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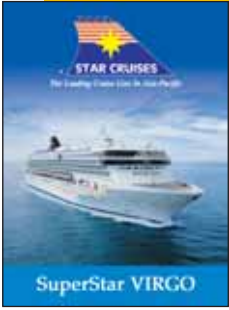
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West India Travel Awards in Goa



(L-R): SanJeet with Arjun Sharma, Mrs. India 2015 Tanushree Pandey, Dilip Parulekar, Nikhil Desai, Kamal Hingorani, Rohan Sable, and Harmandeep Singh Anand inaugurating the second edition of West India Travel Awards, held recently at The Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort.

'Land of yoga & wellness' at WTM



Suman Billa
 Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

India attends the World Travel Market London 2015 with a promising agenda. Suman Billa informs that yoga and wellness tourism will be the event's highlight.

AHANA GURUNG

Being hosted from November 2-5, 2015, in London, the World Travel Market (WTM) witnesses a congregation of international travel professionals who gather every year in

November to network, negotiate and conduct business.

According to **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, the Indian travel and tourism brigade plans to create a big splash at the WTM this

year. "A huge Indian delegation will be attending WTM, led by the Tourism Minister himself," he says. "We also have a space of around 800 square metres for the Indian pavilion and have received a lot of support from the private sector. Alongside, we

are sponsoring the Buyers' Club lounge this year where the space will be branded by Incredible India decor and Indian food will be served. The whole idea is to target every buyer and give them a preview

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Sikkim's 1st airport by Dec 2016

The 4th edition of International Tourism Mart 2015 saw participation from 52 international delegates, comprising of tour operators from 23 countries.

TT BUREAU

The mart, organised by the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) in association with the Northeastern states and the state of West Bengal, was inaugurated by **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, along with **Pawan Chamling**, Sikkim Chief Minister, in Gangtok, Sikkim. At the inauguration, Dr. Sharma said that the mart helps to showcase to the world the rich and untapped potential of the Northeastern states. He said that promoting tourism in these states will be one of the prime focus areas of MOT. He said that improving connectivity is key to promoting tourism in the Northeast. The minister informed that Sikkim will have its own airport in Pakyong, 35 km away from Gangtok by December 2016.



The centre will work to create better road connectivity for the public through National Highways for the North East. He assured that he will discuss the matter of road connectivity with the concerned ministry. Dr. Sharma appreciated the fact that Sikkim is soon going to become the first cent per cent organic state in the country.

Vinod Zutshi, Tourism Secretary, MOT said that the Government is developing the

Northeast region in terms of all aspects—tourism, education, health, transport networks, telecommunications, information technology, electricity grids, flow of investment and trade and everything else that is needed to harness its economic and commercial potential and raise the standards of living of our people in this region.

The delegates at the mart came from Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei,

Cambodia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, UK, USA and Vietnam. Post-Mart Fam trips to the states have been arranged for the delegates from overseas to create awareness about the rich and varied tourism products of the Northeastern region and to give them a first-hand experience of the destination.

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eTV ensures inbound booms

The Government of India launched tourist Visa on Arrival enabled by Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA), presently known as the e-Tourist Visa scheme (eTV) on November 27, 2014. The eTV facility is making sure that visa issues don't pose a hindrance for foreign tourists. As it extends to more countries, it is evident that tourism occupies pride of place in the country's priority list. At present e-Tourist Visa facility is available for citizens of 113 countries arriving at 16 airports in India.

There were 5,608,000 Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) from Jan-Sept 2015, in fact during September 2015 India received 540,000 FTAs compared to 509,000 during September 2014 and 454,000 in September 2013. Out of these 5,608,000 FTAs a total of 2,01,705 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visas as compared to 19,290 during the same period last year, registering a growth of 945.6 per cent. The percentage share of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during September 2015 among the top 15 source countries was highest from Bangladesh (18.81%), followed by USA (10.99%) and the UK (7.96%) among others.

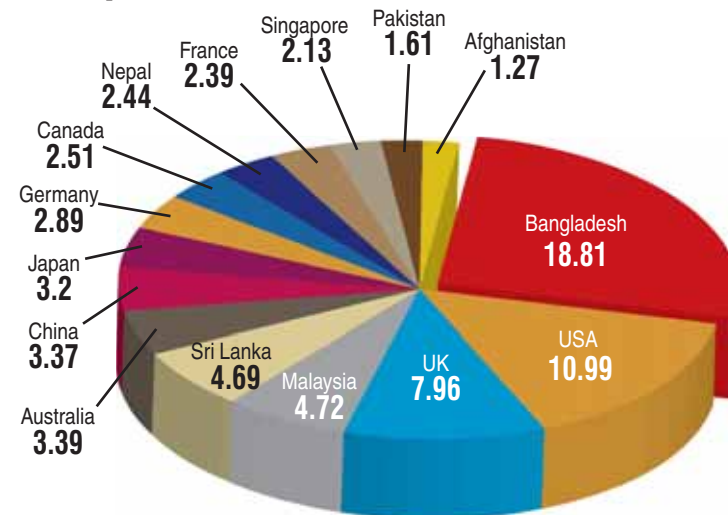
Foreign Exchange Earning (FEE) during the month of September 2015 was \$1.436 billion. FEE from tourism in January-September 2015 was \$14.453 billion showing a growth of 3.2 per cent over the same period during 2014.

The rising FTA rate is clearly due to the steady performance of the Indian economy, which has brought about industrial growth and economic development, leading to the emergence of India as one of the most promising markets in tourism in the very near future. Contrary to the belief that tourism in India is still restricted to traditions, this industry is booming with new domestic and international airlines offering affordable fares and all kinds of innovative packages to woo inbound visitors into India. With better connectivity and hotel accommodation available in every segment, not only in metros but tier II/III cities also, we can only move forward, providing jobs and livelihood to many and creating a new class of skilled youth...

FTAs continue strong growth

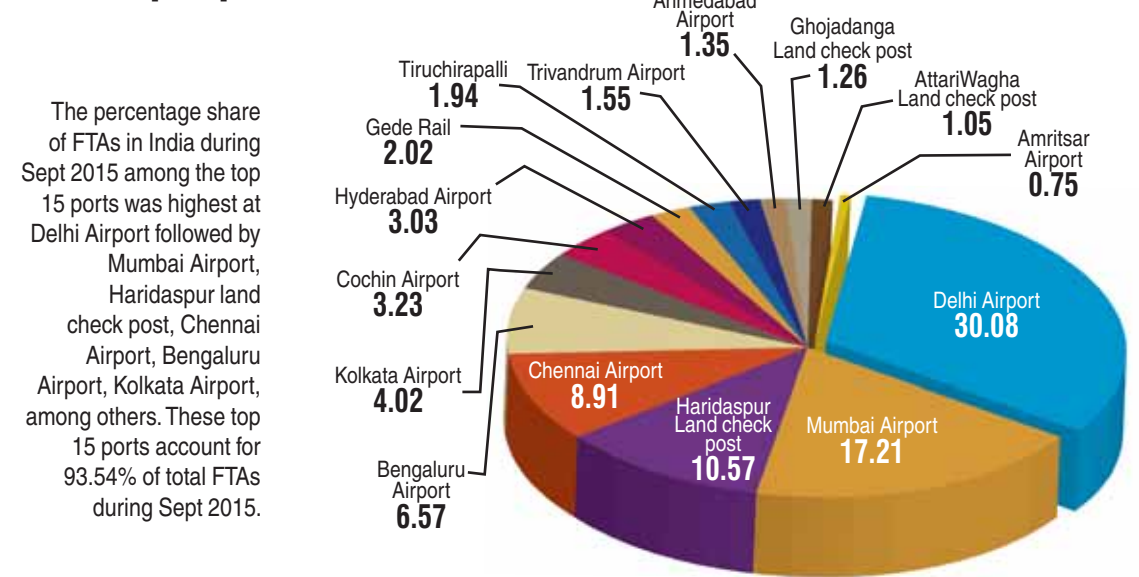
According to the Ministry of Tourism, the Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) from Jan-Sept 2015 registered a growth of 4.6 per cent over the same period last year. The highest number of tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa (eTV) from the US during Jan-Sept.

Percentage share of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during September 2015



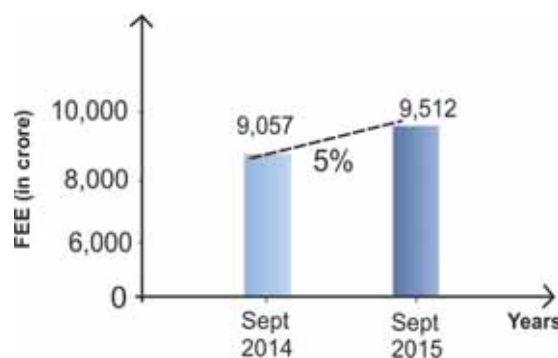
FTAs during Sept 2015 were 540,000 as compared to FTAs of 509,000 during Sept 2014 and 454,000 in Sept 2013. There has been a growth of 6.1 per cent in Sept 2015 over the same period last year. FTAs during the period Jan-Sept 2015 were 5,608,000 showing a growth of 4.6 per cent over Jan-Sept 2014. Bangladesh topped the list of source countries for FTAs, followed by China, UK, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, among others.

Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during September 2015 among the top 15 ports



The percentage share of FTAs in India during Sept 2015 among the top 15 ports was highest at Delhi Airport followed by Mumbai Airport, Haridaspur land check post, Chennai Airport, Bengaluru Airport, Kolkata Airport, among others. These top 15 ports account for 93.54% of total FTAs during Sept 2015.

Percentage share of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during September 2015



Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) during the month of Sept 2015 were US\$ 1.436 billion. FEEs from tourism in Jan-Sept 2015 were US\$ 14.453 billion showing a growth of 3.2 per cent over the same period during 2014. FEEs during Sept 2015 were ₹ 9,512 crore as compared to ₹ 9,057 crore in September 2014. The growth rate in FEEs in rupee terms during September 2015 over September 2014 was during 5 per cent. FEEs from tourism in rupee terms in Jan-Sept 2015 were ₹ 91,737 crore showing a growth of 3.2 per cent over the same period during 2014.

Source: Ministry of Tourism



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Telangana seeks guidance from agents

B. Venkatesham, Secretary Tourism and Culture, Government of Telangana, was in Delhi recently to promote the Bathukamma festival. He urges travel agents to coach the new state and says that if everything goes well, 2017 will be 'Visit Telangana Year.'



SAMAPTI DAS

QTelangana is the youngest Indian state. What are you doing to promote it?

Telangana is the youngest state of India but it is a confluence of all religions, nationalities, languages and regions. It is a place where everyone is comfortable. It has the most hospitable climate. We are working on massive urban forestation in order to maintain that. If everything goes well, we will declare 2017 as 'Visit Telangana Year.'



B. Venkatesham
Secretary Tourism and Culture,
Government of Telangana

We are inviting all the travel agents to host their annual conferences and regular meetings in Hyderabad, We urge agents to guide us and become our coaches

QWhat is the USP of Telangana as a tourism destination?

I think Telangana is the most suitable state of India for a better livelihood. It is a melting point of India. Secondly, it is the best MICE destination in India. The HICC is capable of handling almost 10,000 delegates which no other convention centre in any part of India has. Telangana has epic cultural, architectural and sculptural capacities. We have a great historical past in Warangal and adjoining areas. We offer Medical Tourism also. Hyderabad has low cost medical facilities as compared to other states of India. The real estate is the cheapest.

QHow closely are you working with the travel agents?

We are inviting all the travel agents to host their annual conferences and regular meetings in Hyderabad. Telangana can accommodate all kinds of tourists, whether

economical or exorbitant and luxurious. We as a new state, urge the agents to guide us and become our coaches.

QWhat are you doing to attract more foreign tourists?

We are trying to bring out our past glories and cultural ethos like the Bathukamma festival which is a unique festival

celebrated only by women and men are only spectators.

QAre you planning to participate in the foreign travel marts?

We are participating in all the foreign marts as well as the domestic ones. We participated in ITB Berlin and now we are participating in WTM London also. Being the youngest kid

in the family we are the most enthusiastic and most active.

QTell us about the Bathukamma festival

It is a festival of Telangana celebrated by women, with flowers that grow exclusively in each region of the state. It is a symbol of Telangana's cultural identity and thus exalts the inherent

relationship between earth, water and human beings.

This is an ideal occasion to visit Telangana which offers its visitors a plethora of places of pristine natural beauty, abundant wildlife, magnificent palaces and forts reflecting architectural blends along with immense opportunities to explore its artistic and cultural enrichment.

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Goa betting big on MICE, adventure

This year Goa Tourism is participating in World Travel Market (WTM) London 2015 and plans to showcase an all-new portfolio of facets to impress global visitors from far and wide. **Ameya Abhyankar**, Director of Tourism, Goa, tells us about the initiatives to make Goa the top tourist destination.

VAISHALI DAR

Goa is taking tourism to the world in a new avatar. Year after year, Goa Tourism participates in leading global events for the travel industry. "Yes, Goa Tourism is participating at

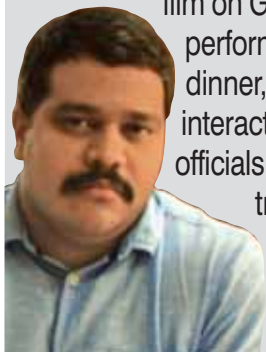
Goa is abuzz with activities for several reasons which mainly include: Adventure Tourism (Hot Air Balloons, Amphibious Vessels), ropeways, bungee jumping, scuba diving, horse riding, and initiatives such as Segway Tours, Seaplanes



performance and authentic dinner, followed by informal interaction with tourism officials, offering the country a true flavour of Goa," says Abhyankar.

As per the latest inbound numbers, a total of 4,058,226 arrived in Goa in 2014, domestic check-ins were 3,544,634 and foreign arrivals were 513,592. Prime international source markets for Goa include Russia, the UK, Germany, France, Middle East and South East Asia. "Due to several geo-political factors there has been a dip in foreign tourist arrivals. But this is a temporary phase and the coming season should be better. We could hope for a 10 per cent growth or even more in international tourist arrivals. The e-Tourist Visa regime introduced by the central government which has now extended eTV benefits to 113 countries will boost numbers in the coming season," explains Abhyankar.

"The interaction consists of a presentation on Goa, screening of a film on Goa, entertainment performance and authentic dinner, followed by informal interaction with tourism officials, offering the country a true flavour of Goa."



Ameya Abhyankar
Director of Tourism, Goa

Goa all through 2015. The e-Tourist Visa (eTV) facility has proven to be a big boon for Goa. "Within a short span of eight months as many as 17,100 eTVs have been issued at the Goa Airport in Dabolim," says Abhyankar.

For the safety and security of tourists, the government has made arrangements for beach patrol with 676 life guards and an additional 117 personnel on beach patrol till midnight, tourist police and

women taxi service. Goa Tourism showcases its clean beaches as a result of the Comprehensive Beach Cleaning Management Plan and other Clean Beach Initiatives. Goa Tourism will be celebrating art and culture with Delphic Games in February 2016. The 5th Youth Delphic Games is the world's only common floor for art and culture which is coming to India for the first time. It will attract 125 countries with over 7,000 participants, six art categories and

over 70 sub-categories, with many parallel artistic and fun events and activities.

Goa Tourism gives an opportunity to the tour and travel operators to promote their products and services. "B2B interactions and participation in travel trade shows, networking events gives a perfect platform to showcase products to the masses. The interaction consists of a presentation on Goa, screening of a film on Goa, entertainment

WTM 2015," says Abhyankar, "and this year too we are proudly showcasing all new portfolios with facets which will impress global visitors."

among others are on the anvil. A hotspot for weddings and celebrations, the state has bagged several awards as a leading wedding and honeymoon des-

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Tourism manpower short by 5 million

Looking at the National Skill Development Council's studies on skill gap, **Rajiv Pratap Rudy**, Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (Independent Charge) and Parliamentary Affairs, Govt. of India, suggests that 12 weeks of skill training is as important as 12 years of secondary education to make people employable.



KANCHAN NATH

Comparing figures of skill development across the globe, the Minister says, "Even in China which has a population of about four billion now, 46 per cent of the workforce is skilled. By skilled, I mean employed. United States has a 58 per cent skilled workforce, Germany has about 70 per cent, UK has about 68 per cent, Japan 80

important. The prime minister feels that though 12 years of secondary education may be very important, it is 12 weeks of our training that will make you employable. That is the difference we are talking about. Have we gone wrong somewhere in making education aspirational, but not skills that make you employable?"

Enumerating the industries that need employment, he said, "We are talking about 500 million people to be trained in India which is a huge number. If you look at the skill gap studies done by the National Skill Development Council, the construction sector requires about three crore people over

the next five years, assuming that the rate of growth goes up by eight per cent. And 1.7 crore people are required in the retail sector, one million in furniture furnishings, one crore in textiles, five million skilled people in tourism and hospitality, five million people in automotive care and so on.

"We have 310 million people who need to be trained immediately. So out of every 100 people that you need to train, 30 can pay for themselves. The other 70 have to be paid for. This means that 230 million people have to be paid for. On an average after school education, you require 20,000 per head to train one person in

one, two or three months. So in the next five years you need 5,00,000 crore just to address the basic training of these people. Somehow we have failed to integrate vocational education as aspirational at the school educational level. People kept harping on finishing degrees even as unemployment rises."



Rajiv Pratap Rudy
Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (Independent Charge), and Parliamentary Affairs, Govt. of India

The prime minister feels that though 12 years of secondary education may be very important, it is 12 weeks of our training that will make you employable

per cent and Korea has 96 per cent. However, in India the percentage of skilled workers stands at only a dismal four and half per cent of the world's skilled force."

Reemphasising on skill enhancement, Rudy says, "In the last 68 to 69 years, the country has been stressing on education as being most

Need for Skill

- 500 million people need to be trained in India
- 1.7 crore people are required in the retail sector, one million in furniture furnishings, one crore in textiles, five million skilled people are required in tourism and hospitality, five million people in automotive care

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As WTM London is set to welcome travel and tourism industry professionals from across the globe, TRAVTALK speaks to the Indian travel trade to find out about their expectations from the event.



We are participating in WTM with a lot of enthusiasm and optimism with our new itineraries supported by our value added features which make our programmes more fascinating. One of the key points of strength of SenKay

Tours and Travels is to be distinctive in enriching the itineraries with something special of greater intensity. We do believe that the choice of itineraries is important, but not more than their contents. Hence in our role as DMC, we keep our partner tour operators consistently updated about our value added features and the latest infrastructure in the country through the efforts of our research and development team.

Anil Kumar

Director - Marketing, Operations,
Product Development and Finance Contracting
SenKay Tours and Travels



roomsXML.com has been exhibiting at WTM for the past several years. As always we expect to meet some of our global clients and also showcase our recent innovations to potential clients. roomsXML.com anticipates that India's inbound tourism will grow in 2016 due to certain measures taken by our government like the e-Tourist Visa facility.

In anticipation of the inbound demand, roomsXML.com has scaled up its inventory of luxury Indian hotels (4,273 hotels as on October 15, 2015).

Prakash Bang

Managing Director, roomsXML Solutions



This year I expect WTM to be far better than previous years particularly for India. All sources of advertising are attracting tourists to India but I personally feel that India shall witness a significant growth with the e-Tourist Visa on arrival now in operation for many prominent countries. I would also like to witness travel technology developments and get an exposure on the innovations

in technology in the global scenario

Ankush Nijhawan

Managing Director, Nijhawan Group



Since TravelLibro is a unique brand and one of the first to cater to travel social networking out and out, the strategy is to spread the word out. We want to reach out to worldwide agents, tourism boards, and bloggers to spread awareness. We would like to educate the agents and tour operators across the

globe on how they can improve their business sitting in their office through our website.

Monish B. Shah

Chairman and MD, TravelLibro



WTM is a perfect platform to connect with existing and prospective clients, industry associates and trade partners. During this period, we also get an opportunity to get an insight of the changing trends of the industry. This time we are showcasing our two signature products which are Travel Cloud Suite (TCS) and Travel Assist. Inbound tourism performance in India has shown some remarkable growth in the past. India has some great potential in this sector in future.

Meenu Sachdeva

Managing Director, TI Infotech

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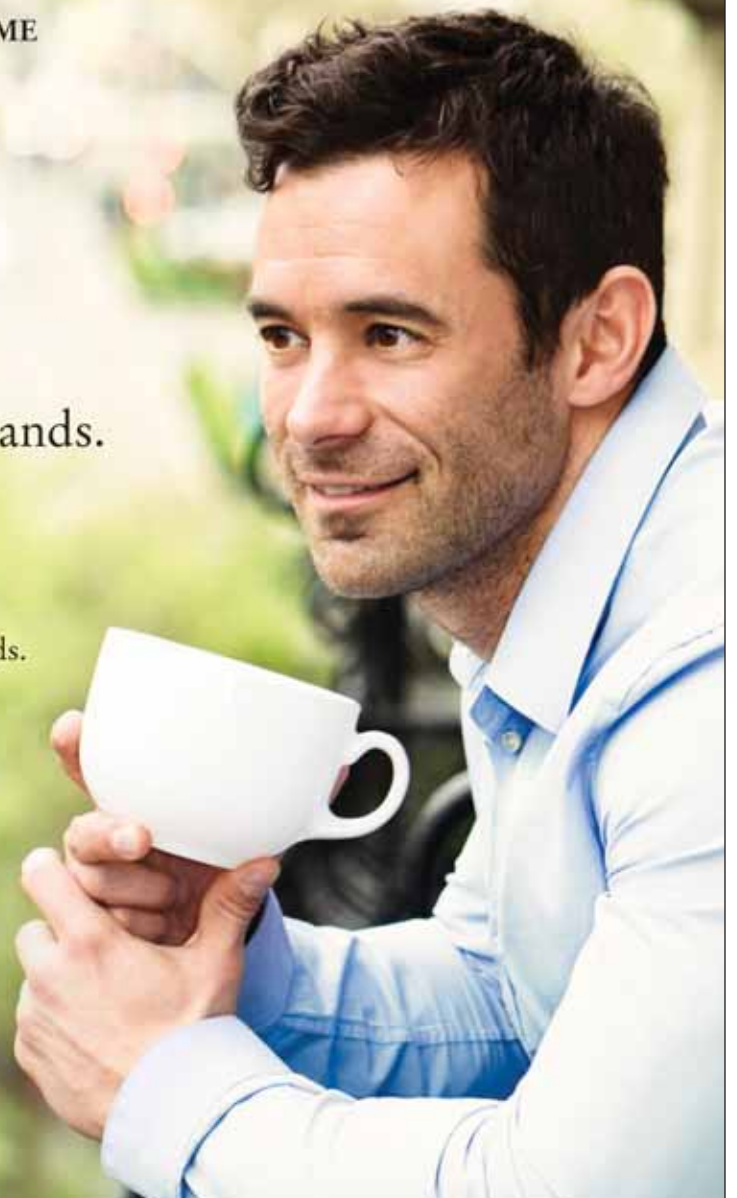
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Identifying global trends @WTM

► Contd. from page 10



We have been participating in major international travel marts to promote Maharashtra in the international market. It gives us a great platform to sell our products to the international travel trade. We have been working on a lot of tourism products to promote our state and I am happy to inform that we are also looking at the possibility of developing mining tourism in Maharashtra in some of the coal mines of Vidharba region in Chadrapur or Yavatmal area. WTM is also an opportunity to enhance knowledge and identify new trends in the global market of travel and hospitality industries. I personally feel that the organisers must recognise regular participants, be more co-operative and to not evaluate everything in terms of money.

Paraag Jaiin Nainutia

MD, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation

We will showcase all three properties at WTM. They are Hotel Pushkar Palace, Jagat Palace and Royal Desert Camp. We always showcase these properties at international fairs like WTM. We also have online presence. We want people who visit WTM like travel agents from around the globe, to know about us and visit our properties. We are hopeful that this time the mart will be much better than last year.



Jagat Singh Rathore

CEO, Hotel Pushkar Palace



As hotel exhibitors, we have been participating in World Travel Mart (WTM) in London for decades in order to boost our visibility and saleability amongst the buyers. Our expectations have remained the same over the years, i.e., the event will help us further boost our visibility in the international market and also grow overall inbound numbers.

Last year, we witnessed a growth of 10.20 per cent in inbound arrivals despite it being an election year and significantly improving upon the previous two years when arrivals grew by 4.3 per cent and 5.9 per cent in 2012 and 2013 respectively. We expect a better growth this year. In India we have plenty and therefore, her diversity of tourism products is what I see as greatest pull for international tourists.

S N Srivastava

President & Co-founder, Clarks Inn Group of Hotels

We have been regularly participating in WTM since we have a diversified portfolio of hotels catering to the inbound leisure traveller. The objective of participation is to enhance our brand visibility in the overseas markets and to meet up with foreign tour operators promoting India and update them on new hotel openings. With increased focus of the Government in promoting India and the fact that global economy is showing signs of recovery, we expect 2016 to be much better in terms of foreign arrivals and spends.



Pradeep Kalra

Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing Sarovar Hotels



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A. Shelly Thenuwara

Managing Director Tree of Life Nature Resort

Contd. on page 15 ►

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Foreign arrivals aplenty in 2016

► Contd. from page 12



The prospects for inbound tourism in the year 2016 look very bright driven by steady flow of foreign tourists. Going by the recent booking trends, it indicates one of the best years in terms of inbound tourism with major international meets being planned which will bring a lot of international tourists to India. All these factors indicate healthy growth over the past few years. The e-Tourist Visa scheme has eased the attaining of visas for those looking to visit India. Promotion campaigns marketing India as an exotic destination have also played their role. Domestic stability and relative inexpensive value of rupee in terms of major foreign currencies is also an important factor in making India an attractive destination.

