passion of our respective brands, networks and people will help us deliver a superior experience for our customers."

OTOAI looks to Africa

■ The deal between OTOAI and RTTA is one of the outcomes of Rwanda Calling 2015 activities, which is expected to go a long way in helping boost the number of visitors from India. In a bid to boost outbound travel to Rwanda, Outbound Tour Operators of India (OTOAI) has recently signed a deal with Rwanda Tour and Travel Association (RTTA). "The objective of the Memorandum of Understanding will be to market Rwanda as a must-visit tourist destination in India," says **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI, after signing the deal in Kigali, Rwanda. The

deal, which is one of the outcomes of Rwanda Calling 2015 activities, is expected to boost the number of visitors from India. Rwanda Calling, which is in its third edition, aims at enhancing trade, tourism, and investment opportunities in the country.

According to Sahni, over 20 million Indians will be travelling outside the country by 2020, presenting tourism and other sectors a lot of opportunities. Sahni led a 15-member delegation to Rwanda. He urged the Rwanda government to improve facilities to make the sector more attractive to Indian visitors.

TrawellTag Cover-More engages travel agents in Bengaluru



TrawellTag Cover-More recently conducted its 'Travel Agents Engagement Programme' (TAEP) in Bengaluru that discussed ideas and initiatives over two interactive sessions. It was aimed at enhancing product knowledge, up-sell skills and updating the agents about the recent market trends.

TAAI announces annual election results

TAAI's Members' Annual Meetings and Elections have been conducted in all TAAI Regions and Chapters. The list of newly elected office bearers is as follows:

REGION / CHAPTER	Chairman / Chairperson	Hon. Secretary	Hon. Treasurer
WESTERN REGION	Sampat Damani Disha Travel	Sameer Karnani Arunodaya Travels	Madhuri Erach Kanga Ahura Travel
NORTHERN REGION	Rajan Sehgal Arrivals Air Services Pvt.Ltd.	Neeraj Malhotra Ganpati Travels	Gaurav Dogra Plan Your Holiday
SOUTHERN REGION	Hema RV Chander Kalpataru Tours India Pvt. Ltd	Joseph Jaya Ravi J. India Air Travels P. Ltd.	Santhi Sakthivadivel Sansar Tours Pvt. Limited
EASTERN REGION	Devesh Kumar Agarwal Victoria Travels P.Ltd	Vikas Sarawgi NCS Travels & Tours Private Limited	Chandra Prakash Poddar Vinayaka Air Travel Agency
KARNATAKA CHAPTER	M. S. Raghavan Passion & Pleasure Travels & Tours Pvt. Ltd.	Amish Desai Beleast Travels Pvt. Ltd.	Vinayak Ramesh Kumar Comfort Leisure Pvt. Ltd
KERALA CHAPTER	Ross Masood The Great India Tour Co. Pvt. Ltd.	K. Thomas Best West Travels	Asharaf N Lavanya Travel Service
GUJARAT CHAPTER	Paras Amarish Lakhia Utopia Travel Services Pvt. Ltd.	Virendra Shah Mamata Airwings	Prashant Madhani The Junction
ANDHRA PRADESH & TELANGANA CHAPTER	Ajay Kumar Ramidi Lorven Tours & Travels.	Nagesh Pampati Pampati Aeroworld Travels Pvt. Ltd	G. Veera Mohan Frontline Travels (P) Ltd.
PUNE CHAPTER	Krishna Gopalan Travel Masters (Mumbai) Pvt.Ltd	Bahram Pashutani Zadeh Napolitan Travel Agency Co. Pvt. Ltd	Shaishav Parekh Panam Tours and Travels
PUNJAB CHAPTER	Chairman / Chairperson Seat Vacant	Narinder Davesar Bharti Travel Advisor (Regd).	Pankul Sharma Sharma Travels
J&K CHAPTER	Shamim Ahmed Shah Shah Travels Pvt. Ltd	Zahoor Qari Air Links Tours & Travels	Sheikh Abdul Ahad Discover Culture India
SOUTH GUJARAT CHAPTER	Mukesh P. Patel Ronak Travels & Tours Pvt. Ltd.	Jashwant Patel Cinderella Travels	Netal K. Patel C.P. Travel & Tours
SAURASHTRA-KUTCH CHAPTER	Devendra R. Shah Devendra Travels & Tours	Bharat P. Shah Parag Travels P. Ltd.	Jitendra Chhabilbhai Lakhani Happy Tours and Travels
GOA CHAPTER	Arif Abdul Razaq Paramount Travels	Francisco Xavier Peres Speedbird Travel and Tours	Sita Antao Meeting Point Travel
RAJASTHAN CHAPTER	Manoj Sogani BCS Tours & Travels (P) Ltd.	Dashrath Singh Rathore Mayur Travels	Sunil Jain The Classic Tours and Travels
MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH CHAPTER	Manish Sharma International Travel Forum	Rajesh Agnihotri Holiday Point (Bhopal) Tours & Travels Pvt. Ltd.	Hemendra Singh Jadon Overseas Travels
NAGPUR CHAPTER	Jatindra R. Nakade Travel Links	Abhishek Kothari Bhagwati Travels	Kishor Shrihari Parate Flight Travel House
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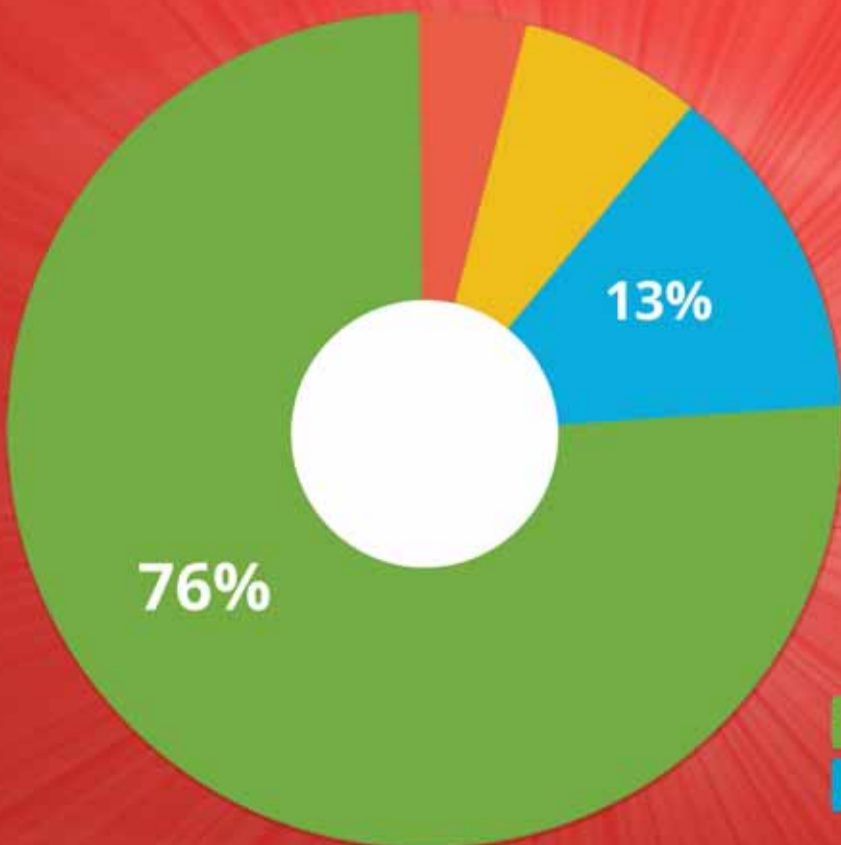
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Sweden's `52cr marketing budget

With a special focus on tourism, the Government of Sweden has allocated about `52 crore over three years in growing markets such as India. VisitSweden is now doing its market research while keeping agents as its priority.

HAZEL JAIN

Mikael Damberg, Sweden's Economic Development and Innovation Minister, recently announced that his government will now focus more on tourism, investing SEK 70 million (around `52 crore) up to 2017. This will be spent over three years in multiple countries to implement a number of initiatives that will strengthen Sweden's image abroad, including major investments in growing markets like India and China.

The plans include promoting eco-tourism in Sweden's countryside and increase the number of nights spent in the country. In September, Scandinavian Airlines will open a new route direct to Hong Kong. There are also plans to create a direct connection to New Delhi.

Speaking about the India market, **Lotta Thiringer**, Regional Director (Growth &

Development), VisitSweden, says that since India is a relatively new market for Sweden, its main goal for 2015 is to learn about and assess the potential of the Indian market which is growing rapidly to set a relevant strategy. "We first need to conclude our market research to determine what budgets should be allocated. Though we have witnessed a steady increase in the number of commercial bed nights from India to Sweden, a strategy will be developed when we have gathered all necessary market data," she says.

Thiringer is clear that the destination will be promoted through the travel trade. She says, "The trade is the pulse of any target market. They help penetrate and understand the target market through their network. Going B2B is therefore essential and needs to be looked into first. We have a three-city Scandinavian roadshow lined up in October 2015 in New Delhi, Mumbai and

“We have a three-city Scandinavian roadshow lined up in October 2015 in New Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai where we are expecting to meet travel trade partners and learn from them.”

Lotta Thiringer
Regional Director (Growth & Development)
VisitSweden



Chennai where we are expecting to meet travel trade partners and learn from them.”

Apart from the annual roadshow, VisitSweden is working closely with VisitNorway and VisitDenmark through the Scandinavian Tourist Board in India. It will work jointly with them for the travel trade. When questioned about whether VisitSweden plans to work with the key travel associations like TAAI or TAFI, she said, "We will look

into this together with our partners at the Scandinavian Tourist Board.”

While the NTO doesn't have a specialist programme for the travel trade yet, it will decide on whether it should develop one after its research is concluded. "At the moment, efforts are underway on how to promote Sweden in India. VisitSweden is exploring the Indian market through a pilot project aiming to increase knowledge about the market

and to build our network with the travel trade here. Given the outcome of the project a more ambitious programme will be launched in 2016 to increase awareness about Sweden. We have yet to decide whether we will develop a Scandinavia specialist program for the travel trade within this programme," Thiringer adds.

