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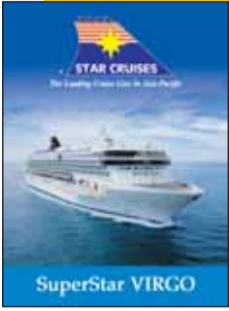
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### East India Travel Awards

# Legends go for gold...



(L-R); Sanjeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, felicitates Rajindera Kumar, Working Director, Ambassador Hotel, Former President, FHRAI, Senior MC Member, HRANI and Chairman, Convention Organising Committee, along with Chief Guest Basanta Rajkumar, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Government of Punjab, and Mrs. India 2015 Dr. Tanushree Pandey

India Travel Awards celebrated the achievements of those behind the success of the industry at the second edition of the East India Travel Awards, held on November 19, 2015 at the Holiday Inn Chandigarh Panchkula. The event was graced by **Basanta Rajkumar**, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Government of Punjab, along with other distinguished personalities who came together to acknowledge the contributions of the best in the travel and tourism industry in East India. The Gallery of Legends award went to **Rajindera Kumar**, Working Director Ambassador Hotel, Former President, FHRAI, Senior MC Member and Chairman, Convention Organising Committee, while **Rupak Gupta**, Joint Managing Director, U.P. Hotels, won the DDP Game Changer award. **Prem Pal Gandhi**, Chairman, KC Group of Institutions, Colleges and Hotels received the DDP Trailblazer award. **Bjorn Noel Deniese**, Vice President Sales & Marketing, Mayfair Hotels & Resorts and Director, Mayfair Spa Resort & Casino in Gangtok, Sikkim, won the Face of the Future award. The winners of the awards were defined by a fair and unbiased selection process done through online voting and judgment by a panel of jury consisting of travel industry luminaries. The awards saw a total of 2,88,395 votes being received in 96 categories from 25 countries.

# Customisation is the key: Zutshi



**Vinod Zutshi**  
Secretary-Tourism, Government of India

Vinod Zutshi, Secretary-Tourism, Govt. of India, says that the varied tourism offerings combined with the new Civil Aviation Policy allows us to offer customised experiences.

TT BUREAU

The Government of India has taken many initiatives—like the introduction of the e-Tourist visa and the release of the Civil Aviation Policy—to boost the number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs)

in to the country. According to Zutshi, these moves have only shown positive results in the long term.

“The Indian tourism industry is growing at a very fast rate,” he expressed. “So far, 10.2 per cent growth has been reg-

istered in 2014 over 2013. This shows that the growth has almost doubled when one compares it to the average growth rate around the world, which is about 4.75 per cent. If you observe the last four years from 2010-2014, our average growth has been about 7 per cent, 2.5

per cent more than the rate at which the rest of the world is growing,” he added, speaking at the World Travel Market, 2015, in London.

