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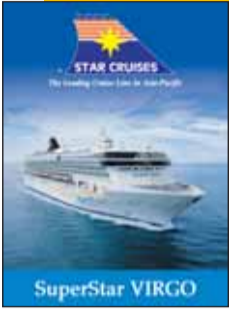
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NON-STOP DELHI - TORONTO

**AIR CANADA**

## NE connectivity on MOT radar

To give inbound tourism a fillip, the Ministry of Tourism is upgrading connectivity to Northeastern states and plans the development of Guwahati as a heli hub.

KANCHAN NATH AND AHANA GURUNG



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

In an attempt to tap the tourism potential of Northeast India, the Ministry of Tourism has identified connectivity as one of the chief shortcomings in the region. Plans to develop this aspect have already been taken into account and major funds to refurbish crucial airports have been authorised.

**Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge)

and Minister of State for Civil Aviation, says, "The Government is looking at improving connectivity in the Northeast region. For this purpose, funds of ₹ 1,200 crore have been sanctioned for the revamp of Guwahati airport. With the help of Pawan Hans services, Guwahati will also serve as a heli hub – these services have commenced more than two months ago."

He further states that funds worth ₹ 484 crore for the

upgrade of Agartala Airport and ₹ 90 crore for Tezu Airport in Arunachal Pradesh have been approved.

Furthermore, three additional projects are being worked on in Majuli and Kamakhya in Assam, and Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. Funds to the tune of ₹ 250 crore have also been sanctioned for projects under the Swadesh Darshan (Northeast Circuit) and PRASAD scheme, he said.

## Agents benefit from medical tourism

Headed by Tourism Minister Dr. Mahesh Sharma, the Medical and Wellness Tourism Board will play an important role in streamlining medical tourism in India.

TT BUREAU

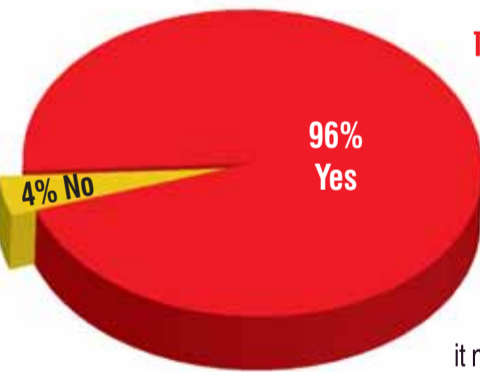
**Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, says, "The formation of this board will have a symbiotic advantage of private and government sector.



**Vinod Zutshi**  
 Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

ators in the country. **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, says, "The National Medical Tourism and Wellness board will provide marketing development assistance to travel agents and tour operators who are keen on promoting medical and wellness tourism. A total of four trips a year have been allotted. They can also avail monetary aid of up to ₹ 2.5 lakh for the same purpose."

## Industry wants free Wi-Fi in hotels



TRAVTALK recently conducted a poll asking

the industry if all hotels in India should offer free Wi-Fi in the room.

Unanimously the industry feels that free Wi-Fi in hotel rooms is now the need

of the hour. 96 per cent of the industry voted for free Wi-Fi while four per cent had reservations due to security concerns in India. Hotels need to look at this demand seriously and now

it might be time to consider Wi-Fi as a necessity and not a luxury that guests need to pay for.



As medical tourism in India is mainly driven by the private sector, the board will act as facilitator. Today we see no consolidation of efforts. Every hospital is trying their best to meet their own objective but the overall objective of Destination India has to be brought to focus, which is also one of the responsibilities of the board."

The board also assures additional benefits to tour oper-

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# Vkonect opens the world of luxury

Vkonect Luxury, India's first exclusive events platform focused on business interaction for luxury, was held from October 10-11, at The Westin, Gurgaon.

TT BUREAU

As luxury continuously gains new meaning and momentum in the country, stalwarts of the industry have recognised and acknowledged its importance in the outbound market. For the same reason, Gurgaon recently hosted the second edition of Vkonect Luxury at The Westin, Gurgaon, where 25 India travel, luxury and hospitality companies participated in the premium B2B meetings platform. At the two-day event, networking sessions were held between the buyers and exhibitors, and exclusive business sessions allowed participants to acquire valuable information pertaining to Indian outbound travel.

Speaking at the event, **Punam Singh**, Promoter and Director, Vkonect Events, says, "Vkonect is a thought process, honed over years after attend-



ing industry events globally. Leisure, MICE, Luxury, Weddings, Wellness and Spa Tourism came in all forms but Luxury is the most inclusive, demanding and profitable. Our main objective was to keep our buyers and exhibitors happy and satisfied with the outcome of the event. So far we have received excellent feedback," she comments. She also expresses that many of the buyers were curious about Sports, Shopping and Spa Tourism and that Vkonect would look into these aspects. Additionally,

**Vineet Gopal**, Director, Vkonect Events, says, "This year, the response was phenomenal. We have received full attendance and all the participants were very enthusiastic." Singh further elaborates on the upcoming Vkonect event. "The next in line is Vkonect Weddings which is scheduled for 2016. We haven't fixed a date yet but it will most likely be held during late March or April 2016," she says.

The industry partners who participated in the event are Tourism Boards of

Canada, Philippines, Germany, Jordan, Reunion Island, Munich, Scandinavia, and Tirol – Austria. Other partners include — Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Meritus Hotels & Resorts, FRHI Hotels & Resorts India Pvt Ltd, St. Regis (Starwood Hotels), Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, Relais & Chateaux Soneva Resorts, Sahara Star & Aamby Valley City, Palazzo Versace, Fanatic Sports, VIA Rail Canada, Kairali Resorts and Air Canada.

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# TRAVELTALK

## VIEWPOINT

### Tourism tops India's priority list

It is evident that tourism occupies pride of place in the country's priority list. It is a constantly debated issue, whether talking about night tourism in India, which would provide safety in the popular areas of various metro cities, or medical and wellness tourism having a huge potential in India, or seeing the government's focus on enhancing the e-Tourist Visa facility. At present this facility is available for citizens of 113 countries arriving at 16 airports in India.

201,705 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visas from January-September as compared to 19,290 during the same period last year, registering a growth of 945.6 per cent. This is excellent news for the country.

The government announced the setting up of a Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board, which will consist of the Union Tourism Minister as the Chairperson and members of related government departments. It would also have experts from the tourism and hospitality sector and specialists from the medical, wellness and yoga fields. This board will support travel agents and tour operators with marketing development assistance and monetary aid.

Delhi, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, in fact almost all Indian states have been pushing for night tourism to not only increase the inflow of more tourists but also to improve safety in popular areas. Night landings in many areas are now being allowed, like the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

MICE has also been accepted as a big opportunity which has been undercapitalised until now.

Winter tourism needs to be promoted in the Himalayas with ski slopes and resorts already developed in Gulmarg and Manali, both boasting world-standard hotels. The Kerala government is promoting the state for its backwater experiences and the beauty of its green expanses, other than the ayurveda it is famous for, which is the prime focus for wellness tourism.

If the government and the industry together stay focused, we should be able to achieve the target set for us of being 1% of 1.8 billion international tourists by 2030.

# 15% luxury tax bane for Delhi?

Luxury tax is a debatable subject for the tourism industry. Delhi, after a rise from 10% to 15%, has the second highest luxury tax in the country.



TT BUREAU

The variation in levying of luxury tax has become a debatable subject for the Indian travel and tourism industry. Presently, the percentage of luxury tax varies vastly across the different states, with some of them not levying it at all. As a result, the range of luxury tax within the country ranges from zero per cent to 20 per cent. Another challenge is that the basis for the computation of the tax also varies. In some Indian states, the tax is levied on the published tariff, while in the case of others it is on the actual tariff. Luxury tax is only one of the taxes charged to a hotel guest in India, and overall, the total tax applicable may vary from 18 per cent to 25 per cent across different states.

**Luv Malhotra**, President, HRANI & Vice President, FHRAI, says, "The proposed hike in luxury tax by the Delhi Government came as a major shock to the travel and tourism industry. A change to tax on Actual at the same rate (10 per cent) but were stunned to hear that it has been hiked to 15 per cent on Published Tariff. Over the past few years there has been rapid growth in hotels around Delhi which have taken

### State-wise Luxury Tax on Hotels

States	Luxury Tax	Calculated On	Effective Tax Rate	Rank 2015
Arunachal Pradesh	0.0%	-	0.0%	1
Jammu & Kashmir	0.0%	-	0.0%	1
Manipur	0.0%	-	0.0%	1
Mizoram	0.0%	-	0.0%	1
Nagaland	0.0%	-	0.0%	1
Odisha	0.0%	-	0.0%	1
Sikkim	0.0%	-	0.0%	1
Uttar Pradesh	5.0%	Actual Tariff	5.0%	8
Andhra Pradesh	5.0%	Published Tariff	7.0%	9
Telangana	5.0%	Published Tariff	7.0%	9
Gujarat	6.0%	Published Tariff	8.0%	11
Punjab	8.0%	Actual Tariff	8.0%	11
Uttarakhand	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	13
Bihar	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	13
Haryana	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	13
Madhya Pradesh	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	13
Maharashtra	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	13
Rajasthan	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	13
West Bengal	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	13
Goa	12.0%	Actual Tariff	12.0%	20
Karnataka	12.0%	Actual Tariff	12.0%	20
Assam	12.0%	Actual Tariff	12.0%	20
Kerala	12.5%	Actual Tariff	12.5%	23
Jharkhand	12.5%	Actual Tariff	12.5%	23
Chhatisgarh	10.0%	Published Tariff	13.0%	25
Himachal Pradesh	10.0%	Published Tariff	13.0%	25
Tripura	15.0%	Actual Tariff	15.0%	27
Tamil Nadu	12.5%	Published Tariff	17.0%	28
Delhi	15.0%	Published Tariff	20.0%	29
Meghalaya	20.0%	Actual Tariff	20.0%	29

Source: The State Ranking Survey, compiled by HVS in association with the World Travel & Tourism Council, India Initiative (WTTCL)

"If one looks at the statistics for the last 10 years one can see most of the newer hotels (except for the ones at DIAL) have come up in Gurgaon, Noida, Greater Noida Ghaziabad. The occupancies of these properties have also been in steady increase over the last few years (except for the last couple due to a slowdown in the economy) and Delhi state has been the biggest loser."



**Luv Malhotra**  
President, HRANI & Vice President, FHRAI

advantage of the tax structure in Delhi and now we expect more and more of business to shift there. If one looks at the statistics for the last 10 years one can see most of the newer hotels (except for the ones at DIAL) have come up in Gurgaon, Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad. The occupancies of these proper-

ties have also been in steady increase over the last few years (except for the last couple due to a slowdown in the economy) and Delhi state has been the biggest loser. We expect with this decision of AAP Government the trend to continue. I fear that long term investments will continue to move to other cities."

Since WTTCL's previous study, Tripura has slipped 14 places as a result of increasing its luxury tax from 10 per cent to 15 per cent. Similarly, Uttarakhand has moved down five places as a result of escalating its luxury tax from 5 per cent to 10 per cent. Himachal Pradesh, meanwhile, has dropped significantly in rank-

ings owing to levying the luxury tax on Published Tariff now, as compared to Actual Tariff in the past. Moreover, Delhi, having recently increased its luxury tax from 10 per cent to 15 per cent, has moved down three places from the last survey. With this change, its luxury tax is among the highest in the country. Resultantly, by default, Goa, Karnataka, Assam, Kerala, Jharkhand, and Chhatisgarh have witnessed a favourable transition in rankings by one place each. States such as Delhi, Kerala, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan can be seen capitalising on luxury tax. On the other hand, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim are consistent in terms of levying no luxury tax on hotel rooms.



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# FTAs in Haryana cross 300,000

The 30<sup>th</sup> edition of the Surajkund International Crafts Mela, to be held from February 1-15, 2016 is one of the several initiatives by Haryana Tourism to boost inbound tourism. Dr. Sumita Misra, Principal Secretary, Haryana Tourism, discusses developments to promote and highlight Haryana's potential as a major tourism hub.



AHANA GURUNG

## Q How many domestic and international visitors did Haryana receive in 2014-2015?

In 2014-2015, Haryana has had more than 75 lakh domestic visitors and over 3 lakh foreigners visiting the state. There has been a steady growth rate in comparison to previous years. In 2012-13, over 62 lakh domestic tourists and more than 2 lakh foreigners visited the state and in 2013-

In 2015, the highest ever footfall of 12 lakh visitors, including a record number of 1.60 lakh foreigners, was recorded during the Mela fortnight. The participation of 20 countries in the Mela 2015 has established it as a truly international event. We are expecting about five to six new countries that will be exhibiting best of their art, craft and cultural performances during the Mela 2016.

## Q Haryana Tourism also plans to develop tourist hotspots in a bid to promote tourism in the state. Could you please shed more light on the same?

Haryana Tourism is planning to develop Kurukshetra, which falls under the Krishna circuit, as a mega tourism destination under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of

Tourism. To improve tourism infrastructure, major investments will be made in places such as Jyotisar, Brahma Sarovar, Sannhit Sarovar, Amin and Narkatari in Kurukshetra district and Salwan in Karnal district.

Fort, restoration of Chatta Bal Mukand and Takhat Baoli in Narnaul and revitalisation of Bada Talab and Solah Rashi Sarovar in Rewari.

Haryana Tourism has also introduced the concept of Farm Tourism in the country, in partnership with 14 farm owners in Haryana. We offer special holiday packages in these chosen farms in Haryana and around Delhi.

The state has plans to develop the Mahendergarh Fort as a cultural hub while simultaneously concentrating on the conservation of Madhogarh



Dr. Sumita Misra  
Principal Secretary, Haryana Tourism

To improve tourism infrastructure, major investments will be made in places such as Jyotisar, Brahma Sarovar, Sannhit Sarovar, Amin and Narkatari in Kurukshetra district and Salwan in Karnal district

14, more than 64 lakh domestic tourists and about 2.4 lakh foreigners paid a visit to the state.

## Q What aspects can visitors look forward to at the Surajkund International Crafts Mela 2016?

The upcoming Mela will showcase the heritage crafts of India in a much bigger way and make an effort to reach out to the craftspersons from far flung areas of the country. Existing infrastructure will be given a facelift and new facilities for convenience of visitors and craftspersons will be added. More safety related steps would be undertaken with special emphasis on disaster management. High-tech CCTV cameras, gas banks and superior fire-fighting equipment will also be installed.

## Q How many participants and visitors do you anticipate?

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## Tourism Minister, Philippines to inaugurate PATA New Frontiers Forum

■ The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has announced that **Ramon R. Jimenez, Jr.**, Secretary of the

Again (VPA) 2016—which is going to be the most massive retail-focused effort the Philippines has ever made. Destination marketing is a daunting task as it involves selling an experience, both tangible and intangible. The Philippines prides itself of having a unique biodiversity, rich natural resources, and wide variety of product offerings for tourists. But most of all, we have the Filipino people—the country's most important asset—to thank for, who serve as the PDOT's partners in building our brand and fulfilling the promise of a more fun Philippines," Tourism Secretary



**Ramon R. Jimenez, Jr.**  
Secretary, Philippine Department of Tourism

Philippine Department of Tourism (PDOT), will deliver the opening address during the PATA New Tourism Frontiers Forum 2015 at the Oriental Hotel in Legazpi, Albay, Philippines from November 25-27. The event is being hosted by the Provincial Government of Albay in partnership with The Department of Tourism, Philippines. Secretary Jimenez, who is responsible for the country's tourism campaign, 'It's More Fun in the Philippines', will speak on the 'Successful Destination Marketing Campaign – Trend in this digital economy'. "This forum is timely and relevant as we step up our marketing efforts for our destination-based campaign and as we launch Visit the Philippines



Jimenez said. The Forum will explore various topics including Climate Change Mitigation and the Role of Tourism, Marine Tourism & the Implications for Water-Reliant Operations, Global Adventure Travel Trends, ASEAN for Adventure: Where Boundaries are Endless, Crisis Management & Risk Reduction for New Destinations, and the Power of Ecotourism: Best Practices & Models for Implementation.