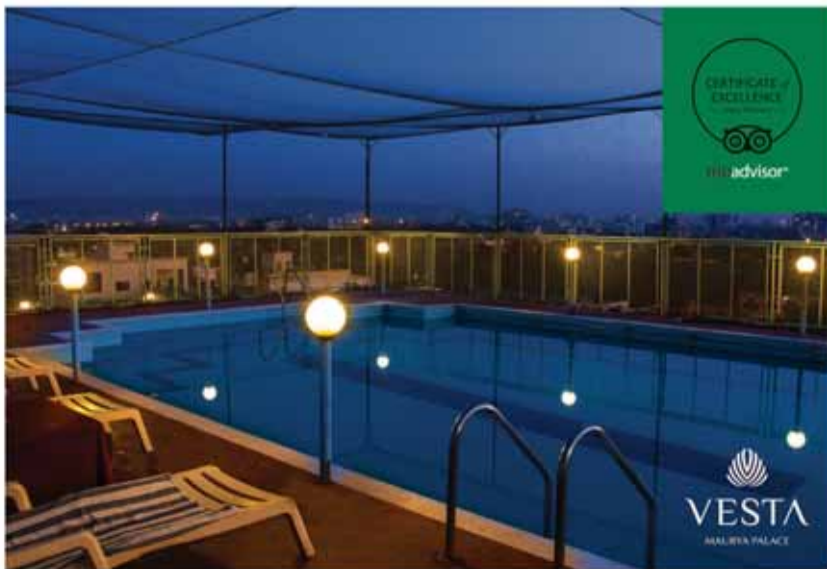
VisitSweden, she reveals, will work with a targeted approach to cut through the noise with its message to its

target group and focus on a few selected cosmopolitan areas. "We have a partnership with VisitNorway and VisitDenmark for our marketing efforts in India to create better impact, as we know that the Indian traveller likes to do round-trips and the three Scandinavian countries are a perfect combination," she says.

Joint Efforts

In September, Scandinavian Airlines will open a new route direct to Hong Kong. There are also plans to create a direct connection to New Delhi

VisitSweden is working closely with VisitNorway and VisitDenmark through the Scandinavian Tourist Board in India



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Explore adventure in Haridwar

Rakesh Lamba, Management Consultant, Hotel Ganga Sadan by HIVE, tells TRAVTALK that the hotel wants to focus mainly on adventure tourists.



SAMAPTI DAS FROM HARIDWAR

Ganga Sadan by HIVE recently organised a familiarisation trip for agents to showcase the special facilities that the hotel provides for all kinds of tourists.

The hotel has around 39 rooms including a presidential suite, a rooftop restaurant, and a wide range of mocktails and F&B facilities. It is a brand new hotel and its USP is that it is located right at the banks of the Ganges and has a huge ghat and a private temple where prayers are offered every morning and evening. **Rakesh Lamba,**



Rakesh Lamba
Management Consultant
Hotel Ganga Sadan by HIVE

We have tied up with an international company which organises bungee jumping, flying fox, giant fall, river rafting and kayaking

Management Consultant, Hotel Ganga Sadan by HIVE, says, "We are talking about a concept which is not prevalent in Haridwar right now. We are launching Haridwar as an activity-oriented destination. We provide a lot of activities to our clients. We have tied up with an international company which organises bungee jumping, flying fox, giant fall, river rafting and kayaking. Wildlife is also an USP as Rajaji National Park is a few kilometers away and has not been explored well so far."

Other than these activities, the hotel also organises rock climbing and trekking for schools and colleges. These activities are likely to start from October 1.


Ganga Sadan by HIVE also welcomes a lot of corporate groups looking for such activities. Various short trips to Mansa Devi and Neelkanth Mahadev temple and to Mussoorie and Dehradun can also be organised. Lamba highlights a one week pack-

age for senior citizens where they will be pampered with Yoga, head and foot massages. The meals will be cooked according to their preference. Talking about the hotel occupancy, Lamba says, "We are ready for large groups and with the Kumbh Mela arriving, we will have 100 per cent occupancy."




Hotel Ganga Sadan by HIVE

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A new Star shines on Dubai's high street

Located at the forefront of Dubai's most prominent thoroughfare, Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai, on Sheikh Zayed Road, is connecting guests to the heart of the booming business district and the city's main tourist attractions to ensure the property becomes a local landmark. The hotel which opened in November last year has positioned itself comfortably as both a business and a leisure hotel.

MEGHA PAUL FROM DUBAI

Are long flights, waiting for the cab or shuttle, or cab ride to the hotel, followed by the much-longer inevitable queues for check-in, taking a toll on you? Not if you are staying at the Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai. In one of the most innovative ways to check in at the hotel for larger groups of travellers, the Starwood property can do check-ins in the bus or cab itself on your way to the hotel.

"As conventions and group business grows, guest arrivals are sometimes compressed into very narrow timeframes. Thus, we want to consider multiple registration locations and other means of eliminating long lines and the amount of time our guests spend in the registration process," says **Ramon Von Schuckmann**, Director of Sales, Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai. Located at the forefront of Dubai's most



Ramon Von Schuckmann
Director of Sales
Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai

Primarily our guests are business travellers, thus hassle-free check-ins become a critical aspect at our property



Carmen Ortiz
Director of Marketing
Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai

First of all we're in the middle of the city. We have the metro station and we are in front of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)



Barun Gupta
Account Director-Global Sales,
Starwood Hotels and Resorts

Dubai is one of the most-preferred destinations for Indians. Starwood wants to cash in on this growing set of travellers

the first Starwood property within walking distance from the Trade Centre. The hotel is also targeting another niche market, which is the long-stay segment. "In a total of 654 keys, we have 180 apartments — fully serviced, with 100 one-bedroom apartments. So we specifically look at corporate customers who want to stay a bit longer, anything between one month and a year," Schuckmann explains. With Dubai being an evolved MICE destination, MICE and groups will also be a key focus for the hotel, especially during trade shows and conferences at the convention centre, Schuckmann explains, referring to the two-storey ballroom and six meeting rooms.

According to **Carmen Ortiz**, Director of Marketing, Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai, the hotel has positioned itself as offering a crossroads to Dubai. "First of all we're in the middle of the city and we are very accessible to the old and new parts of Dubai. We have the metro station and we can target the corporate traveller since we are in front of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and you can walk to the World Trade Centre and the many offices nearby," she points out. The hotel will also appeal to a small number of leisure travellers, in particular those with short stopovers in the city who do not require a beach or mall location, but would still prefer to be in close proximity to the city's major

attractions, she informs. "In 10 minutes you can get to the Old Souks or Dubai Mall and with the metro you can go to the marina or JBR or any other mall in the city," she adds.

Talking about the importance of India as a source market for Starwood and this hotel in Dubai, **Barun Gupta**, Account Director-Global Sales, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, reveals, "Dubai plays a vital role for growth of the Starwood portfolio. It is the second market after New York where Starwood will be opening all its 10 brands. And, India is growing in terms of outbound partnership with all destinations. With Dubai being just a few hours away, it is one of the most-preferred destinations for Indians for leisure and MICE. Starwood wants to cash in on this growing set of travellers. Thus, we recently hosted a fam trip to Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai to showcase our properties to top MICE agents from India."



Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai

prominent thoroughfare in Sheikh Zayed Road and in the proximity of Dubai World Trade Centre, the hotel's target market is clear, he adds. "Primarily our guests are corporate and business travellers, and thus hassle-free check-ins and other innovative measures keeping them in mind becomes a critical aspect at our property."

The hotel is the first new-build for Sheraton in Dubai in more than 30 years. It is also

Vantage Point

- ➔ Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai, is the first Starwood property within walking distance from the Trade Centre
- ➔ Dubai is the second market after New York where Starwood will be opening all its 10 brands

Industry needs a GST boost

Being mid-scale gives them the upper hand when it comes to expansion into Tier-II and Tier-III cities, says Ajay Bakaya, Executive Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts.

ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

What are your expansion plans?

We have over 70 hotels now and we are quite happy with the progress. The economy isn't exactly booming. We have opened 3-4 hotels in the last six months. We have at least five new hotels to be opened in the next six months. We have a very nice property coming in Agra. We are still trying to get foothold in the Middle East. It starts making sense now as we have properties in India, East Africa, that's

why Middle East will be a very good option and this can act as a bridge.

As a home-grown brand what challenges do you face?

Every international brand that was not in India is there and every international brand which is not there will be there in the future, that's a challenge. The game going forward is going to be of distribution. Who can get your hotel to the users as efficiently as possible. And the big boys will have an edge in that area. They have

much larger budgets, much larger number of hotels. So they have a broader base to work on. We have the advantage of taking mid-scale hotels to smaller Indian cities to the rest of the world. We believe the bigger boys are not so efficient when it comes to Tier II and Tier III cities. The costs are just too high.

What are your predictions for 2015-2016?

We are still looking at certain optimism, perhaps not boundless optimism but a fair degree of optimism.

We expect rates to go up starting September/October. Last six-seven years we have witnessed erosion of rates. Is it going to be a steep takeoff? Well, I don't think so. Let's wait and watch what happens in 2016. Government is taking so many initiatives to boost inbound tourism, we are also seeing rise in the taxes including luxury taxes, let's see what's the way forward on this.

From the hotel point of view the sooner the GST happens, the better it will be for all of us.



Ajay Bakaya
Executive Director
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

But they have announced GST for a long time. What do you think will this ever happen?

Well it's 50-50. I think sooner or later it has to happen and at the moment it will, that will be a significant achievement for us Indians as a country, particularly for the hospitality industry. So I hope that happens as far as taxation is concerned. Otherwise taxation is going to be as illogical as it has been for 15 years. ➔



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– KEDAR DIGHE, ROOMS DIVISION MANAGER, GRAND MERCURE GOA SHREM RESORT

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The Filipino connect

The Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines organised a four-city roadshow for its travel trade partners based in Nagpur, Chandigarh, Lucknow and Delhi. The Nagpur road show witnessed big participation from the travel agents of the region. The objective of this B2B roadshow was to educate and update them about Philippines' existing and new tourism product offerings.