The fact that India has a diverse range of destinations,

Contd. on page 16 ▶

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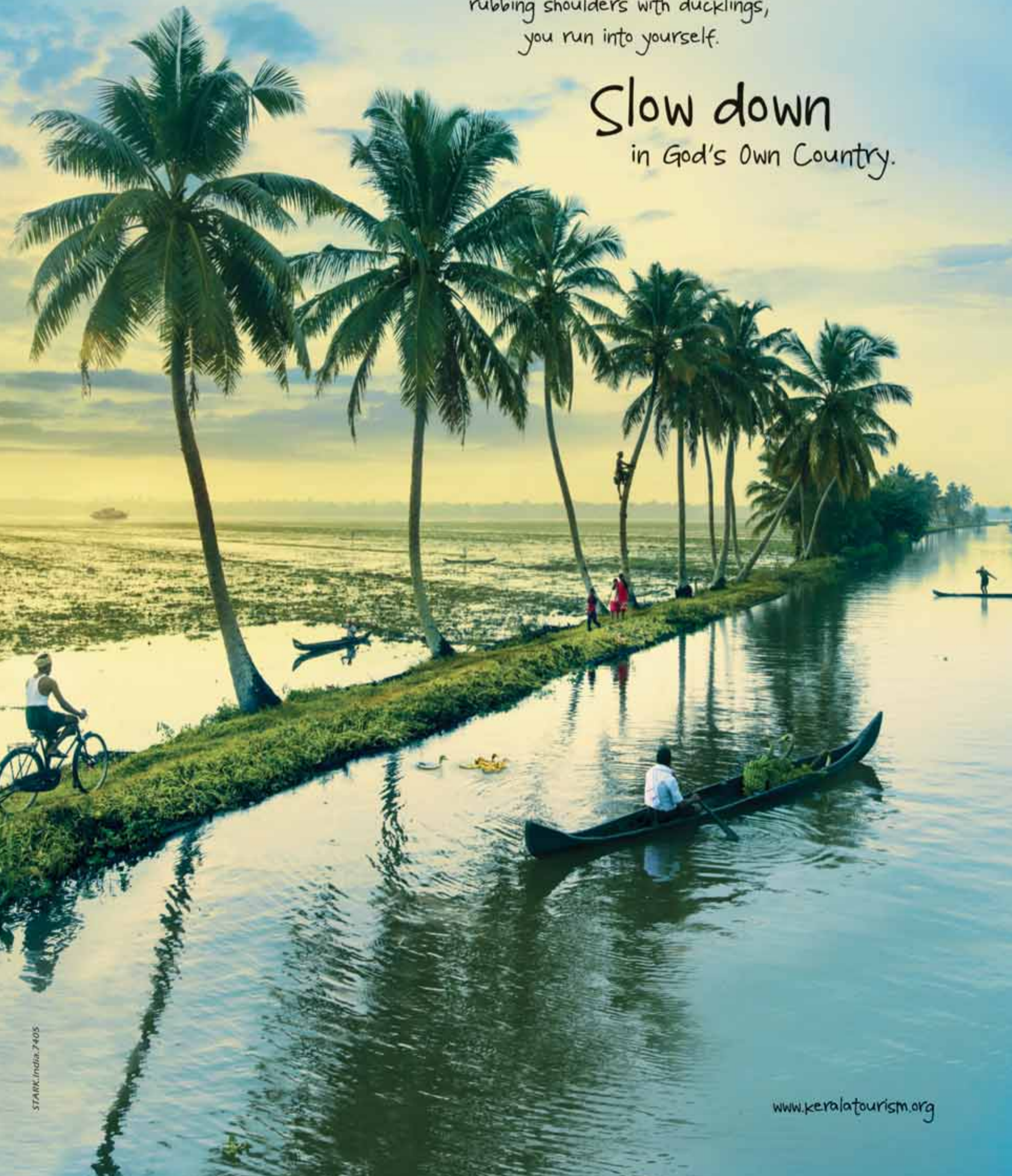
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# North to welcome Maya

As India Travel Awards (ITA) travels for its second North edition to honour the achievers of the travel industry from the region, Crowne Plaza, Jaipur Tonk Road, is all set to host the mega event.

**TT BUREAU**

Marking the year end, and after the success of its regional chapters in West, East and South, India Travel Awards is now travelling North to Jaipur this December. The second edition of North India Travel Awards will honour the achievers of travel and tourism industry from the northern region. Crowne Plaza, Jaipur Tonk Road, is hosting the grand event on December 8, 2015.

The award statuette, Maya celebrates the grandeur of tourism. Based on an online voting system, the winners will be awarded after a thorough jury analysis of the voting, making the awards fair and unbiased.

Sharing more details about the event, **SanJeet**,



**SanJeet**  
Mentor  
India Travel Awards

Mentor, India Travel Awards, says, "The awards are recognition for the excellent work done by the tourism industry at a regional level in India. They honour the hard work and dedication shown by our leaders. With Maya, our princess in black, the awardees have an added responsibility to ensure that our industry grows further and prospers. The industry has many heroes but no



**Ashwini K Goela**  
General Manager  
Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road

platform to recognise them. India Travel Awards are our way to thank the stars of the industry and encourage the new faces who will be the leaders of tomorrow."

Located in close proximity to the airport and in the business hub of Sitapura, Crowne Plaza, Jaipur Tonk Road is the latest addition to one of the world's largest hotel group.