Rishi Puri
Vice President
Lords Hotel and Resorts

We are looking forward to the tourists from the UK and Europe to newer destinations like Madhya Pradesh and hope for good growth of this market which is low at the moment. We are expecting a growth in India inbound tourism as this year. IATO showcased MP as a destination to inbound agents beyond Bhopal. Indore, Ujjain, Omkareswar, Mandu and many more are in focus now. There are popular destination in India for inbound tourism like Rajasthan, Kerala and MP, one can travel to MP year round for its Night Food Market (Sarafa) and other activities like pilgrimage.



Vishal Kumar
Group Head, Sales & Marketing, Sayaji Group of Hotels



WTM is a great platform to bring together travel professionals from across the globe under one roof. For the past six years we are participating in WTM as an exhibitor. This year also, we expect to get better response and generate more business. In the inbound space, operators are moving towards automation in their backend processes and providing online services to their clients irrespective of their physical presence. This change in approach has made India as one of the most searched and desired destination to visit, thus increasing the inbound tourism to India.

Abhishek Jangid
VP - Sales & Marketing, QuadLabs Technologies

Particularly for singular hotels, platforms like WTM provide relevant business opportunity to maintain contact and meet a qualified diaspora of travel professionals globally. Backed by stable socio-economic environment where India is seen as a destination for international investment and positive travel sentiment, we are hopeful to witness a positive growth, both in business and leisure in-bound travel.



International travel to India is maturing with tourists going beyond the obvious itineraries. Some of the emerging circuits include extended itineraries into Rajasthan spanning across Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Shekhawati belt; culture and heritage travel to Hampi, Varanasi; Buddhist Circuit in and around Bihar and wildlife across Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

Saurabh Rai
Area Managing Director, Preferred Hotels & Resorts



Just giving eTV is not a solution to boost inbound tourism. Yes, it is beneficial and is the first and a very important step. But unless there is a co-ordinated National Policy which is applicable to all state tourism boards, it is of no use. It is very important to ensure that the focus is on development of the appropriate infrastructure to make a tourist feel at home, apart from marketing and promotional activities to attract them.

Mahendra Vakharia
MD, Ahmedabad-based Pathfinders Holidays and Chairman Western Chapter, OTOAI



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JAL, Vistara connect Tokyo to 11 Indian cities

Vistara has entered a formal partnership agreement with Japan Airlines (JAL) allowing passengers on JAL's daily direct services between Tokyo (Narita) and Delhi to connect with Vistara to 11 Indian cities. To further enhance its presence in Japan, Vistara has appointed Air System Inc. (ASI) as its new General Sales Agent (GSA) in the country. ASI will now provide Vistara with reservations, ticketing and sales services. "Japan is among the fastest growing travel markets in the world and the origin of significant business and leisure travel in India," says



Phee Teik Yeoh
CEO
Vistara

are thrilled to have established a presence in Japan through the partnerships with Japan Airlines and ASI. With Vistara's growing domestic network, we look forward to providing seamless con-



Phee Teik Yeoh, CEO, Vistara. "Cities like Tokyo and Osaka account for the majority of traffic coming to India and this trend is expected to grow progressively with the strengthened cooperation between both countries. We

nectivity for Japanese customers to and from various parts of India." In the coming months, Vistara plans to open a new lounge at Delhi Airport, add new aircraft and launch new domestic routes.

Kolkata to Varanasi on a river cruise

Since 2009, Heritage River Cruises, and now its sister company, Heritage River Journeys, have sought to bring diverse historical and life experiences for contemporary travellers on river cruise ships.

Heritage River Cruises and Heritage River Journeys have sought to imagine diverse historical and life experiences for travellers on their cruise ships, the RV Bengal Ganga and the MV Ganges Voyager. The managing director of these companies, Raj Singh, started to explore river cruising in India in the 1990s but earnest exploration of the waters began in the mid-2000s. With the help of the Inland Waterways Authority of India, Inland Water Transport of the Government of West Bengal and numerous individuals, he delved into the possibilities of cruise tourism.

Sailing on an IWAI survey vessel, he planned an itinerary and imagined anew the possibilities of starting passenger cruising from Kolkata to Varanasi after nearly a break of more than a 100 years. Pontoon bridges, varying levels of water, different regimes of state and central government taxation and the



Photograph by: Debanjan Das © Heritage River Journeys

lack of infrastructure were just some of the difficulties that the companies and their ships have encountered and dealt with to deliver a tourism experience that is of a very high standard. Each ship has 28 cabins, a dining room, a bar, a spa, and viewing decks. There is a crew of 35 on each vessel which maintains and services the ship and its passengers. The Bengal Ganga is an expedition river craft, made entirely out of Burma teak and iron. It sails from Kolkata to Patna and downstream to Kolkata between

October and late March when the river's waters are plentiful yet calm. The Ganges Voyager, chartered for the next four years by the international tourism organisation Haimark, is a hotel on water, with suites and interior decoration reminiscent of the Raj. It sails between Kolkata and Murshidabad once a week.

A new vessel, the Ganges Voyager II, is about to be launched in 2016. With all three traversing the river, approximately 3,500 passengers a year will travel to this lit-

tle explored part of eastern India. During all this growth, the companies have tried to keep the environmental and social impact of tourism on the communities along the river to a minimum. Local transport and local forms of culture are part of the tourist's 'India' experience.

The ships are staffed with crew from different parts of the country, of diverse social backgrounds and attract intrepid travellers who wish to see the Ganga for its famed mysticism. All commercial ventures need to make money. But how we make that money is equally important. Our collective vision is to build companies that do their business honourably, in an ecologically thoughtful way, as well as bring pleasure and the security of a good livelihood and great travel experiences to many.

Annapurna Garimella
Vice President
Heritage River Journeys

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London gets third AI flight from Delhi

■ Air India will start a third frequency between Delhi and London from November 1, 2015. The flight will operate daily with a B-777-200LR aircraft. There is already a daily flight from Mumbai making this the fourth daily flight between India and London.

The national carrier will commence operations between Mumbai and Diu from October 26, 2015. The state carrier had



approached various State Governments to operate flights to Tier II and Tier III cities under Viable Gap Funding (VGF).

Subsequently, the government of Diu has shown a keen interest and a 72 seater, ATR 72-600 aircraft will start operations on the Mumbai-Diu route. Other state governments have also shown their interest and are in the process of finalizing the terms of operations under the VGF route.

AP's 'Epic Scheme' for agents

Andhra Pradesh Tourism is all set to come up with a new Buddhist Circuit and backwater destination. Neerabh K Prasad, Principal Secretary-Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, discusses its new products and 'Epic Scheme' that urges travel agents to partner with the state to develop tourism.



KANCHAN NATH AND SAMAPTI DAS

Q What are the new initiatives that Andhra Pradesh Tourism is taking?

The Chief Minister recently launched the Tourism Mission document in Vijaywada prescribing the 5, 10 and 15 years' goals. In the five years' goal, we aim to double our tourist arrivals. We are targeting 173 million tourists by 2020. The tourism policy was also launched which has a lot of incentives and operating benefits. For example, now VAT will be at uniform five per cent for all the tourism infrastructures. This will be for the existing as well as the new units. We are targeting nearly ₹ 10,000 crore investments in the next few years in the tourism sector itself.

Q What are the special offers you plan to introduce for travel agents?

We have introduced a new scheme in the tourism policy called the 'Epic Scheme'. Any travel agent who wants to partner with Andhra Pradesh or the AP Tourism Development Corporation or any other entity provid-



“Any travel agent who wants to partner with Andhra Pradesh or any other entity providing tourism service in the state, will be fully supported by us through awareness, Fam trips and participation in various exhibitions, so that they can become effective stakeholders.”

Neerabh K Prasad
Principal Secretary-Tourism,
Government of Andhra Pradesh

ing tourism service in the state, will be fully supported by us through awareness, Fam trips and participation in various exhibitions, so that they can become effective stakeholders. I would appeal through you to travel agents who want to contribute in any manner to tourism development in Andhra Pradesh to become a member of the 'Epic Scheme.'

Q Are you introducing any new product for the international market?

We are introducing two major products for the international market. One is the Buddhist Circuit. Everyone knows the traditional circuits of Bodhgaya, Sarnath in India and Kushinagar, Lumbini in Nepal. But in China, Korea or Japan, they follow the

Mahayana sect of Buddhism which began in Amaravati— our new state capital. We have fabulous Buddhist monuments and museums there. There is a tremendous demand for this new product including the Nagarjuna Konda which is the remains of the erstwhile Nagarjuna University, Amaravati and the surrounding areas. The second product is targeted to the Hindu diaspora all over the world. People know the importance of Tirupati but find it difficult to visit. So, we are offering an integrated product which will include airport transfers, temple darshans and pujas, all taken care by AP Tourism.

Q What are the products you offer to attract domestic tourists?

There are two new products for the India market also. One is 'Another Backwaters'. Everyone knows about Kerala, so we are offering Konaseema surrounded by East and West Godavari. There are a number of hotels and house boats around the Godavari delta. We are also positioning Visakhapatnam as a new beach destination of India and developing a number of beaches there.

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Govt support must for inbound growth

With a boost in domestic air connect and airport infrastructure, road transportation and enhanced convention ability, Saurabh Rai, Area Managing Director, Preferred Hotels and Resorts, says an increase in inbound tourists to India is certain.



TT BUREAU

QWhat are your expectations from WTM London?

WTM continues to be one of the most relevant travel and tourism platforms worldwide. Hoteliers eye this forum for critical business introductions, building new relationships, negotiating and transacting business. Our global portfolio of independent member hotels and resorts has always exhibited a strong interest in participating at WTM. Particularly for singular hotels, such a platform provides a relevant business opportunity to

deals and packages in right proportions, have been instrumental in attracting inbound tourism. India got few of the vital travel components together early in time and the first sub-segment to do so was the upscale to luxury hotel segment. It is heartening to witness a tremendous boost in other related segments such as domestic air connect and airport infrastructure, road transportation and enhanced convention capability.

QWhich are the most popular destinations in India today for inbound tourism?

There are a certain set of primary inbound destinations within the country that range from the Golden Triangle up North, Goa on the West coast and Kerala down south. State Tourism Boards have been playing an important role in accentuating their own tourism attractions, showcasing cultures, gourmet, history, landscape

and wildlife. International travel to India has been evolving and there is a segment of repeat visitors to India who are now going beyond the obvious itineraries.

QDo you offer any special deals or packages to the travel agents?

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value the support from our travel trade partners and are committed to provide them with offers from world over. We are dedicated to timely commission payments, up-to-date information, and outstanding service. We offer an exclusive monthly e-communication for travel agents. The itinerary features special programs and promotions as well as news and updates on our hotels and resorts.



Saurabh Rai
Area Managing Director
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maintain contact and meet a large qualified diasporas of travel professionals globally.

QAre you expecting a growth in India inbound tourism in 2016?

We are bullish on inbound travel prospects for India. Backed by a stable socio-economic environment, as India is seen as one of the foremost destinations for international investment and positive travel sentiment, we are hopeful that India will witness a positive growth, both in business and leisure inbound travel. With tangible support from the Central Government on strategic initiatives like e-Tourist Visa facility, it is quite realistic to expect larger number of arrivals into the country.

QWhat are the factors that help the most in attracting tourists to India?

All platforms like travel marts, Incredible India advertising, roadshows, online travel sites, word of mouth, good

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Railways' App services

The Minister of Railways launched a number of IT initiatives that reduce the waiting time and also benefit the railways by helping them cope with higher ticket sales using lower investments.

AHANA GURUNG

Following the Prime Minister's Digital India vision, Indian Railways recently launched a number of IT-enabled passenger services through video conferencing. Present on the occa-

of Northern Railway from today. About 50 Currency-cum-coin-cum-card Ticket Vending Machines (CoTVMs) are now functional over various stations. I am also happy to inaugurate the Currency and Coin Operated Ticket Vending

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Dadar Central, Panvel, Thane and Lokmanya Tilak Terminus, Andheri, Mumbai Central, Borivali, Dadar Western, Dadar Central, Vasai Road, Bandra, New Delhi and Nizamuddin stations on Northern Railway, Western Railway and Central Railway. Paperless Season tickets on suburban sections of Western Railway, Central Railway and New Delhi-Palwal Section of Northern Railway can also be booked through the app.

The Railway Minister also launched the Train Enquiry mobile app on iOS which was created by Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS). The mobile app is based on the National Train Enquiry System (NTES) which provides information on real time train status through various interfaces like nationwide unique rail enquiry number 139, website, mobile interfaces, touchscreens, face-to-face enquiry and display boards at stations.



sion, Minister of Railways, **Suresh Prabhakar Prabhakar** unveiled following the new IT initiatives and said, "Moving ahead in the direction of making Digital India, today, I am happy to inaugurate the System for Paperless Unreserved Tickets, Paperless Season Tickets and Paperless Platform Tickets through mobile phones, in the Mumbai Suburban system of WR and CR and Delhi - Palwal section

Machines (CoTVMs), being installed at various stations of Central and Western Railway," he elaborated.

Through the UTS, passengers can now avail paperless unreserved ticketing services through mobile phones on suburban stations over Central Railway. Furthermore, paperless platforms tickets can also be booked for stations like

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Odisha Tourism on the anvil

A recent World Bank report states that Odisha is the seventh friendliest state in India to do business in. The state government's newly launched Industrial Policy Resolution 2015 adds to the tourism policy and provides many fiscal benefits for investors.

TT BUREAU

An Odisha investors' conference, organised by Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) in Delhi, highlighted the "ease of doing business" in the state. The Odisha Tourism Policy of 2013 declares tourism to be a means of economic and inclusive growth. Aiming at the sustainable tourism development of the state, the policy invites all stakeholders to participate in the development of tourism.

L N Gupta, (IAS), Principal Secretary to Government, Skill Development & Technical Education Department & Tourism Department, said, "We are in the process of amending the Tourism Policy 2013 after IPR 2015 has come out but for the time being you can look at either policy. IPR 2015 announces tourism as the priority sector, and it is just about 15 days old. Tourism shall also



be the focus sector for the state for the next five years along with auto, agro, food processing, IT, pharma and hand-crafts. It aims at transforming Odisha into a more vibrant and industrialised state."

Talking about infrastructure and connectivity he said, "The state capital is Bhubaneswar and the older parts of the city are 2,600 years old. There are more than 300 temples. The new

Bhubaneswar is one of the first planned cities of India like Chandigarh. Earlier there used to be one flight, today there are six flights from Delhi, five flights to Kolkata. More than 40 flights come to Bhubaneswar. In fact Air Asia is also thinking of connecting Bhubaneswar directly to Malaysia. Air India has already started an international flight to Abu Dhabi from Bhubaneswar. The headquarters of the South Eastern railways is in Odisha and numer-

ous fast trains are connected to Bhubaneswar. It also has well maintained national highways—NH5 and NH6."

About development plans, he said, "There is a Special Tourism Area near Puri, which is called the Samukha project. The initial plan was to develop 3,000 acres of land. Against that, 972 acres has already been acquired and is in the government's possession. IFC is working as a consultant. Around

448 MBA power is available, water is assured and connectivity in terms of road infrastructure is in place. The construction of the boundary wall is going on. It will be ready for allocation as soon as the PPP model is set."

TS Walia, former President, FHRAI, said, "Odisha has historically seen major transformations in the ancient past and now is the time for another major transformation in development in terms of

the tourism set-up and by meeting international standards specially with regard to safety, security and hygiene. This is possible with Public Private and Peoples Partnerships (PPP model). I have been visiting Odisha for many years. Whatever endeavours I have undertaken have been a great success with the blessings of Lord Jagannath. The more investors experience Odisha, the more they will understand that the government likes to showcase the tourism and hospitality potential."

Well-connected

- ↳ The headquarters of the South Eastern railways is in Odisha and numerous fast trains are connected to Bhubaneswar
- ↳ It also has well maintained national highways—NH5 and NH6

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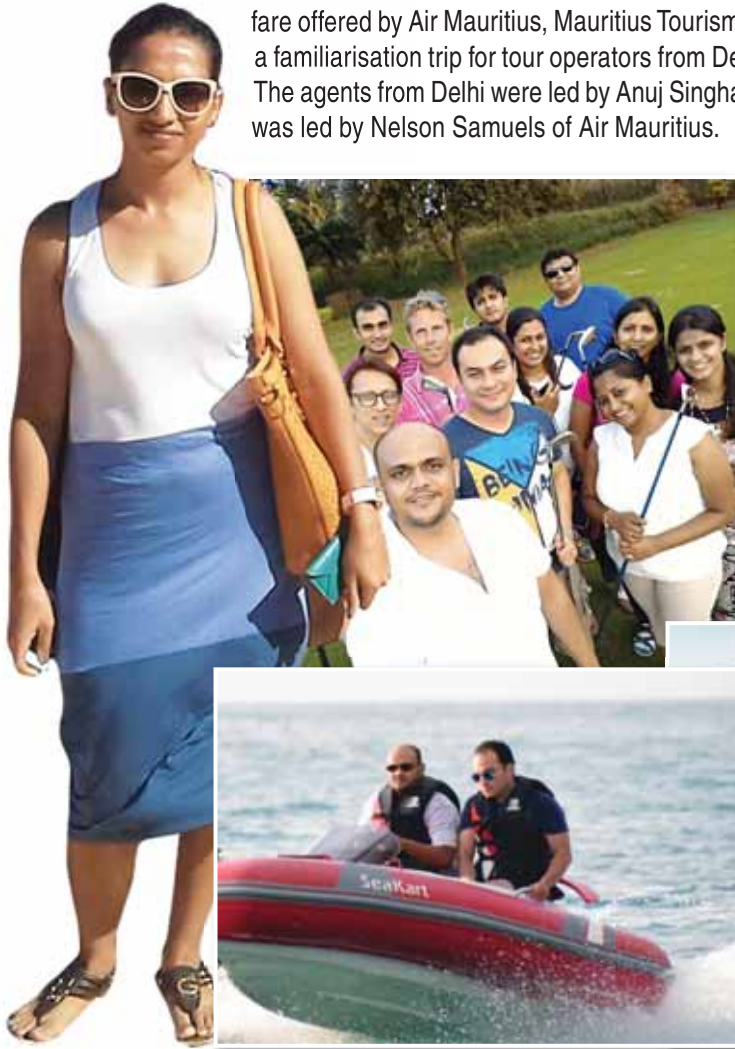
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Agents let their hair down in Mauritius

To build on the success of the recent roadshow and take advantage of the promotional fare offered by Air Mauritius, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) organised a familiarisation trip for tour operators from Delhi and Mumbai in September this year. The agents from Delhi were led by Anuj Singhal of MTPA India, and the Mumbai Group was led by Nelson Samuels of Air Mauritius.



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India a market of choice

Jean Michel Cassé, Senior Vice President, Operations – AccorHotels, India, elaborates on some of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives started by the company.

TT BUREAU

Q Kindly elaborate on the CSR initiatives of AccorHotels India.

AccorHotels has been recognised for its corporate social responsibility initiatives by 'Team France' under the education category for the 'Accor Centre of HOPE' by H.E. François Richier, French Ambassador to India. The 'CSR Impact Prize' recognises the contributions of French MNCs in India and bestows awards to recognise the contributions made by them through radical and transformative changes in the development arena of innovation and excellence.

The Accor Centre of Hope provides vocational training to improve the employability of young women and men from unprivileged backgrounds in the Delhi-National Capital Region and has attracted and fostered talents by developing, training and motivating people to work in the service sector.



Jean Michel Cassé
Senior Vice President
Operations – AccorHotels, India

Sustainable development and solidarity are also key priorities at AccorHotels. The group has taken a strong stand on the planet and the communities hosting its hotels with its Planet 21 programme.

Q In your opinion, how has Indian tourism industry changed over the past decade?

As the domestic and global travel continues to grow with the rise of the middle class, we particularly see growth emerging in Tier II and III markets. Given the current demand-supply dynamics,

favourable economic and political situation, the sector is on the crossover of a much expected growth trajectory.

Early signs from the government to drive tourism through several strong policy initiatives such as the introduction of e-Tourist Visa and specific funds for developing tourist destinations could bring in stronger demand, supporting the industry over the next 12 to 18 months. India is on a strong economic rebound and remains the market of choice.

Q What are some of your new initiatives?

The group plans to double the network of hotels in coming years, across all brand categories. We have invested in various brands at strategic locations with the luxury and upscale segment such as Sofitel Mumbai BKC and Pullman Delhi Aerocity that is scheduled to open in November this year.

Gourmet dining in Chennai

Located 30 kms from the Chennai International Airport, the InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram offers world-class accommodation to discerning guests.

TT BUREAU

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) recently announced the opening of InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort in India. The resort will join InterContinental Mumbai Marine Drive to be the second



ment, "The opening of InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort marks an important milestone in IHG's journey in India. Chennai is a city that boasts the perfect mix of diversity and culture with a glossy layer of cosmopolitan glamour. Whether a

spa that offers relaxing therapies including indigenous sea-inspired beauty treatments and yoga. The resort's expansive and versatile indoor and outdoor venues are ideal for conferences, meetings, and special occasions such as wedding celebrations. InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram offers three gourmet dining options which includes The Melting Pot with three live kitchens that serves the best in European, South Asian and Peninsular Indian cuisine, a Chinese Specialty Restaurant, and Tao Of Peng & Lounge Bar.

hotel under the company's luxury portfolio in India. The resort is located in a picturesque location overlooking the Bay of Bengal on East Coast Road, making it one of the most exclusive properties in the city and joins the award winning InterContinental Hotels & Resorts around the world.

Shantha de Silva, Head of South West Asia, IHG, com-

business trip, corporate retreat or a leisure break, our newest property in Chennai will offer unrivalled facilities and access to many cultural and business opportunities in one of the country's biggest cities."

The 105-room resort offers a full range of facilities and amenities to guests, including an outdoor swimming pool, a fully-equipped health club and

Vijai Singh, GM, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort, said, "The InterContinental brand is trusted around the world for its superior service which guests have come to know and appreciate. The resort will be one of the first five star beach resorts on the east coast of India and is sure to offer unforgettable memories to the guests visiting the city."

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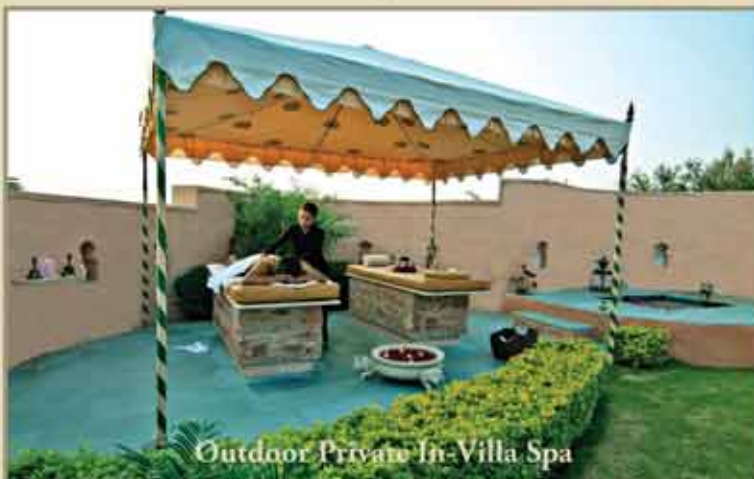
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Next-gen agent has arrived

On the sidelines of the Travelport e-volve Middle East Summit 2015 at the Shangri-La Bosphorus Hotel, in Istanbul, Turkey, **TRAVTALK** spoke to **Matthew Powell**, Senior Director, India, Travelport, about the Indian market and the new age travel agent.



KANCHAN NATH FROM ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Powell has been working with Travelport now for over 20 years. He wears the product hat as well as the technology hat and also manages India from a commercial perspective. Bullish on the Indian market, he says, "We have seen the Indian market grow roughly

back to Travelport, realising the value we offer in the way we market their product. We offer a rich and wide range of content and we have a global presence. I feel that is similar to what is going to happen in India, India has a lot of LCCs, IndiGo for example have

content that they have not necessarily had before, for eg niche exclusive boutique properties, smaller properties. Airlines have changed so much that the product that the airline offers on each plane in each airline is different. Travel agents need to have access to this kind of information while doing the bookings for potential clients. They should be able to pinpoint the value-add of each ticket in terms of space, type of bed, bar, shower, etc. they should be able to see pictures and videos and actually say to that traveler, that it's an overnight flight but it's not a flat bed."

He concludes by saying, "We are seeing such a trend to move towards the mobile platform. Trend is to research for trips on the mobile and go back to PC and book for corporate travel. The key remains for the GDS backend to provide the extensive range of information. Travel agents need now to become experts, fully aware of activities and more. It is truly now the consultancy side that the agent now brings to the table."



“We believe that the next generation travel agent is already here. They do need to have more information. They need to be one step ahead of travellers. The travelers today are savvier than they have ever been.”

Matthew Powell
Senior Director, India,
Travelport

by 10 to 12 per cent Year-on-Year with regard to air travels. Going forward with the GDP growth that the Government is trying to achieve, we do not see this number reducing." Elaborating on the potential of the market he says, "Every traveller on a train in India is a potential air traveller for the market if the correct price point is given to them. With the LCCs this is being achieved and will lead to an increase in the number of domestic flyers."

Giving his perspective on the European market vis-à-vis India, Powell says, "Just recently, Ryanair has gone

recently ordered more than 200 new aircrafts. Even as the domestic travellers rise, the high yield is going to come from the US, Europe, Asia and more and that is where the GDS model really makes sense, in providing the global reach."