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Best MICE Destination



The award was given to Lavasa Tourism and received by its Asst. Vice President Tourism, **Bhupesh Kumar**

Best Luxury Wedding and Mice Hotel



The award was given to Crowne Plaza Kochi and received by its General Manager, **Sanjay Kaushik**

Best Hotel Chain



The award was given to Choice Hotels India and received by its Vice President Sales & Marketing, **Shivali V. Sharma**

Best Mid-Market Hotel



The award was given to Mercure Lavasa Hotel and received by its Area General Manager Accor Hotels, **Manish Dayya** and Hotel Manager, **Sachin Malhotra**

Best Luxury Destination Wedding Resort



The award was given to Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Alibaug and received by its General Manager, **Santanu Guha Roy**

Best All Day Dining Restaurant



The award was given to Festa - Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort and received by its General Manager, **Rohan Sable**



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Maya adorns the best in hospitality

The first India Hospitality Awards 2015 for South and West, held recently at Crowne Plaza Kochi, acknowledged and awarded the best in the hospitality industry. TRAVTALK speaks to the award winners to gauge their motivation and commitment towards the industry.

Best MICE Destination

It was a great evening and a very exciting event. Lavasa has won two awards now. Last year we won the best tourist destination award in West India and this time we have won again the best MICE destination and the best mid market hotel. So it's great for us and we hope to do better next year.

Bhupesh Kumar

Asst. Vice President Tourism, Lavasa Tourism



Best Budget Hotel

I would like to thank India Hospitality Awards for this honour. This award will give more confidence and boost to the whole team. This is a great opportunity to meet all industry stalwarts and we are happy to be a part of this event.

R Ravichandar

Chairman & Managing Director, Nandhana Hotels



Enterprising General Manager of the Year

This was absolutely an amazing night. I had also attended the North India Travel Awards held in Delhi. It is getting better every year. I think this is a big opportunity for all hoteliers and industry partners to meet and network with each other.

Kunal Shanker

General Manager, Holiday Inn Cochin



Best Restaurant and Bar

The event was wonderful and a nice venue. It is a wonderful initiative as far as recognition of the hospitality partners is concerned. I am sure that this will definitely go a long way. Hospitality is growing rapidly in India and these kinds of events will boost the potential of this industry.

SA Samee

General Manager, Mediterra, Sayaji Indore

Excellence in Customer Service

It was a great event organised by DDP Publications who are the pioneers of the industry. We all enjoyed the evening but more importantly getting together with the industry colleagues and learning about new happenings and new hotels is a great feeling all together.

Pankaj Dubey

General Manager, Golden Tulip Grand View Resort, Goa



Best Luxury Wedding and MICE Hotel

This event will give a lot of synergies. It is a very positive competition between the hotels and it gives great visibility to the tourism and hospitality sector. We get to see the movements in the industry and every region gets its own recognition through these award ceremonies.

Sanjay Kaushik

General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi



Best Hotel Chain

I think this is a great initiative that India Hospitality Awards has taken. It is a good idea to identify the leaders in the hospitality industry and I am glad that it is done region wise because when we go national or on a worldwide platform we tend to miss out on region wise presence. This concept is very encouraging for all in the industry.

Shivali V Sharma

Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Choice Hotels India



Best Mid-Market Hotel, Mercure Lavasa Hotel

The event is a great initiative and being the first award ceremony in the India hospitality segment, I think it was fantastically arranged and we are very happy and proud to be a part of this event.

Manish Dayya

Area General Manager, Accor Hotels

Best City Hotel

Thank you Hospitality Awards for this honour. This was a great show and for me and my team it is a big moment of pride to receive this award in front of the industry stalwarts.

S Hari Hara Sudhan

General Manager - Hospitality, The Capital - Trivandrum



Best Debut Hotel

It is a great feeling for us that we have won two 'Mayas'. My hotel has won the best debut hotel award and I have won the best general manager mid market so it is a wonderful moment and I am feeling over the moon.

Ranganath Budumooru

*General Manager
Holiday Inn Express & Suites Hyderabad Gachibowli*



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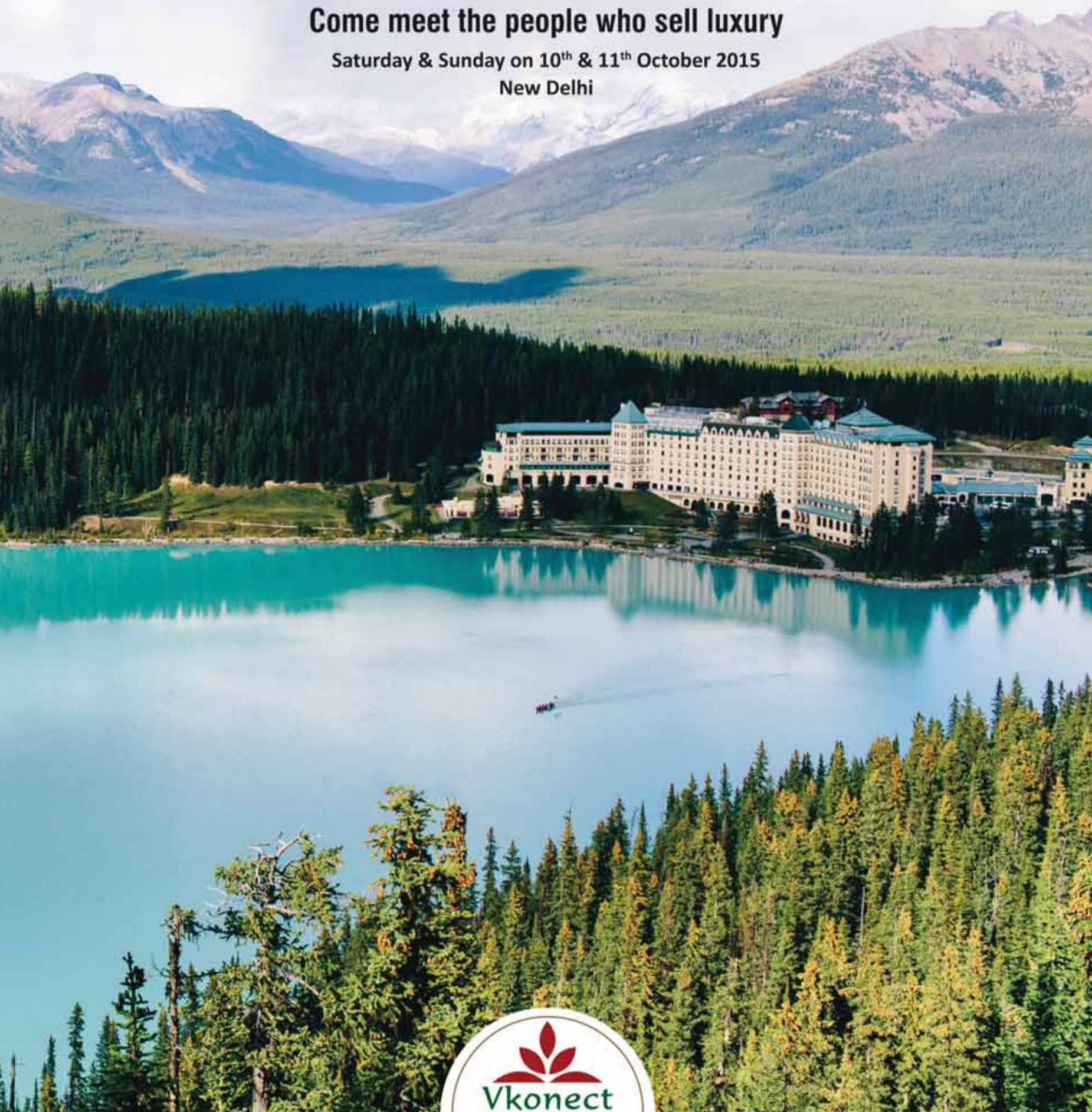


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Responsible Tourism Awards @WTM

A worldwide campaign to end canned hunting, a tour operator offering locally-led alternative city tours and a local mangrove conservation and education project in Madagascar are among the organisations included in list of finalists for the 2015 World Responsible Tourism Awards at WTM London. But who will take the gold?



After intense debate by the judging panel, 37 organisations have been chosen across 12 categories, recognising achievements from animal welfare campaigns to accessible tourism practices in one of the most diverse lists of finalists the World Responsible Tourism Awards at WTM London has ever seen. The range of organisations vary hugely in size; from tourism industry giants such as TUI Travel UK & Ireland, to tiny individual enterprises such as Cnoc Suain in Ireland, in setting; from city tours to an isolated Amazon ecolodge and in style; from mainstream tour operators to small, niche businesses. These finalists are also based in more countries than ever before – 20 different countries worldwide, with Cyprus, Hong Kong and Finland represented for the first time ever.

Commenting on the entries received this year, managing director of Responsible Travel, and founder of the Awards, **Justin Francis** says, "In our entries this year we've seen organisations clearly influenced by the work of our previous winners, for example city tours run by homeless guides. It is our responsibility to find those inspirational people again."

Professor Harold Goodwin, chair of the Awards' judging panel, noted that 2015 has revealed some of the strongest entries ever received by the Awards team. He says, "Our aim is to surprise and inspire, but the standard is rising, and we have to keep pushing up our expectations of our winners."

"We can only award those who enter, and I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to share their stories with the judges. The finalists we've chosen are just the tip of the iceberg of groundbreaking, inspirational work being done in responsible tourism across the globe." Voting is currently underway for the Awards' only publically decided category, the People's Choice in Responsible Tourism in association with National Geographic Traveller (UK)

magazine, with the winner for this, for each of the other 12 categories, and the overall winner will be announced at WTM in London on November 4.