# Maha tourism policy in January

Upbeat after the first edition of Maharashtra International Travel Mart (MITM), Valsa Nair-Singh, Principal Secretary (Tourism & Culture), Maharashtra, discusses the state's new tourism policy which will be out on Jan 1, 2016.



HAZEL JAIN

### Q What has Maharashtra planned after MITM 2015?

We have declared 2017 as 'Visit Maharashtra Year' and are now firming up a good marketing strategy for that. We want to showcase little-known places in Maharashtra. Simultaneously, we will also work on upgrading infrastructure.

### Q There are talks of having an India Travel Mart in Mumbai. Can you elaborate?

We currently have separate marts for Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, J&K and Uttar Pradesh so we already have a captive audience in terms of buyers that come to India for these. Let's have something as big as WTM & ITB, and for something as huge, Mumbai would be the most ideal location. MITM meanwhile can grow in stature. I have requested **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State for Culture, Tourism (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, to keep Mumbai as the location for a possible India Travel Mart.

### Q Can you give us an update on the new tourism policy?

The draft of the new tourism policy is in the public domain right now for comments and suggestions by stakeholders. The comments we receive will then be



“ I have requested our honourable minister to give an 'infrastructure' status to the state's tourism industry in the new tourism policy.”

**Valsa Nair-Singh**  
Principal Secretary  
Tourism & Culture, Maharashtra

taken up for discussion to see which ones should be incorporated. The final tourism policy should be in place mostly by January 1, 2016.

I have requested the minister to give an 'infrastructure' status to the state's tourism industry in the new tourism policy. The new policy will also offer incentives for private investments in tourism – not only in hotels but convention centres, water parks, etc.

### Q Does the state plan to work with other neighbouring countries?

We want to have joint itineraries with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal and Singapore. It could be an itinerary shared by Maharashtra with other states – Goa,

Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan – or they could combine Mumbai with Sri Lanka because it is not every day that a long-haul traveller comes to this part of continent. We have just started exploring this idea.

### Q What are your plans for international markets?

We will be launching a sustained marketing exercise strategically targeting major source markets. We are participating in WTM London and ITB Berlin. We will also try and pitch for ATM Dubai this year. Apart from that, we will be doing roadshows in select markets. We just did one in Osaka and Tokyo this September. We will also go in for a well-thought out electronic media campaign in the US, Western Europe and the Far East markets.

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# Mumbai becomes AI's second hub

Having moved its entire operations to Mumbai's international airport from October 1 despite higher rentals, Air India has now made Mumbai its secondary hub in the region.



HAZEL JAIN

Just a couple of months into the job, 'Turnaround man' **Ashwani Lohani**, CMD, Air India, likes the challenge he has decided to take up. "It's a good job. All of us know what needs to be done," he says.


To start with, he is looking at improving the OTP (on-time performance). "It is fairly decent right now at about 85-90 but it has to be much higher. We also want to improve passenger convenience, better information systems, and improving utilisation. We are also looking at new routes and have looked at a new route recently but it's a complicated exercise and it's too early to reveal it," he says, adding, "The work culture also has to improve, but I don't think interference from the government is an issue. There are definite plans to improve and upgrade the products."

A total of 63 Air India flights have been shifted to Mumbai's Terminal 2 (T2) – 11 international and 52 domestic. This integration will not only help the national carrier offer



ease of transfer to its passengers, but will also be a big thing for Mumbai.

Star Alliance has already booked 1,000 flights per week. **Mark Schwab**, CEO, Star Alliance, says, "There are 11 Star Alliance carriers operating into Mumbai and this integration gives them an opportunity as well to move their passengers seamlessly from T2 on

the Air India network. It also allows this airport and the city to compete more effectively with other airports and other hubs in the region. It is just a matter of time when we will see not only more service, bigger airplanes but much larger number of connections happening through Mumbai." Air India recently celebrated the first anniversary of its membership with Star Alliance. 


## Selling point for agents

"The travel trade was very eager to have an integrated terminal in Mumbai for Air India flights. It will now become very easy for them to sell Air India. We engage with the travel agents 24x7. We have our sales team. I every city in India and wherever we operate internationally. We are the first movers as far as integrated ops for domestic and international is concerned. So the travel trade is very upbeat."

**Pankaj Srivastava**

Director (Commercial & Board Member), Air India

## New Heights

 The first domestic flight departing from T2 was AI 627 (Mumbai to Nagpur) while the first domestic flight to land here was AI 695 (Hyderabad to Mumbai)

 Air India's longest non-stop flight from New Delhi to San Francisco starting from December 2, 2015 three times a week will be on 777-200LR, with seat capacity of 238 (First: 8, Business: 35, Economy: 195)



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# WTTCL & HVS felicitate state performers

Analysing the state-wise potential of travel and tourism in the country, the fourth edition of India State Ranking Survey, conducted by the World Travel & Tourism Council India Initiative (WTTCL) and HVS, was announced at The Oberoi New Delhi. An awards ceremony shortly followed to honour the best-performing states after which the esteemed guests socialised and made merry over cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.





# Golfing more fun in India

Riding on the success of the first edition of FICCI Golf Tourism Summit 2014, the Ministry of Tourism and IGTA is organising the second edition from October 26-27, 2015, at The Lalit, New Delhi and ITC Grand Bharat, Manesar.



**TT BUREAU**

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Government of India, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and India Golf Tourism Association (IGTA) are jointly organising the second edition of the FICCI Golf Tourism Summit (FGTS) from October 26 - 27, 2015 at The Lalit, New Delhi and ITC Grand Bharat, Manesar.

The Summit would have limited number of table tops at a strategic location for major partners. A table top will have one set of B2B meetings for two days. Each set would have 20 meetings, each of 15 minutes duration. All B2B meetings would be pre-scheduled and structured and will be at the table top of the registered Indian sellers.

The highlights of this year's summit are a platform led by MOT and IGTA, pioneering exclusive focus on inbound Golf Tourism, new set of foreign buyers who will be attending the second edition of the summit.

There will be seven hours of structured, pre-scheduled B2B meetings in two days between 20 hosted hand-picked leading foreign tour operators from across the world who specialise in Golf Tourism with the stakeholders from India, besides the interactive conclave pondering over critical issues on the first half of the first day.

A game of golf would be organised by IGTA on October 27 to bring in the cheer and

refreshment post hectic business deliberations of the two preceding days.

IGTA would organise Fam trips to golf courses for the hosted leading foreign tour operators from across the world who would come for the

summit. This will offer a great opportunity to the willing golf courses in the country for onsite marketing of their facilities to their target market.

Entry during B2B hours is restricted to preregistered buyers and sellers only.

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The Summit would have limited number of table tops at a strategic location for major partners

All B2B meetings would be pre-scheduled and structured and will be at the table top of the registered Indian sellers

There will be seven hours of structured, pre-scheduled B2B meetings in two days between 20 hosted hand-picked leading foreign tour operators



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# Kerala backwaters at ITB

Kerala Tourism attributes its achievements to the private sectors in the state especially the tour operators and hoteliers, and charts out its plans for ITB Asia.



SAMAPTI DAS

At ITB Asia, which is regarded as one of the biggest travel and tourism B2B fairs in Asia, Kerala Tourism has taken a 27 sq metre stand which is based on the theme of 'Backwaters of Kerala'.

Four co-exhibitors will also participate in the event along with Kerala Tourism," says **P. I. Sheik Pareeth**, Director- Kerala Tourism. "The demand for short-haul travel is encouraging from the Asian countries. We hope to leverage it for our benefit," he adds.

Kerala bagged the largest number of honours at the 2013-14 National Tourism Awards distributed by President Pranab Mukherjee last month.

**AP Anilkumar**, Minister for Tourism, Kerala Government, received the Awards. He says, "The growth of Kerala Tourism is very high. Kerala is the fastest growing tourism destination in the



**G Kamala Vardhana Rao**  
Tourism Secretary  
Govt of Kerala

world. This is mainly because of the private industry especially the tour operators and hoteliers."

Anilkumar informs that Kerala has submitted to the centre a multi-project plan worth ` 568 crore that aims to boost the state's tourism profile.

**G Kamala Vardhana Rao**, Tourism Secretary, Govt of Kerala, says that the establishment has been consistently striving to position the state as a global destination with a

focus on sustaining and preserving the land's nature, culture and tradition. He adds, "The tourism industry collectively in Kerala is doing well. The tour operators and the hoteliers are coming together to contribute to the growth of tourism in the state. The agents are helpful as they enthusiastically participate in international as well as domestic roadshows."

Rao talks about their major initiative, Blog Express and informs that as a part of the promotional campaign they are focusing on tapping unexplored destinations like China, Japan and other Far East countries.

### New Avenues

For its Blog Express, Kerala Tourism is focusing on destinations like China, Japan and other Far East countries

# Next MICE stop: Istanbul

The 3<sup>rd</sup> ACE of MICE Exhibition, scheduled to be held from March 16-18, 2016, in Istanbul will give Indian MICE sector a chance to meet with reputed hosted buyers.



SHIVANI KAUL

Organised for the second time this year, the ACE of MICE Exhibition is a leading regional event for the meetings, incentives, conferences, events and business travel industry.

The event gathered 11,687 industry professionals with over 269 exhibiting companies from 25 countries and 656 high-level hosted buyers from associations, agencies and corporate companies. ACE of MICE Exhibition 2015 also exhibited colorful panels and held various conferences for three days which hosted 70 expert speakers.

The third edition of ACE of MICE Exhibition will take place at Istanbul Congress Center (ICC) and Lutfi Kirdar Congress Center on March 16-18, 2016.

At the three-day show, participants will be able to



**Beyza Aksit**  
Exhibition Director  
ACE of MICE Exhibition

have pre-scheduled B2B meetings with local and international hosted buyers, participate in seminars, networking parties and ACE of MICE Awards Ceremony on March 17, 2016 which is gathering more than 2,500 MICE professionals from all local industry stakeholders and choosing the best of the year.

**Beyza Aksit**, Exhibition Director, ACE of MICE Exhibition, says, "India is obviously an important MICE destination for Turkey not only with its wide surface

but also with its colorful culture and traditions which make this destination more attractive.

"We are also aware that Turkish market is very important for Indians especially for wedding planners as well. Recently Turkish and Indian tourism professionals came together in India which means the relationship between these two countries will keep on improving.

"We believe this meeting is also going to affect MICE activities as well as leisure tourism. We had many hosted buyers and visitors from India at the last editions of AME and we're now in contact with Indian MICE companies to attend AME 2016.

"ACE of MICE Exhibition gives opportunity to meet with their potential buyers both local and international," Aksit adds.



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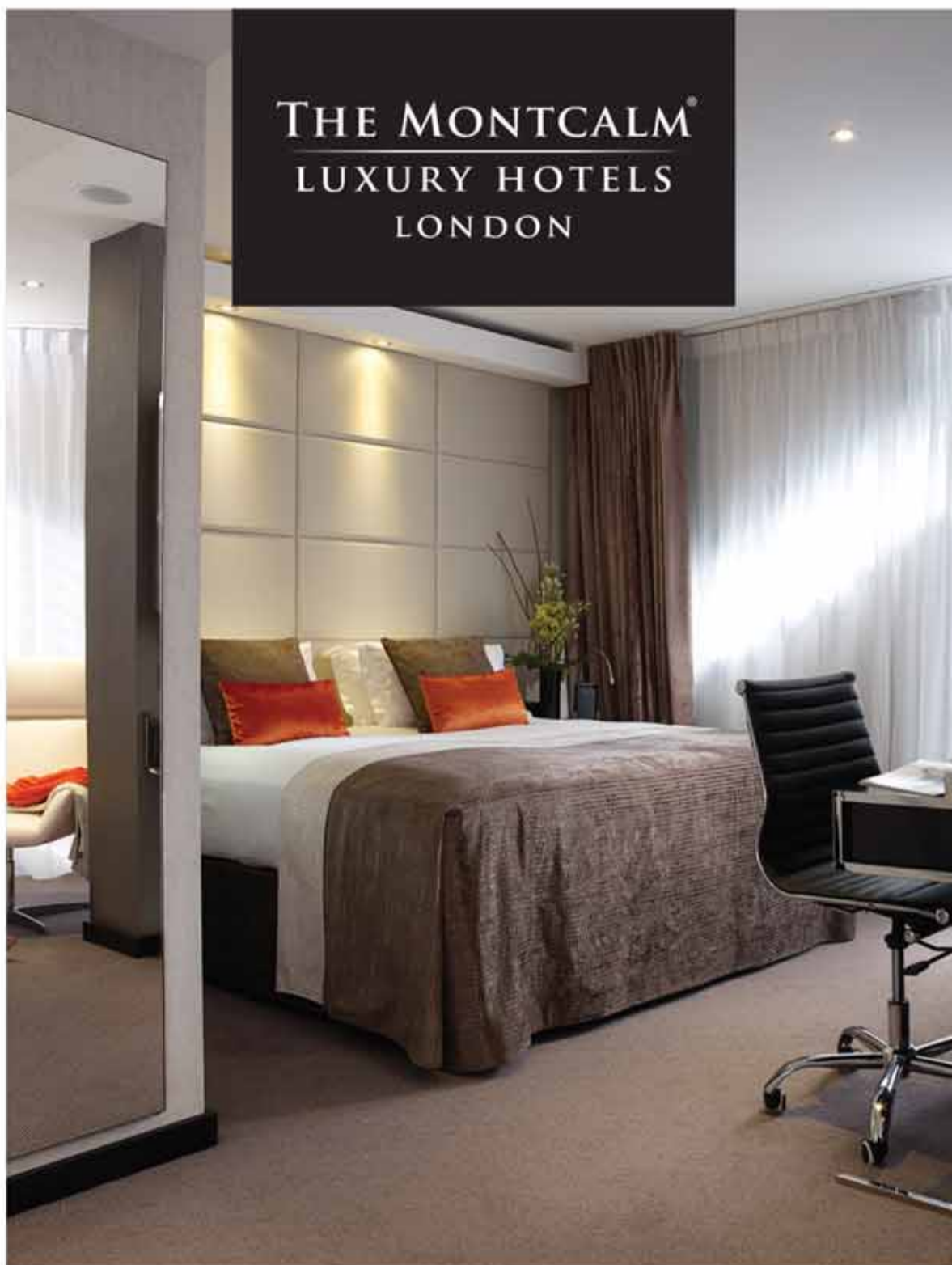
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## Focus on MICE @ITB Asia

ITB Asia, the 'Trade Show for the Asian Travel Market', welcomes exhibitors from a wide range of sectors including MICE, corporate, leisure and technology. The show will be held in Singapore from October 21-23.