With its promising convention facilities, the property is well-equipped to manage big events. **Ashwini K Goela**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza, Jaipur Tonk Road, says, "The preparation of the award ceremony started as early as April 2015 from choosing the most apt venue to the blue print layouts and more. The chef has crafted the most sought after menu hand-picked from the most exquisite ingredients to serve a pre-plated 5-course dinner and exceed the gastronomic expectation during the award dinner. The food and beverage team have chosen a variety of beverages including select wine to perfectly pair with the dinner. With 218 well-appointed rooms and suites and five eclectic dining options, we promise the essence of warmth and friendly service."

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# TRAVTALK

VIEWPOINT

# Stable growth in outbound travel

TRAVTALK brings to you how Indian travellers are expected to increase the length of their outbound trips.

## Taxes continue to plague the industry

The introduction of the Swachh Bharat Cess (SBC) of 0.5 per cent on all taxable services will affect the travel, tourism and hospitality industry substantially. This levy translates into 50 paise for every ₹ 100 worth of taxable services. For travel agents this means their services towards airfare, modification of bookings, charges for train and bus bookings, booking hotel accommodations, arranging sightseeing and transfers for clients as well as consultancy fees will come under the SBC ambit, making it more expensive for their clientele.

The use of this fund in actually cleaning the country and giving us clean roads and infrastructure, and ridding it of some of the diseases like malaria, dengue, diarrhea, jaundice etc. would definitely benefit the industry. How this will be done remains to be seen!

We also had the world's largest hotel and lodging company come into existence when Marriott International bought Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide. Combined, the companies operate or franchise more than 5,500 hotels with 1.1 million rooms worldwide. Going with the adage "Bigger is Better" this consolidation within the hotel industry may be its best bet to defend their bottom lines vis-à-vis competitive influences of other brands, OTAs, lodging companies, and those whose revenues come at the expense of hotel companies.

Neither of the two scenarios is going to show results overnight, it will take some time to actually comprehend the change and see the effect it will have on our industry. Until then, let the excitement build on the e-Tourist Visa (eTV) giving international travellers the confidence to come into India with ease and hope for higher FTAs now that we are in the midst of the tourist season.

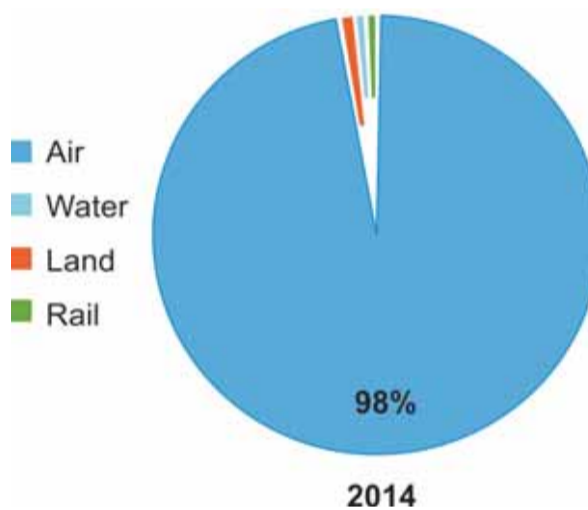
### Total number of trips, Domestic in millions, International in thousands



Part of the rise of domestic tourism can be attributed to growth of lower middle class incomes – the type of domestic consumer who cannot afford the flight prices to journey abroad, but who want to turn a religious pilgrimage into a family holiday.

Source: TTIC Analysis

### International departures, Mode of Transport



Travelling by air is the preferred choice for outbound Indians, with over 17 million trips in 2014, which is expected to increase to 19 million by 2015. While air is the obvious choice since most outbound Indians opt for far off destinations such as Thailand and UAE, ease of booking also plays a part in their choice.

Source: TTIC Analysis; Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

### India Outbound Departures (in 000's)

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Thailand	985.8	1,093.4	1,181.9	1,310.8	1,456.6	United States	724.4	824.8	961.9	1,051.9	1,131.6
United Arab Emirates	964.5	1,032.5	1,088.9	1,157.2	1,226.2	Malaysia	691.2	697.3	698.1	724.5	743.1
Saudi Arabia	998.7	1,007.6	1,060.1	1,265.7	1,469.7	China	610.1	619.4	624.6	670.7	711.5
Singapore	894.9	931.7	1,074.2	1,141.3	1,195.1	Bahrain	466.9	488.8	498.2	514.5	532.6
Kuwait	826.5	872.6	888.3	932.4	964.1	Hong Kong	429.3	431.6	433.0	452.1	462.5