Simon Press, Senior Director, WTM London says, "The judging for this year's World Responsible Tourism Awards at WTM has been



the most competitive for many years. I am delighted with the quality and the diversity of the finalists. I look forward to congratulating the winners and all the finalists at the awards ceremony, which forms part of World Responsible Tourism Day on November 4."

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27/10/2015	Round Robin: Session 5	2945	1645
28/10/2015	Round Robin: Session 6	1345	845
28/10/2015	Round Robin: Session 7	2945	1645
29/10/2015	Round Robin: Session 8	1345	845
29/10/2015	Round Robin: Session 9	2995	1645
30/10/2015	Round Robin: Session 10	4745	2945
31/10/2015	Semi-Finals: Session 11	4745	2945
31/10/2015	Semi-Finals: Session 12	5895	3695
1/11/2015	Finals: Session 13	7045	4245

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More MICE for the *Maharaja*

Pankaj Kumar, Executive Director - Sales & Marketing, Air India, talks about what the national airline, a member of Star Alliance, offers to MICE groups.



VAISHALI DAR

Q Has the passenger profile changed over the years?

Yes, the profile of the passengers has changed over the years. Among the various reasons of travel, like business, leisure, social, religious, education, medical, shopping, business trips are showing an interesting upward trend, worldwide. This largely owes to the significant growth in the trips undertaken for attending or participating in meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops. Over the past decades, MICE has been recognised as a significant market segment and an important contributor to national economies. India ranks among the top 10 preferred MICE destinations across the globe.

Q Is the Indian passenger demanding more from an airline?

The Indian aviation industry has emerged out of

the global financial crisis at a steady pace and has shown good growth rates over the years. The passengers in India expect more from the airlines in terms of safe, reliable and on time services; expect highest level of service around the world; seamless connections; adherence to commitments made by airlines, and worldwide recognition.

Q Which are the popular destinations for MICE groups on Air India?

The popular MICE destinations on Air India are USA, Germany, Rome/Milan, UK, China, Singapore, Japan, Australia, Thailand, Korea, Hong Kong and Dubai.

Q Are there any special packages for large MICE groups?

Air India offers special fares and packages for all MICE groups. These fares are tailor-made according to the requirement of the group. Additionally, with Air

“AI, being a member of Star Alliance, offers Conventions Plus and Meetings Plus products which offer discounts on all participating airlines of Star Alliance for various conventions and meetings.”

Pankaj Kumar
Executive Director - Sales & Marketing, Air India



Q Do you see growth in business passengers and MICE groups in and out of India?

The year 2015 should be a profitable year for MICE industry. As per our internal analysis the MICE segment has a potential of approximately ₹5,000 crore from the Indian market. So yes, there is a huge potential of growth in business passengers and MICE groups in and out of India.

Latin tales for travel trade

LATAM Airlines Group recently launched the new South America Specialist Advanced Programme for the Indian travel trade. Marcio Ma, Country Manager, India, LATAM Airlines, informs about the destinations added in the programme and how it is helpful for the Indian tourists.



SAMAPTI DAS

LATAM Airlines Group recently launched the South America Specialist Advanced Programme during an event in New Delhi. The programme comprises four different modules. The first module features Peru and Chile, the second features Brazil and the third, Colombia and Ecuador. The fourth module will highlight technical information about LATAM Airlines Group. The workshop held in Delhi covered Chile and Peru giving information about the itineraries and highlights of these destinations.

Marcio Ma, Country Manager, India, LATAM Airlines, says, “The event is to train the travel agents to be specialised in South America so that they can understand a little bit more about the countries and offer more to their customers.”

Explaining further, he adds, “We understand that South America is not a cheap destination but we are still



expecting a 10 per cent growth for this year from the Indian market. Last year was a very good year for the industry and this year again we are expecting a good growth with the help of the Indian travel agents.”

There were special presentations by the Embassies of Chile and Peru also.

Luis M Cabello, Economic and Commercial Counsellor, Embassy of Peru, says, “These kinds of activities held by LATAM will defi-

nately develop a better connectivity between India and Peru as well as other places in South America. Talking about numbers in case of Peru, we have 20 per cent more Indian tourists flying to Peru each year.”

Carolina Vasquez, Director, PROCHILE Commercial Office, Embassy of Chile (India) says, “South America is not known to Indians much and these kinds of presentations will promote the destinations in the continent.”

LATAM has through fare agreements in India with Air India, Lufthansa, Virgin Atlantic, British Airways, Jet Airways and Air France.

India Centric

➔ Peru has 20 per cent more Indians visitors each year.

➔ South America expects 10 per cent growth from Indian market

Basel, Switzerland

"Culture, history, relaxation & enjoyment – get inspired by Basel!"

Highlights:

- **Basel Zoo** housing a large number of exotic animals
- **Museums** - Art, Cultures, Tinguely & more
- **Rhine Cruises** offering splendid views of the city



Hand-held holidays losing sheen?

With the evolution of technology in the travel trade, the entire ball game has changed. TRAVELTALK finds out from industry stakeholders whether the relevance and role of travel agents and tour operators has ostensibly diminished, and what agents are doing to counter this situation.

INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA

Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travel Group, strikes a positive chord and feels agents are still very relevant. People go to doctors with confidence for face to face meetings and personal examination because every patient's prob-

Dipak Deva, CEO Destination Management, India & South Asia, Kuoni Destination Management, feels hand-held holidays are definitely not on their way out. While there's a very competitive travel market out there, especially with the online platform which offers exciting deals, tour operators

With clients now fending more for themselves, volumes are decreasing, but there is still room for agents if they are honest and efficient. That's the key. They have to reinvent themselves. The client's profile is also a factor. Top-end clients still engage with agents

their services and are providing value additions in terms of not only special discounts, but also by providing a wonderful experience through their own experience. Corporate tours and incentives will always require the expertise of a tour operator to handle and fine-tune their packages.



Subhash Goyal
Chairman
STIC Travel Group



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



M.S. Chawla
Chairman
Siddharth Travels

lems are unique and need unique solutions. Similarly, clients go to agents for special services and solutions.

While hotel details and air tickets are available on the net, many people prefer planning their holidays with expert guidance. So, hand-held holidays will always be there as long as there are travel experts. For air tickets many people prefer buying on the Internet as it saves time, money and effort. But for holiday packages, agents will always be relevant.

However, survival will be difficult for pure ticketing agents, and so they must adapt themselves to the changing environment and diversify to handling inbound/outbound tours, car rentals, cruises, insurance etc. because on this planet only those species have survived who have adapted themselves to change.

offer reliability. This is particularly relevant to a destination like India where services are still not expensive. Clients are happier to travel with tour operators who already have the knowledge and experience about the destination, constantly research new products for travellers, and offer the luxury of travelling in comfort.

It is a relationship-driven business as well, since the clients strongly depend on their tour operators for destination knowledge, updates, products and services.

M.S. Chawla, Chairman, Siddharth Travels, says since clients have more information available to them than ever before, agents have to be knowledgeable, patient, and time-conscious. There's no room for complacency. Agents have to evolve and translate their involvement into cogent action.

because they want extra trimmings to enhance their holiday experiences. It's a matter of comfort and ego.

Homa Mistry, MD, Trailblazers India, feels that while the Internet has made



Homa Mistry
MD
Trailblazers India

information available to people at the touch of a button, 'hand-holding' continues, and will continue. It must be conceded that tour operators have also learnt to upgrade

Aparna Basumallik, CEO, Club7 Holidays, feels the situation now demands more commitment from agents and tour operators. While the online business is increasing, it is mainly for the basic 'ticket and hotel' traveller, and he isn't necessarily getting the best deal. The number of travellers with specialised requirements is also increasing. Not everyone has the time to plan his own trip. And it certainly is not everyone's cup of tea to sit and plan a Scandinavian or Alaskan vacation. Invariably one hooks up with an online travel agent.

The demands on the agent's competence is the



Aparna Basumallik
CEO
Club7 Holidays

critical factor. If he's able to handle a travel connoisseur correctly, his business and the referable business is there to stay. The agent has to prove his worth.

SuccessTalk

Railway platform to podium: Rise of a leader

TRAVELTALK brings you an inspiring story of travel industry stalwart **Kalaimamani V.K.T. Balan**, Chairman, Madura Travel Service, and his tryst with destiny.

TT BUREAU

Born on January 26, 1954, at Thiruchendur, a holy town in Thoothukudi district in Tamil Nadu, Balan came from humble backgrounds. He could only study up to class eighth. In 1981 he landed in Chennai, then 'Madras,' with empty pockets. Egmore Railway Station

frequented the American Consulate for visa. He even accompanied them to the offices of other travel agents and helped them to get their tickets. He earned the goodwill of many gentlemen as well as majority of the travel agents. This impressed a travel agency which gave him a full time job at their



V.K.T. Balan, Chairman, Madura Travels (centre) with US Consulate Officers, and Vice Counsellor and Executives

platforms and benches were his abodes. Balan tried his best to get employed for food but of no avail.

Struggling hard for existence, he spent his time in the company of others who were like him in search of odd jobs. One ill-fated day, which changed his entire life, Balan was sleeping tired, broken and faint-hearted, with the deprived lot of others like him at the railway station. Suddenly he was disturbed and woken up by a policeman at midnight. He had to run to the best of his ability to avoid getting arrested. While running, he noticed a queue of people standing near a building and joined the queue to escape the policeman. Then a stranger approached him and asked whether he can get a berth in the queue. Balan instinctively obliged and the stranger gave Balan `2.

Balan realised that he had been standing and sitting on the platform adjacent to the American Consulate. Balan received it with a great surprise and safely possessed the capital for Madura Travel Service in his pocket.

Thereafter, he approached more gentlemen who

company to reserve places for their clients.

Balan was grateful to get this job, but his hunger for success was not over and it urged him to work harder at the travel agency. To fulfil his dream and hard work, Madura travel service was born on January 17, 1986.