ANKITA SAXENA

"This year's programme encompasses a range of topics with many new partnerships inked. In particular, we have collaborated with CAPA (Centre for Aviation) to hold the show's inaugural industry outlook forum and a collaboration with DestinationElite to organise the show's first Luxury Travel & Hospitality Forum," says **Katrina Leung**, Executive Director of Messe Berlin (Singapore), the organisers of ITB Asia.



**Katrina Leung**  
Executive Director  
Messe Berlin (Singapore)

tourism boards the presence of Indian exhibitors has been a staple of ITB Asia."

Leung also highlights the increased interest of buyers in the MICE segments. She says, "Buyers attending ITB Asia come from a wide range of industry sectors. This year, in particular, we've seen increased interest from buyers in the MICE segment, reflecting the significant growth occurring in the region."

Addressing the Indian travel industry, Leung says, "At ITB Asia, Indian exhibitors can gain an in-depth understanding of what their counterparts around the world are doing in the industry today and understand the unique needs of buyers outside India to help them draft their growth strategy for the region. We shall facilitate face-to-face interactions, to spread awareness, establish partnerships, build contacts and generate leads for businesses."

trends and developments that will drive growth and ideas to leverage on current industry opportunities. Last year ITB Asia witnessed 852 buyers and 750 exhibitors from 76 countries.

On the participation from India in the show over the years, she says, "India is one of the fastest growing travel markets and we've enjoyed strong support from them over the past seven years. Across the travel industry, hotels, resorts, tour companies and

Talking about what the event holds in store for agents, Leung explains that this year's show will first kick off on the first and second day with a series of keynote sessions moderated by PhoCusWright founder and industry veteran **Philip Wolf**. The keynote panelists will include executives from Tuniu, Ctrip, Airbnb, Agoda, Expedia, TripAdvisor and Uber, Venture Republic Global and MakeMyTrip who will share their insights on



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# 50<sup>th</sup> FHRAI Convention livens up Odisha



The 50<sup>th</sup> annual convention of Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) took place at Mayfair Convention in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The convention saw participation from some political bigwigs and hosted engrossing panel discussions.



# Key policies unveiled at MITM

The three-day Maharashtra International Travel Mart (MITM) 2015 held in Mumbai last month was the perfect platform for the Maharashtra government as well as Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation to announce major policy changes and key development plans, respectively.





## 11 innovations ease biz

Taking content from various suppliers, de-duplicating the hotels and presenting them as a single feed has made roomsXML a popular online tool with travel agents.



TT BUREAU

roomsXML.com works exclusively with travel agents. It was the pioneer in introducing 'multiple supplier single feed' concept in the industry and offers 87,410 unique properties across the world – in real time and at net rates.

If this wasn't enough to make it popular with the travel agents, there is more. **Prakash Bang**, Founder, roomsXML, says, "It has a feature that removes the guesswork whilst selecting and booking a hotel. Only those properties would become 'Preferred' if a minimum of 10 travel agents nominate it. It is like getting a reference from fellow agents, making it more dependable."

He lists down 11 innovations that set roomsXML.com apart:

1. De-duplication of inventory
2. Room type mapping: An industry game-changer, this shows the room name with pre-determined mark-up
3. Made to order XML feed
4. Quotation generator: Branded Q-Push, the feature helps the travel agent to submit quotations with property images and information via email directly from the roomsXML booking panel
5. Retail interface: Branded Retina – It is a retail interface that allows the travel agent to confidently flip the screen to face their customers exactly as the hotels call them
6. Mobile interface for travel agents
7. Online CRM: A ticket number ensures that a query remains on alert until resolved.
8. Preferred by agents: The ranking of the property goes up as more and more unique agents prefer that property. It's like getting a reference from fellow agents; certainly more dependable.
9. Map-view search: Search and view properties on an interactive map, based on location and budget.
10. Local currency commitment: Mitigates the currency exchange risk.
11. B2C widget: Branded FRAME, this widget instantly converts a static website into an active, money making B2C initiative.



**Prakash Bang**  
Founder, roomsXML

## An agent-friendly model

Within a year, Amoeba Hospitality has established itself with four properties and will be adding three more soon. **Gaurav Kumar**, Director, Amoeba Hospitality, elaborates on the company's success and future plans.



TT BUREAU

**Q**What is the USP of Amoeba Hospitality?

Amoeba Hospitality is one of the very few companies in the business that are willing to invest and operate properties. Amoeba has a policy of not operating more than two hotels in a location that provides comfort to the hotel owners about their business profitability. The company also has business model that is travel agent friendly unlike aggregation models which are killing the OTA and travel agent industry. We are looking at developing a long term and reliable travel agent network that can penetrate markets across India and overseas.

**Q**Why should travel agents book through Amoeba?

We have specialised offers and performance linked



**Gaurav Kumar**  
Director  
Amoeba Hospitality

We are specifically focusing on agents who are familiar with the wildlife segment as we are launching our next resort 'Kanha Woods' in the last week of October

incentivised payouts for our channel partners. Currently we have a 200 travel agent network and are looking to make it to 1000 by next year. We are specifically focusing on agents who are familiar with the wildlife segment as we are launching our next resort 'Kanha Woods' in the last week of October.

**Q**Do you plan on adding more properties to the company's portfolio?

We are currently operating three properties in pristine locations like Kanatal (Amoeba 180 Degree Resort), Gangtok (Bella Casa Amoeba), and Almora (Amoeba River Retreat). We will be doubling our room inventory in the above mentioned properties as well as launching more properties in Kanha, Lonavala, Aurangabad and Ooty in the near future. We are aiming for 12 hotels across the country by 2016.

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# Skålleagues in the limelight

Skål Delhi recently had another lunch meet where Mandip Singh Soin, FRGS, was felicitated for his achievement in bringing sustainable tourism to the forefront.

**TT BUREAU**

At the recently held Skål Delhi meet, **Mandip Singh Soin**, FRGS, was felicitated. He has been appointed Ambassador of the '10 Million More' Campaign by Sustainable Travel

International, USA. He also received the Citation of Merit Award by the Explorers Club at their ceremony in New York in March 2015. He is the first Skålleague and the first in the travel industry globally to have received this recognition.

**Greesh Bindra**, Secretary, Skål International Delhi, says, "For every Skål lunch, we try to organise an interesting event for all our Skålleagues to have a fun time. Today we have felicitated Soin for his achievement and feel proud that one of our

Skålleagues has reached such a height."

**Ranjit Vig**, Treasurer, Skål International Delhi, says, "Skål is initiating many activities which include recognition of some of our colleagues who are achievers in the industry to

bring them to the forefront. We are also initialising efforts taken by Skål International where we are sharing as much information with our members so that they are aware of the events and activities that take place and they don't coincide with their travel plans."

Soin made a presentation at the meet, about his journey into the Arctic in 1989 that was the motivation in his movement towards ecotourism and responsible travel that is now being embraced by the tourism industry.







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# Hotel business booms in Tier II, III cities

As metro cities near saturation point, home-grown and international hotel brands are busy charting expansion plans into the potential markets of Tier II and Tier III cities. TRAVTALK speaks to industry professionals about the emerging trends in the hotel business.



ANKITA SAXENA

The Indian hospitality industry is evolving with infrastructure development in smaller cities, which are short of quality accommodation and related services but with latent demand for these facilities.

**Sudeep Jain**, Vice President Acquisitions and Development, South Asia, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, says, "Tier II markets offer untapped growth opportunities. As the urban landscape continues to evolve, demand will come from new markets and leisure destinations." The Four Point Brand of Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide recently announced three hotels in

Bhopal, Vijayawada and Vembanad Lake in Kerala.

"Many big hospitality players are looking to expand their portfolio into these cities due to good demand generators and lower costs of development. Connectivity to these cities is important and it's often found that hotels in well-connected Tier II and Tier III cities boast of good occupancy at reasonably good price points," says **Harikumar Balakrishnan**, General Manager, Radisson Blu Plaza, Mysore.

Some of the leading international hotel brands are at the forefront of expansion into these smaller markets, and working with agents is essential for them to generate business. Balakrishnan emphasises on



**Dilip Puri**  
MD India and Regional Vice President South Asia, Starwood Hotels and Resorts

the importance of travel agents who aggressively offer travel and hospitality solutions. "The agents have helped us reach an audience from far-flung corners of the world. We treat them as a very important partner in our business. Almost half of a hotel's produced room nights coming from online distribu-



**Shantha de Silva**  
Head of South West Asia InterContinental Hotel Group

tion company is not unheard of," he adds.

**Dilip Puri**, Managing Director India, and Regional Vice President South Asia, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, says, "India today is still an 'under-hoteled' market, and the demand for high-caliber lodging is expected to far exceed current supply for



**Sudeep Jain**  
Vice President Acquisitions and Development, South Asia, Starwood Hotels and Resorts

at least the next three to five years. As domestic travel increases and Indian travellers continue to demand more sophistication in terms of both quality and experience, we have significant opportunity to grow our brands across the spectrum in gateway cities and tertiary markets as well as in resort destinations."

According to **Shantha de Silva**, Head of South West Asia, IHG, air connectivity to smaller cities is pertinent for growth. "Development of new airports in smaller cities and towns to encourage air travel across the country, with a target to build around 200 low-cost airports in the next 20 years to connect Tier II and Tier III cities, have resulted in positive sentiment in the industry. The industry is expected to grow four times to over \$400 billion by 2022."

Facilities like inroads, improved infrastructure, lower land costs and increasing connectivity to smaller cities have shown potential growth in these markets. There is affordable real estate and

Contd. on page 26 ▶





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\*\* Beautiful 'Indian Blue Robin' captured while it rests on a single foot in the leafy upcountry area during the migrant season



**Crowne Plaza Jaipur to open doors on Nov 1**

■ InterContinental Hotels Group is launching Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November. It is the group's 10<sup>th</sup> Crowne Plaza property in India. The hotel will provide 218 rooms and 20 suites in all. Speaking on the launch General Manager **Ashwani Goela** said, "We are very happy and excited with the launch of Crowne Plaza in Jaipur. Our hotel will cater not only to business but even leisure travellers. Ideal for MICE, this property will provide ample of space for hosting meetings, events, conferences and weddings. We look forward to welcoming our guests for a great experience." Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road, a green building will incorporate several sustainable features. This Green Engage certified hotel will give the property the ability to track energy, carbon and water consumption as well as to assess how waste is managed. The Double Glass unit will ensure lower carbon footprints and allow maximum entry of natural light while minimizing heat transmission. It will be the only hotel façade in India, to not have punch windows.

# Staff training in budget hotels

WUDSTAY aims at providing standardised hospitality services in budget hotels and guest houses across the country. In a conversation with TRAVTALK, Prafulla Mathur, Founder and CEO, WUDSTAY, discusses the propositions of the company, role of travel agents, and its future plans.



TT BUREAU

**Q Do you work with travel agents?**

Travel agents are an essential part of our functioning and we are increasing our engagement with them. Being a five-month-old company, we have tied up with more than 300 hotels across 35 cities and are trying to engage agent partners in a big way. They help us generate higher revenues out of the inventory and help provide the guest with a standardised property at a good price and in the process also earn profits.

**Q Do you offer any special deals for agents/ regular clients/ corporate companies?**

Absolutely! If there is an economy of scale, we are

more than happy to pass on the benefits to our partners.

**Q Are you only targeting the domestic market? How do you plan to capture the international market?**

At the moment all our hotels are based in India and primarily cater to the domestic market. The international market contributes only 2 to 3 per cent share in our source market and is concentrated in Goa, Shimla and Jim Corbett circuit. However, we would expand to target the foreign travellers too. To do so, I believe, one has to first identify the channels where tourists go to and then with the support of channel partners and travel agents we would offer travel packages and inventory accordingly.



**Prafulla Mathur**  
Founder and CEO  
WUDSTAY

**Q What categories of hotels do you work with?**

We operate through budget and boutique hotels along with guest houses to standardise the general hospitality behaviour and then, sell these hotels on our website and hotel application. Our 95 per cent of tie-ups are 20-25 room segment budget hotels but because we see a

lot of business movement, MICE and big corporate clients, a five per cent share is from the luxury hotel segment.

**Q What are the benefits for the hotels which associate themselves with you?**

Our partner budget hotels of 20-25 rooms, when on their own, generally manage to sell 5 to 6 rooms daily on an average but have to cater to prices according to 20 room occupancy to earn the bench mark amount. This leads to high costs for these hotels. When they partner with us, we sell the inventory for them, in effect increasing the occupancy and thus bringing down the costs. We train the staff of the hotel in terms of nuances and subtlety

of hospitality to offer better services. Also, a direct benefit is the increase in revenue share.

**Q What are your plans for the near future?**

On the supply front, in the next 12 months we are going to increase the existing inventory of 3,000 rooms to 10,000 rooms across 65 cities. On the demand front, we are targeting the retail market. We are very focused on the operations segment of what we offer and have seen an increase in occupancy up to 65 per cent from our partners. We have developed a process where we are going to standardise all budget hotels as the luxury hotel segment doesn't need this work. We have good partnerships with all OTAs and are listed with MakeMyTrip for accommodation facilities.

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# MICE, weddings top earners

►Contd. from page 23

cheaper talent, the cost of operations is lower, thus offering better return on investment directing towards a sustainable profit margin.



**Harikumar Balakrishnan**  
General Manager  
Radisson Blu Plaza, Mysore

of Chandigarh, our occupancy has been stable through the year (72 per cent). We are trying to pull our Average Room Rate (ARR) from ₹4,300 to



**Michael Singh**  
General Manager  
Park Plaza, Zirakpur

₹4,700 in the next three months," Singh adds.

Discussing the gap in Average Daily Rates (ADR) between metros and non-metro locations, Balakrishnan says, "Excluding hotels based on a 'destination experience,' there is a sizeable gap in the ADRs of metro and Tier II and Tier III cities.

However, with the venture of big brands into these cities, this gap is being bridged. The pricing in these cities are often very reliant on the market and existing hospitality players. The new luxury entrants into smaller cities are able to raise the existing city ADRs but often, there is a ceiling price point that becomes relevant to the leisure and corporate consumers."

Singh identifies his target segment as corporate groups, tour and travel groups, destination weddings and conference groups while Balakrishnan says that the key contributing segment for Radisson Blu Mysore is Leisure FITs.

"MICE opportunities in these secondary markets are immense. A city like Mysore that's within easy reach of big cities like Bangalore, Chennai and Coimbatore, offers exclusive cultural qualities for MICE groups," Balakrishnan says. ↴

"Cost of living or cost of doing business in Tier II and Tier III cities is lower than Tier I cities, which our guests are able to enjoy without compromising on world-class standards," says Michael Singh, General Manager, Park Plaza, Zirakpur.

"Due to the ideal location of our hotel and the largest ballroom in the region

# New Jüsta in Udaipur

Jüsta Hotels has increased its portfolio from a single hotel in Bengaluru to 15 hotels in six cities in a span of 10 years, says, Ashish Vohra, Founder and CEO, Jüsta Hotels & Resorts.



## Q What are the new properties that you are planning to open?

We are in the process of launching a luxury resort in Nathdwara, Udaipur close to the Shreeji Temple. It will have 32 keys with a pure vegetarian multi-cuisine restaurant. We believe in creating our hotels and resorts in a different way rather than following the old brick and mortar model. In the next two years, we wish to add few more hotels in Rajasthan, Chennai and Gujarat. We are aggressively looking for like-minded hotel developers to take hotels on management contract or revenue share model.