Talking about the next generation travel agent, he exclaims, "We believe that the next generation travel agent is already here. They do need to have more information. They need to be one step ahead of travellers. The travellers today are savvier than they have ever been. They need an access to

Next-gen Agents

- ➔ Need to be one step ahead of travellers
- ➔ Need an access to content that they have not necessarily had before
- ➔ Should be able to pinpoint the value-add of each ticket

Korea's Jeju Island forays into India market

■ To promote Jeju Island in Korea as an ideal destination for Indian tourists, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, Jeju Tourism Organisation, Jeju Tourism Association and Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau organised a press conference on October 14, 2015.

Jeju Island is promoting the destination for honeymoon, leisure, MICE, adventure sports, medical and wellness tourism and cultural heritage site. Discussing the role of agents, Lee Jung Hwan, General Director, Culture, Tourism & Sports Bureau, Jeju

Special Self-Governing Provincial Government, said, "As India is a relatively new market, travel agents are an important aspect of business. We are providing incentives and special offers to travel agents in India to help promote the destination better. As of now we have around 1,000 agents working with us."

Korea saw a total of 14,201,516 visitors in 2014 out of which only 1.04 percent were Indians, amounting to an increase of 19.9 percent over 2013. Jeju Tourism Organisation is now promoting Jeju as an independent

destination. The number of Indian tourists visiting Jeju Island was recorded at 1,165 in 2014, which spent \$1,250.50 in Jeju Island.

Jeju Island is also targeting business travellers, offering various incentives to boost MICE. "Corporates can have meetings and events in caves, in traditional houses, near the beach or in gardens at Jeju. We have the ICC Convention Centre and are looking at more properties to have team building exercises at the scenic location," said Jin-hun CHO, Marketing Director, Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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Kerala MICE for Japanese CEOs

■ Kerala Tourism has sought the support of the Japanese government in turning Kerala into a MICE destination for chief executive officers (CEOs) of prominent companies in Japan and those based in India. "The honourable Ambassador of Japan **Takeshi Yagi** has assured his full support towards Kerala government's efforts to transform the state as a MICE destination for the business heads from his country," said **G Kamala Vardhana Rao**, Tourism Secretary, Kerala. The Kerala Government had slashed the luxury tax on auditoriums and convention centres having rents above ₹ 20,000 from 20 per cent to 10 per cent in the budget last year to attract MICE tourism. Yagi suggested a meeting of the representatives of the Indo-Japanese Chamber of Commerce, an independent business body, in Kerala to explore the possibility of inviting investment in hospitality and tourism sector in the state.



Kamala Vardhana Rao
Tourism Secretary, Kerala

Praising Kerala's natural beauty, Yagi also offered his embassy's support in promoting Ayurveda in Japan. "He pointed to the tremendous opportunity for promoting Ayurveda, which is a time tested traditional medicinal system, among the people of Japan" said Rao. The meeting with the Japanese Ambassador along with Toshihiro Yamakoshi, Counsellor, Embassy of Japan in New Delhi on October 6, came before the Kerala Tourism roadshow in Tokyo on October 19.

Belmond showcases its 46 products

Belmond International recently held its first roadshow in Delhi and Mumbai. **Andrea Filippi**, Executive Director, Worldwide Sales, Belmond, says the travel agents extended a warm welcome to the delegation and showed a remarkable level of knowledge of the brand and its 46 products.



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Members demand commissions

Now that the dust has settled and the new team is in place, it is time to look at what the members of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) want from them. This poll was conducted before the election results were declared.



The new TAAI team needs to be a little more concerned about the small and medium agent members. They are looking mainly for two to three things: one is that the commissions should be restored. Secondly, the payment schedule should be changed from seven days to a fortnight again. These small agents are looking to the leaders to create more avenues from where they can generate more income."

Devesh Kumar Agarwal
Chairman (Eastern Region), TAAI, and MD, Victoria Travels



There are so many issues that the new team must look at. The weekly payment is one of the most urgent issues. The other worrying issue is that of the commissions. Even the LCCs aren't paying us commissions. Then there is web disparity which means that travellers are booking their tickets directly from the airline website and bypassing us. Let's see what the new team will do about these issues.

Narinder Singh
CEO, Narinder Tours & Travels



The main issue is that of the commission which was eliminated by airlines a few years ago. It is one thing that all of us unanimously want the new president to take up. Then there are other matters like the passport issue. The agent no longer has any authority to submit their clients' passports. These are the main issues that have affected the earnings of the travel agents.

Ashish K. Mittal
Co-Founder and CEO, TSC Travel Services

Today, the agents are going through lots of challenges. One of the major challenges is the commission itself. A couple of years ago the commission itself got eliminated. Now the biggest challenge for the new president is to revive the commission on one side and on the other side he will also have to guide the travel agents on how they can find various avenues to supplement their income.



Niranjana Gupta
MD, Navras Travels

All the members are now looking for a change. There is a yawning gap between what TAAI was and what it has become. The new team has its work cut out; it will need to raise TAAI back to its days of glory. It will also have to bring the members together and draw good participation from everyone. TAAI needs to be united and rise up high once again in the travel fraternity.

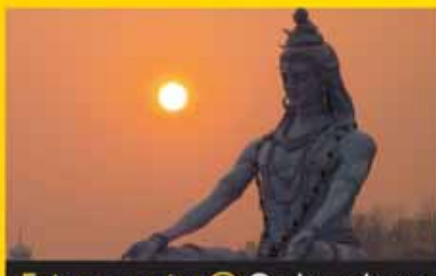


Tina Kanuga
Director, Bathija Travels

The last election was a real disaster, so first we need to unite all the members. We need to generate the same confidence that TAAI as an association used to instill among its members. So regroup everyone and put some three to four agenda in place for the new team so that they can re-instill faith back in TAAI.



Rajan Dua
MD, Udaan India



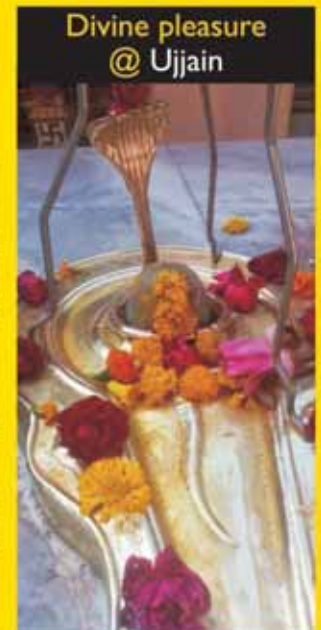
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Saxony : State of the Arts

A Tour through the Saxon Regions



Saxony – this sophisticated region is famous for its cultural and historical sights, its picturesque landscapes and traditional craftsmanship as well as the modern history of manufacturing. The metropolises of Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz are beautiful towns to discover. In the holiday regions, one can combine city trips with active, family and spa holidays. Also the typical cuisine and proverbial hospitality are reasons for spending holidays in Saxony. A holiday in Saxony is a holiday amidst 1,000 years' worth of history and heritage, with cultural breaks offering a chance to explore the legacies of famous composers, architects and artists. Saxony's holiday regions are ideal for combining city breaks with activity-based, family and wellness holidays both in summer and in winter.

There are over 500 museums in Saxony's holiday regions, towns and cities. Above all it is Saxony's exquisite artistic and cultural heritage that is appreciated by visitors from around the world. Music festivals, plays and internationally acclaimed art collections dominate culture in Saxony. Saxony is family friendly, cyclists and walkers, hikers, mountain bikers and motorcycle riders are all well catered for in the hills of Saxony, as are winter sports enthusiasts. Saxony has a broad range of grape varieties – including goldriesling which is only grown here. The majority of Saxony wines are drunk locally, a rarity in Germany. Wines from Saxony are known as rare gems because the Saxony wine region is the most north-easterly and one of the smallest in Europe.

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Worldhotels to push Lalit overseas

The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group partners with Worldhotels to strengthen their sales and marketing reach globally for their properties in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata.



ANKITA SAXENA

With presence in over 11 key destinations in India offering finest hotels, palaces and resorts, the Lalit Suri Hospitality Group is focusing on tapping the international market with its alliance with Worldhotels. Worldhotels offers 450 hotels in 250 destinations and 65 countries worldwide.

Discussing the genesis of the partnership, **Keshav Suri**, Executive Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, says, "The story of The Lalit and Worldhotels matched along the lines of ownership, history and personality. With the country being marketed globally, it was high time we took our brand to the global level." **Roland Jegge**, Executive Vice President, Asia Pacific, Worldhotels, says, "Lalit was a perfect match for us in terms of size and location of their properties which offer us an inven-

We are looking at redirecting client traffic to The Lalit website to retain the customer base

Roland Jegge
Executive Vice President Asia Pacific, Worldhotels

tory of many hotel rooms and business hotels with MICE facilities. With this partnership, we will help bring out The Lalit out to the world and share our story and DNA of the brands."

Explaining the collaboration with travel agents, Suri says, "We work well with travel agents and offer a loyalty programme for event management companies, embassies and travel agencies. We also offer commissions to our travel agents and work well with OTAs too." However, looking at the global scenario, Suri expressed the need to have a world recognised loyalty programme to improve business.

Jegge says, "We are looking at an overall addition of value in all segments be it business, leisure or MICE travel. We shall expand the properties in places where The Lalit may not be present currently and notch up the sales and marketing." Suri adds that through GDS, some non-negotiated

accounts and RFPs from countries which can afford suites and leisure travel, the hotels will be able to increase the ARR. Jegge discussed their plans to partner with travel agents to have preferred listing and list Lalit higher and leverage on their partnership. "We are looking at redirecting client traffic to The Lalit website to retain the

customer base," he added. Talking about the MICE facilities at The Lalit Hospitality Group, Suri adds, "We are a preferred destination for conferences, exhibitions, seminars etc, and 20 per cent of our business can be attributed to MICE. We will now take these MICE facilities to the global level."



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FITUR to showcase shopping & health

A major representation of the worldwide tourist offering will be put together for another year at FITUR, the International Tourism Trade Show, which brings forward the dates of its 36th edition to January 20-24, 2016.



FITUR, organised by IFEMA, will again prove to be the international tourism industry's largest business platform, for it attracts the most comprehensive exhibition of proposals and services from businesses, organisations and institutions from 165 countries and regions worldwide. This is why, with more than three months to go before it is staged, FITUR 2016 is intensifying the preparations for its upcoming staging in the confidence that it will repeat last year's magnificent results, which broke the record of participation with 12 per cent more international professional visitors. This means that over those five days 125,084 professionals from 139 countries visited the Trade Show, which boasted a total of 222,551 attendees including the weekend public.

One of FITUR's characteristics is its ability to adapt to market realities and to bring to participants the possibilities



offered by the new trends in tourism. In this regard, the International Tourism Trade Show is structuring its offering around the different spaces it has gradually developed and, in particular, the latest novelties, FITUR Shopping and FITUR Health, which were suc-

cessfully launched at the last staging in response to two sectors with significant growth potential.

The remainder of sections is proving to be equally effective in helping tourism professionals to find the key

to successfully confront the challenge of innovation in tourism management. Thus the fourth edition of FITUR Know How & Export, promoted by the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism, through SEGITTUR and in collaboration with ICEX España

Exportación e Inversiones (ICEX Spain Exports and Investments), highlights the most innovative solutions associated with tourism management in Spanish companies and developments and their potential in gaining access to markets abroad.

FITURTECH, hand in hand with ITH, the Hotel Technology Institute, is staging its 10th edition, bringing us the tourism of the future.

Also in collaboration with the ITH, and together with the World Tourism Organisation UNWTO, FITUR is organising the seventh staging of FITUR Green, which advances innovation and sustainability in the tourism industry as the way to drive competitiveness forward in both businesses and destinations, uniting current trends with consumer expectations and demands.

FITUR will boost its programme of B2B meetings, tailored appointments and scheduled agenda of contacts to facili-

tate encounters and the possibilities of commercial exchange and agreements –at the past staging, more than 5,000 scheduled meetings materialised at the Fair's B2B Space at the service of exhibitors and visitors, where multiple trade collaborations were closed. The FITUR B2B Hosted Buyer Workshop will again be staged, unfolding an intense schedule of personal, previously arranged appointments between participating companies and a broad selection of international hosted buyers.

Highlights

- FITURTECH, hand in hand with the Hotel Technology Institute, is staging its 10th edition, bringing us the tourism of the future
- FITUR is organising the seventh staging of FITUR Green, which advances innovation and sustainability in the tourism industry

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Wellness is Maha mantra

Taking a cue from its southern counterpart, Maharashtra is exploring ways to promote its newly-packed wellness products to the incoming tourist traffic.

HAZEL JAIN

While it hasn't really been able to package this product well yet, the state's AYUSH division – short for Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha & Homoeopathy – is keen on tapping the inbound traffic Maharashtra already receives. **Prof. K. R. Kohli**, Director of AYUSH, Government of Maharashtra, who is in charge of promoting this wellness product, says that AYUSH should be incorporated into the tourism industry just as Kerala has done.



Prof. K. R. Kohli
Director, AYUSH
Government of Maharashtra

Maharashtra contributes some revenue to the Government of Maharashtra," he says.

"Kerala has a lot of treatment centres, *panchkarma* and wellness centres and many Europeans and Americans come and stay there to get their necessary treatment – whether it is short term or long stay. Maharashtra too has a similar product but we haven't promoted it well. We are now trying to promote Maharashtra's AYUSH and wellness centres, its *panchkarma* centres so that the inbound tourism coming into

Prof. Kohli's aim is to not only popularise traditional remedies of Maharashtra through AYUSH but also contribute to a small share to the state's revenue. AYUSH is a government body in India and means "long life" in English.

"We are trying to become a nodal agency for Maharashtra where if any tour operator wants to tie up with any of the wellness centres they can come to us. We are in the process of estab-

lishing a certification system – diamond, gold, silver certification – for the center depending on the quality of their facilities. Once we do that, we know what facilities are available in which centres and then we can tie-up with the tour operators and inform them about these centres and the kind of facilities that they have. We want to inform international tourists coming into India about the health and wellness centres available in Maharashtra," he says.

Prof. Kohli adds that while it is not planning to conduct any roadshows, it will participate in all exhibitions related to travel and tourism, including international and domestic shows.

Think Fit

AYUSH is in the process of establishing a certification system for wellness centers depending on their quality of facilities

Now, Film City tours

Amidst announcements of a one-window system to get permits for film shooting in Maharashtra, the news is that Mumbai's famous Film City will be developed for tourism as well.

TT BUREAU

The Maharashtra government has been trying to use its assets, package it well and promote it to the rest of India and the world to attract more tourists. One such project involves developing Mumbai's famous Film City in Goregaon where most of Bollywood shoots its movies.

Vinod Tawde, Minister for Education & Culture, Government of Maharashtra, recently announced that he wishes to make Mumbai the 'entertainment capital of Asia'. "I don't think any city in any other country in Asia has such a large film and television industry like Mumbai. We will develop about 112 acres of land within the Film City which will not only have better facilities for film shoots and production but also allow tourists and promote tourism. We want to make Film City the place for shooting as well as a place for tourism that will not disturb the shoots," he said.

"We will develop about 112 acres of land within the Film City which will not only have better facilities for film shoots and production but also promote tourism."



Vinod Tawde
Minister for Education & Culture
Government of Maharashtra

These include amenities for tourists, entertainment avenues and hotels and F&B outlets apart from film shoots, pre and post production facilities, and skill development institutes. The minister added that they are just about to issue a global tender for this project.

This news comes amidst the announcement of a single-window clearance system for permissions to shoot films, television serials and advertisements in the entire state of Maharashtra. From a minimum of 27 applications, the state government has now brought

it down to a single online application. "If you apply for the shoot and that area includes the Mumbai Port Trust, then automatically the application will move to them - they need not apply separately," Tawde said.

The master plan of Film City and Bollywood museum under the PPP model has been submitted before the Infrastructure Committee of the Government of Maharashtra. The Government of Maharashtra has decided to appoint Film City Corporation as the nodal agency to co-ordinate this activity.

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Beachcomber owns & manages 8 luxury 4 star & 5 star properties in Mauritius & a 5 star property in Seychelles. Royal Palm, Dinarobin, Paradis, Shandrani, Trou aux Biches, Le Mauricia, Le Canonier, Le Victoria, & Sainte Anne (Seychelles)

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Agents are here to stay

Umang Narula, Chairman and Managing Director, India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), tells **TRAVTALK** how important offline travel agents are for their business.



TT BUREAU

QWhat are the recent developments at ITDC?

Looking at the future requirements of skilled manpower and employability in the tourism and hospitality industry, we have recently launched The Ashok Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management (AIH&TM)-Centre for Excellence at Hotel Samrat in New Delhi in affiliation with The National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHM-

Even in Q1, 2015-16 we continued the momentum generated in the last financial by posting profit yet again. The total turnover in quarter ending June 2015 stood at ₹ 105.96 cr as compared to ₹ 103.63 cr in the corresponding quarter last year.

QWhat will be strategies for 2016?

To increase the customer base we not only participate in fairs, shows and travel marts like WTM, ITB, ATM and IMEX etc but also engage with clients from corporate sector,

agents and tour operators are one of the most important sources to get foreign clientele i.e. the leisure travellers. To ensure that we meet all the demands of today's aggressive competitive market, the Ashok group of hotels offers special packages to travel agents. The market volatility differs from one region to another. Some markets are highly price sensitive as compared to others. Keeping in mind different market segments like Europe, the UK, USA, Far East etc, we work with various travel agents as per specific requirements of the markets they operate in.

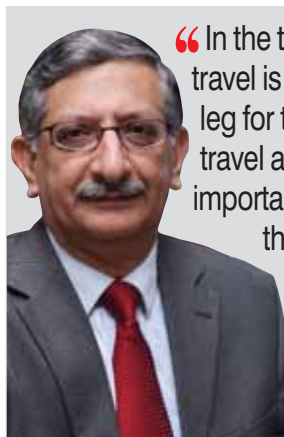
QHow important offline travel agents are to you in the era of online travel agents?

Even though the Internet has created revolutionary changes in the tourism industry, the travel agencies cannot be replaced. At the same time we cannot ignore the upcoming new businesses which OTAs have opened and therefore we have entered into agreements with most of the online travel agents. The volume of business that we are able to source from these OTAs has seen a tremendous growth.

At the same time, we strongly believe that offline travel agents play a vital role in contributing to the growing business of the Ashok group of hotels. The group business still comes through offline travel agents and hence these agents/associations are here to stay.

Lately, some of the travel agencies have forayed into the MICE market segment which brings a great benefit to our flagship hotel The Ashok in New Delhi as it is a popular MICE venue in the capital given its unmatched convention facilities and a huge inventory of 550 rooms.

“In the tourism industry if travel is considered as the leg for the industry, then the travel agents are the very important backbone of the whole system.”



Umang Narula
Chairman and Managing Director, India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)

CT) to offer B.Sc course in Hospitality and Hotel Administration (HHA). To promote our country's rich culture and heritage, ITDC has also implemented new Sound and Light shows at popular heritage sites across country. Recently we have installed a Sound and Light show at Delhi's Old Fort. It also uses the latest video-mapping technology which makes the narration realistic. Additionally, we have also opened Duty Free Shops at Mumbai and Paradip seaports. ITDC through its Ashok Tours and Travels division also intends to foray into cargo handling business to improve its turnover and bottom line.

QHow has the year 2015 been for you/ITDC?

The financial year 2014-15 has been an interesting year for ITDC. During the year FY 2014-15, ITDC posted a robust profit with an all round increase in the performance as compared to the previous financial years. The total turnover for FY 2014-15 stood at ₹ 504.19 crore as compared to ₹ 469.58 crore in the previous year 2013-14, clocking a growth of 7.37 per cent while the net profit before tax has increased by 226.48 per cent. In fact, the profit earned by ITDC during 2014-15 has been at an all time high in the last 7 years.

travel and tourism industry and through online media. To consolidate our presence in our target segment specific strategies are being chalked out for different verticals.

We are also designing special packages for specific segments by way of pro active engagement with customers in order to improve Occupancy Rates in our Hotels. To deal with the competitive environment we are marketing more aggressively than ever. Dynamic pricing, long term tie ups with targeted segments are some of the marketing initiatives that have been taken. In addition, we will very soon be launching a new brand campaign through different media in the country.

QHow closely are you working with travel agents/agencies/associations? Do you give them any special offers or incentives?

Travels agents, agencies and associations play a vital role in tourism and hospitality sector. It is rightly said that, 'In the tourism industry if travel is considered as the leg for the industry, then the travel agents are the very important backbone of the whole system.' ITDC has been working very closely with many travel agents/ agencies/ associations since decades. Travel

New Ventures

- ITDC has opened Duty Free Shops at Mumbai and Paradip seaports
- ITDC through its Ashok Tours and Travels division also intends to foray into cargo handling business to improve its turnover and bottom line



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Maharashtra on the right path forward

The three-day Maharashtra International Travel Mart (MITM) 2015 held in Mumbai was a perfect platform for the state government as well as Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) to showcase their products.

HAZEL JAIN



We have been working on a lot of tourism products to promote our state and I am happy to inform that we are also looking at the possibility of developing Mining Tourism in Maharashtra in some of the coal mines of Vidharba region in Chadrapur or Yavatmal area. We are currently in discussions with the Western Coalfields Ltd and we hope to enter into an agreement with them for Mining Tourism soon.

Paraag Jain Nainutia
MD, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation



We want MITM to be an annual event. We have 75 international buyers here for B2B meetings with the intention of showcasing our products and our culture. This has been taken from the idea of WTM London and ITB Berlin shows and we want to make this event as big as that. We want to promote Maharashtra on an international level through this platform with its 720 km coastline, Bollywood, tiger sanctuaries, Deccan Odyssey, Ajanta Ellora, the Lonar crater.

Satish Soni
Joint Managing Director, MTDC



We have revamped our beautiful Deccan Odyssey luxury train specially for MITM. Its exterior has been altogether changed with Warli paintings and other images that depict Maharashtrian culture. The rates for tourists however remain unchanged.

Swati Kale
General Manager, MTDC

Lavasa is an important part of Maharashtra's tourism roadmap and we had to be present at this first edition of MITM. We wanted our presence to be felt here specially since all the other important tourism players of Maharashtra were going to be here. We work very closely with MTDC specially when it comes to participating in exhibitions.



Bhupesh Kumar
Assistant VP (Tourism), Lavasa

The first edition of MITM was very well organised – it was compact with good number of participants and visitors. ITB will be celebrating 50 years in 2016 so we are gearing up for a bigger and better ITB next year. India as always will have a big presence with an entire hall. We are happy to have India coming back to ITB again and again.



Rika Jean-François
Commissioner (Corporate Social Responsibility), ITB Berlin

MITM has been a really good attempt at showcasing regional tourism by MTDC where they have tried to bring out the essence of Maharashtra. Today, you can't limit yourself to inbound or outbound tourism. We also have a big segment which is growing in terms of domestic tourism. We now even need to concentrate on cities beyond the obvious tourist circuits. It is not only Delhi-Agra-Jaipur; it's not just a few cities in Kerala. MTDC has also invited a few agents to go on Fam trips to showcase its products.



Gurjit Singh Ahuja
CEO & Co-Founder, Cruise Mantra



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Dreamliner for Oman Air

Boeing and Oman Air celebrate the delivery of the airline's first 787 Dreamliner, along with a suite of services to ensure ongoing efficiency and cost savings for its fleet.

TT BUREAU

As Oman Air's first Boeing 787 Dreamliner was finally delivered recently, the airline has announced that its first Dreamliner will be deployed to Saudi Arabia and Europe. The six 787-8s were ordered in November 2011 as part of the airlines' expansion plans.



Paul Gregorowitsch, CEO, Oman Air, says, "We are delighted to receive our first Dreamliner which, combined with Oman Air's award-winning service, will provide an excellent travel experience for our customers. Our decision to invest in this game-changing airplane underlines our

confidence in the 787 and the value it will add in terms of reliability, operational efficiency and comfort."

"We're proud to have Oman Air join our growing base of 787 customers in the Middle East and around the world," says Boeing Commercial Airplanes President and CEO Ray Conner. "Our partnership

with Oman Air dates back almost 15 years during which time the airline has been operating the 737 family. We're delighted to help introduce Boeing twin-aisle airplanes into its growing fleet," he said.

The 787 family has been designed by Boeing with superior effectiveness that allows the airlines to profitably open new routes to fly people directly where they'd like to go in exceptional comfort, keeping in mind Oman Air's overwhelming preference. The 787 family has opened more than 50 new non-stop routes around the world ever since it entered services in 2011 and is one of the most super-efficient families of commercial planes.

We are delighted to receive our first Dreamliner which, combined with Oman Air's award-winning service, will provide an excellent travel experience for our customers

Paul Gregorowitsch, CEO, Oman Air

VisitScotland woos Bollywood, honours SRK



Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan was invited to Scotland's capital by the prestigious University of Edinburgh to be conferred with the honorary degree of Doctor Honoris Causa. VisitScotland has researched and created a special online map, Bollywood Scotland, which highlights dozens of Scottish locations which provide the stunning backdrops for some of Bollywood's best-loved stars and most iconic musical sequences. In total, the map showcases 23 Indian films that have been shot in Scotland.



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10 new properties

Cygnett Hotels and Resorts is targeting to have 10 properties operational in India, Nepal and Bangladesh by 2016, says **Vikram Malhotra**, CEO & Co-founder, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts.

TT BUREAU

QHow do the agents work with Cygnett Hotels & Resorts? Are you offering any special packages or deals to the travel agent?

Travel agents are a key part of our distribution strategy. We have tie-ups with various travel agents all over India and we offer special and introductory rates for our properties. In addition, we offer support to our hotels from our regional sales and marketing teams in targeted feeder markets.

QWhat are your targets for the coming year?