Now it has turnover in crores and functions in its own premises opposite to Egmore Railway Station. Today, Balan continues to live as a simple man and was former chairman of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) Southern Region. Balan's professional life came full circle when the US Consulate Officers, and Vice Counsellor and Executives recently invited him to release their book on the US.

The Government of Tamil Nadu had conferred Balan with the prestigious "Kalaimamani" award and the citation was given to him by the then-Tamil Nadu Governor Fathima Beevi. The then-Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi presented a shawl and gave him the "Thanga Pathakam" (Gold Award).

Kochi: India's 1st city to get WTCF membership

Kochi has become the first Indian city to be granted membership of Beijing-based World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) Council with Kerala's Tourism Department accepting the invitation to join its league of leading tourism cities across the world. Kochi Mayor **Tony Chammany** handed over the membership acceptance document to Chinese Ambassador to India **Le Yucheng** at a function held at Kochi in the presence of Kerala Chief Minister **Oommen Chandy**, Chief Secretary **Jiji Thomson**, Kerala Tourism

Secretary **G. Kamala Vardhana Rao** and Tourism Director **P.I. Sheik Pareeth**. State Principal Secretary for IT and Industries **P.H. Kurian** and former

Secretary **T Balakrishnan** also attended the function. Yucheng said the two regions need to explore the possibilities for partnerships in culture, sports and

tourism as there are many striking similarities between the cultures of China and Kerala, especially the cuisine, martial arts and snake and dragon boat races. The Chinese ambassador also expressed interest in bringing investments from his country to Kerala's tourism sector, particularly for construction of an entertainment city and an oceanarium. He also urged the government to convene a meeting of tour operators of both the countries while agreeing to support Kerala's efforts to increase inflow of Chinese tourists to the state.



St. Moritz, Switzerland

“The birthplace of Alpine holidays
where the sun shines almost 322 days a year”

Highlights:

- **Corviglia & Piz Nair** - adventures on the home mountain of St. Moritz
- **Muottas Muragl** - impressive view over the lake region of the Upper Engadine
- **Horse-drawn carriage** - A romantic ride around the lake, through the Staz forest

Autumn Promotion*

Discount of Rs. 1000/- on
all hotel bookings in St. Moritz

*Travel Period : 12th September to 30th November 2015. Conditions apply.

Free SIM with Rail Europe

With 3,500 free SIM cards up for grabs with a prepaid credit of €18, travellers on Rail Europe can avail this facility on a first-come, first-served basis.



Rail Europe in cooperation with Eurail is offering a free SIM card to its customers,

Travellers who book their Eurail Global Pass from August 3 to September 30, 2015 including these days, will be eligible to receive a free SIM card. The

micro or nano, with a UK (+44) and US (+1) phone number that includes a prepaid credit of €18. The roaming SIM card offered during this promotion will be



allowing them to receive and make calls, send text messages, take advantage of Wi-Fi hotspots and get 3G data throughout their European trip.

promotional offer is limited to 3,500 SIM cards and they will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. The roaming SIM card will be available as regular,

pre-activated and travellers will be able to use it immediately. For more information about this promotion, agents can log on to www.raileurope-world.com.

DID YOU Know?

India among top markets for New Zealand

India is among the top 10 international source markets for Tourism New Zealand. The typical length of stay for an Indian holiday visitor is 14.3 days.

Digital Revenue Operators

Avijit Arya, Founder and CEO, Internet Moguls, says operators use their plug and play model, without having to invest in technology or manpower.



Internet Moguls have plans to deliver \$100 million in revenues, now that they manage hotels in 14 countries.

Avijit Arya, Founder and CEO, Internet Moguls, with his army of moguls and a lot of new automation technologies built at the British Columbia office, is powering hotels from Kigali in Africa to Sydney in Australia. With the new London hotels and apartments the company is now delivering millions of dollars of revenues for hotels internationally.

Arya says, "Owners and operators both use our plug and play model, and they don't have to invest in technology or manpower. They find in us tried and tested Award Winning Digital Revenue Operators."

"With the Digital Hospitality training arm that we have, we train hoteliers on how to manage their digital revenues and be ready for the digital only ecosystem."

“They find in us tried and tested Award Winning Digital Revenue Operators. With the Digital Hospitality training arm that we have, we train hoteliers on how to manage their digital revenues and be ready for the digital only ecosystem.”

Avijit Arya
Founder and CEO, Internet Moguls

The company's 'M-powered Hotels', a product based on its plug and play model, is operational in 300 hotels across 11 countries. 'M-powered Hotels' is an all technology driven in-house system that allows hotels to manage its marketing aspects. Arya says the product helps hotels to earn 50-60 per cent extra in revenues. He emphasizes that Indian hotels need to explore this system in a big way.

Finally to send out strong messages and share daily

learning, Arya personally produces one new video on his channel #askaviarya on You Tube which reaches 1,72,000 hoteliers every Tuesday morning at 11 am.

Arya adds, "I am not sure about how great the Indian industry alone is but I am positive that we can become an Indian multinational like my friends, Bhanu from RateGain and Ritesh from OYO Rooms have already done and proved."

Selamat datang, says Indonesia

Indonesia is looking forward to welcome around 250,000 tourists from India this year. The Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia in collaboration with Visit Indonesia Tourism Office organised Indonesia Sales Mission in India. The event was held in Mumbai and Delhi and was attended by industry stalwarts.



Davos, Switzerland

"The largest resort in the Alps for mountain holidays, sports and conferences"

Highlights:

- **Zügenschlucht** - a wild and romantic gorge
- **Monstein Brewery** - the highest brewery in Europe
- **Sertigtal** - an enchanting side valley of Davos



Autumn Promotion*
Discount of Rs. 1000/- on
all hotel bookings in Davos

*Travel Period : 12th September to 30th November 2015. Conditions apply.

Agents must toe the line of eCommerce

The eTailing and Travel Commerce Conference by IAMAI held on July 24 and 25 at The Lalit, New Delhi, was a unique forum that facilitated interaction among renowned industry leaders across various sectors, highlighting the challenges, issues, opportunities, to grow this sector.

KANCHAN NATH

In the opening address, **Kumar Karpe**, CEO, Tech Process, said, "The confidence of consumers around eCommerce has changed

strategies are getting discussed."

Guest of Honour for the event, **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, high-

With the penetration of telecom, mobile has become the focal point of eCommerce and many companies' strategic decision point. Along with customer centric, mobile-based strategies are getting discussed

Kumar Karpe, CEO, Tech Process



(L-R) Kumar Karpe, CEO, Tech Process, with Suman Billa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, and G. Shankaran Nair, President and Chief Strategy Officer, Servion Global Solutions

exponentially and so have the challenges. The way mobile is rapidly enhancing the experience, the shift from eCommerce to mCommerce, the rate at which it is moving, has surprised many of us. Along with that it brings other challenges, the connectivity beyond the top 20 cities is still an issue."

Talking about consumer expectations, he said, "Consumer expectations are changing, they are demanding more. After a research on 5000 odd customers across different cities we came up with interesting insights: 1) subconsciously the consumer wants to control the time of payment, 2) consumers want the flexibility of place 3) consumers want to control the mode of payment and 4) digital device flexibility/consistent user experience.

"Also with the penetration of telecom, mobile has become the focal point of eCommerce and many companies strategic decision point. Along with customer centric strategies, but on an equal note mobile-based

lighted that the government is currently focusing on two aspects: enabling people to get on-board eCommerce platforms and on transforming India from being a job seeker to a job creator.

The job [of travel agents] will change from that of a tour operator to somebody who curates it, whose expertise is sought in creating that experience in that destination

Suman Billa, Joint Secretary Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

He reiterated, "eCommerce has created tremendous opportunity for aggregation. When I used to head Kerala Tourism, in KTDC 55-60 per cent of the room inventory was sold to the room aggregator at the beginning of the year. This is what de-risks entirely. It is through the rest of the 40 to 45 per cent we make the money, after pitching to the premium guys. So I think the nature of the business is really changing. I think this

aggregation is happening across platforms on a very wide scale."

His message to travel agents was: "The nature of their job will change, people will get in touch with them either because they are not comfortable with technology or for the comfort of speaking to someone. The job will change from that of a tour operator to somebody who curates it, whose expertise is sought in creating that experience in that destination. Also a lot of virtual real estate is replacing real estate. In the hotel scenario, many trav-

ellers first check the Internet, booking nowadays are happening on a specific room in the hotel not a generic room. People want that level of details, such as views, etc."

Commenting on the profile of travellers, he said, "Today is the day of the alert independent traveller, people like to plant their own itineraries, create their own experiences. People want completely personalised, customised experiences. A lot of travel will go in for high value

people who are just elephant watchers and/or specialised groups, among others."

Special Address on Customer Experience by Design was given by **G. Shankaran Nair**, President and Chief Strategy Officer, Servion Global Solutions. Talking about the disruption of technology, he said, "The one thing to be noted in all technology conversation is that where is the consumer in all of this? The single largest challenge for all is loyalty of

The single largest challenge for all is loyalty of customer. Technology disrupts, one of the effects of disruption of technology is that it also distances

G. Shankaran Nair, President and Chief Strategy Officer, Servion Global Solutions

experiential travel. In terms of specialised products, the world is moving towards a very niche kind of a traveller. Women groups, students,

customer. Technology disrupts, one of the effects of disruption of technology is that it also distances. We are already eight to 10 years

behind in terms of adoption of eCommerce. The consumers experience goes from 1) Research 2) Purchase 3) User experience and 4) Experience of service."

Talking about the journey of information especially for a brand, he said, "Initially information was shared only through word of mouth, then came radio, print, followed by TV. These all are actually forms /innovations in technology. Brands could now broadcast information through one way communication. That cycle of consumer behavior changed 50 years ago. The awareness and research cycle got disrupted a second time with the advent of the Internet. Now awareness and research is not from one to many but from many to many. Today as a brand there is no control. There are many people out there talking about it. As a consumer I am free to take whatever information I want. The connection no longer is at the human level but at the productivity level. So in this scenario how do you get customer loyalty? You may win today's business but tomorrow's business is not in your control. Consumers remain promiscuous as far as moving from website to website is concerned."