## Q How closely are you working with offline travel agents?

India is a complex tourist destination with a lot of diver-



**Ashish Vohra**  
Founder and CEO  
Jüsta Hotels & Resorts

sity. It is very important to work with offline travel agents who can provide multiple solutions to tourists. We value our partnership with them and work closely with most of the travel companies operating in and outside Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Ahmedabad.

## Q Are you providing them special offers/incentives?

Today's consumer and travel partners know how hotels operate and we plan various packages and promotions to link multiple cities in the same region. At the same time we share performance linked bonus with travel partners to promote inbound and domestic travel trade during lean and high period.

## Q How do you think the hospitality sector has changed over the years?

Technology and availability of structured hotels have given added edge to domestic consumer who is willing to experiment and wish to travel to new places within India. That is why most of the large hotel companies are not venturing into mid and small scale hotels in order to capture all level of consumers. ↴








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# Sri Lanka's wellness products

A. Shelly Thenuwara, Managing Director, Tree of Life Nature Resort, in Kandy, Sri Lanka, shares how the resort, through its health and wellness products, plans to tap India market.

TT BUREAU

**QHow big is the India market for you?**

Sri Lanka has a lot to offer to the Indian tourist. There is a lot of potential to explore not only in tourism but also in business and trade. Another advantage is at the government level where both countries are very cooperative. Therefore,

size and Indians can enjoy more within a short duration and for almost the same amount or even less money than they spend in India.

**QWhat is the most popular travel product among Indians?**

The Ramayana Trail is the most popular trail among Indian devotees that brings them to Sri Lanka. Fortunately, our resort is located in central Sri Lanka, in Kandy, and we can organise tailor-made tours ranging from day tours as well as four to five day packages.

**QWhat does your hotel offer guests looking for wellness?**

Our hotel has a host of indoor and outdoor facilities including an authentic ayurveda centre, large swimming pool, mountain biking, jogging court, bird watching and

nature walk trail. We also offer detoxifying massages, rejuvenation treatments, organic meals, yoga experience, meditation, and wellness guidelines. We offer special wedding packages inclusive of resorts, photo-shoot locations and destination weddings.

Tree of Life Travels is our travel arm formed to cater mainly to inbound tourists and specialises in adventure tours and eco tourism. Our staff undertakes package tours to popular destinations as well as customised tours. It's the first time that a Sri Lankan hotel is looking at tapping the India market for wellness tourism.



A. Shelly Thenuwara  
Managing Director  
Tree of Life Nature Resort

The Ramayana Trail is the most popular trail among Indian devotees that brings them to Sri Lanka

I invite everyone to come to Sri Lanka as tourists and explore the opportunities our country has to offer.

**QWhat draws Indians to Sri Lanka?**

Indian tourists like Sri Lanka as a destination for its history, religion, nature and spicy food. Even though India is our closest neighbouring country with a lot of similarities, we also have a lot of differences in our culture, food and traditions. Indian tourists like to experience these differences. Moreover, India being a large country, they have to spend a lot more time and money to enjoy the beauty of their own country. Sri Lanka in comparison is smaller in

**In Nature's Lap**

The hotel has a host of indoor and outdoor facilities including an authentic ayurveda centre, large swimming pool, mountain biking, jogging court, bird watching and nature walk trail

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# Heritage at Castle Khandela

Castle Khandela, an old palace built over 300 years ago, has been converted into a heritage hotel, providing its guests a unique and exciting glimpse into the heritage of Rajasthan.

TT BUREAU

Castle Khandela, situated in an ancient heritage town of Khandela in Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, is often flocked by tourists and known for its colorful markets, traditional havelis which showcase old architecture and peaceful ambience. The palace, which has been restored and converted into a heritage hotel, has 17 rooms with all modern facilities but maintains the traditional ambience, decor and architecture intact.

Khandela is well-connected to Delhi and Jaipur, making it an easy destination to reach. Dr. Raisal Singh, Owner, Castle Khandela, talks about how travel agents play a key role in increasing business for the hotel. "The travel agents are helping and regularly sending guests to Castle Khandela. It is with their



**Dr. Raisal Singh**  
Owner  
Castle Khandela

support and encouragement that we started this project 3 years back," he says.

According to Singh, "In a short span of 3 years, we have done fairly well and are improving every year. Guest reviews have majorly contributed in putting Castle Khandela on the world map. We are listed in many guide books and brochure program in international markets."

Discussing the future endeavours for the hotel, Singh says, "Looking at the market trend, we are trying to market Castle Khandela and Khandela Haveli in the European Market." With its heritage attractions and architecture, Castle Khandela provides its guests with latest technological amenities.

The Castle also caters to the MICE groups that come to the hotel. Expressing the importance of MICE travel for the hotel, Singh adds, "MICE plays a very special role in Heritage hotels as smaller groups enjoy outdoor activities like village walks, jeep safaris and camel safaris. It also allows us to arrange gala evenings followed by dinner at the Castle. MICE groups are always welcome as we can provide them with specialised and customised packages."

# Moving into Tier II, III cities

Meandering Vacations plans to get inbound traffic latest by April 2016 and its first group of 200 foreign tourists are lined up to be in India on April 21, 2016.

TT BUREAU

## QWhat are your main source markets?

**Deepali Wagle:** Our sourcing is 80 per cent from the domestic market for now. We have a focused approach to make our presence felt in Tier II and III cities and are expanding our sales offices in these locations.



**Amita Nair**  
Director,  
Meandering Vacations

**Amita Nair:** Inbound tourism is also a part of our short term strategy. Our plans are to get inbound traffic latest by April 2016 and our first group of 200 foreign tourists are lined up to be in India on 21 April 2016, followed by 150 people in July 2016.

## QWhat are latest Indian tourism industry trends?

**Amita:** 'One big Indian family' has now become a thing



**Deepali Wagle**  
Director,  
Meandering Vacations

of past. People have smaller nuclear families that create bigger budgets to fulfil their need for holidaying. Now, vacationing has become a need and while families would travel maybe once in two years, they now travel twice a year or even more. This has opened a lot of opportunities for professionals in the tourism industry.

## QWhat kind of support do you

## expect from the Government?

**Deepali:** The Government should ease its strict visa regime, improve tourism infrastructure for the tourists' right from the time they land, and provide liberalised taxation for foreign exchange earners on par with other industries like software etc. It will help create opportunities and attract right talent to take the industry to the next level.

# Targeting global outreach

Ananta Hotels and Resorts is looking at developing itself globally. Anshul Bhargava, Corporate General Manager, Ananta Hotels and Resorts, focuses on the group's future initiatives.

TT BUREAU

The Ananta Udaipur opened last year with 160 keys. The group continues to look at strengthening its resort portfolio with a beach resort in Dwarka and another resort at Abu Road. It's focusing on investing not only in real estate but also in developing the brand and its loyalty in the staff and training them in technology, resources and infrastructure that supports growth, business model and distribution.

Anshul Bhargava, Corporate General Manager, Ananta Hotels & Resorts, says, "We work with all segments of business whether it is offline or online agents or corporate. We have unique and special offers for all of them whether it is leisure or corporate."

Bhargava says that their aim is to reach maximum



**Anshul Bhargava**  
Corporate General Manager  
Ananta Hotels and Resorts

International events are ideal for brand building via product demonstrations, seminars, conferences and sponsorship

audience. So, when they attend international marts, they want to capture new and

big foreign markets like Spain, Russia, France, the UK, etc., as both their resorts attract a lot of inbound guests. He adds, "We want to develop our brand globally as a unique concept. International events are ideal environments for networking and brand building via product demonstrations, seminars, conferences and sponsorship opportunities. We also expect to check and evaluate competition."

According to Bhargava, as the government makes eTV available to 150 countries by March 2016, certain remedial steps are required, like more initiatives, relaxed taxation policies, correction in pricing, rationalisation and a balanced perspective. He says, "India has a huge opportunity to increase air capacity; international airlines should start flying to more tourist destinations to bring in more foreigners."

# 40 properties by 2017-end

Rishi Puri, Vice President (Operations & Development), Lords Hotels and Resorts, discusses their future plans and tells how helpful travel agents are to boost their revenues.

TT BUREAU

## QWhat are the new properties that you are coming up with?

We have recently launched Lords Inn Brand in Jodhpur. We are going to launch two more hotels in Jammu and Agra by the end of this year. Keeping in mind the prime location and the city both the properties will be F&B oriented with multi-dining and banqueting spaces apart from well placed, comfortable rooms and suites.

## QHow helpful are travel agents for you and what are you offering them?

Today, online travel agents are playing a major role in promoting and selling the hotels' eSpace. But in India 'human touch' is very important and hence, offline travel agents are equally helpful to carve out a place for us

in booking package vacations and pushing the brands to maximum travellers to our various property locations. It boosts our revenue as we get the bookings in bulk. We have long established business tie-ups with travel agents with regular incentives in place which are generally based on the business volumes generated from each of them.

## QWhat special do you offer to lure guests?

It is always better to offer true value to the guests for the money they spent.

**We call ourselves 'True Value Hotels' and offer high value that we don't see any need to lure guests with complimentary stuff.**



**Rishi Puri**  
Vice President (Operations & Development), Lords Hotels and Resorts

## QWhat are your future initiatives?

As a group, strategically, we are looking at growing in Tier II and Tier III cities as they offer better return on investment.

We have a target of expanding to 40 properties by the end of 2017. At the same time we are looking at an expansion which is stable, sustainable and adds value to all stake holders.





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# Mana Hotels' next stop: Varanasi

Travel agents play a big role in promoting Mana Hotels Ranakpur and the destination, says Dheeraj Jain, Marketing Manager, Mana Hotels Ranakpur. He reveals the company's expansion plans.



TT BUREAU

**Q**What are the new properties that you are coming up with?

Except our hotel in Ranakpur, we have acquired land in Varanasi. We will build a hotel there once the market gets better. We are also exploring the possibility of leasing other hotels in Udaipur, Mount Abu or near-



**Dheeraj Jain**  
Marketing Manager  
Mana Hotels Ranakpur

**To promote [Ranakpur] to the potential market we are using all the possible channels including travel agents who are playing a big role in promoting the destination as well as our hotel**

by areas. In next two years, we'll definitely have at least two more properties.

**Q**How helpful are travel agents for you? Are you offering them any incentives?

Ranakpur is a destination which is not yet known to

mass travellers in spite of having so many attractions for all age groups. To promote these to the potential market we are using all the possible channels including travel agents who are playing a big role in promoting the destination as well as our hotel. We are offering them special

rates commensurate to the business they give to us apart from invitations for Fam trips regularly. We work closely with the travel trade to understand the true needs of the travellers to ensure an unforgettable experience.

**Q**To what extent do you think hotels should provide freebies to lure more guests?

We don't believe in luring our guests with complimentary stuff. Instead, we try

**Q**How have hospitality trends changed over the years?

Change is inevitable and it holds true for the hospitality industry as well. The one trait which is constant in our industry is 'customer satisfaction'. A modern day traveller is well informed. Therefore, they seek a wholesome experience rather than just a package which includes room and food. Not only are they exploring new destinations, but are challenging the hotels to go



to understand their preferences and customise experiences. This goes a long way in satisfying a guest rather than offering them complimentary services which may even offend a guest at times.

beyond what was conventionally considered to be their scope of services. With the advent of the OTAs and other aggregators, the best deal in terms of value for money is also a big decision making factor for travellers. ✈

# Orritel's yoga resort in Roha

Leveraging the increasing popularity of health and wellness properties among travellers across segments, Orritel Hotel has planned a yoga resort in Roha, Maharashtra.



TT BUREAU

**S**lated to be operational by early 2017, Orritel Hotel's new yoga resort is likely to bring some level of recognition to Roha – a small city two hours away from Mumbai, in the Raigad district of Maharashtra. The Orritel Yoga & Ayurveda Spa Resort is spread across five acres of land. **Amit Dholakia**, Managing Director, Orritel Hotel, reveals more and says, "It will have 40 units of accommodation, areas for yoga camps, alternate therapies and a wellness resort. We are in the final stages of approval for the plans. The designs are in place."



**Amit Dholakia**  
Managing Director  
Orritel Hotel

He adds that there will be specially trained yoga teachers from the Iyengar Yoga Institute. "Everything from the landscape to the design and the food will be made keeping in mind the underlying theme of wellness.

So there will be special flora that promotes health, for example Ashoka trees to treat blood pressure, neem plants, etc," Dholakia says.

"The kitchens will use natural products like herbs and organic ingredients. Of course, all food will be vegetarian. This will be an important aspect of the packages that we will create. The resort itself will be an all-inclusive resort," he adds.

There will be ayurvedic doctors also present on the hotel premises. "We want to attract travellers from the Western countries, Europe,

Israel, etc who visit India for long-term stays and who don't necessarily want to stay in an ashram but look for clean and quality accommodation – nothing too intense. We will also tap expatriates, Indian HNIs and senior citizens. This resort will not be priced very high but will offer the best of both – a relaxing holiday while gaining value from their India experience," he adds. A 21-day package will be sold at around \$1,000.

An adjoining plot of 80 acres will house an Iyengar Yoga institute. Dholakia has more than seven projects in this industrial belt in Maharashtra. ✈



# Sustainable French charm in India

Segiyane Paquiry, Managing Director, La Villa Puducherry, shares with TRAVTALK how the property embraces the idea of sustainability.




TT BUREAU

**Q**With the mushrooming of boutique hotels in the country, how do you counteract the competition?

In a city where the lure of profit is endangering its architectural heritage, the creators of La Villa deliberately embraced the challenges of sustainability. Limited number of

**Q**What is La Villa's USP?

La Villa is one of the oldest houses in Puducherry (19<sup>th</sup> century) and has been converted into a 6 suite hotel with a swimming pool, restaurant, and an Idea Shop with La Villa products. Each

suite has its own atmosphere. The use of noble and natural materials like precious wood, fabrics, silver cutlery, fine porcelain along with a distinctive sense of colour and detail draws you into the atmosphere of poetic intimacy and non-ostentatious luxury. 



**Segiyane Paquiry**  
Managing Director  
La Villa Puducherry

We target high revenue individual couples, families and group of friends for a one night stay or a private reservation of all the six suites

rooms, the use of traditional building techniques, re-purposing architectural elements from demolished villas, employing local artisans to preserve their ageless craft, adapting the project to preserve trees hundreds of years old, are a few examples of the choices made to transform the hundred-year-old villa into a luxury six-suite boutique hotel. Even the hotel stationery is made from recycled cotton. All paper and bottles are recycled and proceeds are redistributed to the personnel.

**Q**What was the occupancy of La Villa last year? What clientele did you receive?

We received 60 per cent occupancy on the first year and are expecting 75 per cent this year. The majority clients are Indian (40 per cent) followed by French (25 per cent) while the rest are from all over the world. We target high revenue individual couples, families and group of friends for a one night stay or a private reservation of all the six suites.



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## 'Beachcomber' targets MICE

Representing multiple hotel brands in India, Iris Reps has managed to create a market for niche products like Beachcomber Hotels and Regal Hotels International.

TT BUREAU

"India is no longer a predictable market; it has become very dynamic," says **Alefiya Singh**, Director of Mumbai-based Iris Reps. Representing multiple niche products in India, Iris Reps is actively promoting two major international hotel brands – Beachcomber Hotels and Regal Hotels International.



**Alefiya Singh**  
Director  
Iris Reps

Speaking about the Indian market, Singh adds, "Indian travellers are now becoming more aware of the deals. They do loads of research before settling down on a destination or property. Of course, personal referrals still go a long way for Indians but online tools such as TripAdvisor are fast becoming a reliable source for reference checks."