We will have 10 operational properties in India, Nepal and Bangladesh by the end of 2016. We are coming up with hotels at Nepalgunj in Nepal and one more hotel in Assam. We will be launching our resort properties in Mussoorie and Digha, West Bengal. Some more projects are under discussion at various cities. We



Vikram Malhotra
CEO & Co-founder
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

are targeting all major business, industrial, tourists, pilgrimage locations. We are also actively targeting the Middle East from our office in Dubai.

QWhat are the target segments for the hotels?

We target both business and leisure travellers. Our hotels in Kolkata and Guwahati cater to business travellers while the property in Goa is ideally located for leisure guests. The MICE market is an attractive and fast-growing market. We intend to

offer extensive conference facilities at some of our upcoming properties to target this segment specifically. Our Summit Conference hall at Kolkata and Columbia at Guwahati have the capacity to hold around 200 people, where we offer banquet and conference facilities, meetings, conferences, training programmes, product launch, social gatherings etc.

QWhat kind of technology additions are you looking at for your hotels?

Our tie up's with the major global distribution systems allow our hotels access to over 6, 50,000 travel agents worldwide and our reservation engine allows for seamless website booking for our customers. In addition, we actively use social media to propagate business at our hotels. We are in the process of implementing a central reservation system to offer active support to our properties as well as an App to facilitate ease of bookings in our hotels.

Ballroom for 900 guests

Shangri-La, which ventured into India with its first hotel in Delhi more than a decade ago, has recently opened its second hotel with 397 rooms in Bengaluru.

MEGHA PAUL

Banking on Silicon Valley

Shangri-La Hotel and Resorts is a well-known brand internationally and with over 90 properties, it is well received abroad. Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru is their second venture in India, the first being in Delhi. With two hotels and upcoming projects in India, we aim to position the brand as the ideal choice for both business and leisure travellers. Located in the heart of the city at the central business district, the hotel is perfectly positioned and caters to all needs of business travellers. The room rate starts from ₹ 8,000 for a deluxe type room exclusive of taxes.

New offerings

Besides an F&B destination, Shangri-La Hotel Bengaluru will also feature as a destination to bask in grandeur with its unique packages offering distinctive luxury experiences. Furthermore, our design elements with a grand



Jens Corder
General Manager
Shangri-La Hotel Bengaluru

upscale finish and contemporary styling features are an attraction in their own right. Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru redefines luxury, hospitality blending stylish design and innovation incorporating guestrooms, function and meeting venues, signature restaurants, bars and spa with the unique blend of contemporary Indian hospitality. Located at the prestigious blue ribbon address of Palace Road Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru brings together the renowned hospitality of Shangri-La with the legendary Indian cultural chic. Showcasing the city's

largest guestrooms and an enviable inventory of 30 suites all with spectacular views across the city.

MICE matters

Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru offers comprehensive meeting and event facilities, with seven flexible function rooms with a pre-function area covering a total space of 1,996 square metres. It also has a dedicated events team to assist in planning events from beginning to end with style and attention to detail. For conferences of up to 900 guests in theatre-style seating, the hotel's Grand Ballroom is the newest and largest meeting destination among premium hotels in the city. In addition to the state-of-the-art conferencing technology and tailor-made catering services, Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru offers a wide range of business and secretarial support services. A dedicated glass elevator connecting the lobby and banquet spaces serves as an added convenience for guests.

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India needs more ports for cruises

Sean Treacy, Managing Director, Singapore and Southeast Asia, Royal Caribbean Cruises, speaks about the fleet of ships to be launched and the first-ever marketing collaboration with the Singapore Tourism Board and Changi Airport Group.



VAISHALI DAR

Q*Tell us about Royal Caribbean Cruises' business plans for India.*

There's a lot going on in Royal Caribbean Cruises globally. With 22 ships in our fleet, we will be adding one of the largest cruise ships in the summer of 2016 called 'Harmony of the Seas' based in Barcelona. This is an ideal ship for the Indian cruise market. Another important billion dollar ship will be 'Explorer of the Seas' which will cruise from Europe to Asia, stop in Kochi, go for a three-

We have entered into an agreement with the Singapore Tourism Board to cooperate with us to spend more in terms of marketing dollars to promote cruise in South East Asia and in India. Royal Caribbean International has signed a first-ever multi-million dollar marketing collaboration with the Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

and Changi Airport Group (CAG) to promote cruising out of Singapore. And in turn, attract the cruise line's largest number of overseas fly-cruise guests.

Q*What is the growth rate of cruise tourism in India?*

The overall total cruise market is about 100,000 cruisers annually. We can triple the

figure over the next three to four years with the growth of cruising in South East Asia, which is huge opportunity for the Indian market. There is a growing awareness of the cruise market, which is being driven by TIRUN Travel Marketing Team and we need to build the market in support of travel and trade partners.

Q*Has there been growth in the demand of cruise vacations from India?*

Yes, future business can triple. This year has been a record year as we have doubled the growth.



Sean Treacy
Managing Director, Singapore and Southeast Asia, Royal Caribbean Cruises

We have over 40 cruises with three to five cruise nights, which is ideal for the Indian cruise market as it will help drive a lot of growth in this market

night cruise to Singapore and then head to Beijing with 4,000 passengers. Next year, we are going to have the longest season ever out of Singapore. We have over 40 cruises with three to five cruise nights, which is ideal for the Indian cruise market as it will help drive a lot of growth in this market.

There are a few things we need to work on to build local India cruise departures. We need to have more ports for cruise departures and better infrastructure. We should be able to take large ships as the average cruise length is three to five nights in India, which can be done through an intra-India cruise. Since you can't have the same kind of cruise experience due to tax regulation and there's no duty-free shopping, tax on beverages as in a normal cruise, so we have to make all these into viable options.



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Exploring Central Asia

Amit Sharma, General Sales Manager, Travels Mantra, talks about promoting Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, future plans of the company and its relations with travel agents.



Talking about the initiative, Sharma says, "We have come up with the Russia CIS series as a flagship product for FIT, MICE and family tours. We are also promoting Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, also known as the 'Switzerland of Central Asia'. We are the first tour operators in India to organise a group tour of 60 people on direct flight to this destination. Bishkek is being promoted as a destination to look forward to for MICE and FIT."

On the company's association with travel agents, Sharma explains, "We offer the best discounts from our end to the travel agents and clients. Travels Mantra has been catering to the B2B segment since its early days and are now among the top B2B travel networks with a reach of over 20,000 travel agents. Travels Mantra now acts as both B2B and B2C platform."

Talking about the company, Sharma adds, "Travels Mantra



Amit Sharma
General Sales Manager
Travels Mantra

was formed to revolutionise and redefine the quantitative business in Uzbekistan and India. We believe in providing full satisfaction to our client and travel agents who work with us." Having completed 10 years in the industry, Travels Mantra operates its own travel agency licensed by the Ministry of Tourism of Uzbekistan and Certified by Euro Asia Standard and Quality. Travels Mantra is a fast growing online portal and a brand of Amro Voyage. "We support and work on all domestic and international

flight bookings and hotel bookings to make the perfect holiday. The transparent pricing and seamless operations are complimented with best personalised services for our partners," says Sharma.

Travels Mantra operates from Central Asia at Tashkent, Uzbekistan apart from other locations. "We are a leading inbound tour operator dealing with the Middle East, Asia Pacific and European countries. The local office in Tashkent provides our B2B partner and clients more reliability and comfort," adds Sharma.

Explaining the packages that the company is charting out, Sharma says, "Our Uzbekistan team is working on various itineraries for Silk Road. The Indian team is working to popularise the unique historical destination in the Indian market. We have options of package combination with 'Five Stan' countries which include Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan."

All-suite villa resort in Munnar

Aiana Hotels & Resorts has signed a management agreement with Moonriver Resorts to operate Aiana Munnar – A Moonriver Resort. The property is scheduled to open in 2016.



Aiana Munnar – A Moonriver Resort is an all-suite villa resort spread across 20 acres of lush greenery. The resort is



Amruda Nair
Joint Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Aiana Hotels & Resorts L.L.C

set amongst natural springs, scenic views and will feature authentic dining experiences and an extensive Ayurveda-inspired spa.

Amruda Nair, Joint Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Aiana Hotels & Resorts, said, "The signing of Aiana Munnar - A

Moonriver Resort heralds an exciting journey for Aiana Hotels & Resorts in India. As our first property in India, Aiana Munnar – A Moonriver Resort solidifies our commitment to offer locally relevant design and authentic experiences. We are happy to partner with Alex and Tsarina Vacha as their expertise in design and commitment to preserving the natural environment is in line with Aiana's brand philosophy. As an upcoming leisure destination with great connectivity and natural beauty, Munnar lends itself to the creation of unique experiences that will be the hallmark of Aiana Hotels."

Alex Vacha, Managing Director, Moonriver Resorts, said, "Aiana Munnar – A Moonriver Resort has been envisioned as a grand retreat and luxury resort, created for the discerning traveller looking for a unique experience within a natural environment. A lot of detailing has gone into the finer aspects of the project and traces of local elements have been incorporated to stay true to the destination's rich heritage."

The development also offers a unique real estate opportunity for buyers to own a part of the luxury resort under the fractional ownership model.

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A window to promote luxury hotels

UK-based representation and PR Consultancy Window to Luxury (WTL) brings together some of the smaller, unique and luxury properties from exotic destinations in India. Sanjay Mechery, Director, Window to Luxury-London, tells TRAVTALK what is expected from WTM, the scope and attractions of these properties and their past international business.

TT BUREAU

QWhat are your expectations from WTM this year?

We have a carefully selected niche market segment of boutique properties in experiential places. We will be showcasing them under one roof-Window To Luxury (WTL), and capture the attention of the luxury tour operators who matter.

QWhat are the products that these properties are showcasing?

We have categorised our hotels into Wildlife, Wellness, Heritage and Beach Retreats. WTL has an exciting collection of properties, all different and unique in their own way. They may be small, large, established, luxurious, adventurous with wildlife experiences, etc but all have a unique story to tell or relate to, making them different and interesting for the guests.

QWhat kind of international business have these properties received in the past?

There has been a huge interest and surge in the enquiry levels. We have to commend our new Visa policy too which has eased a lot from the previous years. WTL has been in business only from the past two years and we have already seen a huge surge of over 30 per cent of the UK guests to The Serai alone over the last year which in many ways is a positive and welcome beginning.

QHow are these properties being promoted?

We work very closely with the travel trade, mainly with tour operators who decide the destiny of our products. We promote the properties by creating awareness of their story lines by means of one to one meetings with key decision makers of



“We work very closely with the travel trade, mainly with tour operators who decide the destiny of our products. We promote the properties by creating awareness of their story lines.”

Sanjay Mechery
Director, Window to Luxury-London

the industry, attending seminars, road shows, and exhibitions like WTM, Destinations, The Luxury Travel Fair, Adventure Travel Fairs, Bird Fair etc. We conduct training sessions with travel consultants across UK and are dedicated to a digital interaction with travel trade.

QAre you targeting only the UK and European market or are other markets also in the list?

WTL primarily looks at the UK and Irish Markets, but we are making inroads into the European sector too. As of now, we are covering entire UK

and Ireland by way of our marketing and meeting one to one strategy with tour operators and key decision makers.

QHow does a traveller differentiate between these properties and a brand?

Brands have done their jobs. There is a market for them, no doubt. I can confidently say that the products we represent are second to none with regards to the actual destination of the hotel or resort, positioning, service levels, food standards and above all there is a personal touch in terms of experience. That is where the storyline plays a main role and that indeed is an increasing trend amongst visitors.

QWhat advantage do these properties have when working with you?

WTL's strength lies in client representation, PR and

Social networking. We work closely with our clients to create clear and realistic plans customised to meet their requirements to ensure increased sales and growth in business. The UK market saw a huge vacuum thereby resulting in a genuine demand for a representation of such unique, boutique hotels and resorts from India. All these are some of the positive advantages WTL hotels enjoy.

Strong Start

- WTL has categorised our hotels into Wildlife, Wellness, Heritage and Beach Retreats
- It has witnessed huge surge of over 30 per cent of the UK guests to The Serai alone over the last year

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Wellness & yoga top selling points

► Contd. from page 3

of what India is like and what we have to offer." He adds that outdoor campaigns have been planned and the Incredible India branding will be sited all over the city. Video screens will also dis-

to make conscious efforts to re-establish the fact that India is indeed the land of yoga and wellness," he comments.

Billa seems positive about the reception and the outcome of WTM, more so

We are expecting to see good results especially since we are highlighting yoga and wellness tourism. This works as a strong advantage and I am sure we will receive an incremental inbound growth

Suman Billa
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

play the Incredible India commercial.

On speaking about the projection of India, Billa elaborates that the main focus is to promote the country as a wellness destination and the land of yoga. "After the Prime Minister's International Yoga Day initiative received such a huge response, we are highlighting the country as a wellness and yoga hub. We need

since London is hosting the prestigious travel trade event. He explains, "The UK is a fairly established market and Europe is familiar with India and its culture. We are expecting to see good results especially since we are highlighting yoga and wellness tourism. This works as a strong advantage and I am sure we will receive an incremental inbound growth," he wraps up.

Social network for the trade

Social networking is becoming an important tool for the travel trade in attracting clients and TravelLibro is leveraging this demand through its innovative product.



Travel planning is a lot more than just booking hotels before traveling. That's where TravelLibro's key feature of connecting with travel agents of specific specialisations comes in. This recently launched website allows a travel agent to register for free and gain access to a world of travellers. It's a highly customised App and the portal will connect agents who have expertise in the area of request to travellers.

Monish B. Shah, Chairman and Managing Director, TravelLibro, says, "TravelLibro not only provides free leads to an agent but is also a space to showcase their work and agency. We also provide each agent with detailed analytics on their followers, people who have viewed their profile, itineraries viewed and downloaded and a cutting edge lead monitor. Global travellers will now be able to reach the travel agents on TravelLibro.com!"

Shah says, "A traveller's experience will be completed



"TravelLibro not only provides free leads to an agent but is also a space to showcase their work. We also provide each agent with detailed analytics on their followers, people who have viewed their profile."

Monish B. Shah
Chairman and Managing Director, TravelLibro

with a trip which is well-planned. That's where the experience of the travel trade comes in. Gone are the days of taking trips in herds to show a location which has been replaced with online bookings and a traveller venturing out on their own. This has happened because agents around the world have not accepted the change globally to start doing more business online. TravelLibro brings the traditional way of booking holidays through an expert in a new-age technology-driven travel world."

TravelLibro's planner allows travellers to plan a holiday and share it with friends. To reach the last step of bookings

TravelLibro has included them in its strategy as opposed to booking portals. Users can now judge which agent they should plan their next holiday with based on their work, specialisations and followers.

Shah adds, "Since TravelLibro is a unique brand and one of the first to cater to travel social networking out and out, the strategy is to spread the word out. Agents, tourism boards and travellers will all be targeted at one event to spread awareness. We would like to educate the agents and tour operators across the globe on how they can improve their business sit-

ting in their office spending time on one link. At the same time tourism boards are high on our list to connect with in order to own their pages."

He emphasizes that TravelLibro's heart remains with the travellers and connecting them with experts. "Hence, the activities will be concentrated on getting quality genuine wanderers, globe trotters, honeymooners and every travel lover onto the platform to experience travel as never before. The effect of this will be seen directly by specific trade partners who would invest their time and effort for their content and presence on their portal more consistently. We also cover the best travel agents on our newsletters and social media regularly. We will also be participating in travel trade fairs regularly," Shah reveals.

TravelLibro's Travel Diaries helps agents track all their travel experiences on one single profile with the help of an interactive map, travel tracker, itineraries, journeys, travel memories, bucket list, bookmarks, etc.

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Travstarz's hosts agents in Thailand



A Fam trip was organised by Travstarz with Rayong Marriott Resort & Spa, a leading hotel for Indian destination weddings, MICE and leisure travel. The participants included leading travel agents from Delhi and Mumbai and explored two Islands of Rayong and Koh Samet in Thailand.

410 mn arrival into Asia

International arrivals into the Asia Pacific region continued strong growth momentum of previous years with a gain of 5.4% during the first half-year of 2015.



TT BUREAU

These are some of the top-level findings contained within the Annual Tourism Monitor 2015 Final Edition released by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA). Highlights of the Annual Tourism Monitor 2015 Final Edition include:

- International Visitors arrivals to the Asia Pacific region – as defined by the 45 destinations covered in this report – have collectively shown significant growth over the last five years rising from almost 455 million in 2010 to over 552 million in 2014.

- Asia continued its dominance in 2014, capturing more than 410 million foreign arrivals – a relative share of more than 74% - led by Northeast Asia with a share of 47% of total international arrivals into Asia Pacific.

- China, Hong Kong SAR and the USA were the



Mario Hardy
CEO
PATA

top three generating markets for all international arrivals within the Asia Pacific region in 2014, although there were significant deviations in that grouping from sub-region to sub-region.

- For early 2015, the 39 destinations in the Asia Pacific region with arrivals data for early 2015 show a collective gain of 5.4% year on year, compared to growth of five percent for the same destinations and periods of 2014.

- Early 2015 indicators for the key source market show that Thailand, Hong Kong SAR

and Japan captured more than 4.1 million additional arrivals from China, period over period in 2015.

- The impact of the contraction in the Russian outbound market is also considered in light of destinations across the Asia Pacific region in early 2015, with Thailand, Turkey and China being particularly negatively affected.

“Understanding the immediate impacts of changes in the foreign inbound markets allows us to contain the negative consequences and boost the positive. This Final Edition of the 2015 PATA Annual Tourism Monitor therefore provides an important first step in quantifying these changes and allowing us to make resource deployment decisions based on those quantification metrics,” said PATA CEO **Mario Hardy**. “Our publications along with PATAmPOWER are valuable tools for those planning and making important decisions in allocating their resources for the future.”

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Red-eye flights, new routes on SG

SpiceJet recently announced several new initiatives such as its very first red-eye flights within the domestic network on the Delhi-Bengaluru route, a new flight on the Delhi-Nanded route, along with serving Dubai direct from eight Indian cities.

TT BUREAU

Ajay Jasra, General Manager (Corporate Affairs), SpiceJet, says, "Red-eye is a popular concept in the west as they generally tend to be more economical than the day-time flights. More so, night flights are a smart option to business and other frequent travellers as they can conveniently attend their business meetings and take a late-night flight back thus avoiding road traffic during peak hours. We



Ajay Jasra
General Manager (Corporate Affairs)
SpiceJet

We are in the process of adding close to half a dozen red-eye flights in the coming winter schedule as they serve our objective of boosting connectivity 24x7

are the process of adding close to half a dozen red-eye flights in the coming winter schedule as they serve our objective of boosting connectivity 24x7."

On Delhi – Nanded sector, the flight SG 671 will operate this flight service twice a week on Monday and Thursday on this route. SpiceJet is the only airline to operate to and fro flights from Nanded and the airline is looking forward to carry innumer-

able Sikh pilgrims to visit the Hazur Sahib by offering them a convenient yet affordable mode of travel. SpiceJet launched direct flights to Dubai from Amritsar and Kozhikode and flight services will start from November 15, 2015.

On the Delhi – Bangalore sector, the airline will be oper-

ating 4 flights in a week i.e. Monday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. SpiceJet operates three flights currently on this route. The new red-eye flight on Delhi – Bangalore sector would be available at fares starting ` 3,899.

Dubai is one of the airline's six international destina-

tions after Bangkok, Colombo, Kabul, Male (Maldives) and Muscat. Services to Kathmandu, which had been temporarily suspended, will resume in the future, and additional international destinations will be announced in the coming weeks. With the launch of these flights, the airline will be serving Dubai

direct from eight Indian cities, Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Pune, Kochi, Madurai, Amritsar, and Kozhikode, with connections from dozens of more cities including Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru. To celebrate the launch, the airline is offering tickets at an introductory fare of ` 4,999 all-in one way

between Kozhikode - Dubai and Amritsar – Dubai. While SpiceJet will operate daily flights on the Kozhikode – Dubai route, flights on the Amritsar – Dubai route will operate on all days except Saturdays. It will be deploying its Boeing 737NG aircraft on the newly launched routes.



Spice in the air

- On Delhi – Nanded sector, the flight SG 671 will service twice a week on Monday and Thursday
- On the Delhi – Bengaluru sector, the airline will be operating 4 flights in a week i.e. Monday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday

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Hahn Air salutes top agents

Bengaluru witnessed its share of glitz as Hahn Air acknowledged its top-performing travel agencies and partners for 2015.

TT BUREAU

Hahn Air hosted an awards ceremony to celebrate its top-performing travel agencies and valued business partners for the year 2015. With India being one of Hahn Air's top 10 markets worldwide, the airline has established itself as one of the leading ticketing specialists across the sub-continent.

Over 50 travel agents from Bengaluru attended the prestigious awards ceremony. Hahn Air awarded a certificate of appreciation recognising its top 10 agencies for their continued support and for being among its top business partners. The top three agencies, based on the criteria of highest revenue per travel agency, took home trophies featuring Hahn Air's mascot 'Martin, the smart travel agent'.

The top agency for the evening was Riya Travel & Tours (India) while FCM Travel Solutions (India) was awarded second place. GBT India Private Limited took home the third trophy.



Kimberley Long-Urbanetz, Vice President (Sales & Agency Distribution), was there to present the awards along with Hahn Air's Director Global Account Management for Southern India, Bharat Kapoor. She said, "We are very optimistic about the Indian market as it holds great potential and Indian travel agencies have increased their business with Hahn Air to date by over 20 per cent in 2015 compared to 2014. Our outlook for 2016 is

extremely promising and we look forward to greater cooperation with our valued business partners."

To acknowledge the importance of the market, Hahn Air has established a dedicated service desk for India which can be reached 24 hours. There are also three regional Global Account Directors in charge of their respective regions for marketing and sales support and related activities.

Association Talk

TAAI forms 8 committees

The new team of Travel Agents Association of India took important decisions at its first Managing Committee meeting, including forming special committees that focus on specific areas.

TT BUREAU

Under the chairmanship of the newly-elected TAAI President **Sunil Kumar**, some important decisions were taken during the first Managing Committee meeting held from October 7-8, 2015 in Hyderabad.

One of them included forming committees with special portfolios. All portfolios assigned are for one year, after which it will be reviewed towards the end of the first year of the current term. Important committees will have more than one co-chairperson.

Region-Chapter chairpersons and members with experience who can support TAAI in its pursuit to resolve challenges will be added to committees. These committees will be further developed in the future MC meetings.

Other key conclusions from the meeting include forming an arbitration forum to resolve disputes between members and TAAI to avoid the possibility of a litigation and mandatory Region/Chapter meetings with members held at least once in 60 days.

It was also decided that the TAAI Managing Committee meetings will become a two-day program and will be held in various parts of India to offer an opportunity for interaction with the local membership of Regions/Chapters.

The second TAAI meeting has been proposed for November/December 2015 and will be held along with the Office Bearers of all Regions/Chapters and the Chairpersons of various committees will make presentations on what their committees aim for.

List of portfolios assigned:

Airlines Council
Chairman: **Jyoti Mayal**
Co-Chairman: **Shreeram Patel**

Tourism Council
Chairman: **Jay Bhatia**
Co-Chairman: **Imtiaz Qureshi**

Allied Services including Insurance Matters
Chairman: **Bhagwan Ramnani**
Co-Chairman: **R. Krishna Rao**

Membership Development
Chairman: **Anil Kumar**
Co-Chairman: **Bhagwan Ramnani**

Technology, Website and CRS
Chairman: **Shreeram Patel**
Co-Chairman: **Anil Kumar**

Legal Matters
Chairman: **Imtiaz Qureshi**
Co-Chairman: **Devaki Thiyagarajan**

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Chairman: **Devaki Thiyagarajan**
Co-Chairman: **Bhagwan Ramnani**

Cultural/Sports Council
Chairman: **R. Venkatachalam**



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Daniel Ruff, President and Managing Director, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) and Indian Ocean regions, Wyndham Hotel Group, and **Rahul Rai** – Executive Director (Marketing, Sales & Distribution), Unique Group, tell **TRAVTALK** about the hotel's plans for India market.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

Q Tell us about Wyndham and its USP?

Wyndham Hotel Group is the world's largest hotel company based on number of hotels. As both a leading hotel brand franchisor and hotel management services provider, the company's



Daniel Ruff
President & MD, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), Wyndham

The government is proactive and doing a lot to boost tourism. I think that's opening up doors for investments and wherever doors for investments open, the infrastructure improves

global portfolio consists of approximately 7,700 properties and over 668,500 rooms in 71 countries.

Q How important is India market for you? What makes your product suitable for the India market?

It's actually a thrilling destination for international guests as well as domestic travellers. With the development of India, and with the development in infrastructure, the country is bringing excitement around the globe. The service culture in India has always been there and now you are also building infrastructure alongside. I am sure India is destined for greater things.

Also the government is proactive and doing a lot to boost tourism. I think that's opening up doors for

investments and wherever doors for investments open, the infrastructure improves. So that's all connected with how we are promoting ourselves and why we are targeting India as one of the most important markets. ↴

"Last year we had about 6 million people coming into India but internationally India's image has been portrayed in a very wrong manner. But still people don't feel very safe when they are travelling to India because of the stories that they have heard. But now I think the government understands that there is a potential of calling 20 million people to India next year. I think today hotels are doing occupancies that is not generating profits for them. So once we have the additional number of tourists coming into India and all the hotels start doing 70 per cent occupancy instead of 50 per cent occupancy with may be a 500 rise in the ARR, I think everybody will do well. That has already started happening. Also few days back Gujarat Tourism recognised tourism sector as a separate industry and it has not clubbed it with real estate. At least now we know there is some paper lying with the government which says that tourism has to be there separately. The debts that the banks give to the hotels have to be calculated separately, it should not be in line with real estate which gives massive hope to hoteliers. In Bangalore travel agents contribute around 40 per cent to our business. The future we see with them is excellent."