Source: TTIC Analysis

### International departures by purpose of visit (in millions), 2010-2019

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Business	5.0	5.5	6.0	6.7	7.2	7.9	8.5	9.1	9.8	10.5
Leisure	2.5	2.7	2.9	3.3	3.5	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.9	5.3
VFR	2.7	2.8	3.0	3.3	3.6	3.9	4.3	4.7	5.2	5.8
Other Personal	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.3	3.6	3.9	4.2	4.7	5.1	5.7
Total	13.0	14.0	14.9	16.6	17.9	19.5	21.2	23.0	25.0	27.2

Source: TTIC Analysis, Ministry of tourism India, Trade Press, US Census Bureau



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# AI payments via VISA and Mastercard

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) meeting held at Kempinski Ambience Hotel, New Delhi discussed the new committee's agenda where Air India announced that the airline will accept corporate card payments on VISA and Mastercard from January 1, 2016.



AHANA GURUNG & VAISHALI DAR

Air India will accept payments via Mastercard and VISA corporate credit cards through the travel agent's GDS network. **Pankaj Srivastava**, Director-Commercial, Air India, said, "We are pleased to announce that with effect from January 1, VISA and Mastercards corporate cards will be accepted by Air India on the GDS gateway."

Srivastava announced this during the TAAI meeting on November 19, amidst the committee members and office bearers of all 20 regions and chapters. Currently, the national carrier only permits American Express credit cards on their payment gateways through GDS for corporate cards. At the meeting, Srivastava also highlighted the various milestones of 2015 for the airlines before making the key announcement.

Speaking about the highlights of the day's meeting, **Jay Bhatia**, Hon. National Treasurer, TAAI, said, "The meeting was held to train and guide the committee members, discuss the objectives and aims, and talk about how we are going to take things forward in the coming two years. We had presentations by managing committee portfolio holders, like tourism airline membership development council, the allied services who work with the embassies, and VFS. The whole idea was to discuss how we are going to work forward and benefit the members, resolve various issues, focus on future prospects and strive for our industry to grow further," he elaborated.

TAAI President **Sunil Kumar** also shared his thoughts on the association's agenda and said, "Our first and foremost plan is image building – a kind of re-planning since

we are in our 65th year and the TAAI committee has been running the same way. We need to be relevant with the changing times. Our entire focus will start with rebranding TAAI. The sec-

ond focus would be to prepare our members to be able to encounter the challenges of tomorrow, and lay emphasis on training. Another important agenda is leadership development within the committee," he explained.



TAAI Managing Committee Members and office bearers

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### TAAI MC Agenda

- To be relevant and focus on rebranding
- To prepare the members to be able to encounter future challenges
- Leadership development within the committee

## Shandong Airlines links Eastern China to New Delhi

■ Travelling to China from India has become more convenient with the commencement of Shandong Airlines' four weekly non-stop flights between New Delhi and Kunming from Nov 11, 2015. Operated by a Boeing 737-800, the services are available on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday with onward connectivity to mainland China. Furthermore, travel agents can avail of an IATA Commission of three per cent by selling Shandong Airlines tickets.

The introduction of the new route comes as a boon since only six flights provided a direct link between the two countries. At present, four Chinese carriers—Air China, China Eastern, China Southern and Shandong Airlines; along with one Indian carrier, Air India, serve the market.

Shandong Airlines, owned by Air China, mainly operates domestic routes to east China destinations and international routes to India, South Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Taiwan and Thailand.

# SriLankan bullish on South India

Despite limiting its expansion in India, SriLankan Airlines has increased frequencies to Chennai and Bengaluru throughout last year as a result of huge market demand.

TT BUREAU

SriLankan Airlines has been constantly monitoring demand in India in order to be quick on the draw. After announcing a code-share agreement with Mihin Lanka for the operations of flights between Kolkata and Colombo, it also undertook expansion plans in India by increasing frequencies to Chennai and Bengaluru throughout last year. It currently operates four flights a day to Chennai; double daily flights to Tiruchirappalli and Cochin; daily flights to Trivandrum, Mumbai and Delhi and eleven flights a week to Bengaluru.