What consumers want?

- ➔ To control the time of payment.
- ➔ The flexibility of place of payment
- ➔ To control the mode of payment
- ➔ Digital device flexibility /Consistent user experience

First familiarisation tour of Zanzibar



The Zanzibar Tourism Promotion Centre (ZTPC) conducted its first familiarisation tour for 10 persons representing six travel agencies in association with the Travel Agents Federation of India's Western Region Chapter.

6.5% surge in domestic travel demand: IATA

Domestic travel demand rose 6.5% in June compared to June 2014, with the strongest growth occurring in India, China and Russia, according to the global passenger traffic results announced by International Air Transport Association (IATA). Total domestic capacity was up 6.0%, and load factor was 82.2%, up 0.4 percentage

points. **Tony Tyler**, IATA's Director General and CEO, says, "Improved air connectivity would make a major contribution to the government's efforts to make it easier to do business in India. For that, we need a policy framework that reduces onerous taxes and regulation and that continues to improve infrastructure and cost efficiency."

The Bernina Express

“From the Alps to the Palms connecting the Swiss Cities of Chur / Davos / St. Moritz and Tirano”



Autumn Promotion*
FREE Reservation on the Bernina Express

*Travel Period : 12th September to 25th October 2015. Conditions apply.
Reservation fee : EUR 34 per person.

Recognising friends of tigers

WWF India and Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) along with the Global Tiger Forum (GTF), jointly observed the Global Tiger Day on July 29 by organising the WWF-PATA Bagh Mitra Awards. Three individuals and two grassroots organisations were felicitated for their exemplary work toward tiger conservation. The event was attended by wildlife enthusiasts, sustainable tourism and eco tourism lovers.



Ananda: Taking luxury to new heights

Set amongst 100 acres of virgin forest and opened in September 2000, Ananda in the Himalayas features a restored Viceroy's Palace, world-class spa, 70 deluxe rooms, five suites and three villas. India's first destination spa is cashing in on the growing trend of weekend getaways.



TT BUREAU

Beckoning travellers from around the world in pursuit of rejuvenation, healing and Nirvana, wellness retreats in India have taken medical tourism up a notch. Now, one can indulge into spiritual odyssey amid soulful ambience of luxury retreats that present a blissful concoction of serenity and finest comfort of modern life. Nestled in a forest near the Himalayas, the Ananda Spa has been set up in an erstwhile maharaja's

northern retreat. India's first destination spa offers a mix of Ayurvedic and Western spa therapies designed to relax the mind and body.

At the heart of the wellness focus is the integration of yoga and Ayurveda philosophies along with purifying whole body therapies, while incorporating the five elements of nature, thus creating harmony between the mind, body and spirit. Talking about the evolution of the concept of destination spa and how



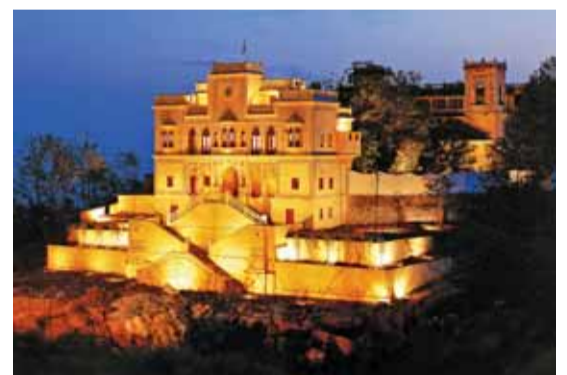
Ashok Khanna
Founder & Managing Director
Ananda

We went back to the Vedas and created something unique for the stressed-out elites. A trip to Ananda is about finding your inner self

Ananda is promoting wellness in a big way, **Ashok Khanna**, Founder & Managing Director, Ananda, says, "The concept emerged during the 90s with

the IT revolution in India. The new era also brought with it a lot of anxiety and stress levels were increasing. We went back to the Vedas and created something unique for the stressed-out elites. Thus, a trip to Ananda is about finding your inner self, introspection and the gateway to the soul."

The wellness spa offers guests a choice of rooms, suites and one- or two-bedroom villas. Throwing light on the innovative offerings at the property, Khanna reveals, "We offer a mix of Ayurvedic and western spa therapies designed to relax the mind and body. Treatments, daily activities and meals are devised on the basis of guests' *doshas* and will also help those looking for anti-ageing or weight loss treatments." Guests can immerse themselves in a complete rejuvenation experience in the 21,000-square-foot spa, with an extensive selection of around 80 therapies in the 21 treat-



ment rooms and four consultation rooms. The spa also features luxurious hydrotherapy facilities, a Beauty Institute, outdoor temperature-controlled swimming pool, sauna, steam rooms, fully equipped gymnasium, Khanna adds.

Ananda is owned and managed by IHHR Hospitality. "We are very engaged with Ananda guests. Ananda as a brand is an extremely intuitive, personalised and care-giving experience. The brand attributes

are high level of service and authenticity in whatever we do. The service at Ananda is the differentiator," he adds.

Cushioned in Hills

➔ Ananda in the Himalayas focuses on the integration of Yoga and Ayurveda philosophies along with purifying whole body therapies, while incorporating the five elements of Nature



Ticino

"Switzerland's sunny south with a Mediterranean flair"



Highlights of the Region :

- **Mendrisiotto** - Vineyards & hills full of history
- **Bellinzona** - Medieval castles & a Unesco Heritage site
- **Lake Lugano** - Parks, the old town & a stroll by the lakeside
- **The Lake Maggiore area** - exotic flora & the surrounding valleys

Autumn Promotion*
Discount of Rs. 1000/- on
all hotel bookings in Lugano

*Travel Period : 12th September to 30th November 2015. Conditions apply.



All fun in the Philippines

Chandigarh was the second pitstop for the Philippines road show in India. DOT Philippines along with a 15-member delegation interacted with key travel and tour operators, MICE and up-market leisure operators in the region. The programme for the roadshow included presentations by officials of DOT Philippines, DMCs and hotels from Philippines in addition to Q&A, detailed networking sessions and special lucky draw for the participants.



Lake Geneva Region, Switzerland

"The romantic Lake cities of Montreux & Lausanne,
a scenic journey on the GoldenPass Line &
a high level experience at the Glacier 3000"

Autumn Promotion*

Discount of Rs. 1000/- on all hotel
bookings in Montreux & Lausanne

*Travel Period : 12th September to 30th November 2015. Conditions apply.

Air China non-stop Mum-Beijing from Oct 25

■ Air China, China's national air carrier, will launch direct international flight from Mumbai to Beijing with effect from October 25, 2015. The strategic move of Air China is a step to strengthen its existing route network in India. Air China has introduced Airbus A330-300 to its service to Mumbai. The new flight will operate four times in a week i.e., Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Passengers will also have return flight service from Beijing to Mumbai four times a week i.e., Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday.

Airbus A330-300 has seating capacity of 301 passengers which offers 30 seats in Business Class, 16 seats in Premium Economy and 255 seats in Economy Class. The outbound flight will depart from Mumbai at 02:30 IST, arriving in Beijing at 11:20 CST. The return flight will depart from Beijing at 19:40 CST and arrives next day in Mumbai at 01:00 IST. After the launch of this route, Air China will discontinue with its existing route PVG - CTU - BOM - CTU - PVG effective winter schedule 2015.

Time's right for mid-segment hotels

In a tête-à-tête with TRAVTALK at the launch of Park Regis Jaipur, Simon Wan, MD & CEO, StayWell Hospitality Group, discussed his company's future plans for India, and the challenges he faces in the country.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

QWhat are your expansion plans?

We came in India in 2012. If you look at the world map and the economic growth, you will realise, India has an amazing potential. Also, India is a very important country in terms of tourism growth. India will become a major power economically, and it is just a matter of some time. So, we first came in 2012 to look at various hotel opportunities, visited many cities and talked to various hoteliers and hotel owners. During the first 18 months we have been lucky to sign six hotels and we continue doing that. We are going to open one more hotel in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad in October, then we are opening one more hotel in Goa in December and by the end of this year we will have five operating hotels. In the span of three years we have made a satisfied growth. Then in 2016 we will open the remaining five. We are very confident and by 2017 we will sign 25 hotels out of which 15 of them will be open that would represent a major mid-scale brand in the sense.

QWhat are the unique features of StayWell Hospitality Group?



“Most Indians don't prefer spending `10,000 to stay in a five-star hotel especially the younger lot. They will use mid-scale brand, as long as that brand bringing consistency, good service and good security.”

Simon Wan

MD & CEO, StayWell Hospitality Group

We are flexible to work with hotel owners to achieve maximum profitability with the best product standard.

QIn India, according to you, what is the future of mid-market hotels?

I think the future of mid-scale hotels in India is phenomenal. If we look at the growth in China, Indonesia, in the mid-market hotel segment, there are some very strong fundamental drivers that were not there 10 years ago. The number one driver remains the rising middle class.

This has happened due to economic growth, better education etc. Also, with the advent of economical airways middle class has got encouraged to travel more. When people travel they need accommodation and I would say most Indians don't prefer spending `10,000 to stay in a five-star hotel especially the younger lot. They will use mid-scale brand, as long as that brand is bringing consistency, good service and good security. So I see there is tremendous growth of mid-scale brand in India because of these underline drivers.

QAccording to you what challenges do you see especially in Indian hospitality industry?

The challenge is to bring our operating cost down and this will depend on how we will train our staff in multi-tasking.

QWhy did you choose Jaipur?

Jaipur is a well-known international city but in my view Jaipur is underselling itself for the last few years. Jaipur will soon be a very well-renowned tourist destination with all the international hotel brands coming here.

Settling in Well

→ StayWell is expected to sign 25 hotels by 2017

→ It is going to open one more hotel in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad in October, then we are opening one more hotel in Goa in December

Honing South America specialists

LATAM Airlines Group launched the new South America Specialist Advanced Programme. The presentation for the first module which features Peru and Chile, was recently held in Delhi for the travel agents. The workshop gave information about the itineraries and highlights of these two destinations.