For these two hotels, Iris Reps offers special deals

through DMCs, online portals, GDS' as well as special rates for airline and industry partners.

Pioneer of the Mauritian hotel industry, Beachcomber Hotels owns and manages eight hotels in Mauritius, an island-resort in the Seychelles and the Royal Palm Marrakech. These hotels represent the highest quality when it comes to luxury and variety.

"Despite having eight hotels in Mauritius alone, what sets all of them apart are the themes, concepts and the ambience. Beachcomber understands that each market is different from the other and perfectly caters to different markets keeping in mind specific preferences and food habits. With a good inventory of rooms we can easily cater to weddings, MICE as well as FIT segments," Singh says.

She says that Beachcomber has made good inroads into India and other international markets for their four-star property. "Now we are slowly and steadily creating a market for their five-star properties as well. Since Seychelles as a destination is picking up, we are now focusing on this luxury island resort and look forward to welcoming more and more Indian clientele," Singh says.

## Zanzibar hotel woos Indians

Taking advantage of the rising India outbound numbers, The Residence Zanzibar by Cenizaro is making its presence felt in India through Mumbai-based Outbound Konnections.

TT BUREAU

In a bid to enhance its brand presence in India's experiential luxury holiday segment, The Residence Zanzibar by Cenizaro has announced its foray into the Indian market. Represented by Mumbai-based company Outbound Konnections, the luxury hotel brand has already created a niche in India through two of its other properties – The Residence Mauritius and The Residence Maldives.

**Anjum Lokhandwala**, Founder and CEO, Outbound Konnections, says that an urge to see its untouched natural beauty will drive tourists from India to Zanzibar. "This combined with the opening of the Zanzibar Tourism office in India, we are positive about the year-on-year growth from India to Zanzibar. It is among the most unique destinations



**Anjum Lokhandwala**  
Founder and CEO  
Outbound Konnections

on the African continent that is yet unexplored," she adds.

Sharing her views on the emerging travel trends she foresees in India, Lokhandwala says, "India is one of the largest and the fastest-growing travel markets in the world. The importance of India as a source market for most foreign destinations cannot be undermined as the country with its emerging mid-

dle class and the upper-middle class has massive potential. The tourism trends around the world are rapidly changing and with the sudden boom in young Indian entrepreneurs making big money, we are optimistic about the experiential and luxurious holidays," she opines.

As far as special deals or incentives for the travel agents and tour operators are concerned, Lokhandwala reveals that so far, they have not tied up with any Indian travel agents or tour operators for The Residence Zanzibar. "However, we are keen to liaison with Indian agents. But we are selective in our approach to keep the product's niche appeal in perspective. We want to reach out to the top Indian trade who are established with a long-term business proposition," she states.



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# Freebies help in growth

Freebies are an attraction and proposition to increase business in the highly competitive hotel industry. **TRAVTALK** finds out from hoteliers about current market trends and how hotels can benefit from providing giveaways.



ANKITA SAXENA



Freebie is always an attraction for customers today in a highly comparable market space, to pick and choose the hotel on value for money ground. In bargain, hotels gain out of customer loyalty.

**Vinay Chaturvedi**  
General Manager,  
UNA Hotels, Amritsar



Keeping our guests' preferences in mind, we were the first hotel company to announce free Internet for all IHG Rewards Club members, whether they are dropping in for a cup of coffee or staying the night.

**Shantha de Silva**  
Head of South West Asia, IHG

I would call added incentives as packaging. Gone are the days when guests were happy to buy only a 'bed and breakfast' proposition from hotels. Packaging amenities or facilities that are most likely to be used by guests is becoming very important.



**Harikumar Balakrishnan**  
General Manager, Radisson Blu, Mysore

Freebies and value add-ons have become a part of the changing customer profile and expectations. The most important aspect is to have quality product and service whether its the Internet, transportation and other add-ons.



**Nalin Mandiratta**  
General Manager, Crowne Plaza Today, Gurgaon



Apart from customised VIP amenities placed in all the guestrooms & suites, it is very important to host events such as GM's Cocktail/Bookers Party on a regular basis to enhance the communication between guest and hotel staff.

**Micheal Singh**  
General Manager  
Park Plaza, Zirakpur



Freebies are a must for guests and that is why we provide free Wi-Fi, drinks along with traditional welcome. We also provide our guests with other amenities like mini bar, tea/coffee maker along with a personalised experience at our heritage hotel.

**Raisal Singh**  
Owner, Castle Khandela

# Shanti Maurice goes Yogic

Shanti Maurice is launching its first Ayurvedic Yoga Journey retreat throughout November. The tailored programmes will be conducted at Shanti Maurice's Nira Spa.



TT BUREAU

The 5, 7 and 14 day dedicated programmes will educate guests on the traditional Hindu medicine systems, uniting them with specialised Yogic practice and nutrition. "Creating an overall wellness routine, the programmes are specifically tailored by the Shanti Maurice doctor to suit each individual, based on their dosha (body type), as well as their emo-


tional, physical and spiritual state," says **MPS Puri**, CEO, Nira Hotels and Resorts

Lead by Shanti Maurice's expert Yogi, guests will receive morning lectures on the Yoga Sutras and the way of their application to daily lives before participating in a number of guided yogic practices to support harmonious living. Puri adds, "Beachfront yoga, pranayama teachings and powerful med-

itation practices, such as music mantra meditation, not only achieve results, but can be easily maintained by applying techniques learnt into daily routines once leaving the resort." Guests will be introduced to Ayurvedic cuisine through a selection of nutrition workshops. "Combined with Yogic practice the cuisine is designed to naturally detoxify, leaving the body lighter, refreshed and rejuvenated" says Puri. Active



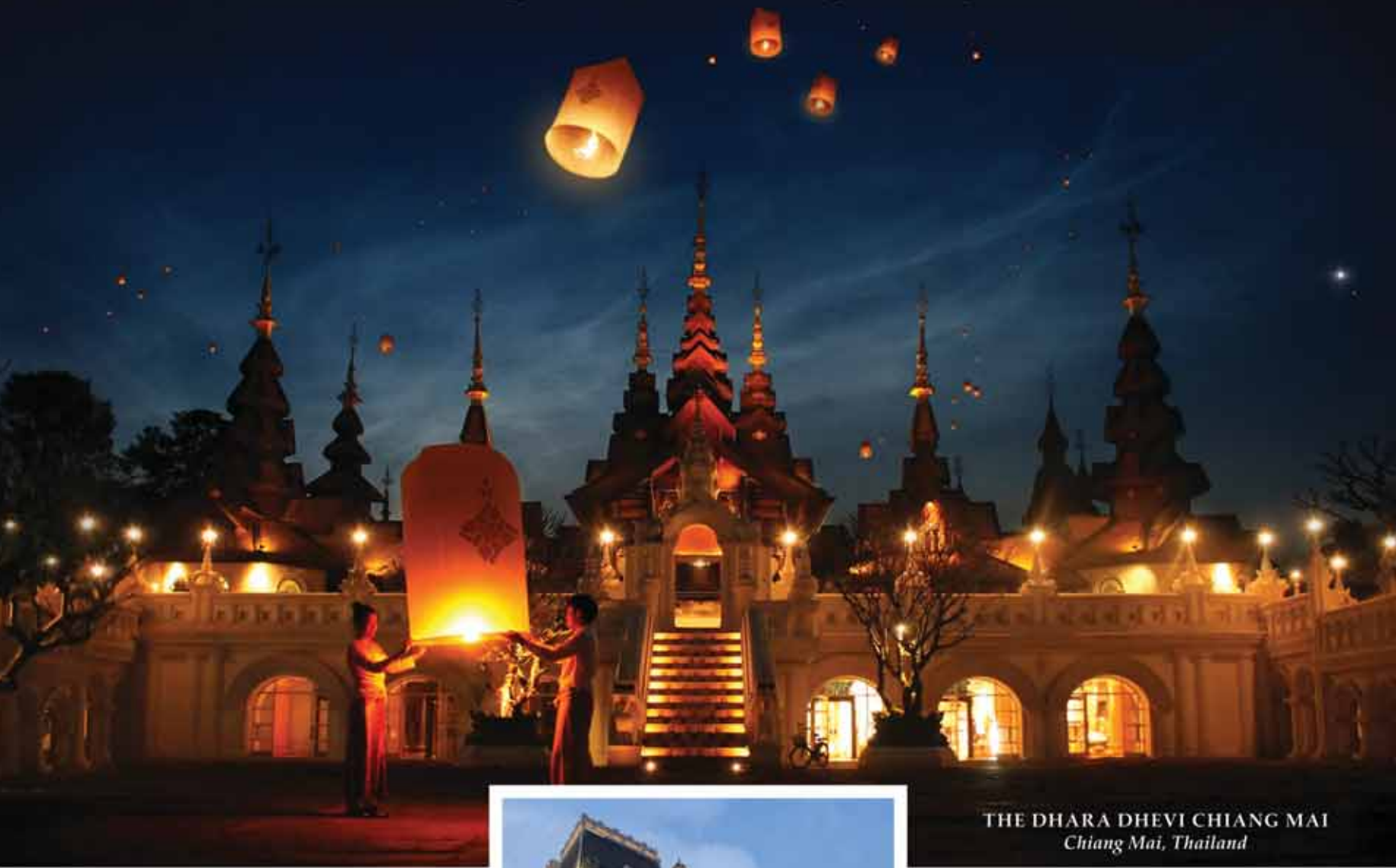
**MPS Puri**  
CEO  
Nira Hotels & Resorts

guests can also take advantage of the paddle board yoga, Watsu, aqua aerobics, Pilates, jogging, fusion fitness and yoga bike tour on offer at Shanti Maurice. 



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**ITDC declares 20% dividend**

India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) closed the year with an all-round increase in the performance as compared to the previous financial years. The turnover of the Corporation has increased by 7.37 per cent to ₹504 crore approximately. The net profit before tax has increased by 226 per cent to ₹38.95 crore as compared to ₹11.93 crore during 2013-14. The profit after tax has increased by 265 per cent to ₹34.37 crore as compared to ₹9.42 crore during 2013-14. The profit earned by ITDC during 2014-15 has broken the records of last 7 years after 2007-08. This was declared during the corporation's 50<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting at the Group's flagship hotel, The Ashok, New Delhi.

The highlighting feature of the AGM was the declaration of a dividend of 20 per cent to ₹17.15 crore approximately. Out of ₹17.15 crore, an approximate amount of ₹14.93 crore will go to the Government of India. The meeting was chaired by **Umang Narula**, IAS, Chairman & Managing Director of the Corporation.

# Competitive taxes within a region crucial

As Indian tourism industry aims at multiplying inbound numbers, Vikram Oberoi, President, Hotel Association India, stresses on the need for reform and development for the country to set the bar high and be capable of accommodating double the number of tourists in a decade.



The tourism industry in India has been working endlessly to reach the target of attracting one per cent of the world's tourists to India by 2020. With the Ministry of Tourism launching new initiatives and planning additional ones, the country is hoping to increase the number of FTAs to India and consequently boost inbound tourism.

Highlighting India's enormous tourism potential, hospitality magnate **Vikram Oberoi** says, "Tourism is one of the few industries that enable people with little or no skill to be skilful very quickly and contribute to tourism related sectors." He further adds, "A unique aspect of the tourism and hospitality industry is that for every rupee that gets spent, tourism creates that

**"A unique aspect of the tourism and hospitality industry is that for every rupee that gets spent, tourism creates that much more employment opportunities than any other service."**



**Vikram Oberoi**  
President, Hotel Association India

much more employment opportunities than any other service." He lauds the Indian Government for recognising and acknowledging the industry as a key driver of employment and growth in the country.

Subsequently, Oberoi addresses some challenges in the hospitality sector that need to be recognised and resolved. He brings up the

issue of the country requiring more good quality hotels to accommodate a higher number of tourists. "Opening hotels in India is capital-intensive, time-consuming, and it takes roughly four years for a hotel to be ready and launched," he comments. "The key thing that would help my industry is if the infrastructure status would allow preferred interest rates and a longer gestation period

for loans to be paid off," Oberoi adds.

The second matter of concern in Oberoi's opinion is the number of approvals that are required to open up a hotel. He mentions that it is time-consuming and in some cases, lacks transparency, so one discovers things along. Oberoi further brings up the issue of a well-debated topic in the country – taxes. "Taxes

are cumbersome," he says. "Different states have different taxes which more than often confuse tourists. A lot of times, tourists look at multiple destinations and have multiple choices. It is therefore crucial for our tax structure to be competitive within a region." By providing more job prospects and working together, Oberoi anticipates that the next five years will bring substantial development in the tourism industry.

**Progress begins here**

- Longer gestation period to pay off loans
- More transparency in approvals
- Competitive tax structure within a region

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# Win a Fam to Egypt @WTM London

The Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) will be offering the travel trade community a chance to go on a seven-day Fam trip to experience the wonders of Egypt. Those travel agents who complete ETA's online training course at WTM London will enter into a lucky draw for the trip.

TT BUREAU

Egypt will be celebrating new opportunities at WTM London and offering travel trade members the chance to go on a Fam trip to experience the wonders of the country for themselves.

The Egyptian Tourism Authority's online training course helps tour operators and agents improve their knowledge about the land of the Pharaohs. Individuals who complete the course will be entered into a prize draw, and two winners will be selected on a quarterly basis to enjoy a seven-day Fam trip to Egypt, including flights, accommodation and transfers.

A spokesman for the ETA says, "The diversity of Egypt's tourism product is one of its kind, from unmatched historical sites, beautiful beaches along the Red Sea Riviera and the Mediterranean Coast, in addition to state-of-the-art resorts providing top quality services in magnificent locations. All this is reached in less than five hours' flying time from the UK."

Egypt will also be at WTM London promoting the completion of the new Suez Canal extension, a multi-billion project that will boost the country's trade and economy, which was officially opened in August.

Meanwhile, in the skies, EgyptAir Express has announced the launch of new domestic routes between Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada, operating three weekly flights on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as flights from Cairo to Marsa Matrouh with two weekly flights on Sundays and Thursdays.

EgyptAir Express already operates 77 weekly flights from Cairo to Sharm El Sheikh and 62 weekly flights from Cairo to Hurghada.

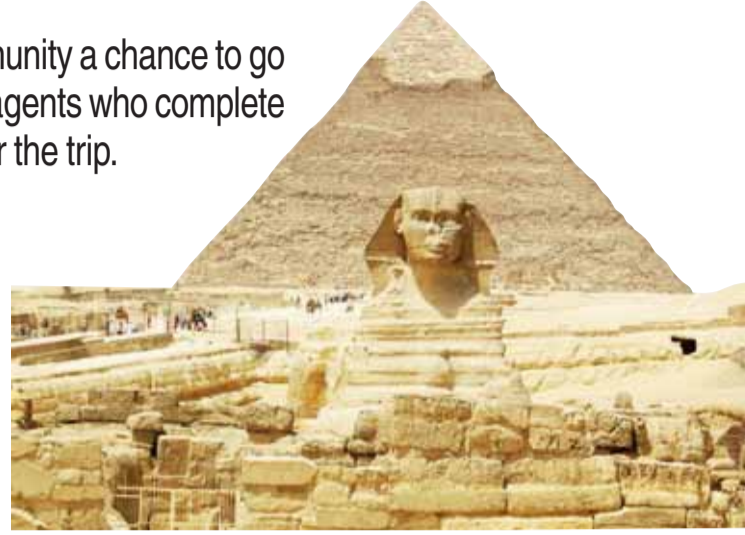
Influential movers and shakers in the travel industry will be at World Travel Market London 2015 – the leading global event for the travel industry – to debate key issues affecting the trade. There will be two

'World Travel Leaders' sessions, along with a ceremony to present the World Travel Leaders Awards to individuals and organisations that have contributed the most to the global travel and tourism industry over the lifetime of WTM. The first WTM World Travel Leaders session is titled

'Asia – Inbound and Outbound Travel – Growing Globally.' Moderated by respected global strategic advisor **Anita Mendiratta** – Founder and Managing, Cachet Consulting – the panel debate will discuss crucial issues driving this growth, now and in the future, and how to

take advantage of the expansion.