Rahul Rai
Executive Director (Marketing, Sales & Distribution)
Unique Group



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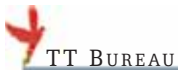
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Offering niche tour options

Amit Malhotra, Director, India Operations, Bestway Tours & Safaris, gives an account of their USP and predicts the Indian tourism industry's course for 2016.



With a vision to promote the rich heritage and culture of India, Bestway Tours & Safaris provides a host of tours to their customers, ranging

Malhotra says, "Our USP lies in our special interest tours, which are niche tourism products and an alternative to mass tours. It is the provision of customised leisure and recreational experiences driven by the spe-

are a fast growing company and with the expansion of the team, we are looking to add more special interest tours to our exhaustive list of itineraries."

For the forthcoming year, Malhotra predicts a positive future for the tourism industry in India. "In the Tourism 2020 Vision document, WTO forecasts that India has the potential to reach nearly 8.9 million international arrivals by 2020," he mentions. "With the introduction of e-Tourist Visa to 113 nationalities worldwide, inbound traffic to India has been on the rise consistently. So, in all, we can say 2016 will be prosperous year for inbound travel," he adds.



"Some of the unique tours we have included are textile tours, women only tours, bicycle tours, photographic tours, culinary tours and battlefield tours."

Amit Malhotra
Director, India Operations,
Bestway Tours & Safaris

from cultural, adventure, beach, Ayurveda, culinary, yoga and spa tours, and much more. Headquartered in Vancouver, Canada, Bestway now serves major tour operators in North America, Europe and the Middle East, apart from covering India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Tibet.

cific expressed interests of individuals and groups." Regarding some new and interesting tours that have been added to their itinerary he elaborates, "Some of the unique tours we have included are textile tours, women-only tours, bicycle tours, photographic tours, culinary tours and battlefield tours. We

Unique Products

Some of the tours offered by Bestway are textile tours, women-only tours, bicycle tours, photographic tours, culinary tours and battlefield tours

Adventure lures FTAs

Rishi Khandelwal, Managing Partner, Wish Bone India, talks about different factors that play a crucial role in attracting FTAs to India.



Specialised in providing unique experiences, Wish Bone India helps travellers plan inspiring vacations that bring them closer to the essence of the locations. The business and luxury travel agency offers MICE, inbound and domestic packages that cover locations such as the Kerala backwaters, wild reserves, Himalayan heights, among numerous others.

Speaking of their USP, Rishi Khandelwal, Managing Partner, says, "We are focussed on extending authentic and immersive experience of each destination. Providing personalised and seamless service is what distinguishes us from the others," he adds. Wish Bone develops every itinerary after first researching about the customer's needs and understanding their exact requirements. From the destination to the mode of travel and style of accommodation to the



"New concepts such as adventure, rural, golf, wellness tourism, each with its distinct characteristics and offerings, are increasingly playing a pivotal role in increasing FTAs."

Rishi Khandelwal
Managing Partner, Wish Bone India

experiences, every aspect is discussed with the customer to ensure the combination works perfectly.

"Our key markets are France, Belgium and the UK," says Khandelwal. "We plan to continue emphasising these three markets. Despite the global slowdown and increasing competition from the Asia-Pacific region, we are very bullish on India's tourism growth outlook," he comments.

When it comes to foreign tourist arrivals, Khandelwal

mentions that it is India's rich heritage and geographical diversity which attracts them to the country. "India's rich heritage, cultural and historical resources and geographical diversity play a crucial role in attracting FTAs," he says. "Moreover, new concepts such as adventure, rural, golf, wellness tourism, each with its distinct characteristics and offerings, are increasingly playing a pivotal role in increasing FTAs. Thanks to the ease in visa regulations, we can expect even more arrivals in the months to come," he signs off.



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Seat dimensions

Seat width: 26 inches (67cm)
Seat length: 78 inches (198cm)
Seat pitch: 84 inches (213cm)
Seat recline: 180 degree



Business
24 seats
2-2-2

Amenities

The seat features an adjustable built-in seat reading lamp, beverage stand, magazine shelf and shoe stowage. It is also equipped with a USB port and a 15" personal TV.

Seat dimensions

Seat width: 20 inches (51cm)
Seat length: 74 inches (188cm)
Seat pitch: 84 inches (213cm)
Seat recline: 180 degree



Economy
198 seats
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The seat features an adjustable built-in seat reading lamp, beverage stand, magazine shelf and shoe stowage. It is also equipped with a USB port and a 15" personal TV.

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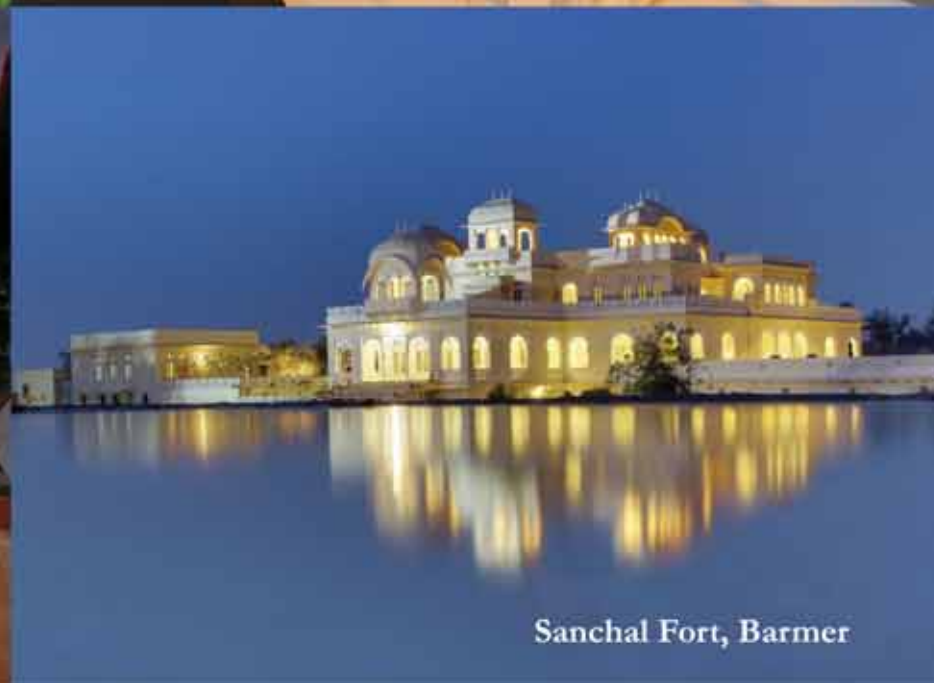
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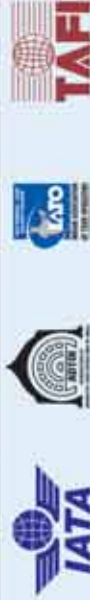
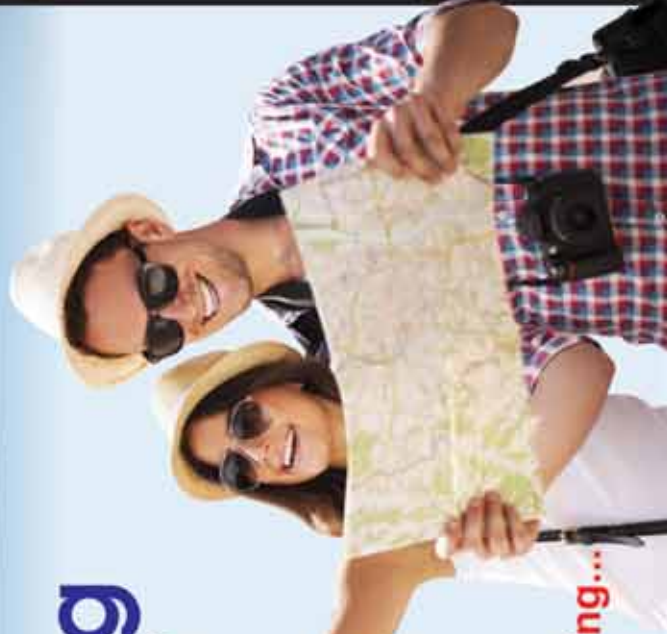


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Buyers get a 'taste of India' @WTM

An array of exhibitors will be partying in style during the WTM London's Festival programme on November 4. Countries including India will showcase their cuisine, culture and traditions at this international platform.



The Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) and Mexico are among many exhibitors that will be hosting WTM London festivals until 8pm on the Wednesday evening of WTM London. The festivals give everyone the opportunity to socialise after the traditional working hours in a fun and vibrant atmosphere. Those attending will experience the culture, hospitality and cuisine with each hosting exhibitor offering something unique.

With 2015 being declared the Year of Mexico in the UK, there is likely to be a lively party atmosphere on its pavilion. Mexico will be showcasing its gastronomy with tastings from its 80 exhibiting destinations as well as a live band to entertain the visitors.

The CTO will be hosting a street party in the Caribbean Village Area at WTM London 2015. Visitors will be treated to live Calypso and steel drum music with savouring local cuisine and tropical rum punch.

Meanwhile, India will be showcasing 'Taste of India' themed festival where one can enjoy the diverse cuisine from every corner of the country. Whilst experiencing live Indian dance and music, taste aromatic local Indian wines from the boutique wineries or Indian beer as they portray the rich cultural heritage of their country.

The Polish Tourist Organisation and Polish travel industry partners are hosting a Networking Party which will give the opportunity to liaise with the country's travel industry representatives. There will also be a party atmosphere with Polish hospitality offering local specialties with live music.

Famous Vietnamese street food is likely to attract plenty of attention as the des-



World Travel Market London, Senior Director, **Simon Press**, says, "The WTM London festivals were only introduced last year to celebrate the 35th year of WTM but they were so successful that

Nepal's festival will be focusing on nature, culture and adventure during its festival

while Indonesia, a country with a rich festival tradition, will demonstrate its diverse country of origins and religions.

we decided to do them again this year.

"This year the festivals look to be even bigger and better with plenty of opportunity for informal networking and fun for all attendees. If you have the opportunity, come and experience the culture, hospitality and cuisine of these exhibitors."

we decided to do them again this year.



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Festivities Galore

- India will showcase its diverse cuisine and culture
- Vietnamese street food will attract attention
- Polish travel partners will host networking and parties
- Nepal will focus on nature and culture

Thinking beyond 1bn tourists agenda



A two-day seminar on "Tourism and Hospitality: Beyond the Agenda for One Billion Tourists and One Billion Opportunities" was organised at University Institute of Hotel Management & Tourism (UIHMT), Panjab University (PU), Chandigarh. The seminar was organised under the aegis of HOSTOCOON-2015 and witnessed a number of speakers from across the country and abroad.

'Reactivating' Nepal

Anil Kumar, Director - Marketing, Operations, Product Development and Finance Contracting, SenKay Tours and Travels, talks about the journey of the company.



SenKay Tours and Travels, one of India's leading DMCs, believes in an India which is a true blend of ancient traditions, values and globally recognised professional services of the modern era. "Our primary goal is to make the traveller experience a unique journey with something special, which imparts an unforgettable memory for our clients. The choice of routes is important, but not more than its contents," Kumar says.

"Our new offerings are itineraries with the spirit of developing new programmes. We want to reactivate Nepal as one of the most fascinating destinations."

Anil Kumar

Director- Marketing, Operations, Product Development and Finance Contracting, SenKay Tours and Travels



"Continuous and consistent involvement of Team SenKay in searching for fascinating non-classical places and its understanding of the traveller's requirements makes it the most trusted DMC in India for developing new itineraries with value-added features, which give a different and unique experience of travelling," Kumar adds.

ings are itineraries with the spirit of developing new programmes in order to be different outside the usual patterns but inside the intensity of the destination without any additional cost. "We also want to reactivate Nepal as one of the most fascinating destinations," he adds.

new destinations within India as well as outside.

On the latest trends in the tourism industry, Kumar says, "A series of decisions with reference to the increase in the entrance fees and taxes, taken in the recent months have put all of us in a tough situation. As tourism fraternity we must take the right decisions at the right time," he adds.

On its new offerings, Kumar says, "Our new offer-

Kumar says the new age traveler is always looking for

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VIA Rail Canada sales up by 67% in Aug

VIA Rail Canada recorded a growth of 67 per cent from India onboard VIA Rail Canada for August 2015 compared to the same month sales last year. End of August in 2015, VIA Rail Canada showed a Year-on-Year growth of 34 per cent in agency sales from this market.

Ashish Saran, Account Head, VIA Rail, says, "67 per cent increase during the month

are key market drivers and we are focusing on both to grow this market organically. This is a positive sign and we hope to continue the same trend in 2016."

VIA Rail now offers an all new Prestige Class on the Canadian, one of the most luxury experiences on any train journey with several improvements and modifications done to vastly improve the travel experiences



of August is a positive jump in sales for train journey travel for Indians travelling to Canada. Considering Indians are more inclined towards convenience and cost, this positive number reconfirms that VIA Rail is a premium train with convenience and affordability as a prime focus. We are trying to reach out to more consumers through the travel trade. Education and information

of guests onboard VIA. There are several improvements on various classes of service, which include specially prepared menus with locally sourced food and wine, fresh, increased on-board entertainment. Even the food and wine service is accompanied with performances by home-grown artists and musicians onboard to give the feel of real Canada

Fiji promotes luxury in India

Specialist Destination Management Company Tour Managers, based in Fiji, has unveiled a luxury brochure for Fiji in India with Namale Resort & Spa and Tourism Fiji.



The Managing Director of Fiji-based Tour Managers, **Damend Gounder**, truly believes in introducing the best of Fiji to the India market. With this vision, he has introduced the Tour Managers' luxury brochure at an exclusive launch in New Delhi followed by an additional event in Mumbai this September. Gounder says, "Tour Managers is committed to the international markets including India, China, the US, New Zealand and Australia. This is evident by the increased staff strength in India. Our aim is to showcase the best of Fiji and of course keep in mind the market sentiments and preferences."

The island-themed event was attended by high profile niche travel agents who exclusively promote high-end resorts for destination Fiji. One of these resorts is Namale Resort & Spa that has been instrumental in proactively assisting the growth of the India market by creating India



Alefiya Singh
Director
Iris Reps

Mature Indian travellers are always looking for new places to explore



Damend Gounder
Managing Director
Tour Managers


Our aim is to showcase the best of Fiji and keep in mind the market sentiments and preferences

market-friendly specials which are highly enticing for the India traveller. Namale Resort & Spa India representative, **Kanishka Kapoor Khimani**, announced free stays at

Namale along with airfare and ground support from Tour Managers for agents selling maximum Namale rooms for the sale period valid until October 2015.


Tourism Fiji India was also present and the support from Fiji's NTO has also been crucial in promoting and educating the Indian travel trade. Through the tireless efforts of **Alefiya Singh**, Director of Mumbai-based Iris Reps that represents Tour Managers in India, and **Saroj Gounder**, Contract Manager (India Division) for Tour Managers, the India market share continues to be consolidated with exciting growth in key off-peak periods for the India traveller. "As far as unexplored and exotic destinations go, Fiji is right up there. Mature Indian travellers are always looking for new places to explore and this island country is perfect for them - specially honeymooners and HNIs. Much of the country is uncrowded with fantastic hotel properties, making it a perfect luxury destination," Singh says.

Tour Managers Fiji also made an exciting announcement for the soon to be launched online portal for India and other key markets which will prove to be a valuable tool in making Fiji more sellable.





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SQ's Premium Economy Class

Singapore Airlines launches its new Premium Economy Class on the Delhi and Mumbai routes. David Lau, General Manager – India, Singapore Airlines, explains the features of the new offering and its importance for the India market.

SAMAPTI DAS

Singapore Airlines introduced its new Premium Economy cabin class on the Delhi and Mumbai routes from October 25, 2015, and January 2, 2016, respectively. It is available on the Airbus A380 services from both cities to Singapore and onwards to Auckland, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, London and Sydney. The Premium Economy Class will be introduced across the Singapore Airlines global network on 19 Airbus A380s, 19 Boeing 777-300ERs and the first 20 Airbus A350s. The airline showcased the Premium Economy seats at DLF Promenade, Delhi from October 10-11, 2015.

collaboration with Singapore Tourism Board, passengers on Singapore Airlines can purchase the Singapore Explorer Pass - a one-time access pass to 23 different attractions and benefits over the duration of the pass at special rates.

Talking about Indian travel agents, Lau says that the travel agents are equally important and Singapore Airlines would love to provide them special offers if they are ready to partner with them.



David Lau unveils the Premium Economy Class

Travel agents are equally important and we would love to provide them special offers if they are ready to partner with us

David Lau
General Manager – India, Singapore Airlines

Following a two-year development programme and an investment of about \$80 million, the Premium Economy Class will welcome customers to a contemporary and stylish design. Each seat has a width of 19.5 inches (on the A380) with an eight inch recline and a seat pitch of 38 inches in a 2-4-2 layout. Together with active noise-cancelling headphones and a sleek 13.3-inch full HD monitor, the largest in its class, featuring an intelligent and unique touch-screen graphical user interface (GUI), customers can look forward to an enhanced KrisWorld In-Flight entertainment experience.

David Lau, General Manager – India, Singapore Airlines, says, "Our decision to introduce Premium Economy is in response to the feedback received from our customers which highlighted the increasing global acceptance for this new cabin class. The product offering has been specifically tailored to provide Economy Class passengers an alternative for medium – long haul travel with extra comforts." In

An advertisement for SilkAir. The top part shows a family (mother, father, and child) sitting in a Premium Economy seat, looking at a tablet. A flight attendant in a red and blue uniform is standing next to them. The background is a stylized blue and white graphic of a bird or wing. Text on the right says 'Asia's most awarded regional airline'. The main headline reads 'MEET THE IDEAL TRAVEL COMPANION.' Below it, it says 'Onboard wireless entertainment with SilkAir Studio is one of the many reasons why SilkAir is a joy to fly.' At the bottom, there are four icons representing 'Reliable Flight Schedule', 'SilkAir Studio', 'Inflight Meal', and '30kg Bag Allowance'.

silkair.com



The Regional Wing of Singapore Airlines

10th Annual UNIGLOBE Travel Regional

300 UNIGLOBE Travel Professionals from across South Asia gathered in Udaipur to celebrate individual and collective achievements, interact, sharpen skills, network and gain insights.



TT BUREAU

The 10th Annual UNIGLOBE Travel Regional Conference and Excellence Awards were conducted recently at The Radisson Blu, Udaipur. Themed 'Go for the Magic' this year's conference

service and cost containment solutions to clients.

"We are very excited as we cover another milestone by moving our brand story to the world of television, with a brand new hot-off-the-press TV commercial. The commer-

knowledge, skills, talents and the power of the UNIGLOBE system."

The conference was marked by an array of educational, team building and experiential sessions. These included a session on the 'Art of



"UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia), organises the conference every year to support inter-agency networking, professional development and to build relationships with each other and with key suppliers from the South Asian region, as well as other parts of the globe."

Sanjay Arya

President, UNIGLOBE Franchise Owners Association (UFOA)

was hosted in the magnificent city of Udaipur, known for its lakes. With over 300 UNIGLOBE Travel professionals attending, insightful educa-

tional effectively underlines how UNIGLOBE Travel, meets the needs of travellers and travel buyers, the UNIGLOBE Way - Travel. Simplified." says

Persuasion' by world renowned mentalist, **Roy Zaltsman**, where he shared techniques of persuasion that could be instrumental in effective client com-

"The UNIGLOBE Regional Conference has emerged as one of the most sought out events for members of the UNIGLOBE family and we are proud to be a part of it. Like every year, this year's conference has lived up to its promise of offering new perspectives and great insights that will undoubtedly make us better travel professionals."

Sunil Narain

Chairman & Managing Director, UNIGLOBE Air Travel Bureau



tion sessions and entertainment packed evenings, the two-day conference turned out to be a great event.

"UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia), organises the conference every year to support inter-agency networking, professional development and to build relationships with each other and with key suppliers from the South Asian region, as well as other parts of the globe," says **Sanjay Arya**, President, UNIGLOBE Franchise Owners Association (UFOA).

The conference saw the unveiling of the first ever television commercial by UNIGLOBE Travel. Taglined, 'Travel. Simplified.', the commercial targets corporate and leisure travellers, positioning UNIGLOBE as travel procurement specialists, delivering high quality

Ritika Modi, Regional President, UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia).

Michelle Desreux, COO and Executive Director,



"The two days at the conference have been both insightful and inspirational. After attending the conference, we are better positioned to make improvements that can make all difference and lead us towards greater success."

Paras Lakhia

Executive Member, UFOA Board

UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia), says, "Our theme for this year, 'Go for the Magic', was chosen to inspire UNIGLOBE Travel professionals to unleash the hidden potential of their mind to deliver magical services to our clients by using

conference was a session by celebrated actor, theatre artist and ad man, **Bharat Dabholkar**, that stressed on the significance of practice in a service driven industry like travel. His session where he also spoke about his journey to suc-

emerged as one of the most sought out events for members of the UNIGLOBE family and we are proud to be a part of it. Like every year, this year's conference has lived up to its promise of offering new perspectives and great insights

"Our theme for this year, 'Go for the Magic', was chosen to inspire UNIGLOBE Travel professionals to unleash the hidden potential of their mind to deliver magical services to our clients by using knowledge, skills, talents and the power of the UNIGLOBE system."

Michelle Desreux

COO and Executive Director UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia)



cess, further inspired audiences to tread their own path of success.

Other insightful sessions at the conference included one by Desreux, that focused on imparting the importance of understanding habits and

that will undoubtedly make us better travel professionals."

Over 20 suppliers from different categories including leisure, technology, insurance, banks, hotels, airlines and destination management companies came together for

The awards included recognition for Counselors, Managers, Sales, Accounts, Leisure and Facilitation personnel at various levels of performance assessment. The awards, organised by Tata AIG, saw the introduction of three new categories

"We are very excited as we cover another milestone by moving our brand story to the world of television, with a brand new hot-off-the-press TV commercial. The commercial effectively underlines how UNIGLOBE Travel, meets the needs of travellers and travel buyers, the UNIGLOBE Way - Travel. Simplified."

Ritika Modi

Regional President, UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia)



using them effectively, and another by Amadeus, leading travel technology solutions company, that elaborated on the different segment of travellers and how technology was playing a role in simplifying travel for them.

Sunil Narain, Chairman & Managing Director, UNIGLOBE Air Travel Bureau, says, "The UNIGLOBE Regional Conference has

The Supplier Showcase, that served as a platform for participants to establish, renew and build successful partnerships with their preferred suppliers and gain a better understanding of their offerings.

Top performing agencies were rewarded for achieving the organisation's highest standards of growth through professionalism and customer satisfaction at the conference. Awards for top-level sales and revenue growth achievements were given to the owners of UNIGLOBE member agencies from across the South Asia region. Also awarded were the top performing agency personnel for continually pushing the benchmark of excellence higher.

this year to include Manager Admin/HR, Manager Accounts, Manager Leisure making a total of 11 categories and 96 awards.

"The two days at the conference have been both insightful and inspirational. After attending the conference, we are better positioned to make improvements that can make all difference and lead us towards greater success," concludes **Paras Lakhia**, Executive Member, UFOA Board.

The conference concluded with a gala dinner themed, 'The Big Fat Indian Wedding', preceded by a comical play, 'Bottoms Up', starring **Anant Mahadevan, Jayati Bhatia and Bharat Dabholkar**.



Art of Persuasion by world renowned mentalist, Roy Zaltsman

Conference creates magic



Gold award for Excellence in Domestic Travel Counselor category



Gold award for Excellence in International Travel Counselor category



Gold award for Excellence in Leisure category



Gold award for Excellence in Manager Accounts category



Gold award for Excellence in Manager Admin, HR category



Gold award for Excellence in Manager Leisure category



Gold award for Excellence in Travel Accounts category



Gold award for Excellence in Travel Counselor category



Gold award for Excellence in Travel Facilitation category



Gold award for Excellence in Travel Manager category



Gold award for Excellence in Travel Sales category



Silver award for Excellence in Domestic Travel Counselor category



Silver award for Excellence in International Travel Counselor category



Silver award for Excellence in Leisure category



Silver award for Excellence in Manager Accounts category



Silver award for Excellence in Manager Admin, HR category



Silver award for Excellence in Manager Leisure category



Silver award for Excellence in Travel Accounts category



Silver award for Excellence in Travel Counselor category



Silver award for Excellence in Travel Facilitation category



Silver award for Excellence in Travel Manager category



Silver award for Excellence in Travel Sales category



Bronze award for Excellence in Domestic Travel Counselor category



Bronze award for Excellence in International Travel Counselor category



Bronze award for Excellence in Leisure category



Bronze award for Excellence in Manager Accounts category



Bronze award for Excellence in Manager Admin, HR category



Bronze award for Excellence in Travel Accounts category



Bronze award for Excellence in Travel Counselor category



Bronze award for Excellence in Travel Facilitation category



Bronze award for Excellence in Travel Manager category



Bronze award for Excellence in Travel Sales category



UNIGLOBE Adyar Travel Bureau, awarded for super performance by TATA AIG



UNIGLOBE Air Travel Bureau, awarded for super performance by TATA AIG



UNIGLOBE Air Travel Bureau, awarded for Top Sales & Revenue Volume & Top Sales Growth



UNIGLOBE Bharath International Travel, awarded for Top Sales Volume



UNIGLOBE CP Travel, awarded for Top Revenue Growth



UNIGLOBE Koniva Tours & Travel, awarded for super performance by Tata AIG



UNIGLOBE Le Travelworld, awarded for super performance by TATA AIG



UNIGLOBE Mod Travel, awarded for super performance by TATA AIG



UNIGLOBE Mod Travel, awarded for Top Revenue Growth



UNIGLOBE Sai Pooja Travel, awarded for Top Revenue Volume



UNIGLOBE Shergill Travel, awarded for Top Sales & Revenue Volume and Highest Sales & Revenue Growth



A comical play 'Bottoms Up', starring Anant Mahadevan, Jayati Bhatia and Bharat Dabhokar



Over 20 suppliers from various industries interacting with 300 participants



Interactive Session with Bharat Dabhokar, Ad man, who talks about his success story to the participants



UNIGLOBE Sri Sai Travel, awarded for Top Sales Growth



UNIGLOBE Utopia Travel, awarded for super performance by Tata AIG

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Africa Travel Association: 40th Congress

The Africa Travel Association (ATA) will hold its 40th Annual World Congress in Nairobi, Kenya from November 9-14, 2015.