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EVENT TALK

AUGUST 2015

NATIONAL

14-16	Aurangabad	IITE
17	Ahmedabad	Visit Britain B2B Roadshow
18-19	Mumbai	SATTE West
18-20	Surat	Travel and Tourism Fair
19	Mumbai	Visit Britain B2B Roadshow
21	Pune	Visit Britain B2B Roadshow
24	Mumbai	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
26	Bengaluru	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
27	Delhi	Medical & Wellness Tourism Summit
27	Delhi	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority Trade Dinner
28	Delhi	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
28-30	Mumbai	India International Travel Mart
31-Sep 1	Mumbai	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
31	Chennai	Tourism Queensland & Tourism Victoria Roadshow

SEPTEMBER 2015

INTERNATIONAL

2-4	Miami	La Cita
24-27	Tokyo	JATA
24-26	Kazakhstan	Astana Leisure

NATIONAL

1	Delhi	Tourism Queensland & Tourism Victoria Roadshow
1	Mumbai	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
2	Chennai	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
3-4	Ahmedabad	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
1-3	Jaipur	IBTM India
3-5	Gurgaon	India International Travel Mart
6-8	Bengaluru	PATA Travel Mart
7	Kolkata	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
7	Delhi	Atout France Networking
8	Delhi	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
8	Delhi	Atout France B2B Workshop
9	Bengaluru	Atout France B2B Workshop
9	Delhi	Visit Florida VIP Luncheon
9	Delhi	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
10	Mumbai	Atout France B2B Workshop
10	Mumbai	Vietnam Embassy B2B Roadshow
11-13	Ahmedabad	Travel & Tourism Fair
11	Lucknow	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
11	Mumbai	Atout France Sales calls
14	Chennai	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
16	Bengaluru	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
14-16	Mumbai	International Food Service India
16	Hyderabad	Hyderabad Fair
17	Mumbai	Scandinavian, Baltic and Nordic Countries Workshop
18	Delhi	Scandinavian, Baltic and Nordic Countries Workshop
18	Hyderabad	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
24-26	Mumbai	Travel & Tourism Fair
28-30	Mumbai	Maharashtra International Travel Mart

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

Dubai visa updates on mobile

Now, agents can get quick updates on the latest visa rules and processes with a new mobile App that VFS is set to launch. Vinay Malhotra, COO (South Asia & DVPC), VFS Global, tells **TRAVTALK** about this innovation that can ease the visa application process for agents.



TT BUREAU

Q Tell us how the new mobile App can benefit agents?

Moving on with the times, VFS Global will soon be introducing a mobile Application which will not only offer information with visa processing features, but will also enable customer feedback and tracking of documents. This App will be for Dubai Visa Processing Centre (DVPC). But VFS Global is in the process of planning mobile Apps for other client governments also. We are looking at launching it by September end or October beginning. The App will be available on iOS and Android for a range of devices to include phones, iPad and palmtops.

Q What are the recent developments at DVPC?

DVPC recently introduced a new range of visa services for all types of trav-

“This App will be for Dubai Visa Processing Centre (DVPC). But VFS Global is in the process of planning mobile Apps for other client governments also. We are looking at launching it by September end or October beginning.”



Vinay Malhotra
COO (South Asia & DVPC), VFS Global

ellers – from 96 hours to 90 days visa options. A significant number of Indians who travel internationally choose Dubai as their destination or a transit point. It is no surprise that many customers fly to UAE frequently, and therefore multiple-entry visas make travel more convenient. The 30-day multiple-entry visa is preferred by Emirates passengers who are stopping in the UAE on their outbound travels from India or on their

return from a more extensive itinerary. This category also suits passengers booked on cruise itineraries.

Q To what do you credit VFS' profitability?

VFS Global pioneered the concept of visa process outsourcing 14 years ago. It continues to develop the lifecycle of this service leading with new solutions and service offerings in this space. Continuous improvement means an

enhancement to the process or a service offering that provides solutions for the client. So, from developing a solution that enables remote document processing to delivering a complete online visa application process, we maintain a robust process to ensure development with the strictest levels of security. Our aim is to enhance the visa application process in general, and support our client governments' vision in the overall border management domain. We do this through technology-driven innovative solutions and through very high service levels.

Q How much investment has VFS made in India?

Currently in India, VFS Global works with 29 client governments and local government bodies through its 307 application centres across 19 cities. Elsewhere, VFS Global serves the Indian government in 10 countries with 40 application centres. ↘

Heritage Hotel Hampi opens doors

■ The management of Heritage Hotels recently unveiled their unique boutique properties in Hampi and Coorg to the travel fraternity in Delhi. Indian Historical Hospitality is marketing both the properties situated in Karnataka.

Sunirmol Ghosh,
Director, Heritage Resorts,

Sudesh Behal,
Director, Heritage Resorts, said, “The hotel was perceived about 15 years ago but because of some unavoidable reasons it couldn't come up but we are happy that finally we have come up with it and looking forward to get good clientele from international as well as



said, “We just launched a new beautiful resort in Hampi which is one of the few places in India where you talk history, walk history and live in History. The USP of the property is that it is close to nature but live with history. We already have good bookings and we expect more in the months of September and October.”

domestic market. The hotel covers nine acres of land with three different types of bungalows and 40 rooms with a nice spa and swimming pool.”

Alok Bhatt, Director (Sales & Marketing), Indian Historical Hospitality, said, “This property is very close to the ruins and is an eco friendly property.”

OBITUARY

E.R.C. Panicker passes away Founder of Panicker's Travels



E Ramachandra Panicker, Founder and Owner of Panicker's Travel, domestic package tour company based in New Delhi, passed away on July 27, 2015 at the Medical College Hospital after prolonged illness. He was 86. The funeral was held at Ambalappuzha in Alappuzha, Kerala. Panicker is survived by wife Lakshmikutty Amma, son Gopala Krishnan, daughter Vimala Lakshmi, daughter-in-law Devi Priya and son-in-law P Balakrishnan.

Panicker came to Delhi from Amabalappuzha and established Panicker's Travels 50 years ago. Soon, Panicker's Travels became the prime choice for Keralites who came to Delhi as tourists. Panicker started the tour operating business on a small scale. He hired a bus and ran weekly tour service from Delhi to Agra. Over the years, his business blossomed and Panicker's Travels became the leading player in tour operator industry.

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InterContinental Hotels Group

New Delhi

The InterContinental Group has ascribed the role of Area General Manager (North) to **Greesh Bindra**. Of the 35 years he has dedicated to the hospitality industry, Bindra served 11 years as General Manager of different hotels. He is the current General Manager at Crowne Plaza Greater Noida. He brings with him vast experience in Food & Beverage, Sales, Marketing, Rooms Division, Resident Manager in Hotels and 10 years of experience in tours and adventure.



Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort

Goa

AccorHotels announces the appointment of **Jayakrishnan Sudhakaran** as the new Director of Sales and Marketing for Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort. In his role, Sudhakaran will be responsible for leading and further improving all aspects of the sales and marketing communications, promoting brand strategies and providing the best of Grand Mercure hospitality experience to the guests. He has been in the hospitality industry for over 12 years. Prior to this Sudhakaran was the Director of Sales at Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa where he was employed for four years.



Four Seasons Hotel

Mumbai

Vikram Reddy has been appointed as General Manager of the Four Seasons Hotel, Mumbai. A Four Seasons veteran, Reddy worked as General Manager of the Four Seasons, Jakarta, over the past 11 years. A native of Hyderabad, he has not one but two undergraduate degrees, the first in Accounting and Economics from the Osmania University in Hyderabad, and the second in Business Administration from the California State University in Long Beach. A fitness enthusiast who starts his day with an intense hour at the gym, Vikram is also keen on travelling around India and exploring the motherland with his wife.



India Tourism Development Corporation

New Delhi

ITDC has appointed **Piyush Tiwari** as its Director of Commercial and Marketing. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and master's degree in Sociology. In a career spanning 28 years, Tiwari has extensive experience in steel industry in managing Profit Centre Operations, Marketing and Business Development and formulating strategies for growth with an overall business perspective. He was previously Regional Manager (North) and Dy. GM, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam (RINL), the corporate entity of Vishakhapatnam steel plant.



Kempinski Ambience Hotel

New Delhi

Neelabh Chugh has been appointed as Director Food and Beverage at the Kempinski Ambience Hotel. Chugh has more than 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry with some of the leading Indian and International brands. In his new role, Chugh will be responsible for running day to day operations of the hotel, developing procedures and service standards and re-positioning the food and beverage outlets of the hotel. Prior to joining Kempinski, he was associated with Double Tree by Hilton, Gurgaon, as a Director F&B. His previous stints include Radisson Blu, The Lalit Ashok Hyatt Regency and Taj Palace.



Hungry Bags

New Delhi

Hungrybags.com has appointed **Hariom Sharma** as Director of Sales and Marketing to head its B2B and Cruise divisions. A science graduate, Sharma has done his post graduation in Travel & Tourism Industry Management and also in Business Management. With more than 12 years of experience in strategic planning, managing sales and marketing operations and relationship management, he was one of the key players in managing cruise business for leading cruiselines such as Carnival Cruises, MSC Cruises and Costa Cruise in India.



Mayfair Hotel & Resorts

Bhubaneswar

Bjorn Noel DeNiese, in addition to being Director at Mayfair Spa Resort & Casino, has now been given additional charge as Vice President Sales & Marketing for Mayfair Hotels & Resorts, the parent company. He will also be setting up the revenue management department for the group based at the Corporate Office at Bhubaneswar.



Crowne Plaza

Jaipur

Neeraj Maharshi has been appointed Director of Sales and Marketing at Crowne Plaza Jaipur. He brings with him indepth knowledge of the Leisure, Corporate and MICE segments and has a total experience of 18 years with organisations like the Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces and Marriott India. He was heading the leisure segment for the Taj Hotels in Delhi and was later responsible for the successful launch of the two flagship hotels of Marriott in India - the Jaipur Marriott and the JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity. He is an MA in Economics from the University of Rajasthan.