The second World Travel Leaders debate is entitled 'UK Inbound and Domestic Travel – Breaking Records' and will be moderated by **Deirdre Wells**, Chief Executive, UKInbound.



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We celebrated the 13th anniversary of Visa Services, a division of Travel Tours Group in August 2015. As part of that celebration, the anniversary promotion with our travel agent partners created a lot of excitement. Needless to say, it was very well received and we, at Travel Tours, would like to thank all our partners for their unconditional support!

Some of the winners are featured above, other winners will be notified individually.

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UITT Ukraine, March 30 - April 1, 2016



VKONNECT LEISURE India, Mar, 2016



AITF Azerbaijan, Apr 7-9, 2016



COTTM China, April 12-14, 2016



SITT Russia, Apr 14-16, 2016



KITF Kazakhstan, April 20-22, 2016



VKONNECT MICE India, Nov 2016



Connections Luxury Italy  
Italy, April 3-6, 2016



BITE China, Jun 24-26, 2016



Connections Luxury Thailand  
Thailand, Jun 19-22, 2016



VKONNECT WEDDING  
India, July 2016



LA CITA USA, Aug 30, Sept 1st 2016



CXSRITE China, Sept 2016



ASTANA LEISURE  
Kazakhstan, Sept 21-23, 2016



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Quito, Sept 19-22, 2016



VKONNECT LUXURY India, Sept, 2016



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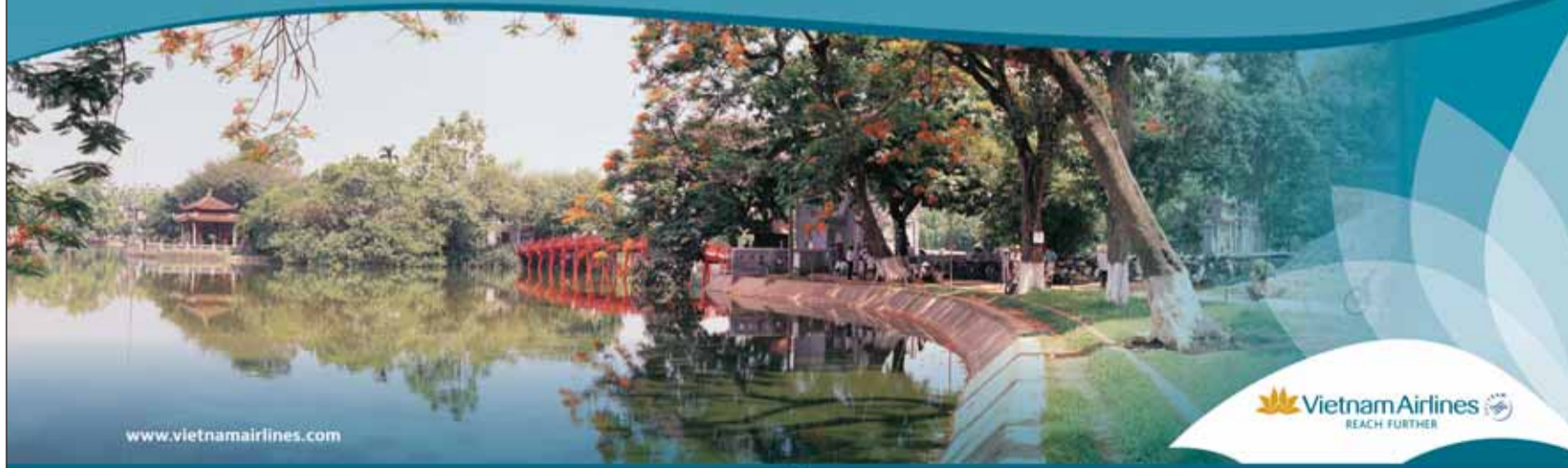


# 850 attend Switzerland Travel Mart

Switzerland Travel Mart (STM 2015), which was held from Sep 21-23, 2015, in Zermatt, is the most important trade show for the Swiss tourism business. 360 Suppliers/Exhibitors and 480 Buyers from 50 countries, including 25 top travel agents from India, attended the mart. This is the first time the event was held in a mountain destination.



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# 6<sup>th</sup> edition of India Travel Awards

India Travel Awards is now celebrating its 6<sup>th</sup> edition in Goa on October 14, 2015, recognising the leaders of travel and tourism industry in the western region of the country. TRAVTALK brings you the details of how Maya reaches the most deserving personalities.

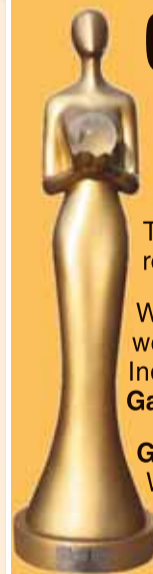


It has a very unique method of selection, giving the option of self nomination to whoever believes they are worthy of getting an award. You just need to log on to [indiatravelawards.in](http://indiatravelawards.in) and select the nomination option, complete it and submit it... as easy as 1,2,3!

After whetting the information we send a confirmation and a 'cast your vote'

link which can be converted into a vote button on your website or add a link to your email signature. You can send out mailers, newsletters or advertise in the print media. People and well wishers from anywhere in the world can cast a vote.

Leaders and game changers are recognised regionally with the beautiful Maya, celebrating the grandeur of tourism. Her beauty



## Going for the Gold

The **Face of the Future** award acknowledges work done by the youth of the industry for bringing in new initiatives and thinking out of the box to take the industry forward.

The **Trailblazer** award is for those who have walked the road of success and created a path for others to follow.

We have the legends of the industry, leaders that we look up to, who must be recognised for putting India on the global map of tourism. They go into our **Gallery of Legends**.

**Game Changers** are the need of the hour for India. We recognise those who have transformed the industry to become what it is today and will become tomorrow. We felicitate them.

The only regional awards in the country that give the inspiration for even the smallest player in the industry to make that extra effort.

India Travel Awards is recognised by all the trade bodies and the Government of India, Ministry of Tourism.

The only Black-tie Silver Service award event in the country.





# Awards in Goa



reflects the best, with the power to change the industry. This regional outreach gives an opportunity for people to be acknowledged even in the smallest of towns across the country, for the good work and dedication they put into the industry and giving them the motivation to go that extra mile.

the travel trade associations and the Government of India, Ministry of Tourism. It is now hailed as one of the most esteemed awards, widely acclaimed and accepted by the tourism industry of India and abroad.

India Travel Awards carries a lot of weightage today as it is supported by all

The winners are supported in all the DDP publications with articles throughout the year.





# Macau abuzz with festivities Sell Indian summers as well

Macau Tourism guarantees tourists an unforgettable experience in the city with celebrations like the Food Festival, Macau Grand Prix, and the International Marathon.

TT BUREAU

Tourists visiting Macau this year are in for a treat as a host of events are lined up to showcase the city's rich culture and heritage. Welcome November with the 15<sup>th</sup> Macau City Fringe Festival, which commences November 7-22

Tower. Throngs of local guests and tourists revel in the variety of mouth-watering Asian, European, Mainland Chinese and local delicacies and with other entertaining activities such as games and beer competitions, the food festival is one of the most popular and awaited events in the city.

December plays host to a number of fun activities as well. The month begins with the Macau International Marathon on December 6 where visitors can participate in full-course marathon, the half-marathon or the mini-marathon. Scheduled for the same day is the Latin City Symphony Parade, an annual parade held since 2011. A cultural integration of the city, the parade features different teams from all over the world, along with local artists, residents and tourists, who flock the historical streets singing and dancing along.

Macau is also a shopper's paradise, thanks to the 4<sup>th</sup> Macau Shopping Festival that goes on throughout December. It begins in grand style with performances by well-known celebrities at the opening ceremony and the rest of the festival treats shoppers to a retail experience they will never forget.

What's more, racing enthusiasts can look forward to a thrilling experience at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix, scheduled from November 19-22 which is also the most internationally known Formula 3 event produced in Macau.



and emphasises on reflecting creativity, development of modern art and unique aspects of the city, among the others. The 15<sup>th</sup> Macau Food Festival follows from November 13-29 and takes place opposite the Macau

TT BUREAU

New Delhi-based Indian Legends Holidays has stayed true to its name and has been actively promoting India to international markets. According to **Ravinder Kumar**, Director, Indian Legends Holidays, the figures for inbound tourism as per government records are very encouraging. "This is reflected in our company's growth which on an average is 15-20 per cent. Inbound business is going through a major transition. e-Tourist Visas will definitely change the image of the country as getting visa is one of the toughest parts of the journey to India. The initial reports from the US and other countries are showing encouraging results but we need to wait for the next 12 months to see the effects," he says.

Kumar adds that the travel trade collectively must sell India as a year-round destination rather than just for

five to seven months. He explains, "My sincere request to the tour operators and hoteliers is to not do negative publicity about India being a hot country. We have ways to do sightseeing even in May



**Ravinder Kumar**  
Director  
Indian Legends Holidays

and June. As a company, we had handled 2,500 pax in May and June on the GT sector in 2011."

Sharing his perspective on the changing trends in inbound tourism, he says that the focus is more on experiential tourism than just visiting

the sites and cities. "Clients are asking for interaction rather than just follow the itinerary. The Golden Triangle still rules along with Khajuraho and Varanasi. But there has been a huge surge in the Buddhist Circuit, Leh, Madhya Pradesh and the North East," Kumar says.

In the past couple of years, Indian Legends Holidays, has focussed on adventure products, with camping in Himalayan, bicycle tours and soft trekking. Its bicycle tour from Manali to Leh has proved to be very popular in the past two years, which indicates a growing interest in adventure.

"Our endeavour is to create more products with the Buddhist Circuit but not limited to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. We have a big range of these products. Nasik Kumbh is quite successful and we are working on Ujjain Kumbh for 2016," Kumar adds.

## Incredible India



### Conference on Spiritual Tourism for Sustainable Development "India : The Land of Gods"

29th October, 2015 at PHD House, New Delhi Registration starts at 9:30 a.m.



"We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us"

**Spiritual / Religious / Pilgrimage** Tourism is a form of Tourism motivated partly or wholly by religious sentiments. India is a land of many religions like **Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Sufism** having their major pilgrimage centres in different parts of the country. Religion and Spirituality are common motivations for travel with major tourists destinations having developed largely as a result of their connection to sacred places, persons and events.

India is the land of **Buddha**. The world's largest democracy India, officially called the Republic of India (in the regional language Hindi: Bhārat Ga narājya) is a country in Asia. Dating from the Indus valley civilization this vast region was discovered by many through sea and land routes with vast empires which were known for its rich wealth of culture and treasures in the past. The name "India" is derived from the River Indus, the valleys around which were the home of the early settlers. The Aryan worshippers referred to the river Indus as the Sindhu. The Persian invaders converted it into Hindu. The name "Hindustan" combines **Sindhu and Hindu and thus refers to the land of the Hindus**.

Being one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, India has been in contact with almost all the major religions of the world, and despite being dominated by Hinduism in the present context, religions like **Islam, Buddhism and Christianity** have also influenced a sizeable portion of the population, apart from niche religions like **Sikhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Judaism** that grew as an offshoot to the major religious schools of thought.

In the recent past, **Ministry of Tourism, Government of India** has launched two new plan schemes – **National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD)** and **Swadesh Darshan** – and both the schemes are to be implemented in mission mode. Developing world-class infrastructure in the respective destinations/circuits is one of the mission objectives of the schemes. Under PRASAD, initially, **12 cities** namely **Amritsar, Ajmer, Amaravati, Dwarka, Gaya, Kanchipuram, Kedamath, Kamakhya, Mathura, Puri, Varanasi and Vellankani** have been identified for development.

To promote the significance of Spiritual Tourism in India, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry is organizing **Conference on Spiritual Tourism for Sustainable Development – "India : The Land of Gods"** on **October 29th, 2015 at PHD House, New Delhi**.

**FOR FURTHER ENQUIRES PLEASE CONTACT :**

Manisha Singh – (D)011-49545454 Extn. 227 ; (M) 99531-91010 ; (E) manisha.singh@phdcci.in  
Varun Gogia – (D) 011-49545454 Extn. 242; (M) 98710-98716 ; (E) varun.gogia@phdcci.in



**Chief Guest**

**Mr. Vinod Zutshi, IAS**  
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India

**Guest of honour**

**Mr. Suman Billa, IAS**  
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India

**Points of Discussion**

- Government Initiative in promoting Religious heritage
- Spiritual tourism in modern world
- Challenges and opportunities in marketing of Spiritual tourism
- International community approach in reviving Spiritual Tourism
- Integrating India and other Buddhist countries under single tourism circuit
- Role of historians and academicians in spreading the teachings of various religions
- Promotion of Buddhist art, culture, architecture and tradition
- Role of MSME units as auxiliary segment to promote Spiritual tourism
- Inclusive development of all the stakeholders in Tourism industry

**Objectives**

- To position tourism as a major engine of economic growth and job creation
- To provide complete tourism experience by enhancing tourist attractiveness of the religious destinations in a sustainable manner
- To promote sustainable pilgrimage tourism in the country
- Enhancing the tourist attractiveness by developing world class infrastructure in the religious destinations
- To strengthen the measures of safety and security of pilgrims and improve quality of tourism services

**Who can attend**

- Tours and Travel Operators
- Airlines
- Resorts and Hotels
- Spiritual Leaders
- Monks
- Historians and Academicians
- State Government Agencies
- Recreational Facilities Provider
- And many more



## HM flying strong in Mumbai

Mumbai, as the first point of entry into India, is showing very strong passenger demand for **Air Seychelles**. But with the expansion of its code-share with Jet Airways, it is seeing a surge in bookings from other cities as well.



TT BUREAU

### What new developments can we expect from Air Seychelles this year?

As we enter the busy winter season, our focus is on the significant developments that we have introduced on our Mumbai route this year. We increased the number of weekly frequencies to four from three in April and now place our 'HM' flight code on Jet Airways' domestic flights between Mumbai and nine points in India, including Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Cochin and Trivandrum.

One of the larger projects we are working in is our migration to the Sabre CSS platform, which is also used by Etihad Airways and Jet Airways. This will modernise our IT systems and enhance many processes, such as check-in and reservation. The changeover is scheduled for March 2016.



**Roy Kinnear**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Air Seychelles

### How are you reaching out to the travel trade here?

We have a sales team based in Mumbai that works closely with travel agents, tour operators and corporate clients to promote Seychelles and the other unique destinations in our Indian Ocean network. We are able to work with their top managers to generate programmes and tours that can be sold throughout India. In addition, our partners Etihad Airways and Jet Airways provide further sales support

to us in India and we have a close relationship with the Seychelles Tourism Board.