TT BUREAU

The international tourism meeting will be hosted by the Kenya Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism under the auspices of Cabinet Secretary Hon. **Phyllis Kandie**.

Known as Magical Kenya, the country offers an abundance of wildlife opportunities, as well as an astonish-

ATA Executive Director **Edward Bergman** said, "On the occasion of ATA's 40th anniversary, we are eager to return to Kenya for this milestone in ATA's history. We are delighted to bring together the public and private sectors, travel industry, and media to participate in the Congress. This also comes at an important time to showcase Kenyan

tourism to show that Kenya is an incredible destination, is open for business, and deserves our attention. We encourage the travel industry to stand with Kenya and support tourism."

During the Kenya Host Country Day, delegates will visit the magnificent Lake Nakuru National Park. As part



of the Host Country Day and an ATA tradition, delegates will take part in a tree-planting cer-

emony at Lake Nakuru as a symbol of long-lasting relationships and as an initiative to achieve a better global environment.

ATA Congress delegates include African tourism ministers, industry professionals representing tourism boards, destination representatives, travel agents, tour operators,

ground operators, airlines, hotels and accommodations, service providers, and travel media. Participants from the corporate, nonprofit and academic sectors are also expected to attend along with travel and hospitality students. Pre- and post-Congress tours will also be available to explore Magical Kenya beyond the Congress.



Edward Bergman
Executive Director
ATA

We are delighted to bring together the public and private sectors, travel industry, and media to participate in the Congress

ing diversity of landscapes and cultures. As the East African hub for business and technology, the country is known for its excellent domestic travel infrastructure and the wide range of tourism activities and services it provides for its visitors. From tropical forests and beaches to vast deserts and majestic mountains, tourists in Kenya can experience a different safari every day.

ATA Congresses provide a unique networking, learning, and agenda-shaping platform for Africa tourism stakeholders. The 2015 programme will include a line-up of educational and professional development sessions; a Tourism Ministers' Roundtable; sessions to Meet the Ministers, Meet the Media, and Africa Meets the World, where buyers and suppliers will meet; visits to Nairobi's top sites; and a range of networking events, including a Kenya Culture Night and ATA Awards Ceremony, receptions, working lunches, and a gala dinner.

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IITTM's HR Conclave focuses on skill development in trade



Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management organised an HR Conclave on the occasion of World Tourism Day at its campus in Noida, with the theme of "One Billion Tourist One Billion Opportunities". The central theme of HR Conclave was to nurture talent and skilling of youth to leverage the 'One Billion' opportunities so mooted by the UNWTO for the tourism industry. Chief Guest for the occasion was His Excellency Ahmed Mohamed, High Commissioner – Designate of Maldives to India.

Kanha: Agents get 40% biz

Navneet Maheshwari, Owner, Kanha Village Eco Resort, says agents play a very important role for the resort and it offers pre-made and tailor-made packages for agents and tour operators.



TT BUREAU

QWhat is the USP of your resort?

Kanha Village Eco Resort is an eco boutique wildlife lodge based at world famous Kanha National Park. We offer all modern amenities for guests within a tribal village setting and mud houses. Guests staying with us get a chance to enjoy the rustic luxury with feel of staying inside the forest which makes them experience wilderness in a better way.

QWill you be expanding portfolio in the future? What locations would you choose and why?

Yes, we would love to expand but not in the immediate future. Eco sensitive properties do not get enough preference. However, slowly the awareness is increasing and we hope that as demand rises we would be able to offer the same kind of rustic luxury to our guests at other wilderness destinations. We are also planning to enter rural tourism as it



Navneet Maheshwari
Owner
Kanha Village Eco Resort

complements our present business which will be up and running hopefully by mid-2016.

QBeing an Eco Resort, what kind of challenges do you face?

At present we do not get lot of eco sensitive tourists but we are sure by creating awareness we will be able to get better response. Biggest challenge is to make our travellers differentiate between a real and fake eco sensitive property since almost all accommodation providers in any national park write themselves as one.

It's a difficult task but we love the challenge. We do face some problems in our working and maintenance but that is part of the game. Like, almost 90 per cent people working with us are local tribal and training them to handle guests is not very easy but that is part of our initiative to help them grow along with us and we will do it.

QDo you deal with travel agents? What packages do you offer them?

Travel agents are the mouth, hands and leg of travel business. They help us in reaching wider market, tell the travellers about us and work hard to help us in getting business. We deal with travel agents and tour operators and have on offer both pre-made and tailor made packages. At present our revenue from travel agents is around 40 per cent of total business we generate and we are expecting this will go up since more and more travel agents are looking for eco sensitive properties now.

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Suggested Experiences:

Day 1: Air and Space Adventures in Toulouse:

Pink City Toulouse promises many fascinating adventures for its families. A must-visit is a discovery of the Airbus Factory home to the majestic A350s and A380s. Take a behind the scenes tour of the factory and unravel the secrets of the world's only authentic double-decker. Do not miss a visit to Aeroscopia - an aeronautical museum located on the Airbus factory premises. Invite your kids to climb aboard a real Concorde or admire a collection of aircrafts. Go behind the scenes of an aircraft or navigate your own flight thanks to a simulator session! Spend an interesting afternoon at the Cité de l'Espace - an adventure park dedicated to space Encounter the cosmos at its IMAX® cinema with a screen as high as a 6 foot storey

building or discover unknown astronomical worlds at the vaulted 360 degree screen of its planetarium. The Moon Runner simulator gives your budding cosmonauts a chance to walk on the moon!

Day 2: A Rendezvous with the Stars at the Pic du Midi

A rendezvous with the sky awaits you at the Pic du Midi located 2hrs 30 minutes from Toulouse. Access the summit located almost 3000 m above sea level with a cable car ride. Outstanding 360 degree panoramas of the Pyrénées mountain range and the plains of the South-West greet you on arrival. Include a visit to its astronomical observatory. Revel in the Starry Night Experience (Apr-Oct) that includes an evening dedicated to astronomy! Make the experience even more special with a stay at the tallest hotel in Europe found atop the Pic du Midi.

Day 3: Discovering the Great Outdoors in Gavarnie

Connect with the great outdoors with a visit to the grandiose Cirque de Gavarnie located 2 hours from Toulouse. This natural bowl carved out by ancient glaciers in grey, ochre and pink limestone rocks enjoys a UNESCO World Heritage classification. Kids are sure to enjoy the ride from the village of Gavarnie on horses, donkeys or ponies which will lead you to the foot of the Cirque. The time will be just right to soak in views of Europe's largest waterfall with its 413m vertical drop and permanently snow-covered mountains and enjoy encounters with marmots, wild goats or birds of prey. Head to Lourdes located at an hour's distance from Gavarnie. Cosmopolitan Lourdes invites you to divine encounters at its sanctuary. Take on visits of its medieval castle that offers stunning views of the sanctuary and the mountains.

For more information on the Midi-Pyrenees region, log onto: www.tourisme-midi-pyrenees.com For more on self-drive experiences in the Midi Pyrenees, email: kashwar.bhagat@atout-france.fr or atoutfranceindia@gmail.com



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Trade partners explore B.C.

Destination Canada organised a Fam trip from September 19-27, 2015, for travel trade partners from across India to the province of **British Columbia**. The trip gave the trade partners an opportunity to experience varied locale of British Columbia. The group visited Kelowna, Vancouver, Victoria and Whistler.



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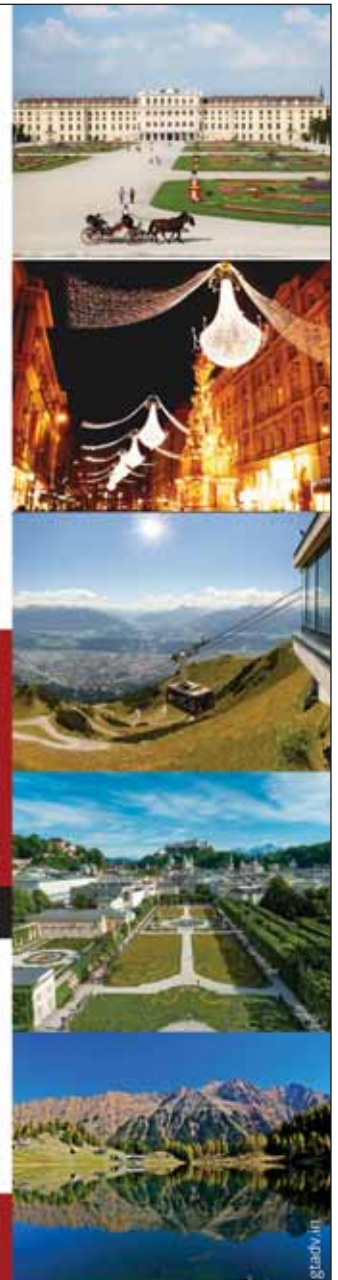
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Vkonect opens world of luxury

The second edition of Vkonect Luxury was held from October 10-11, 2015, at The Westin, Gurgaon, where 25 India travel, luxury and hospitality companies participated in the premium B2B meetings platform. The two-day event witnessed networking sessions between luxury buyers and exhibitors, followed by exclusive business sessions in a tabletop and round-robin format. Guest speakers were also present at the event where they shared their thoughts on the growing luxury sector in India.





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UITT Ukarine, 30th Mar



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KITF Kazakhstan, 20th Apr



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The heart of Incredible India

Clay Telecom goes global

Clay Telecom makes it easy to identify global partners to leverage market share both locally and internationally without making huge investments. Gaurav Dhawan, Executive Director, Clay Business Group, and Aditya Joshi, Chief Operating Officer, Clay Telecom, explain why partnering with their company is beneficial in order to expand business.



TT BUREAU

They say that gone are the days when businessmen used to run operations only in the local market. Now they understand the importance of going beyond their home country and reaching out to larger market share. A perfect example is the Clay Business

Group which started its operations in 2,000 as an international mobility solutions provider in India and has now expanded its reach in the US, UK, Europe and Japan. They have not only grown geographically, but also forayed into different verticals like hospitality and the IT sector successfully.

With a presence in international destinations and India, the Clay Business Group is one of the fastest growing service providers serving the HNI segment. "With our focus on service levels, we are the first brand of choice for world leaders and its customers," says Dhawan.

The substantial investment in infrastructure and comprehensive CRM software has enabled Clay to streamline business processes, make the system robust and offer transparency to both partners and customers.

With immense opportunities available, the travel compa-

nies are looking at bundling their products with value-add services. These help them make a separate revenue stream from ancillary services such as international SIM, insurance, forex etc., and offer a bouquet of services under one roof to heighten their customers' travelling experience. Joshi says, "We are also adopt-



Gaurav Dhawan
Executive Director
Clay Business Group

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ing the same approach and are associating with global partners like American Express, Cox & Kings, Kuoni Travels, Flight Shops and others. Clay is also keen on expanding its operations in other international destinations and is actively looking at strategic partners in the US, the UK and Europe and other countries to become the first choice of an international traveller."

Such strategic partnerships are enabling companies to set-up their business operations in India and beyond without investing in infrastructure, technology and human resources. This is a lucrative deal for both collaborating partners as it helps to cut down investment costs and improves their bottom line in the business. Joshi further states, "We are visiting international fairs like ITB Asia, WTM etc. in search of global partners and have also started discussions with large set-ups for mutual beneficial associations."

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Riya Travel & Tours' Annual Managers Meet

Riya Travel & Tours organised its Annual Managers Meet 2015 in Bengaluru which was a 3-day event from August 7-9. This year the theme was 'E3 - Excel. Empower. Emerge'. The idea behind this is to create a second line of command who can take the legacy forward and bring more goodwill to the company. The meet aims at empowering the manager to excel and create as many future leaders as possible for a healthy and a competitive environment in the organisation.

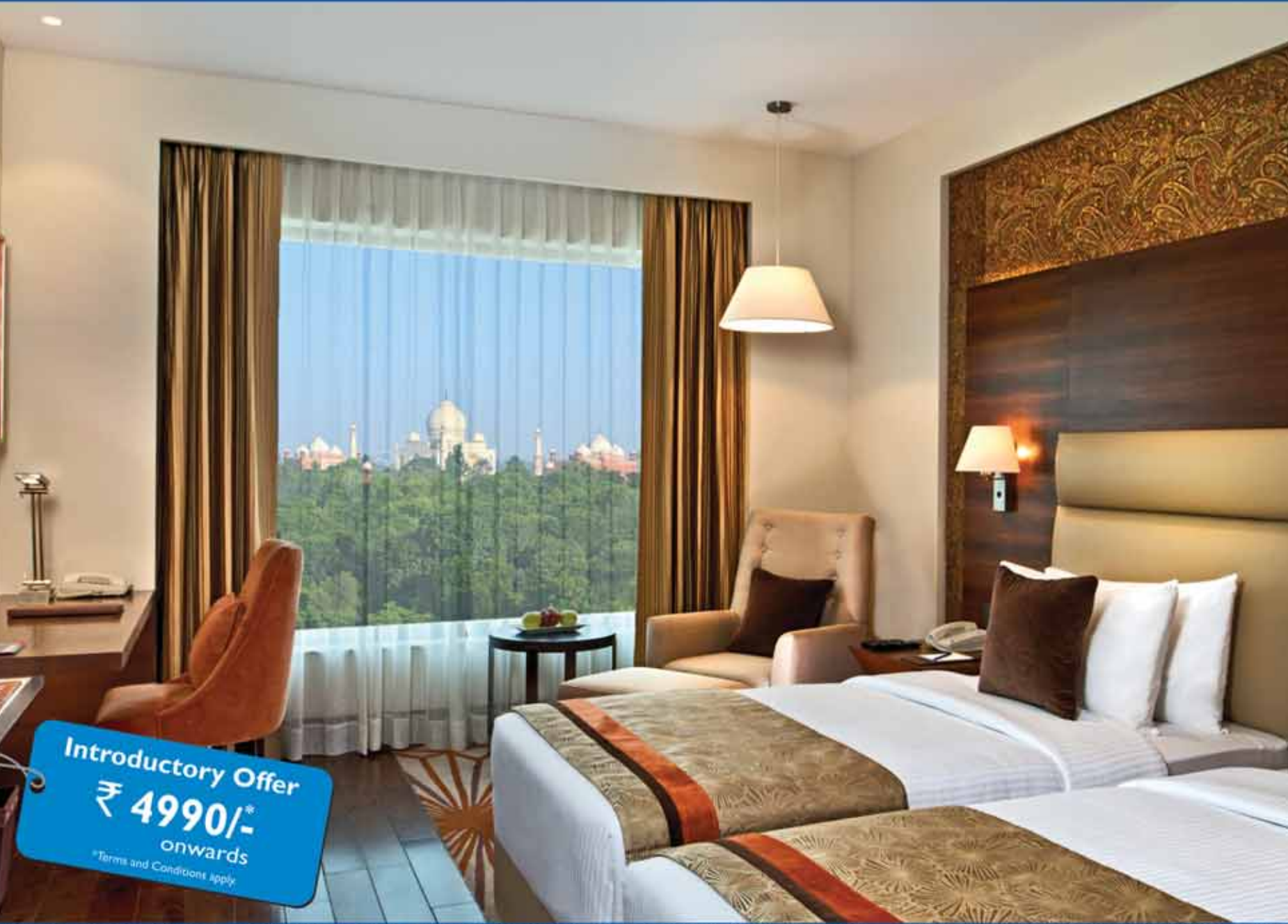


Luxury gains momentum with Vconnect

► Contd. from page 74



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Chhota Imambara, Lucknow

UP: A favourite *with* foreigners



Om Prakash Singh
Tourism Minister
Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh contributed 12.9 per cent to the total share of FTAs to India and 14.3 per cent to the total domestic tourists coming to the state. **Om Prakash Singh**, Tourism Minister, Uttar Pradesh, tells **TRAVELTALK** about the tourism products that the state has to offer.



TT BUREAU

Uttar Pradesh offers abundant attractions and tourist destinations for discerning travellers. Singh says, "We may not have oceans and mountains but the state makes up for it in terms of religious and heritage sites of the highest repute. We have the world's oldest city 'Kashi', and Lord Rama's birthplace 'Ayodhya,' which see massive domestic tourism."

Uttar Pradesh gets the third highest number of foreign tourists visiting the country. It

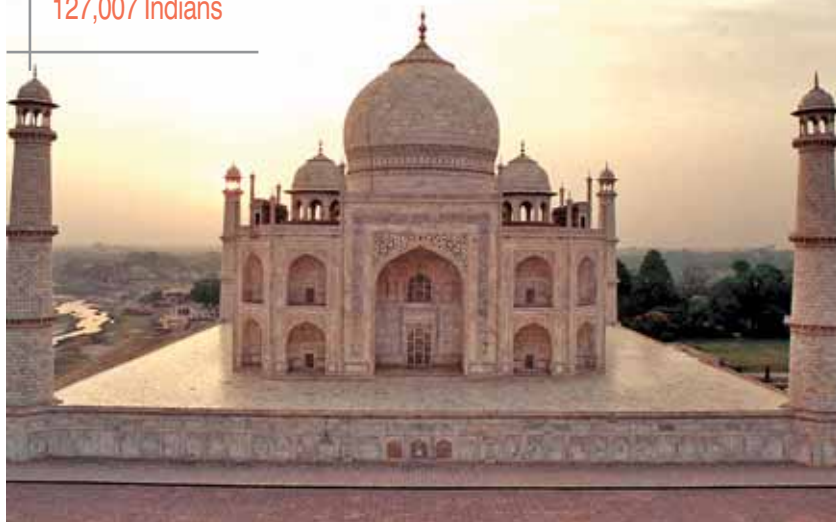
received 29,097,359 foreign tourists in 2014 amounting to a total share of 12.9 per cent out of the top 10 states contributing to FTAs. The number of domestic tourists visiting UP was 182,820,108 making it the second most popular state with a share of 14.3 per cent out of the top 10 states contributing to domestic tourism.

"The Taj Mahal alone saw up to 6,072,263 visitors from January to December 2014, out of which 694,467 were foreigners and 5,377,796 Indians," Singh says. The e-ticketing for Taj Mahal has received a posi-

We had 404,133 visitors who did e-ticketing for the Taj from December 2014 to April 2015. Out of these 277,126 were foreigners and 127,007 Indians



Taj Mahal South Gate



Taj Mahal



Agra Fort



Ganga Aarti

tive response. "We had 404,133 visitors in total who booked through e-ticketing from December 2014 to April 2015. Out of these 277,126 were foreigners and 127,007 Indians," he adds.

With the success of Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart 2015, Singh showed enthusiasm about organising the next Travel Mart from February 22-

24, 2016, in Lucknow. The state has allotted ` 441 crore to Mathura, Ayodhya and Kashi Buddhist circuit out of the ` 1,600 crore received from World Bank as funds earlier this year.

Discussing the tourism facilities provided by the state, Singh says, "Our renewed focus on heritage-based tourism has revived many

small areas/monuments/events which were regionally renowned but lacked national exposure. Some such events are the *Mangla Aarti*, *Dev Diwali* and *Bharat Milap* in Varanasi, *Ramnagar Fort*, and *Shahi Taalab* in Lucknow. We organise light and sound show in Jhansi and Sarnath, Varanasi, and a musical show for the aficionados called *Subah-e-Banaras*."

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Tahiti DMC enters India

Mumbai-based Outbound Konnections will now represent Tahiti DMC Group in India for trade servicing, marketing and public relations activities.



TT BUREAU

Tahiti DMC Group has appointed Outbound Konnections as its sales and marketing representative for India. The Tahiti DMC Group is a Destination Management Company of Tahiti and her Islands and comprises 'Tahiti Nui Travel', 'Tekura Tahiti Travel' and 'Tahiti Tours'.

Outbound Konnections will be the local representative of the Tahiti DMC Group and will be responsible for aggressive sales and tourist promotion activities including travel trade servicing and soft public relations.

Anjum Lokhandwala, Director, Outbound Konnections, says, "We are overwhelmed by our selection and the trust and confidence being bestowed by the Tahiti DMC Group on our organisation as their sales, marketing and PR arm for the India markets. With the new age Indian traveller exploring beyond the set



Anjum Lokhandwala
Director
Outbound Konnections

and conventional itineraries, Tahiti with its realm of luxurious and traditional delights, offers distinct facets and attractions that suit new and evolved travellers, especially for honeymooners. Our initiatives will focus on around making Tahiti the preferred destination of choice for luxury holidays and honeymooners' delight. Our expanding portfolio highlights Outbound Konnections' knowledge and understanding of the Indian mindset."

Raphaella Taufa, Director, Tahiti Nui Travel, says,

"The group witnessed exponential growth by capturing about 43 per cent of the market share from the Indian outbound tourism sector in the year 2014. The growing disposable income along with changing lifestyle makes India a high potential market for Tahiti and her islands."

Tekura Mullez, Director, Tekura Tahiti Travel, adds, "Though the total number of Indian arrivals to the Polynesian countries is not huge, the growth we have witnessed Year-on-Year has established a strong belief in our making inroads and taking the first step into India market."

Diana Chin Choi, Director, Tahiti Tours, states, "Outbound Konnections has the right network and approach, which can comprehend and achieve our objectives; destination positioning and the distribution reach, thereby, augmenting the Indian traffic and higher revenue generation to the group." ↘

Growing proximity to trade

RezLive.com is keen on working more closely with the travel agents around the globe. Jaal Shah, Founder, RezLive.com, talks about its expansion plans.



TT BUREAU

QTell us about RezLive's new initiatives.

Global expansion is on the cards for us and we have focused on increasing both our regional and international presence this year with our new offices in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Romania. We also have successfully launched our Thailand inbound product, 'RezLive Thailand.' This is the first choice of our travel partners who want to offer the best experiences in Thailand to their clients. The key USPs of this product are best price guarantee, 24x7 support services, expertise operations team, round-the-year availability, customised beach activities and local market understanding.

QWhat is your growth strategy?

The Middle East and Asian regions especially India have delivered an outstanding performance due to demand for this market for inbound and out-



Jaal Shah
Founder
RezLive.com

bound travel. Our aim is to continue to consolidate our expansion into international markets, like Africa and Europe, while maintaining growth in the Middle East and Asia. We will also continue working to give our valued partners extra ordinary support service and diversified inventory.


QWhat new projects are you focusing on now?

This year we will be looking at revamping RezLive.com and making our inventory bigger than ever by contracting with other leading hotel chains, so that we put

the whole world at the fingertips of our travel partners. We are looking at expansion into Africa, Europe and other markets within the Asia Pacific to get closer to the local travel trade.


QHow do you work with the travel agents?

We are purely a B2B company and work hand-in-hand with travel partners. They play a vital role in the overall growth and development of the organisation. We also try to be in constant touch with them through our sales team and the different marketing activities and networking sessions we conduct regularly. We have even started one of its kind Product Training Session (currently on a pilot stage in Ahmedabad) in which we invite local travel agents in different batches/sessions and orient them about different offerings under our Travel Designer Group Umbrella. We will continue doing more such activities to further cement out strong relationship with them. ↘



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Buggy rides for hotels

Maini Materials in enhancing 'guest experience' in the hospitality sector. SA Mohan, CEO, Maini Materials, IHA winner shares the future initiatives of the company.



TT BUREAU

QTell us about your organisation?

Maini Materials Movement is a premium brand in material-movement and in-campus electric mobility solutions. The first mass produced electric car – Reva, India's first comprehensive range of battery operated material handling equipment and only India – made electric buggies, are testimony to this. We operate from a state-of-the-art design and manufacturing facility based in the Indian IT capital, Bengaluru, leveraging best-in-class processes and technology.

QWhat are the products and services that you offer?

MMM is an original equipment manufacturer in India to manufacture buggies – Battery operated vehicles (BOV). We offer passenger buggies in two, four, six, eight, 11 and 14 seating options. We specialise in custom made buggies for cargo, F&B, house-



SA Mohan
CEO
Maini Materials, IHA Winner

keeping, laundry, fire safety, mail transfers etc.

QWhat are the new initiatives that the company is taking?

We recently launched Wheel Chair Buggy for the first time in India, for people with Reduced Mobility (PRM). With a capacity for two PRM with three escorts and 150 kg baggage, this buggy is ergonomically designed with special emphasis on passengers' safety, helping airports, hospitals, large corporate and educational premises to be 'Disabled friendly'.

This year, we plan to introduce new Maini Buggy with futuristic and first-of-its-kind features, revolutionising the Battery Operated Vehicles (BOV) industry.

QAre you facing any kind of challenges?