Speaking on this, **Saminda Perera**, GM (Corporate Communications), SriLankan Airlines, says, "These frequency increases are based on market demand. However, SriLankan has not undertaken any expansion plans in India recently. Having said that, we are constantly looking for opportunities to expand our reach in India. We do not have immediate expansion plans, but fre-



“We are constantly looking for opportunities to expand our reach in India. We do not have immediate expansion plans, but frequency increases will take place in line with the market trends and demand.”

**Saminda Perera**  
GM (Corporate Communications), SriLankan Airlines

quency increases will take place in line with the market trends and demand.”

The national carrier of Sri Lanka is also conducting activities along with the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau to endorse the several facilities offered for hosting MICE activities in Sri Lanka. These efforts are focused toward implementing a long-term plan to enhance Sri Lanka's profile as a MICE destination and becoming a premier conference location in the Indian Ocean.

Sharing the number of passengers travelling from India

to Sri Lanka, Perera says, "During the financial year 2014-15, SriLankan carried 6,21,464 passengers and from April to September this year, the number was 3,45,579. We have witnessed high demand from Chennai. Out of 621,464, around 45 per cent travel beyond Sri Lanka." With more than 15 years in the air transport industry, Perera was appointed to his current post in June 2015.

SriLankan Airlines had enhanced its flights to Chennai from Colombo with the addition of a fourth flight in April 2015, reinforcing the significance of the Indian

market and specifically Chennai for the airline. This brought the total frequency of flights between Sri Lanka and India to 86 flights per week. "Chennai is a key market for us and one of the fastest growing cities in Southern India. While we have always received a strong response from this market, Chennai serves as a key business hub for all multinational corporations. This daily flight caters to growing business, corporate and leisure demand between Sri Lanka and Chennai. The increased frequency also reinforces our commitment to Chennai and

will strengthen the deep commercial and bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka," added Perera. The airline saw over 2,25,000 arrivals from Chennai to Colombo in 2014.

### Fact File

- ✦ The airlines' hub is located at Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo, providing convenient connections to its global route network of 95 destinations in 44 countries (including code share operations) in Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Far East, North America, Australia and Africa
- ✦ With the increased frequency the total number of flights between Sri Lanka and India has increased to 86 flights per week

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**Hahn Air**



# Trains: cancellation to cost double

In an attempt to limit the misuse of ticketing activity and discourage touts from black-marketing tickets, the Ministry of Railways has made amendments in booking and refund rules from November 12, 2015.



TT BUREAU

The Ministry of Railways has made a few amendments in the booking and refund rules, in order to curb the misuse of ticketing activity. Starting November 12, you can book a railway ticket online 30 minutes prior to the departure of a train. The reservation chart will now be prepared twice – the first reservation chart would be prepared four hours prior to departure of a train while second and final one, 30 minutes before the train departs.

Furthermore, new refund rules have also been applied for railway ticket cancellations. Cancelling tickets upto 48 hours before scheduled departure of the train will result in double fee charge and the refund can be applied four hours before the departure.

The new cancellation rates applicable 48 hours before departure are as follows: 1st AC/executive class: ₹ 240; 2AC/1st class: ₹ 200; 3AC/ACC/3A economy: ₹ 180; second sleeper class: ₹ 120; second class: ₹ 60.

For waitlisted tickets and reserve against cancellation (RAC), one has to avail the refund upto 30 minutes before the scheduled departure of the train. There will be no refund after that.

Now, cancellation between 48 hours and 12 hours

before the scheduled departure of the train will be charged 25 per cent of the ticket amount and 50 per cent between 12 hours and four hours before the scheduled departure of the train. Additionally, railways have also decided to enable certain unreserved ticket counters to allow refund of reserved tickets.



### Cancellation charge per passenger on confirmed (reserved) tickets:

- ◆ 48 hours before the scheduled departure of the train minimum cancellation charge
  - 1AC/executive class : ₹ 240
  - 2AC/1<sup>st</sup> class : ₹ 200
  - 3AC/ACC/3A economy : ₹ 180
  - Second sleeper class : ₹ 120
  - Second class : ₹ 60
- ◆ Between 48 hours and 12 hours before the scheduled departure of the train @ 25% subject to minimum charge as per (i) above.
- ◆ Between 12 hours and 4 hours before the scheduled departure of the train @ 50% subject to minimum charge as per (i) above.
- ◆ No refund after the above time limit.