### What cities are showing good demand?

Mumbai, as the first point of entry into India, is showing very strong passenger demand. However, since the expansion of our code-share agreement with Jet Airways, we have started to see a growing number of bookings coming from New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and other cities covered under the agreement.

### Elaborate on your new initiatives.

There are several initiatives that we have planned in India as we close off the year, including joint marketing activities with the Seychelles Tourism Board, joint promotions with our trade partners, and familiarisation trips for Indian media to Seychelles. We are already engaged with Seychelles Tourism Board on joint planning for key activities in 2016.

## Multiple bookings in 1 ticket

Kimberley Long-Urbanetz, Vice President Sales and Agency Distribution, Hahn Air, tells **TRAVTALK** about what the airline has in store for agents.



TT BUREAU

Hahn Air has added over 30 new airlines to their network of over 300 air and rail partners in 2015. Celebrating the successful year, **Kimberley Long-Urbanetz**, Vice President Sales and Agency Distribution, Hahn Air, said, "2015 has been a very successful year for us so far. We signed an agreement with our first shuttle partner, the Dutch company Tinker and they will be the first car shuttle provider to sell their services in the air displays of all major GDSs under the reservation code 5W."

Discussing the future plans for working with Indian travel agents, Urbanetz said that Hahn Air is constantly looking for new tools to support the agents and will continue to enhance their business and services. "The Indian market holds great potential. Indian travel agencies have increased their business with Hahn Air to date by over 20 per cent in 2015 compared to 2014," added Urbanetz.



**Kimberley Long-Urbanetz**  
Vice President Sales and Agency Distribution, Hahn Air

The Indian market holds great potential. Indian travel agencies have increased their business with Hahn Air to date by over 20% in 2015 compared to 2014

Hahn Air offers additional content of non-GDS airlines and railway companies under the reservation codes H1 and

5W. Elaborating upon the incentives offered by Hahn Air to Indian travel agents, Urbanetz said, "Travel agents can issue tickets for many airlines in one ticket; including those which are not in their local BSP. If they cannot issue a ticket after completing a booking, they can simply issue the services on a Hahn Air HR-169 document using the standard ticketing process of their GDS. The passengers also have a larger choice of destinations and the security of our complimentary insolvency-insurance Securix."

### Agent-friendly

New tool lets travel agents issue tickets for many airlines in one ticket; including those which are not in their local BSP

The passengers also have a larger choice of destinations and the security of our complimentary insolvency-insurance Securix

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# Bengaluru on PATA map

The 38<sup>th</sup> PATA Travel Mart was held in Bengaluru from September 6-8, 2015. The Mart this year witnessed two incremental forums – the Technology Forum which was conducted in partnership with PhoCusWright and the Investment Forum which will encourage tourism investments in India.





# 450 new charter aircrafts by 2017

The domestic aviation industry is on the threshold of catapulting itself into the global arena and is expected to grow at 10 per cent per annum by 2017, says **Nisha Sharma**, Managing Director, Aloft Aviation.

TT BUREAU

## QHow have you been raising the bar in aircraft charters?

We've earned our reputation by redefining luxury and consistently placing a premium on privacy, flexibility, safety, and reliability. It is the constant com-

of catapulting itself into the global arena. It is expected to grow at 10 per cent per annum to cross \$4.5 billion by 2017. It is estimated that around 120 business jets, 150 small aircraft and 180 helicopters will be added by 2017.

## QHow has business been for you in 2015?

Due to the slowdown of the economy, both domestic and international air charter has been majorly hit. The domestic travel reduced to 15 per cent whereas international travel is most affected with almost 25 per cent dip in the flying. The corporates, who are our major clients, have also highly cut down on travel expenses.

## QWhich are the most popular routes for group charters?

Group charters are more popular in the Western and Northern states for domestic travel and in the international segment, Middle East and South East Asia have major popularity.

## Paperless railway ticket on an App

Railways Minister **Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu** has launched an Unreserved Ticket Service (UTS) mobile Application. He said, "Following the Prime Minister's Digital India vision, we have come up with the UTS that will greatly reduce pressure on ticket windows and is more convenient for passengers. Ticket Vending Machines will also be available that will be operated by currency, coin or card," he adds. Created by Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS), the UTS service is available for Central (Mumbai), Western (Mumbai) and Northern Railway (Delhi) where passengers can book paperless platform and season tickets through the App. Additionally, the minister also unveiled the National Train Enquiry System (NTES) for iOS where passengers can find out livetrain statuses.



**Nisha Sharma**  
Managing Director  
Aloft Aviation

India has now emerged as a pivotal market for private jets with the rising economic growth, expanding business interests and an increasing number of billionaires

mitment to the highest standards, the never-ending pursuits of better results. We have always focused on delivering the best services and go above and beyond the standard offerings.

## QHow has the private jet service industry developed in India in the last 10 years?

Compared to the US, which has the largest number of general aviation planes, around 2,55,000, operating from across 5,110 airports, India has only around 150 active airports and around 700 such planes. However, India has now emerged as a pivotal market for private jets with the rising economic growth, expanding business interests and an increasing number of billionaires. The general aviation industry, the unmistakable enabler of industrial growth around the world, also paced alongside and clocked its highest surge in the year 2006 at 26 per cent. In 2012, the country became the second-largest business jet market in the Asia-Pacific region with a fleet of 165 (up from 26 in 2005), after China with its fleet of 220. The domestic general aviation market is now on the threshold

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# Technology for trade at PATA

► Contd. from page 44





# 60

## SECONDS ABOUT



### World Travel Market, Senior Director, Simon Press previews WTM 2015.

#### Tell us about WTM 2015?

WTM 2015 will be the best yet. Total participants for the event grew to 51,500 in 2014 and we expect even more people to be coming through the doors of ExCeL – London between Monday 2 and Thursday 5 November 2015.

- WTM 2015 will see the WTM Festivals return after a successful debut to celebrate WTM's 35th event last year
- Furthermore, the Wellness programme – introduced at WTM 2014 – has been expanded to include The Wellness Lounge on the Wednesday and Thursday of the event
- The WTM Bloggers' Speed Networking will also be expanded following a successful debut last year, and
- A Taste of ILTM at WTM will be expanded for WTM 2015 to include international buyers.

#### How much business can exhibitors expect to conduct?

WTM 2014 saw more than 1.1 million on-stand meetings facilitate more than **£2.5 billion in industry deals**. This year we expect even more business will be conducted, thanks to the number of new initiatives I've outlined. One of the best ways for exhibitors to meet new buyers and sign deals is to attend WTM's Speed Networking sessions, which take place on Monday and Thursday mornings.

#### What will the event programme look like at WTM 2015?

There will be more than 100 sessions taking place at WTM this year across a comprehensive range of subjects including Aviation, Hotels, Responsible Tourism and Women in Travel. For the first time there will be a gastronomy programme. The hugely popular WTM Captains of Industry, WTM Ministers' Summit and World Responsible Tourism Day will also return.

#### Which exhibitors should we look out for?

World Travel Market always has the biggest brands in the travel industry exhibiting and WTM 2015 will be no exception. Major airlines at the event include **Etihad Airways, Kuwait Airways and Thai Airways International**.

Major hotels chains exhibiting include **Rotana and Jumeirah Hotels**. Furthermore, I'm delighted to be able to announce **Mexico** as WTM's Premier Partner for 2015 as part of the Year of Mexico in the UK and the UK in Mexico.

#### Are there any travel discounts?

Delegates from India can take advantage of 10% off Virgin Atlantic flights to London Heathrow. Visit [www.wtmlondon.com/travel](http://www.wtmlondon.com/travel) for more information

#### Where can buyers and visitors register for WTM 2015?

Visit [www.wtmlondon.com/register](http://www.wtmlondon.com/register)

## DID YOU KNOW?

1

**MORE THAN 1.1 MILLION**

meetings take place at WTM

2

**51,500 ATTENDEES**

from 186 countries at WTM

3

**£2.5 BILLION**

of new business is generated at WTM

4

You can meet **5,000 EXHIBITORS** from across the world at WTM

5

There are more than **9,100 WTM Buyers' Club** members in attendance

6

**MORE THAN 38** travel industry sectors are represented at WTM

7

**MORE THAN 17,000** attendance at WTM's conference programme

8

Including more than **8,000 UNIQUE VISITORS**

9

The Travel Tech Show at WTM is the UK's **LARGEST TECHNOLOGY EVENT**

10

WTM's visitor audience has grown by **MORE THAN 20%** over the last five years

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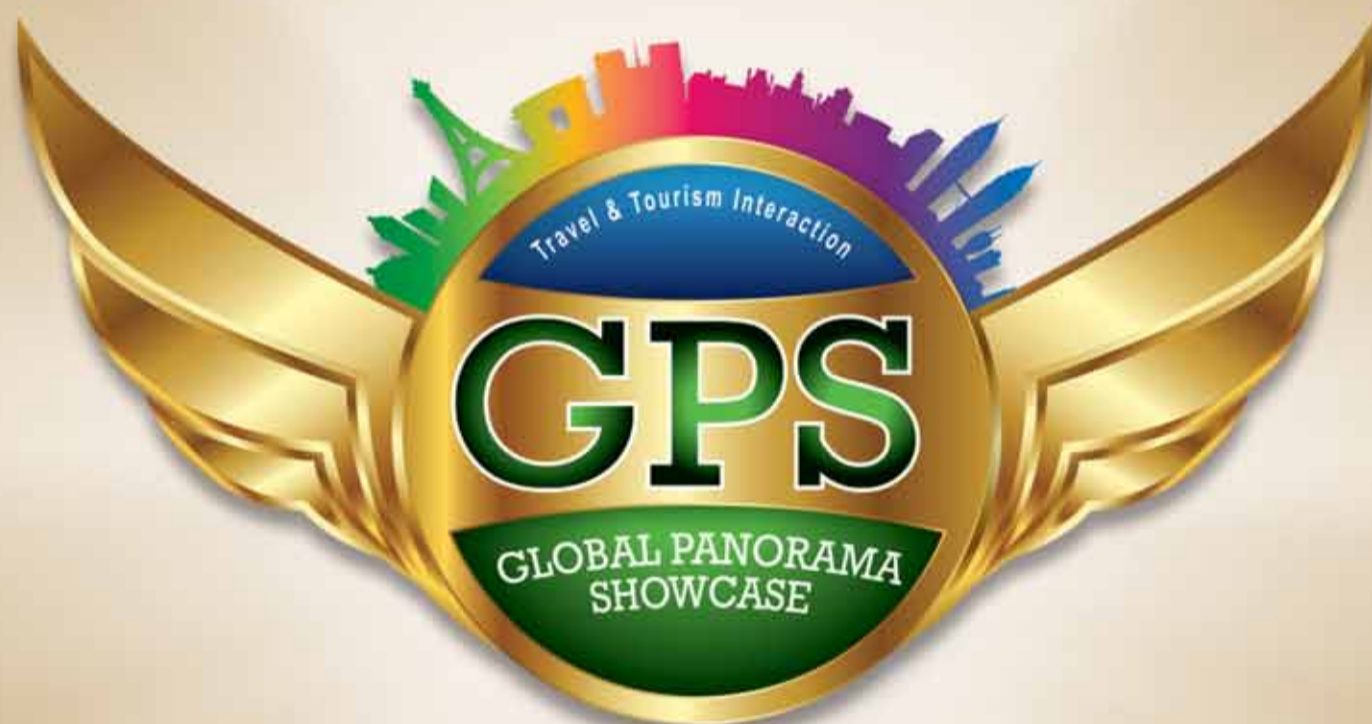
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# 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Meet: Sarovar Hotels



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Sarovar Hotels recently organised its 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Meet on September 11-12, 2015, at the Optus Homitel, Bhiwadi. This annual event was attended by Corporate Heads, General Managers of all 70+ Sarovar Hotels across the country & East Africa, as well as key Sales & Marketing associates from across all regional offices in India. Themed as Together Towards Tomorrow the agenda of this two-day event was carefully put together with a host of external speakers from varied fields.

The meet witnessed presence of renowned speakers such as **Ritish Aggarwal**, Founder, OYO Rooms, **Jagbir Singh**, Ex Olympian; **RJ Friedlander**, Founder and CEO, ReviewPro, and **Pawan Hora**, Founder, Wishbox Studio. The meet also had the presence of **Anil Madhok**, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels and **Ajay Bakaya**, Executive Director of the group.

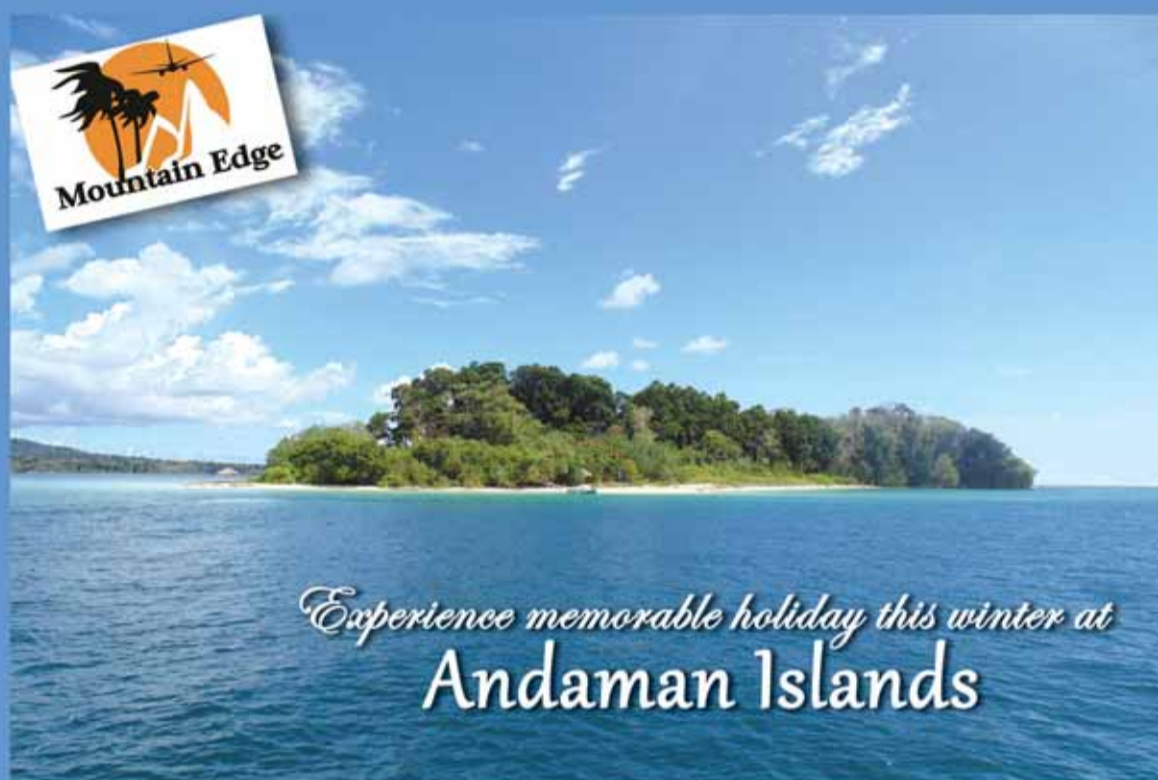
The theme of the two day event was around the flavours of Rajasthan and had special cultural shows by the local artists. ↴

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# 170,000 through JATA Expo

The Japan Travel and Tourism Association (JTAA), along with the Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA), organised the second annual travel event — JATA Tourism EXPO Japan 2015 — from Sept 24-27 at Tokyo Big Sight. With 173,602, the number of visitors broke last year's record. As many as 1,161 organisations from 141 countries and regions participated in the expo. Additionally, plans have been set to organise next year's "JATA Tourism EXPO Japan 2016" from September 22-25, at Tokyo Big Sight.