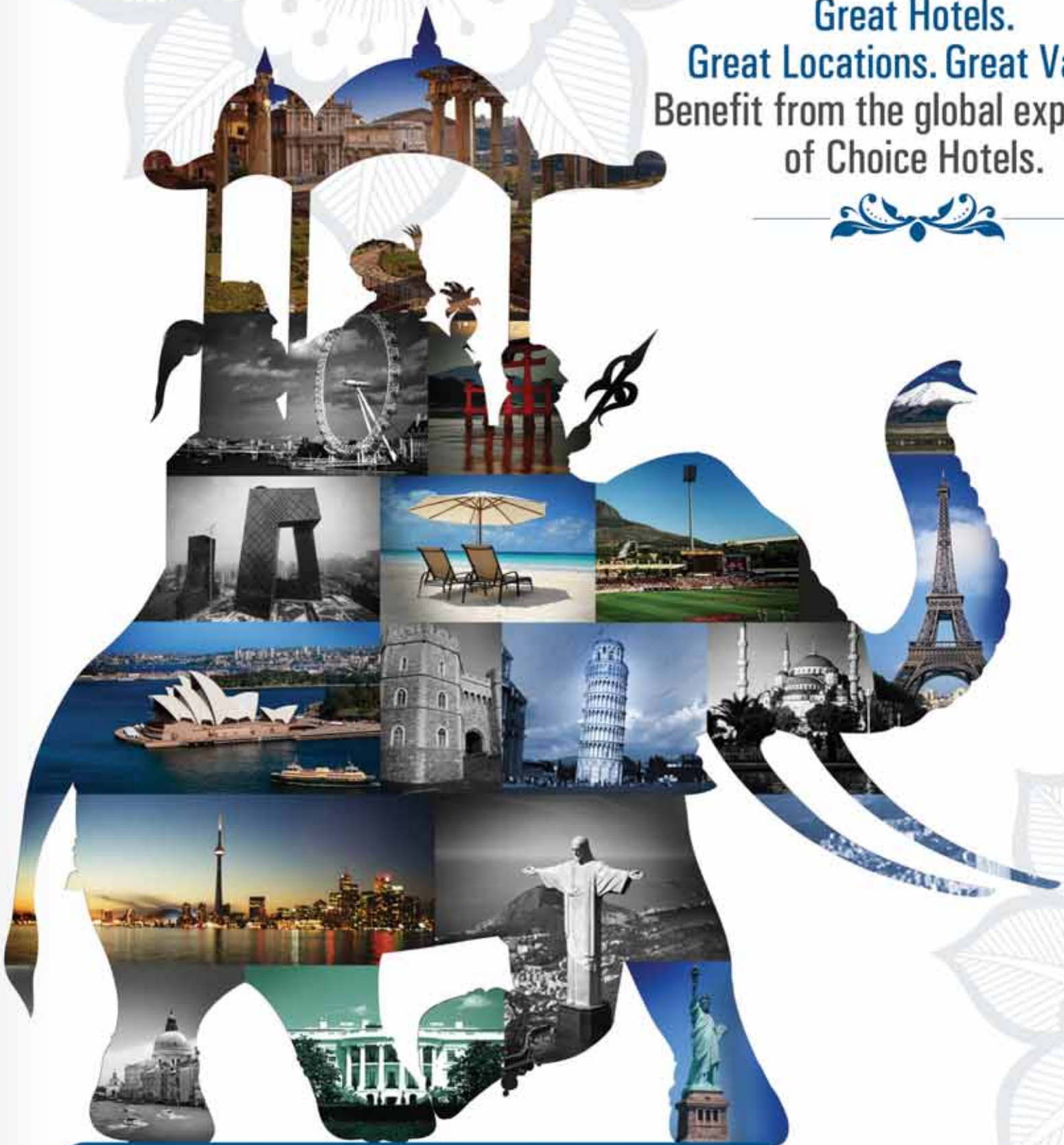
Going green has been on the agenda and it's now one of the fastest growing trends. In this effort, many are opting for BOV at their premises and hence confirms on the scope of growth in the usage of BOV in unconventional spaces, apart from hospitality and lifestyle industry. The challenge lies in tapping into this latent demand which can only be achieved through increased awareness among the different users.

Smooth Ride

↘ Maini Materials specialises in custom made buggies for cargo, F&B, house-keeping, laundry, fire safety, mail transfers etc.



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Thailand's third luxury showcase

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) recently held its third 'Amazing Thailand Luxurious Pleasure Roadshow' where 16 luxurious service providers and representatives from the best boutique and luxury hotels, resorts and airlines, golf course and premium inbound travel agents from Thailand showcased and promoted their products to the Indian travel agents.



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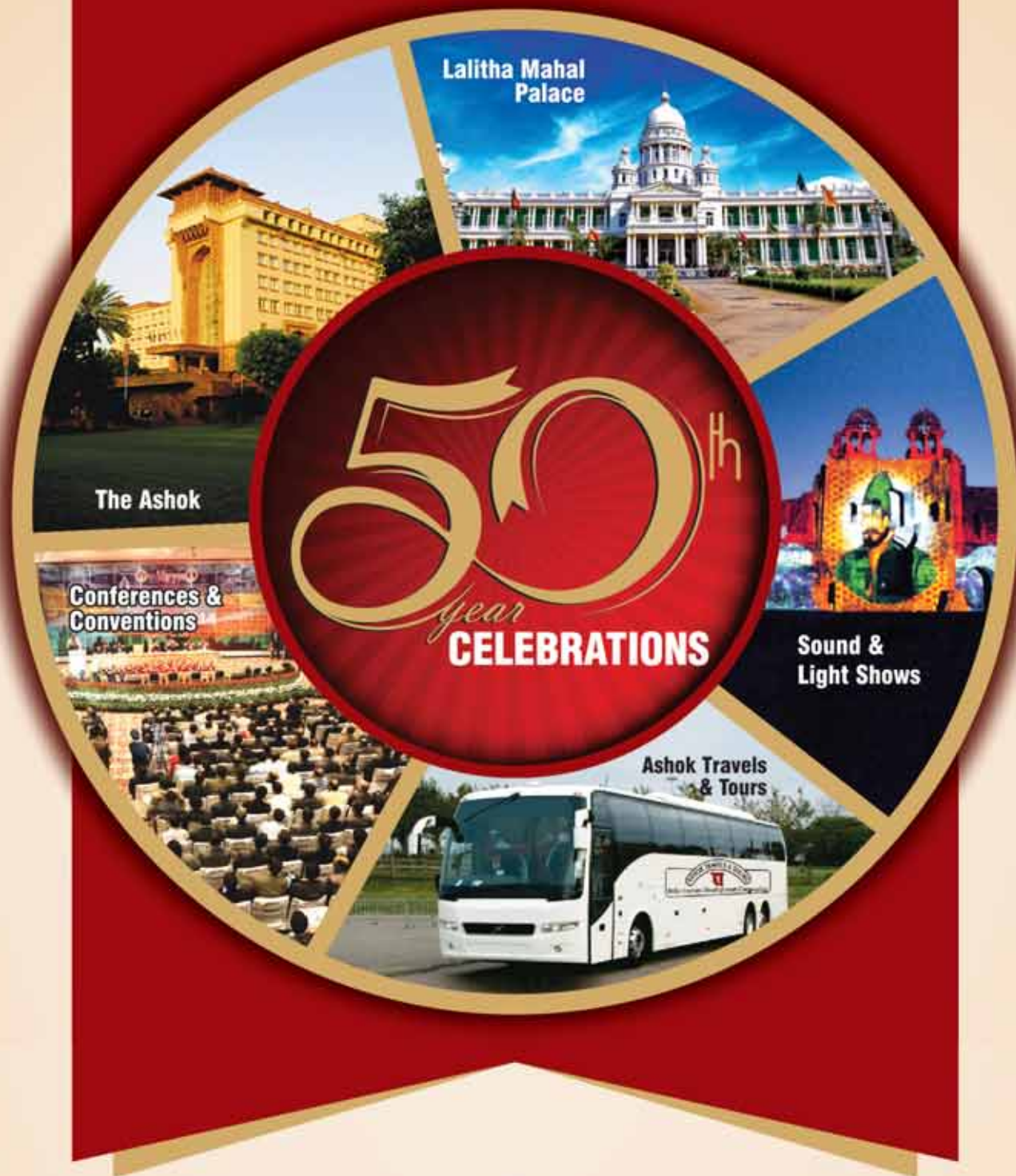
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MP showcases over 100 products

The Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart 2015, held from October 16-18 at Lakeview Ashok, Bhopal, highlighted the state's potential in wildlife, heritage, culture and tourism, and welcomed the presence of 200 buyers and media from over 20 countries.



TT BUREAU
The second edition of Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart took place over three days in Bhopal where over 200 buyers attended the B2B platform to share and explore business opportunities for discerning travel and tourism products.

During the inauguration, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** said, "With 2015 being the Visit MP Year, the government has initiated several projects to increase visitors to the state to see some of the country's best kept world heritage sites, and it's amazing landscapes. The state also offers a safe and secure environment. With the Simhastha 2016 taking place from April 22 to May 21, we will see one of

the biggest gathering of pilgrims in the country and we would like to invite travel agents to promote this event in a big way," he added.

Surendra Patwa, Minister for Tourism, Government of Madhya Pradesh, mentioned about the various proposals and schemes by the Madhya Pradesh Government, to give a fillip to the industry in the state. **Veera Rana**, IAS, Secretary Tourism, MP Government gave details of the second edition of MPTM while **Subhash Goyal**, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators, spoke about the various facets of the tourism industry and how Madhya Pradesh has been at the forefront of tourism marketing.

The event showcased over 100 different products

“With 2015 being the Visit MP Year, the government has initiated several projects to increase visitors to the state to see some of the country's best kept world heritage sites, and it's amazing landscapes. The state also offers a safe and secure environment.”

Shivraj Singh Chouhan
Chief Minister
Madhya Pradesh



India (TAAI), **Sarab Jit Singh**, Vice President, Federation of Associations in Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH), **Jyoti Kapur**, President, Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), **Capt. Swadesh Kumar**, Vice Chairman, Indian Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB), **Akshay Kumar**, President, ATOAI, among many others.

In the heart of India

MP unveiled tourism products such as pilgrimage, heritage, adventure, corporate hotels, wildlife resorts, travel agents and tour operators, handicrafts, culture pursuits

from Madhya Pradesh such as pilgrimage, heritage, adventure, corporate hotels, wildlife resorts, travel agents and tour operators, handicrafts, culture pursuits of Madhya Pradesh. Travel trade and hospitality delegates from countries like

Australia, South Africa, United Kingdom, USA, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Bulgaria, UAE, Sri Lanka, Latvia, Greece, Ireland, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, etc were present

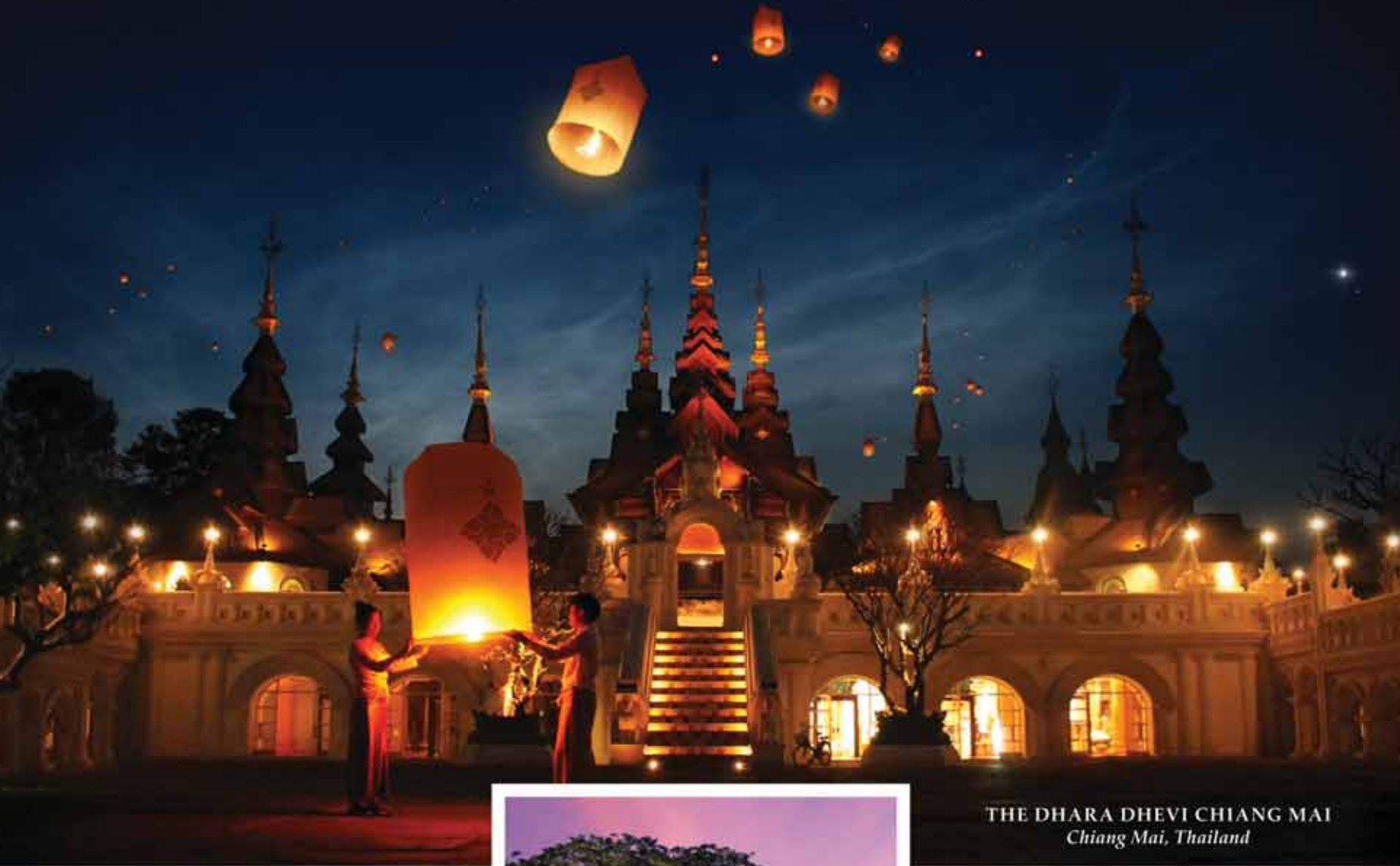
at the travel mart. The inauguration saw the presence of the who's who from the travel trade and hospitality industry, namely **Jyoti Mayal**, Member Managing Committee, Chairperson Airline Council, Travel Agents Association of

200 buyers from 20 countries connect @MPTM

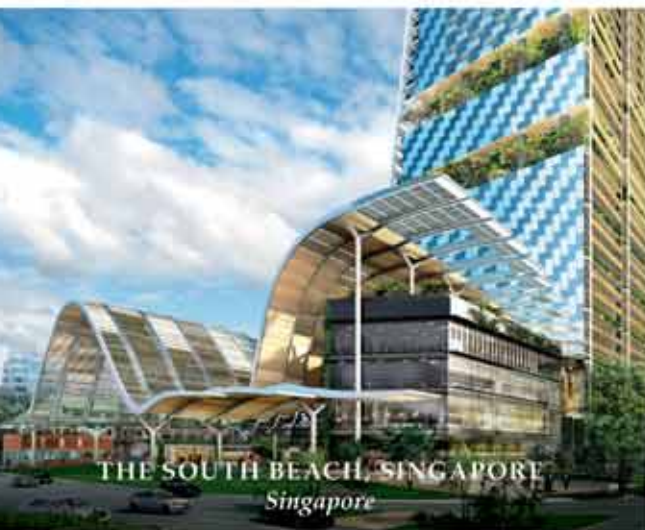


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EVENT TALK

NOVEMBER 2015

INTERNATIONAL

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

JANUARY 2016

INTERNATIONAL

20-24	Madrid, Spain	FITUR
11-13	Milan, Italy	BIT

NATIONAL

8-10	Nagpur	Global Panorama Showcase
8-10	Chennai	Travel & Tourism Fair
14-16	Kochi	India International Travel Mart
15-17	Bengaluru	Travel & Tourism Fair
15-17	Mumbai	India International Travel & Tourism Exhibition
22-24	Nagpur	India International Travel Exhibition
22-24	Coimbatore	Holiday Expo
29-31	Delhi	Satte

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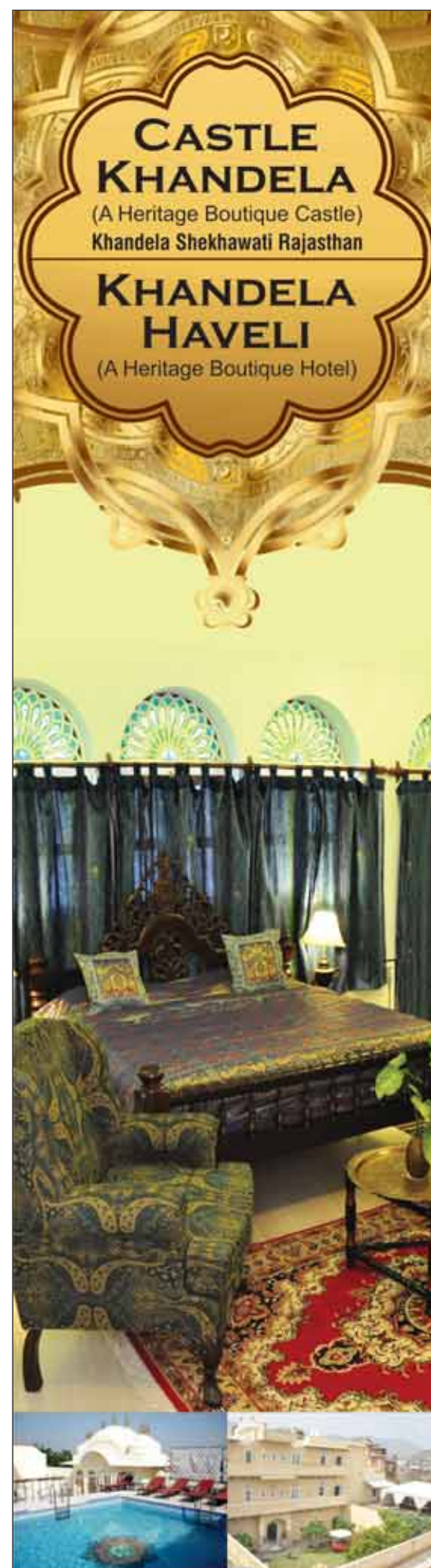
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VISA TALK



Changes in the Schengen Visa Application Process

As part of the worldwide introduction of the Visa Information System (VIS); the Schengen States will launch the VIS in India (and in the neighbouring countries) on 2nd November 2015.

From 2 November 2015, Indian citizens requesting a Schengen visa will have to appear in person in order to provide biometric data (fingerprints and photographs). This concerns the applications for the short-term Schengen visas. For subsequent applications, within the next 5 years, the biometric data will be copied from the previous visa application included in the VIS.

Apart from that, there will be no change in current procedures, such as visa fee or forms. However, the applicants should be aware that the provisions for biometric data, might cause some disruptions at the beginning and the first visit to their respective Schengen State after 2 November 2015 might take a little bit longer.

Exemptions from the obligation of fingerprinting are provided for the following categories of applicants only:

- Children (Age < 12 years).
- Persons from whom the collection of fingerprints is physically impossible.
- Sovereigns and other senior members of a royal family, Heads of State and members of national governments (with their official delegations and spouses), if they travel for official purposes.

For more details kindly contact: udaan@udaanindia.com



Phasing out all Non-Machine Readable Passports (MRPs)

The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India has announced that all Indian citizens living in India and abroad must apply for urgent re-issuance of their passports in the following cases:

- If holding handwritten passports.
- Passports valid for less than 6 months.
- If pages in the passport have exhausted.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has set a deadline of 24th November, 2015 for globally phasing out all Non-Machine Readable Passports (MRPs). From the above mentioned date, foreign governments may deny visa or entry to any person with a Non-MRP passport.



South Korea Short Stay Visa Requirement: Chennai

The Consulate General of the Republic of Korea, Chennai, has announced that applicants applying for South Korea short stay visa have to submit ITRs for the last 3 years along with other required documents. If the applicant submits a bank statement instead of an ITR then the same has to be presented of the last 6 months, accompanied with a declaration letter stating the reason for not submitting the ITRs.

Visa Snippets:

VFS Joint Visa Application Centre, Delhi is now operational from a new location and the address is follows:

VFS Joint Visa Application Centre, Shivaji Stadium Metro Station, Mezzanine Level, Baba Kharak Singh Marg, Connaught Place, New Delhi- 110001

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Largest pillarless ballroom

Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity is ready to open its doors from November. Tristan Beau De Lomenie, General Manager-Delegate, Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, tells us about the hotel's large pillarless ballrooms and other distinct features.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

QWhat is the USP of your property? How is your hotel different from the rest?

The biggest USP of our hotel is the guests staying with us in either of our hotels, whether it is Pullman or Novotel, are free to visit the restaurants and other public areas without any limitations of the other hotel. Pullman New

Also Pullman New Delhi Aerocity has the largest pillarless ballrooms with 13 meeting rooms, three boardrooms and a business centre, each aesthetically designed with state-of-the-art technology. The versatile meeting rooms can be adapted to suit various size and format requirements with flexible seating layouts.

Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, a unique premium



Tristan Beau De Lomenie
General Manager-Delegate
Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

QWhat are your expectations in terms of ARR and Occupancy for the coming year?

We remain upbeat with the long term growth prospects in the hospitality industry, especially as global travel continues to increase with the rise of the middle class market. The optimistic outlook of the hospitality industry suggests solid growth with economy and business hotels segments forming a larger percentage of the total room inventory and now accounting for nearly half of all the hotel rooms in the country. AccorHotels is

expanding rapidly in this segment through its Novotel and ibis brands.

There is an equitable distribution of room supply across the different areas that indicate a maturing hotel market. We are also witnessing the upscale hotel segments following closely behind. With renewed economic sentiments, momentous growth in the market and the recent changes in visa policies, we are positive that the country will drive more inbound business travel.

With renewed economic sentiments, momentous growth in the market and the recent changes in visa policies, we are positive that the country will drive more inbound business travel

Delhi Aerocity is located in the trendiest new destination in the capital and is a perfect mix of luxury and convenience. Our guests at Pullman can choose from a selection of dining options –Café Pluck, Honk, Pling. Our 16,000 sq ft spa - Woo with eight treatment rooms and a heated swimming pool attracts leisure guests.

combo from AccorHotels, combines modernity, design, and simplicity. The virtual concierge at the lobby of Novotel called Moncierge is an interactive forum that helps guests to check flight timings, to give feedback on the hotel and learn about the happenings around the city.

Salient Features

- Pullman New Delhi Aerocity has the largest pillarless ballrooms with 13 meeting rooms, three boardrooms and a business centre
- The Moncierge at the Novotel is an interactive forum that helps guests check flight timings, to give feedback and learn about the events in the city

Delivering agents' promises

Prafulla Mathur, CEO and Founder, WUDSTAY, talks about expectations from WTM and hopes for an increased inbound travel.



TT BUREAU

WUDSTAY, a five-month old company has taken to standardise the facilities provided in budget hotels and is working towards offering better value propositions to their travel agent partners and their clients.

"We feel the country has been painted in a bad light where the traveller may feel unsafe and dirty and thus thinks more before travelling. However, at WTM, one of the largest gatherings of travel trade professionals, we hope that this image is dispelled and we are able to communicate to the foreign traveller that we have taken care of all shortcomings and are on our way to better facilities and value additions," says **Prafulla Mathur**, CEO and Founder, WUDSTAY.

Discussing the various efforts made by travel agents



Prafulla Mathur
CEO and Founder
WUDSTAY

We believe that travel agents need to be confident about the products that they showcase and this can only happen when we as travel companies back them up with efficient and good services


to sell India better, Mathur says, "We just need to deliver on our promises made to the client. If you do this alone, we shall not need any marketing

to sell the potential markets of India." WUDSTAY has been working with travel agents in a big way. Mathur says, "Travel agents are an important aspect of business. We are looking at increasing their revenue, and deliver on services that they promise their clients to further business." Talking about the product and its delivery, Mathur adds, "We believe that travel agents need to be confident about the products


that they showcase and this can only happen when we as travel companies back them up with efficient and good services."

Discussing the expected growth of inbound travel Mathur expressed, "The inbound sector shall definitely grow better with the e-Tourist Visa facility coming in. At our end, we are maintaining the standards, providing staff training and embracing hospitality nuances even at the level of budget hotels. The brands are doing a brilliant job with their services and we are making sure that the budget hotels also pull up to the standardised expectations."

Mathur identifies and categories the popular inbound tourism circuits based on locations. "There are many popular tourism circuits, like Russia-Goa is a huge corridor; Israel-Himachal Pradesh is another. Lot of backpackers come to Rishikesh, Kerala is another popular circuit. We can categorise these circuits as adventure tourism, heritage, wellness, leisure, religious etc." ➤



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Cozmo Travel

Mumbai

Praveen Nair has been appointed as the Chief Operating Officer of Cozmo Travel. He has nearly 22 years of experience in the travel industry. He started his career with a GDS company and then went on to the online platform. His last assignment was with a Thailand DMC. Cozmo Travel India is Air Arabia-owned travel company with more than 70 branches within UAE and GCC. The Mumbai branch will be its first branch in India.



Hilton Worldwide

Gurgaon

Hilton Worldwide announced the appointment of **Kaushik Vardharajan** as Vice President, Development – India. His career with the firm spans almost 15 years and included positions in North America and Asia. Most recently, as Partner Managing Director, Asia Pacific, HVS Hospitality Services, Vardharajan spearheaded strategy for the region driving overall performance of the firm. He holds a Masters in Hospitality Administration as well as a Bachelor of Science in Hotel – Restaurant / Institutional Management from Johnson & Wales University, Providence, RI.