Ashwani Goela joins Crowne Plaza Jaipur as General Manager in the soon to be commissioned hotel. Goela comes to Crowne Plaza from Crowne Plaza Okhla, where he was working as an Executive Assistant Manager. Prior to this, he has served in hotels like Crowne Plaza Gurgaon, Radisson Delhi, The Imperial and Intercontinental The Grand. He is a Hotel Management graduate and has done his Bachelors in Business Administration from Newport University California.



TALKING PEOPLE

Wolfgang Will, Director, Lufthansa Passenger Airlines, South Asia, came to India last year and is in love with the country. "I am well acquainted with the place now. I have been fascinated by yoga here. However, it is my wife who follows it persistently. I am still a traditional jogger," he says.



"I am a vegetarian and the best part about India is that there is plethora of food options. The only being that eats meat, and that too occasionally, is our dog. His name is Nacho. He is a black Labrador from Germany and he too is a frequent traveller. Currently, Nacho has gone back to Germany with his mom, my wife," Will adds.

Amit Aggarwal, Director, Wish Bone India, believes that the friends he makes at work are his best companions. "I believe in continuous networking with my clients and they are the best friends that



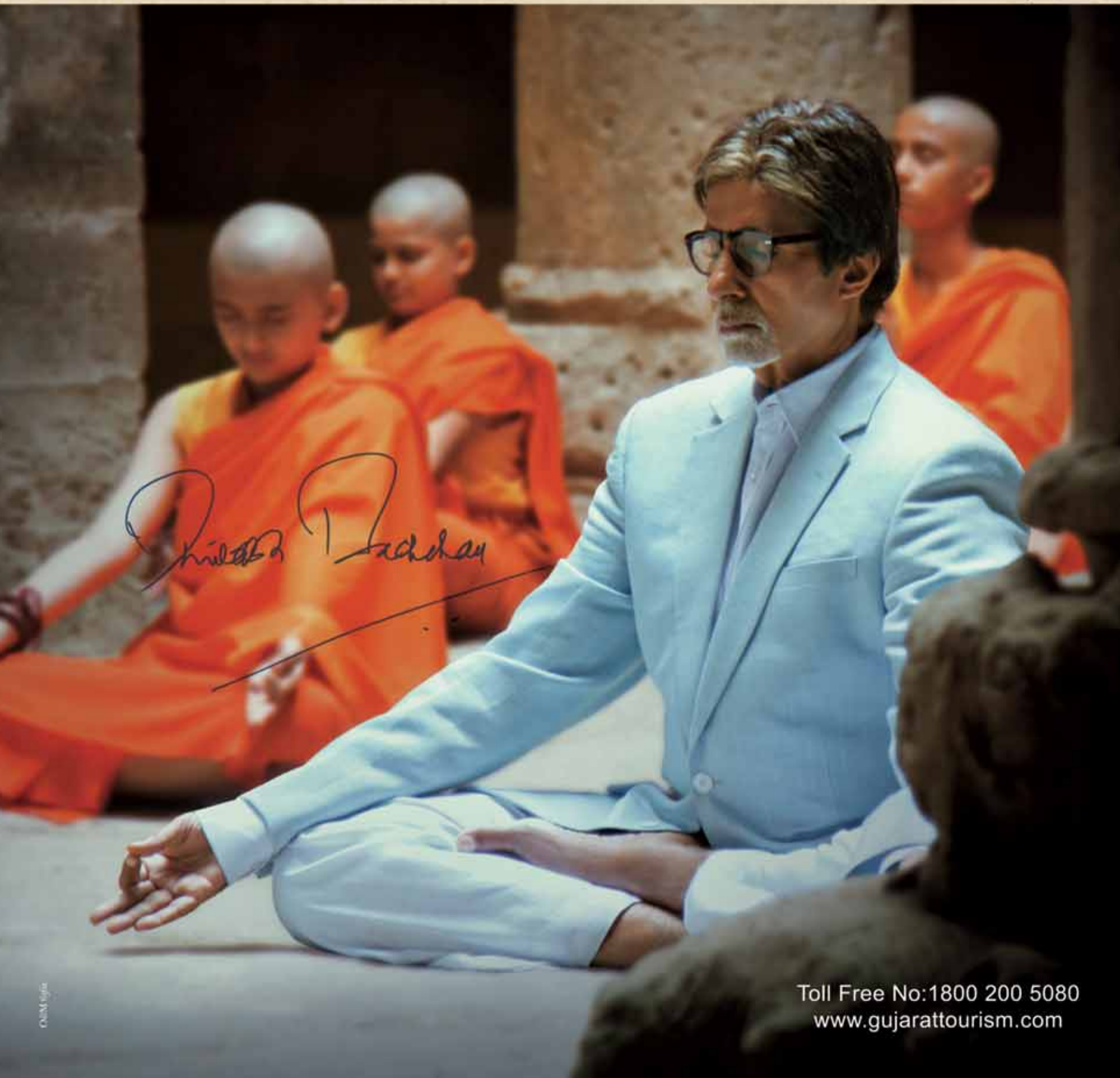
I have now. Whenever I am in a different city, I try meeting up with my clients over drinks and food," he says. Aggarwal is a not a movie buff and feels there is much more to life than watching films. To unwind, the best therapy for Aggarwal is to relax on the pristine beaches of Goa.

Abhay Pathak, General Manager (Commercial) Northern India, Air India, says that getting free time itself is a big challenge and achievement but when he gets that, he loves to travel and explore most of the countries in the world. Pathak loves to look closely into the culture, trends and lifestyle of people around the globe.



Pathak adds that besides travelling, he also makes sure that he takes out time for some exercise and yoga. When asked about his food habits, Pathak smiles and says that he is a pure vegetarian and prefers to stick to salads mostly.

I heard that within the caves of Uparkot I would find inner peace. When I went there I saw exquisitely carved pillars. I saw ornate sculptures. I saw beautiful structures built in rock. Then I closed my eyes. Only to see so much more.



Shilpa Datta

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Upping the ante for India

Part of the \$7 billion ETA/ASCON/AI Ghurair conglomerate based in Dubai, ANTA is betting big on evolved travellers from India.



MEGHA PAUL FROM DUBAI

Middle East's leading travel management company, Ajman National Travel Agency (ANTA) is aiming to be among the top five DMCs in India by focusing on corporate, MICE and leisure travel over the next five years. Established in 1976 and headquartered in Dubai for over two decades, ANTA has been offering extraordinary itineraries for discerning travellers; for the UAE and Oman.

Talking about the company's performance in India, **Kumar Jagadeesan**, General Manager, UAE & Oman, ANTA Travel Group, stated, "Dubai is spending a lot on promoting itself as an international destination. We want to cash in on this trend. Thus, it is obvious the India market becomes vital. Not only are the Indian outbound travellers willing to spend more but the holiday itself is veering towards evolved travel with a focus on stays based on their sophisticated tastes and interests. Thus, we drive about 45-50 per cent of our business from this country. We started concentrating on India about 10 years ago. And, it has grown significantly in the last seven years." Going forward, the company intends to further explore the Indian market, he added. "ANTA currently is looking at garnering more business from the northern and western market. Going forward, it will tap the potential from the south and east markets as well," he revealed.

At the luxury end, ultra high-net worth travellers from India continue to find Dubai an attractive destination, especially due to its shopping malls, tax-free incentives and its connectivity to Europe. Dubai is gaining a reputation for being an attractive wedding destination as it offers everything for the Indian diaspora, he pointed out.



"Not only are the Indian travellers willing to spend more but the holiday itself is veering towards evolved travel with a focus on stays based on tastes and interests."

Kumar Jagadeesan
General Manager
UAE & Oman ANTA Travel Group

Regarding the USP of ANTA, he revealed, "Our expertise lies in sourcing, supplying, distributing and promoting the best in travel products in Dubai making them easily accessible. We put an extra effort to understand why FITs are coming on holidays. There is always a reason to travel for leisure. We ask the FIT groups that one extra question. We give them the same price but book an extra dinner around that one special day. Thus, our services are our differentiator." FIT business has been the growth driver from India for ANTA. The group is now looking at tapping more corporate and MICE travellers into Dubai, he added.

According to **Mohammad Fareesuddin**, Manager-Leisure, ANTA, the company is a part of the \$7 billion ETA/ASCON/AI Ghurair conglomerate based in Dubai. ANTA is also the GSA of major online carriers. "As we are also in the airline business, we are able to get better deals by being in the volume game. We have also realised that every industry needs a cutting-edge and cost-effective marketing tool and therefore, vacation and travel incentives is one of the most powerful methods of attracting business. We help our clients in India to achieve the same. The company is helping outbound traveller from India to achieve organi-

sational goals with customised solutions for corporate travel, leisure holidays, incentive travel, conference,



Mohammad Fareesuddin
Manager-Leisure
ANTA

As we are also in the airline business, we are able to get better deals. We help outbound traveller from India to achieve organisational goals with customised solutions

car hire, and cruise holidays, etc," Fareesuddin affirmed. Bollywood has also enhanced the visibility of Dubai with blockbusters being filmed in Dubai and that association elevates relevance, he opined.

To grow its footprints and increase the brand presence in India, the group has also recently appointed Representation World as its representation company in India. **Vineet Gopal**, India Head, ANTA and Director, Representation World said, "ANTA is not new to the Indian market. We are aggressively looking at promoting the DMC in India now. India is our second largest market after GCC. Our key role will be to increase the number of outbound travellers to Dubai. We also offer extremely competitive rates on hotel pricing. This is another key



Vineet Gopal
India Head
ANTA

Our key role will be to increase the number of outbound travellers to Dubai. We also offer extremely competitive rates on hotel pricing

USPs of the group that will drive business from our country as India is also a price-sensitive market. The group recently hosted specialised MICE agents in Dubai to showcase the plethora of offerings in Dubai."

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