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# EVENT TALK

## OCTOBER 2015

### NATIONAL

16-18	Lucknow	India Travel Mart
16-18	Bhopal	Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart
26	Delhi	Scandinavian Tourism Board Media Brief
26	Mumbai	Spain Tourism Office Leisure Workshop
27	Delhi	Scandinavian Tourism Board Travel Trade Seminar
27	Mumbai	Spain Tourism Office MICE Workshop
28	Delhi	Spain Tourism Office Leisure Workshop
28	Mumbai	Scandinavian Tourism Board Travel Trade Seminar
29	Delhi	Spain Tourism Office MICE Workshop
29	Chennai	Scandinavian Tourism Board Travel Trade Seminar
30- Nov 1	Noida	India Travel Mart

## NOVEMBER 2015

### INTERNATIONAL

2-5	London	World Travel Mart
8-9	Brussels, Belgium	UFTAA AGA + Forum
17-19	Spain, Barcelona	IBTM, World

### NATIONAL

6-8	Visakhapatnam	Holiday Expo
19	Chandigarh	India Hospitality Awards North and East
20-22	Guwahati	Travel & Tourism Fair
22-24	Amritsar	CII Tourism Fest
22-24	Chandigarh	CII Tourism Fest
23	Delhi	German National Tourist Office B2B Roadshow
24	Bengaluru	German National Tourist Office B2B Roadshow
25	Ahmedabad	German National Tourist Office B2B Roadshow
25	Mumbai	Monaco Government Tourist & Convention Bureau B2B Roadshow
26	Mumbai	German National Tourist Office Networking Event
27	Mumbai	German National Tourist Office B2B Roadshow
27	Delhi	Monaco Government Tourist & Convention Bureau B2B Roadshow
27-29	Pune	India International Travel Mart
27-29	Ahmedabad	India Travel Mart
27-29	Kolkata	Travel East

## DECEMBER 2015

### NATIONAL

1-3	Bhuj	Rann Utsav
3	Delhi	European Quartet B2B Workshop
4	Bengaluru	European Quartet B2B Workshop
4-6	Hyderabad	India International Travel Mart
5-7	Jaipur	India Travel Mart
5-13	Kolkata	East Himalayan Expo
5	Mumbai	European Quartet B2B Workshop
11-13	Madurai	India International Travel Exhibition
18-20	Siliguri	Tourism Fair
23-27	Haridwar	CII Uttarakhand Fair

For more information, contact us at: [talk@ddppi.com](mailto:talk@ddppi.com)

# TAT roadshow in Chennai soon

After meeting travel agents in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru and Mumbai, the Tourism Authority of Thailand – Mumbai is looking to add cash-rich Chennai to its luxury roadshow.



TT BUREAU

Promoting its luxury products as “affordable,” Thailand has been moving from quantity to quality. Keeping this in mind, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) – Mumbai recently took its ‘Luxurious Pleasure Roadshow 2015’ to Mumbai, Ludhiana and New Delhi. It is now looking to add Chennai to the list of cities. Soraya Homchuen, Director, TAT – Mumbai, said, “We have considered taking our roadshow to Chennai. It is a cash-rich city and we are keen to tap its potential.”

Thailand’s luxury roadshow brought with it destinations hitherto unseen by Indian travellers. This included three of its regional offices that showcased new areas to the travel agents – TAT Koh Samui, TAT Chiang Rai and TAT Trat. The destination is also promoting its satellite cities as ‘12 Hidden Gems’.

Leading the roadshow was Kittipong Prapatpong,

Director, TAT (ASEAN, South Asia and South Pacific Market Division), who revealed that the tourism board has created a new logo. He said, “We have had the previous logo since 2007 and it was time to deliver a fresh look. Our new logo will

be Amazing Thailand: Discover Amazing Stories. Its underlying theme will be women and families. We are seeing an increase in awareness about woman power and we want to build on that foundation.”

arrivals from India in the first eight months alone this year.”

Of this, Prapatpong stated, around seven to 10 per cent are luxury travellers. “Quality tourists are also a subset of luxury tourists. The aver-



be launched at WTM London this November.”

Explaining the logo, Homchuen added, “The new logo depicts a smile – reminiscent of happy memories from past visits to Thailand, world-renowned Thai hospitality and the warm, welcoming smiles of the Thai people. The tagline will

Talking about TAT Mumbai’s future activities, she said, “After this roadshow we will do joint promotions with travel agents. After touching 906,428 Indian arrivals in 2014, we hope to touch 1.05 million travellers by the end of this year – an increase of 12 per cent. Luckily, we have already recorded seven lakh

age spend of an Indian tourists is about Baht 5,492 per day but they still figure in the top five markets. Their average stay in Thailand is about seven days as against 12 days for international travellers. Tourism did decline after the recent terror attack, but there have not been many cancellations from India,” he stated.



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**InterContinental Hotels Group**

**Chennai**

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has announced the appointment of **Arindam Kumar** as Area General Manager, South India. This includes the company's two hotels in Kochi: Crowne Plaza Kochi and Holiday Inn Kochi; Crowne Plaza Bengaluru Electronics City, and Holiday Inn & Suites Bengaluru Whitefield. The company's two hotels due to open in Chennai over the next year, InterContinental Resort Chennai Mahabalipuram and Holiday Inn Chennai Tidel Park, will also fall under his remit. He will continue to be based at Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park where he was previously General Manager.



**Marriott International Inc.**

**Mumbai**

Marriott International has appointed **Neeraj Govil** as Market Vice President for South Asia. Prior to this, Govil was General Manager at the Shanghai Marriott Hotel City Centre, China. With over 14 years in the hospitality sector, Govil brings a wealth of international experience and expertise to the table spanning across several disciplines including Operations, Marketing strategy and Business development. An alumni of IHMCT & AN, Goa; Govil graduated in Hotel Management and Catering Technology in 1997. Prior to this post he was General Manager at the Beijing Marriott Hotel Northeast and then at the Shanghai Marriott Hotel City Centre.



**Radisson Blu Hotel Dwarka**

**New Delhi**

**Mohammad Shoeb** has been appointed as General Manager for Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Dwarka. He holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Tourism & Hotel Management and has been associated with the hospitality industry for more than 25 years. Shoeb was earlier working with Accor Hotels and was involved in the successful opening and operating of Novotel Visakhapatnam & Novotel Chennai. In the last 10 years, Shoeb has been instrumental in opening of four hotels in southern part of India. In the past he has also worked in ITC Welcomgroup and InterContinental Hotels Group.



**JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar**

**Mumbai**

JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar has appointed **Saeid Heidari** as the General Manager. He brings with him 25 years of hospitality experience with Marriott hotels across Middle East and Europe followed by his move to India as the General Manager for Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel and Lakeside Chalet Marriott Executive Apartments, Mumbai. Under Heidari's leadership, Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel was awarded 'The Best Convention Hotel 2012' by Travel Agents Association of India. Heidari holds a graduate degree in Chemical Engineering and Law.



**DoubleTree by Hilton Gurgaon**

**New Delhi**

DoubleTree by Hilton Gurgaon - New Delhi NCR has appointed **Samir Kant Avasthi** as General Manager. Avasthi has over 12 years of experience. He joined Hilton Worldwide in June 2014 as Director of Sales – ISO and successfully led the company's effort to gain greater share of business from the Indian market for Hilton Worldwide's international portfolio of hotels and resorts. Before joining Hilton Worldwide, Avasthi was with The Explorers, a destination management company. He has also worked with brands like Marriott Hotels, The Grand, New Delhi, InterContinental Hotels Group, and TajSATS Air Catering.



**Clarks Inn**

**Gurgaon**

**Sameer Malhotra** has been appointed as General Manager at The Clarks Inn Gurgaon. He was previously the General Manager for The Acura BMK Hotel in Gurgaon till June. Malhotra has held the position of Associate Director Sales and Marketing in Ramada Gurgaon Central and Head Business Development in Seasons Hotel Gurgaon. He holds a Bachelor's degree in English from Delhi University and Master of Business Administration in Marketing from Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management.



**Hilton Chennai**

**Chennai**

Hilton Chennai has appointed **Amit Kumar** as its General Manager. With over 17 years of experience in the hospitality industry in India, Kumar has previously worked with Taj Hotels Resorts & Palaces, The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts and Starwood Hotels & Resorts. Before joining Hilton Worldwide, as the Executive Assistant Manager, Food & Beverage Services at The Lalit, Mumbai, Kumar led the Menu Planning, Forecasting, Budgeting, Resource Planning, Quality and Cost Control processes.



**Cygnett Hotels and Resorts**

**Gurgaon**

**Deepak Jad** has been appointed as Chief Planning Officer- Projects & Technical Services at Cygnett Hotels and Resorts. With 20 plus years of experience in India and South Asia, Jad was instrumental in setting up the Design and Technical services department at Accor hotels in India and has provided technical assistance for over 40 hotel projects ranging mid level to luxury projects including the construction of top hotels such as The Oberoi Udaivilas Udaipur. He is a qualified civil engineer from BITS, Pilani and a post graduate Diploma in construction management from NICMAR, Pune.



**Crowne Plaza Jaipur**

**Jaipur**

**Rishabh Jain** joins Crowne Plaza Jaipur as Associate Director of Sales in the soon to be commissioned hotel, wherein he will be responsible for business development, sales operations and ensuring the hotel is set up for success. Jain comes to Crowne Plaza from Jaipur Marriott Hotel, where he was working as Associate Director of Sales. Prior to this, he was associated with Taj, Starwood and The Park. He is a post graduate in business management from ITM Business School Mumbai.



**TALKing People**

**Nick Crouch**, Regional Director, UK Visas & Immigration for South and Southeast Asia, says he has travelled far and wide both for work and personal reasons. "I travel a lot for work so try to make sure I see some of the real India, and not just the office, hotel and airport! In India, of the places I've so far visited, it's hard to beat Kerala for sheer beauty, but closer to my current home, I love the buzz of Old Delhi – the food, the people, the noise." Crouch says he has so much more to explore during his time here.



**Ranjeesh P. K.**, General Manager, Davanam Sarovar Portico Suites Bangalore, has a unique hobby of collecting motor bikes and enjoys riding every Sunday. Ranjeesh, who has worked with several hotels in India and abroad in his 20 years as a professional, has collected 1600cc Harley Davidson, 500cc Royal Enfield and another 350cc Royal Enfield. He is a history buff and also listens to rock music to relax. His favourite place to visit in India is Kerala and abroad is Switzerland.



**Ishvinder Maddh**, Founder and Managing Director, ROBINVILLE Intech, says he is still in love with his birthplace Austria. "When I moved from Vienna to Delhi back in 2007, I was motivated by two causes. Firstly, I wanted to rediscover my Indian roots – my family had left India decades prior to my birth. Secondly I wanted to unite the best of both worlds – the European one as well as the Indian one – into a melting pot of history, art, culture and lifestyle. Being able to show the beauty of my home country Austria and its neighbours Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to thousands of individuals per year makes my dream come true."





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# Now, UK and Ireland on one visa

The Indian tourism market is of top priority for the UK government, says **Nick Crouch**, Regional Director for UK Visas & Immigration, South & Southeast Asia. Crouch tells **TRAVTALK** how the UK visa process has been simplified and how the launch of a new video can help agents understand the process better.



KANCHAN NATH & ANKITA SAXENA

## Q How many visit visas have been processed this year?

For visit visas which covers the tourist visas and business visits we have issued 350,000 visas during July 2014-June 2015, which represents a 15 per cent increase as compared to previous year. The percentage increase is a proof that India is a top priority tourism market for the UK. There are three big processing centres – Delhi, Chennai and two in Mumbai. We have also launched more visa application centres this year, one being in Gurgaon and the other in Jaipur. We have increased the frequency of temporary enrollment in Goa and are expanding, making it easier for people to apply.

## Q How has the visa process been simplified?

We have launched a video as a global initiative which will help travel agents understand the visa process better. It explains the visa application process and breaks the myth that it is difficult and complicated. It is a simple 5 step process. To apply for visa, one has to go online, fill the application form, gather all relevant documents and visit the visa centre for a biometric processing. A visa fee of £84 or ₹ 8,400 (exchange rate subject to fluctuation) has to be paid for the processing and the documents can be collected or returned to the applicant via courier.

## Q Please explain the BIVS Scheme?

This scheme, only applicable for Indians and Chinese nationals, allows travellers to visit UK and Ireland on one visit visa. This is a new product that we launched and have received positive response from agents, VisitBritain and the Irish Tourism Board. The British Irish Visa Scheme allows the holder of such a visa issued by the country of first arrival thereafter to travel freely between Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland, for the duration of that visa. Also if they are returning to Ireland following a visit to the UK, they will not require a re-entry visa and vice versa.

## Q What is the passport pass-back scheme?

The passport passback scheme allows the applicant to retain the passport after payment of a convenience fee while

the visa processing takes place. This is very helpful for those who have applied for two visas or travel a lot for work and need their passports while the UK Visa is being processed. After completion of biometric process the traveller can take the passport with them. Once a decision has been made to sanction UK visa at one of the processing hubs, they can bring the passport to get the visa stamped. The convenience fee to be paid for the service is £40 or ₹ 4000.

## Q Are there any services available to further expedite the processing of visa applications?

The super priority visa scheme is now a global product, being offered in most countries but India was the first location where the UK launched it. Across the

spend 24 hours in the UK or the night of the next day without a UK visa. If you are travelling by air, you can travel without a transit UK visa to anywhere in the world if you have a valid visa for USA, Canada, Australia or New Zealand, or an e-residence permit and/or Irish biometric visa. Someone with an Irish BIVS visit visa can transit the UK visa free either airside or landside so long as they have an onward flight that leaves on the day they arrive or before midnight on the day after.

## Q How do you work with travel agents to increase business?

This year we actively attended majority of the VisitBritain roadshows and conducted webinar series for agent training. During the roadshows we made sure that the visa section was up to date and helpful

“We have launched a video as a global initiative which will help the travel agents understand the visa process better. It explains the visa application process and breaks the myth that it is difficult and complicated.”

Nick Crouch

Regional Director for UK Visas & Immigration South & Southeast Asia



world, where we have our processing centres, the applicant can apply for a visa and get it processed in 24 hours after paying an additional fee of £600 or ₹ 60,000 apart from the regular visa fee of ₹ 8,400. However, it is only in India where we offer the travellers to apply in the morning and get their visa processed the same afternoon. In India, this facility is offered at Delhi, Chennai and Mumbai.

## Q What are the provisions for travellers during transit from the UK?

If you are going onwards or from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, or USA, have a valid visa of the respective countries and possess a ticket as proof, then you can

to agents. We also conducted agent meets in Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai.

## Q What are your marketing strategies to reach out to the agents with the new products?

Now that the season is finishing, we are consolidating the ideas we have come up with during agent meets and roadshows. We are also conducting surveys with top travel agents as we believe they really understand the visa system. We are waiting for their suggestions, to see how aware they are of the product and their feedback on what they find easy and difficult in the UK visa process. The new video will be helpful to agents to further understand the visa application process. ↴

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