Four Points by Sheraton

Vishakhapatnam

Four Points by Sheraton Vishakhapatnam has recently appointed **Mayank Uniyal** as the Director of Sales & Marketing. Uniyal comes with a vast experience of 14 years in the hospitality industry and has worked with reputed hotels including IHG, The Leela Hotels, Sarovar Hotels and Starwood Hotels. Prior to this, he was the Director of Sales with Holiday Inn Cochin, where he led the sales, marketing and revenue functions. In his new role, Uniyal will be spearhead Strategic Sales & Marketing initiatives.



Park Plaza

Gurgaon

Harpreet Vohra has been appointed as the General Manager at Park Plaza Gurgaon. Prior to this, Vohra was working at Radisson Blu Agra. An enriching experience of 17 years includes his stints at Hyatt International, Taj Hotels, Golkonda Resorts and Angsana Spa, The Lalit New Delhi and Hyatt Regency in Mumbai. He holds a bachelor's degree in commerce from Bhopal University along with Hotel Management.



Marriott Hotels

Kochi

Rejin Thomas has been appointed as the new multi property Director of Sales & Marketing for Marriott hotels in Kochi: Kochi Marriott hotel and Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport hotel. Thomas comes with over 11 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Prior to joining Kochi Marriott hotels, Thomas was the Director Sales & Marketing of the Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Center and Courtyard by Marriott, Hyderabad. Thomas has been with Marriott since June 2012. Previously he had been working with The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts.



Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa

Goa

Sunishchal Parasnis has been appointed as Director of Sales for Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa, the first Park Hyatt Hotel in India. After a fruitful tenure at Grand Hyatt Mumbai in various roles in the Sales and Marketing team, Parasnis will be supervising and supporting the sales and events team of the hotel both in Mumbai and Goa. He has been associated with the hospitality industry for almost a decade now, with nine years in Hyatt India.



Mosaic Hotels

Noida

Mosaic Hotels, Noida, has appointed **Lalit Sharma** as the new Assistant F&B Manager. A hotel management graduate, Sharma began his career as an Assistant F&B Manager with The Oberoi Maidens Hotel, New Delhi and was promoted as F&B Supervisor with the same hotel. He worked for a decade in The Oberoi Maidens Hotel, New Delhi. Sharma will be responsible for enhancing the image of the organisation through directing business & planning and also enhance on establishing Mosaic Hotels, Noida as the main choice among the discerning customers.



Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

New Delhi

Ram Chatterjee has been appointed as 'Director of Spa' at Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. Chatterjee comes with more than 20 years of experience in hospitality industry. In his new role at Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, Chatterjee will be responsible for developing the concept of flagship Spa & Fitness division of Accor India Group of hotels based in New Delhi, India. Chatterjee has been associated with hotels and like Grand Hyatt Goa, Grand Hyatt Mumbai, Hyatt Regency Kolkata, Taj hotels and ITC hotels.



The Westin Pune, Koregaon Park

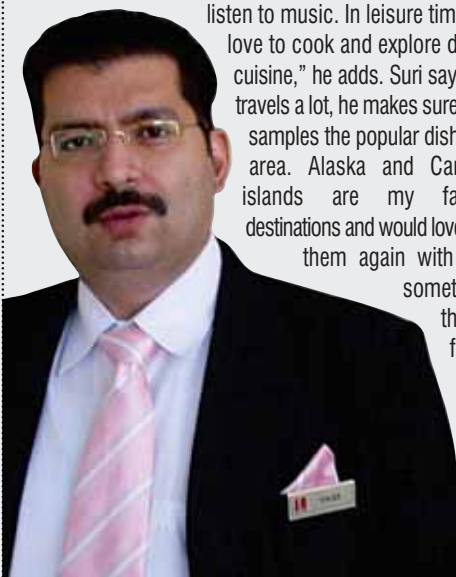
Pune

Manmeet B. Singh has been appointed as the Director of Food and Beverage at The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. He will be responsible for enhancing and sustaining guest experiences at all restaurants, bars and events at The Westin Pune. Singh's career in the hospitality industry spans over almost two decades and includes maximum experience in the food and beverage department, being associated with hotel chains such Hyatt and Intercontinental Hotels. Prior to The Westin Pune Koregaon Park, he worked at the Hyatt Regency, Ludhiana as the Director of Food & Beverage.



TALKING People

Vikas Suri, Associate Vice President, Lords Hotels & Resorts, is a go-getter and believes in acting quickly. "With whatever free time I get, I spend that with family and close friends. I enjoy weekends with my daughter, indulging in swimming or a game of tennis or badminton. I also like to read and listen to music. In leisure time I also love to cook and explore different cuisine," he adds. Suri says as he travels a lot, he makes sure that he samples the popular dish of that area. Alaska and Caribbean islands are my favourite destinations and would love to visit them again with family sometime in the near future."



Pankaj Saxena, General Manager, Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Mysore, says he balances his time between hotel operations and spending quality time with family. "Most of the personal time I have, I spend with family, especially my daughter," he says. Saxena likes to travel and study graphology. "Trekking and nature exploration expedition is my keen interest too," he adds. He prefers Kerala cuisine and loves to travel to Goa, West Europe and Southeast Asia with his family.



Santoshh Kumar Sharmma, Director and Vice President, Foresee Aviation, is a cricket buff. "I am a big cricket fan and whenever I get time, I play cricket with my eight years old son and friends," he says. In his free time, Sharmma likes to listen to Kishore Kumar's songs. He also has an interest in photography. "In India, I have travelled to many cities. However, my favourite will always remain Jaipur for its historical places like Jal Mahal, Nahargarh Fort, etc. As far as a foreign destination is concerned, I thoroughly enjoyed my trip to Maldives," he says. Sharmma adds that he loves Indian cuisines, especially South Indian food.

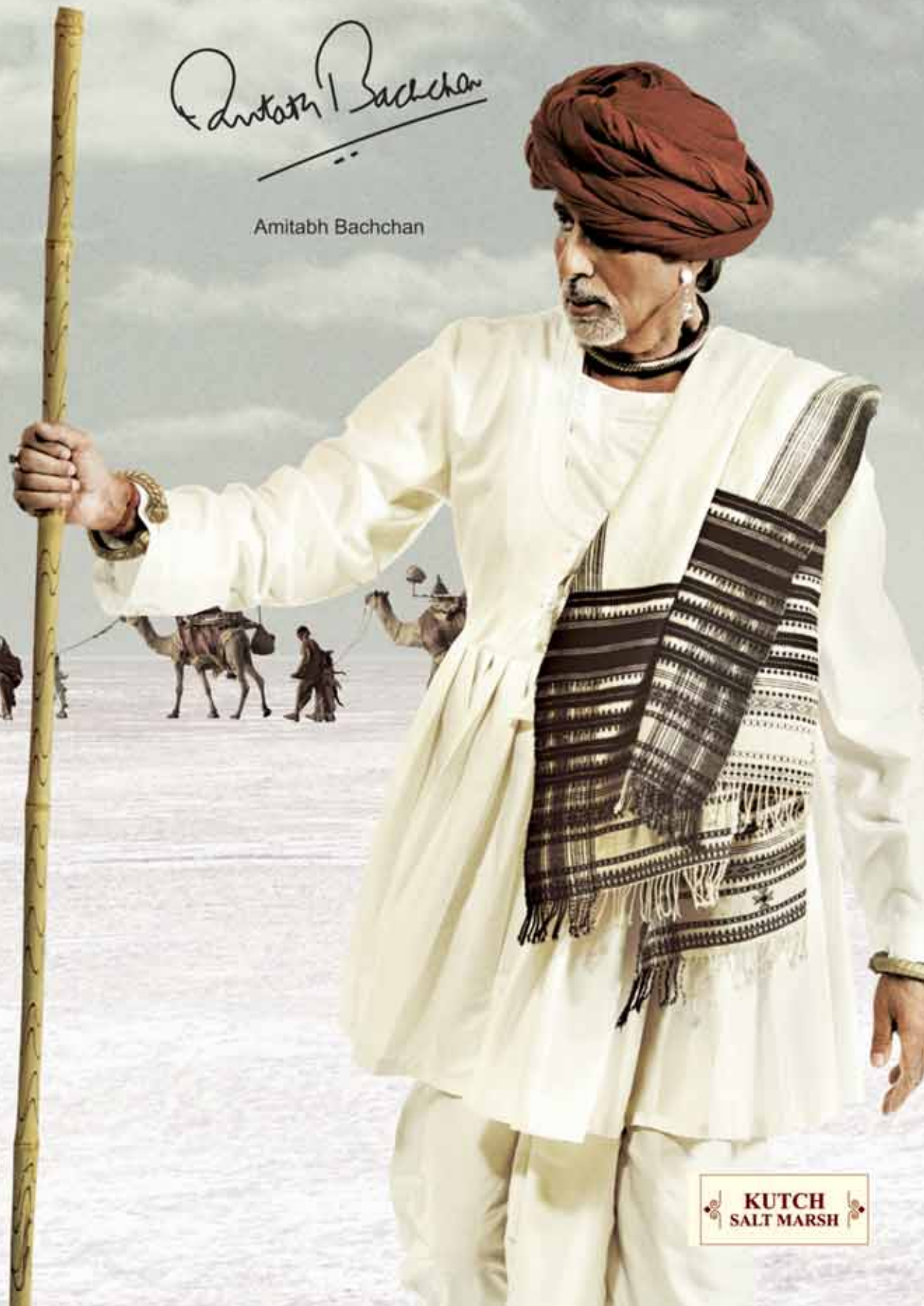


The sand is exactly as white as shown in this picture.
The ocean of white sand stands out stark and pristine in its
colourlessness, interrupted only by passing hoards of camels.
On moonlit nights, the desert reveals another colour.
Something that can hardly be described in words.

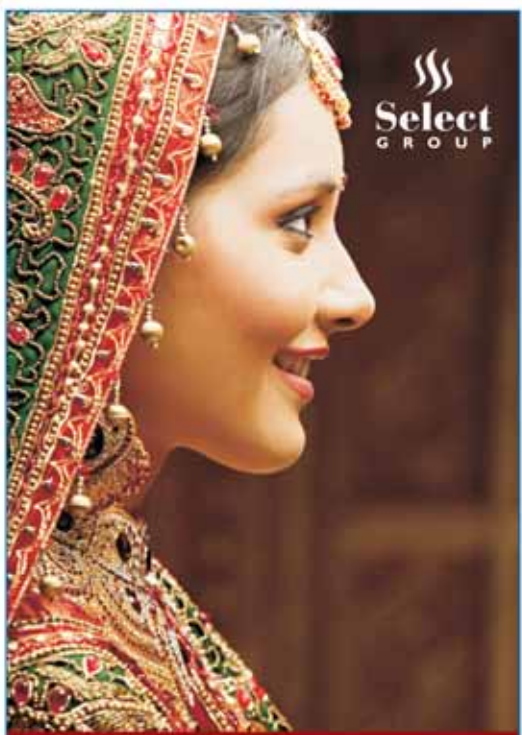
Which colour of Kutch will catch your eye?
Maybe one that I couldn't find!

Amitabh Bachchan

Amitabh Bachchan



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NIKINI DUGGAL DESIGN

Tier II cities on the horizon

With a clear focus on offering lower fares without compromising on quality, AirAsia India will be investing more in the India market and connecting more destinations, especially Tier II cities, says Mittu Chandilya, CEO & Managing Director, AirAsia India.



TT BUREAU

QTata has recently upped its stake. How does this development change AirAsia India's plans?

The very fact that the Tatas have increased their stake in the airline indicates that they trust us and that they believe in our growth strategy. Both AirAsia and the Tata Group have some great values and together we have already been successful in stirring the airline market in India. We are now focused on increasing frequency and we will continue to work towards enabling every Indian to fly the true low cost way. We have aggressive plans for the near future and the next phase for AirAsia India is growth.

QWhat is the kind of roadmap you have planned for the next year?



“We are now focused on increasing frequency and we will continue to work towards enabling every Indian to fly the true low cost way. We have aggressive plans for the near future and the next phase for AirAsia India is growth.”

Mittu Chandilya
CEO & Managing Director
AirAsia India

Our strategy has always been to make air travel affordable to every Indian. With that thought in mind, our primary focus will be to increase frequency in the current destinations we travel to. Beyond that, we will also be looking at connecting more destinations especially Tier II markets.

The new civil aviation policy will have a great amount of impact on our airline's performance. We do look forward to the quashing of 5/20 rule among other developmental and regulatory changes that the civil aviation policy can bring. I have to admit that we see a great oppor-



tunity in the country and we will be investing more. Although our plans have changed, our vision has not been altered. Our focus has been to be a pioneer in offering low fares to our guests without compromising on quality.

QHow has the Indian aviation market evolved since AirAsia entered India?

AirAsia India completely rationalised the fares when it entered the Indian market. Even during the low season, we have managed to stimulate bookings through our much awaited 'Big

policies, etc. Though the Indian aviation is a challenging one, nothing has deterred us from taking the risk and spreading our wings.

QAre there any new developments at AirAsia India that we can look forward to?

At AirAsia we are constantly working towards the development of our products and services. Our premium seats and variety of great food options have left a mark in our corporate travellers. AirAsia India is the only Indian LCC to offer a loyalty program to its flyers with BIG. Guests can earn and redeem flights on AirAsia India and other international flights operated by the AirAsia Group by signing up for our Loyalty Program with BIG. We also have a corporate product called 'Premium Flex' which gives our guests more flexibility in their booking and travel with value added bundles. We also have something called the 'Red Carpet' service that gives guests additional privileges on their travel. We are looking to expand our fleet size, increase our frequencies and add more new routes which will offer enhanced connectivity to our customers.

AirAsia Facts

- ✦ AirAsia India commenced operations in June 2014
- ✦ The airline currently has Bengaluru, Kochi, Goa, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Pune, Vizag, New Delhi, Guwahati and Imphal on its destination network
- ✦ AirAsia expects the civil aviation policy to quash the 5/20 rule among other developmental and regulatory changes
- ✦ It sees necessary approvals, increase in air turbine fuel, airport charges, and changing policies as obvious roadblock

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The winners of second edition of the West India Travel Awards celebrate with their trophies at the Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort

2nd West India Travel Awards

The India Travel Awards – West 2015 celebrated its second edition, this time in India's smallest state of Goa. Held at Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort, the glittering awards ceremony identified and rewarded excellence, and inspired its practitioners to continuously raise the standards of their products and services.

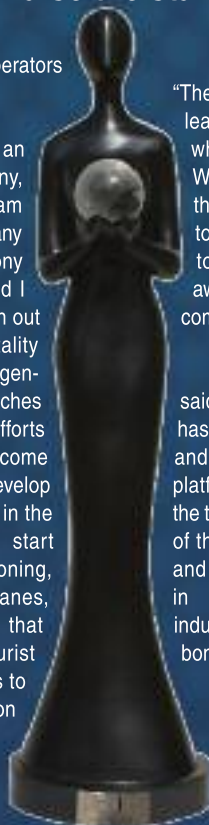
HAZEL JAIN

After the grand success of its fifth edition, the India Travel Awards travelled to the sunny state of Goa to celebrate outstanding achievers from West India region. The second edition of the West India Travel Awards saw a gathering of the best known faces and companies in the industry. Held on the night of October 14, 2015 at Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort, the event was graced by **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister for Woman & Child Development, Tourism, Ports, Protocol, Government of Goa, and **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC).

The black tie event brought together more than 120 guests for an exciting evening celebrating tourism excellence. The objective of these awards is to advance and promote the success and prosperity of the sector. The awards were presented to achievers from different segments of the industry which included aviation, domestic and international tourism boards, hotels and

resorts, travel agents, tour operators and technology.

Congratulating DDP on an outstanding awards ceremony, Parulekar said, "I am very happy to be amidst so many winners. The awards ceremony was very well organised and I hope that these awards given out to the tourism and hospitality industries continue. Goa has generally been popular for its beaches but there have been a lot of efforts since the last three years to come up with innovative ideas to develop newer products. As a result, in the coming days, Goa will start activities like hot-air ballooning, amphibious vehicles, seaplanes, ropeways, etc. I hope that we will take the current tourist arrivals of six million tourists to Goa to more than seven million tourists this year. I urge all of you here to extend your support to us for this."



Speaking about the awards, Desai said, "These awards will motivate a lot of industry leaders to achieve the levels of excellence which others have achieved today. While cheering on the winners I think these awards will act as a great motivator to others who haven't been able to make it to the podium tonight. I'm sure these awards will definitely set a benchmark in the coming years."

SanJeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, said, "We all know that the tourism industry has many awards given away at the national and global levels but none on a regional platform. The India Travel Awards recognise the true stars of India. Frankly, the real heroes of the industry come from different regions and far corners of India. These awards, in their second year, salute the industry achievers who have been the backbone of this industry."

The Gallery of Legends award was given to **Kesari Raoji Patil**, Founder and Chairman, Kesari Tours. **Urrshila Kerkar**, Executive Director, Cox & Kings



(L-R): Tanushree Pandey, Mrs India 2015, Nikhil Desai, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, Dilip Parulekar, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa and SanJeet, Director, DDP Group unveiling the special edition on West India at the Awards ceremony

Limited, won the DDP Game Changer award while **Arjun Sharma**, Chairman and Managing Director, Select Group and Le Passage to India, was adjudged the winner of Tourism Ambassador award. **Nitan Chhatwal**, Managing Director, Shrem Resorts, received the DDP Trailblazer award. **Ruchir Bang**, CEO, roomsXML, was adjudged the Face of the Future while Entrepreneur of the Year award was given to **Aparna Basu Mallik**, CEO, Club 7 Holidays.

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► GALLERY OF LEGENDS

Kesari Raoji Patil, Founder and Chairman, Kesari Tours joins the 'Gallery of Legends'. He is felicitated by **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa, **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, **Tanushree Pandey**, Mrs India 2015 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



► DDP GAME CHANGER

Urrshila Kerkar, Executive Director, Cox & Kings joins the 'DDP Game Changer'. She is felicitated by **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa, **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, **Tanushree Pandey**, Mrs India 2015 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



► **TOURISM AMBASSADOR**

Arjun Sharma, Chairman & Managing Director, The Select Group and Le Passage to India joins the 'Tourism Ambassador'. He is felicitated by **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa, **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, **Tanushree Pandey**, Mrs India 2015 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



► **DDP TRAILBLAZER**

Nitan Chhatwal, Chairman & Managing Director, Shrem Group was awarded the 'DDP Trailblazer' and was received by **Krishani Chhatwal**, Director, Shrem Group on his behalf. She accepts the award from **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa, **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, **Tanushree Pandey**, Mrs India 2015 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



► **FACE OF THE FUTURE**

Ruchir Bang, Executive Director, roomsXML Solutions, joins the 'Face of the Future'. He is felicitated by **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa, **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, **Tanushree Pandey**, Mrs India 2015 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group





Chief Guest **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa being honoured with Pearl Trophy 'Maya'



Guest of Honour **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation being honoured with Pearl Trophy 'Maya'



Thanking **Tanushree Pandey**, Mrs India 2015 for her support to India Travel Awards



► **ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR**

The award was given to **Aparna Basu Mallik**, CEO, Club7 Holidays and was felicitated by **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa, **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, **Tanushree Pandey**, Mrs India 2015 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



► **BEST AIRLINE**

The award was given to **SpiceJet** and received by **Kamal Hingorani**, Sr. VP & Head of Inflight Services and Customer Experience, SpiceJet



► **BEST TRAVEL MANAGEMENT COMPANY**

The award was given to **Travstarz Holiday & Destinations** and received by its Managing Director, **Pankaj Nagpal**



► **BEST LUXURY MICE & WEDDING HOTEL**

The award was given to **Sayaji Indore** and received by its Corporate Head Sales & Marketing, **Vishal Kumar**





► **BEST TOUR OPERATOR - OUTBOUND**

The award was given to **World Travel Studio** and received by its Founder and Managing Director, **Haresh Koyande**



► **BEST CITY HOTEL**

The award was given to **Novotel Pune** and received by its Director of Sales & Marketing, **Rohit Chopra** and General Manager, **Bandish Mehta**



► **BEST VISA FACILITATION COMPANY**

The award was given to **TT Services** and received by its Senior Manager - New Projects and Transitions, **Gaurav Talwar** and Global Marcoms Manager, **Madhu Bharthi V**



► **BEST NTO**

The award was given to **Department of Tourism Philippines** and received by its Account Director, **Navritu K Rai** and Senior Sales Manager, **Shubhangi Chitre**



► **FASTEST GROWING HOTEL BRAND - FRANCHISE**

The award was given to **Ramada** and received by its Director Sales & Marketing - Indian Ocean, EMEA, **Amit Garg**



► **BEST FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMPANY**

The award was given to **Centrum Direct** and received by its Senior Vice President and General Manager - West, New Initiatives & Tie ups, **Anil Menon**



► **BEST SPA & WELLNESS RESORT**

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



► **BEST LUXURY CAMP**

The award was given to **The Ultimate Travelling Camp** and received by its COO, **Rajnish Sabharwal**





► **BEST LUXURY HOTEL**

The award was given to **JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar** and received by its General Manager, **Saeid Heidari**



► **BEST LUXURY TOUR OPERATOR**

The award was given to **Meandering Vacations** and received by its Director, **Amita Nair** and Director, **Deepali Wagle**



► **BEST DESTINATION MARKETING CAMPAIGN**

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



► **BEST BEACH DESTINATION**

The award was given to **Goa Tourism Development Corporation** and received by its GTDC PRO, **Deepak Narvekar**



► **BEST SMART CITY TOURISM**

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



► **BEST MICE OPERATOR**

The award was given to **Club 7 Holidays** and received by its Vice President - Western India, **Rajesh Bist**



► **BEST BUSINESS HOTEL**

The award was given to **Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre** and received by its Director of Sales and Marketing, **Mayuresh Deodhar**



► **BEST TRAVEL PORTAL**

The award was given to **atlastravelsonline.com** and received by its Director, **Hussain Patel**





► **BEST DESTINATION MANAGEMENT COMPANY - AMERICA'S**

The award was given to **7M Tours** and received by its Director, **Akarsh Kolaprath**



► **BEST MID MARKET HOTEL**

The award was given to **Mercure Lavasa** and received by its General Manager, Novotel Lavasa & Area General Manager Lavasa Hotels & Convention Centre, **Manish Dayya** and Hotel Manager, Mercure Lavasa and Lavasa International Convention Centre, **Sachin Malhotra**



► **BEST CORPORATE TRAVEL PRACTICE**

The award was given to **Mahindra & Mahindra** and received by its Deputy General Manager AO & TRS, **John D'sa** and VP AFS Admin ER and CSR, **Vijay Nair**



► **BEST BOUTIQUE HOTEL**

The award was given to **Ramee Grand Hotel & Spa** and received by its Director Operations and Business Development (India), **Nihit Srivastava**



► **BEST GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (GDS)**

The award was given to **Travelport Galileo** and received by its Regional Head West, **Anesh Kavle** and Business Development Manager - Goa, **Melicio Fernandes**



► **BEST SPORTS TOURISM COMPANY**

The award was given to **Sports Konnect** and received by its CEO, **Shashank Shekhar Mishra**



► **BEST EMERGING TRAVEL SHOW**

The award was given to **Global Panorama Showcase, Nagpur** and received by Jagsons Travels' Executive Director, **Jagtar Singh Sethi** and Managing Director, **Harmandeep Singh Anand**



► **BEST ALL INCLUSIVE HOTEL**

The award was given to **Heritage Village Club Goa** and received by its General Manager, **Guitry Velho**





► **BEST CORPORATE INCENTIVE TOUR OPERATOR**

The award was given to **Kesari Tours** and received by its Vice Chairperson, **Sunita Patil**



► **BEST DESIGN & WELL MAINTAINED HOTEL**

The award was given to **Novotel Goa Shrem Resort** and received by its General Manager, **Rohan Sable**



► **BEST CUSTOMISED TOUR OPERATOR**

The award was given to **Hither and Thither Tours and Travels** and received by its Director, **Nilesh Singh** and Director, **Meghana Gautam**



► **BEST DEBUT MID-MARKET HOTEL**

The award was given to **Effotel Hotel by Sayaji** and received by its General Manager, **Kunal Katoch**



► **BEST BOUTIQUE RESORT**

The award was given to **Upper Deck Resort, Lonavala** and received by its General Manager, **Saurabh J. Bamane**



► **BEST INNOVATIVE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**

The award was given to **JJ's Tours** and received by its Managing Director, **Jagrut Thakkar**



► **MOST INNOVATIVE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT COMPANY**

The award was given to **Bonton Holidays** and received by its Founder and Managing Director, **Avanish Sharma**



► **BEST GAMING DESTINATION**

The award was given to **Deltin Royale** and received by its Manager Marketing, **Floyd Tavares**





► **FASTEST GROWING FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMPANY**

The award was given to **Weizmann Forex** and received by its Managing Director, **B.S. Shetty**



► **BEST ECONOMY HOTEL**

The award was given to **ibis Navi Mumbai** and received by Associate Director of Sales, **Ashuthosh Ruia**



► **BEST TRAVEL SHOW**

The award was given to **IITT - Mumbai** and received by its Exhibition Director, **Mohit Mewani**



► PARTNER STATE

The award was given to **Goa Tourism** and received by **Dilip Parulekar**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa, **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation



► HOSPITALITY PARTNER

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



► BEVERAGE PARTNER

The award was given to **Aspri Spirits** and received by its Area Manager - Telangana & Goa, **Geethanjali Rajput**



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- Enjoy a game of beach volleyball on the powdery white sand.

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