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- Sales Dates: 08 Nov to 31 Dec 2015
- Travel Dates: Regular travel rules apply

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- Sales dates: 08 Nov to 12 Dec 2015
- Travel Dates 08 Nov to 31 Jan 2016

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## Now, tourist police in Karnataka

■ The Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka along with the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) and the State Home Department have launched tourist police-Tourist Mitras-in Bangalore.

The first phase of the project will have 175 guards who have undergone three weeks of lectures and training. They will be deployed in 319 destinations across Karnataka said **R. V. Deshpande**, Tourism Minister, Karnataka. Tourist Mitras' role would be that of a first-in-line responder to provide assistance to domestic as well as international tourists. They will be vested with the powers of special police officers according to statutory provisions.

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## Destination Canada brands 200 radio cabs

Destination Canada branded 200 radio cabs as part of its marketing development strategy. **Rupert Peters**, Regional Managing Director, Destination Canada inaugurated the campaign on November 24, 2015 at Canada House, New Delhi. He was accompanied by **Brian Parrott**, Minister (Commercial), High Commission of Canada, New Delhi. Destination Canada, India has recorded an increase of 19.3 per cent Indian tourist arrivals in the year 2014 with a positive growth in each month. In 2015 until September, Destination Canada has already recorded a double digit growth. Peters joined Destination Canada in May 2008 and is based in their London office. His core responsibility includes overseeing marketing and operations across the primary markets of the UK, France, Germany, Australia and India.



# Sports tourism big with corporates

Sports tourism is slowly taking shape in India as the cricket-crazy country is gradually accepting and enjoying other sports as well.

The year 2015 has supposedly been one of most exciting years in the history of outbound sports tourism from India. The limelight was stolen by the ICC Cricket World Cup held in Australia and New Zealand from February to March. Estimated customer traffic from India to these two countries during the event was over 6,000 pax. Corporate clients and MICE groups contributed about 70 per cent of this and the rest were FIT and GIT groups.

Major reasons for the success of this event was the product options available for customers bundled with some interesting matches like India v/s Pakistan and India v/s South Africa. The support extended by Tourism Australia, New Zealand Tourism and Malaysian Airlines was commendable.

Amongst the other outbound sport events, we saw an interesting surge in attendees for niche sporting events like Wimbledon. Year on year increase alone from our business calculations was over 150 per cent for Wimbledon, which is a very positive indication that

package costs are no more a hindrance for selling such events in India. Other events which did decent contributions were the Club League football games in England and Spain, Formula 1 races across the world, India Cricket team tour to Australia and The Rugby World Cup in England.

### Expectations from the new year

Year 2016 will be even bigger and better and has some of biggest shows lined up like UEFA EURO 2016 in France, Rio Olympics and above all the ICC World Twenty 20 scheduled in India. The regular yearly products like Wimbledon, French Open and Club football leagues also are expected to grow bigger and better and we are making every possible effort to reach the masses with lucrative options.

The New Year would be an absolute treat to all Indian sports fans and they can see a mix of finest world sporting events in same year. Our strategy will be to educate and spread information to all fans

about various sporting events and packages that can be booked. We have both online and offline tools ready to spread the message across B2B and retail segments. We are very serious about creating fan communities for each sport and have already initiated various social media campaigns online.

### Sporting trends

One of most interesting trends observed is that Indian sports tourism customers have started thinking beyond cricket and have attended various events where India is not a dominant team such as football, athletics and boxing. We were surprised to receive queries and accommodate interests for events such as Superbowl, NBA and WWE in the last few months. This explains that there exists a large segment of customers who do not want to be mere TV viewers but wish to be part of the stadium crowd.

There will also be a growth in FIT customers. Sports tourism is not alone dependent on MICE groups and year 2015-16 has

shown promising signs of growth in FIT queries. We have been delighted to cater to customers in average age group of 25 years including women fans wishing to attend global events.

The New Year will also see a change in approach by the corporates. Over the last few months and years even corporate MICE groups have started eyeing sporting events as one of major themes for larger groups. We have catered to single groups of over 400 people for international matches and continue to get queries for year 2016.

- The author is Shashank S Mishra, Founder & CEO, Sports Konnect



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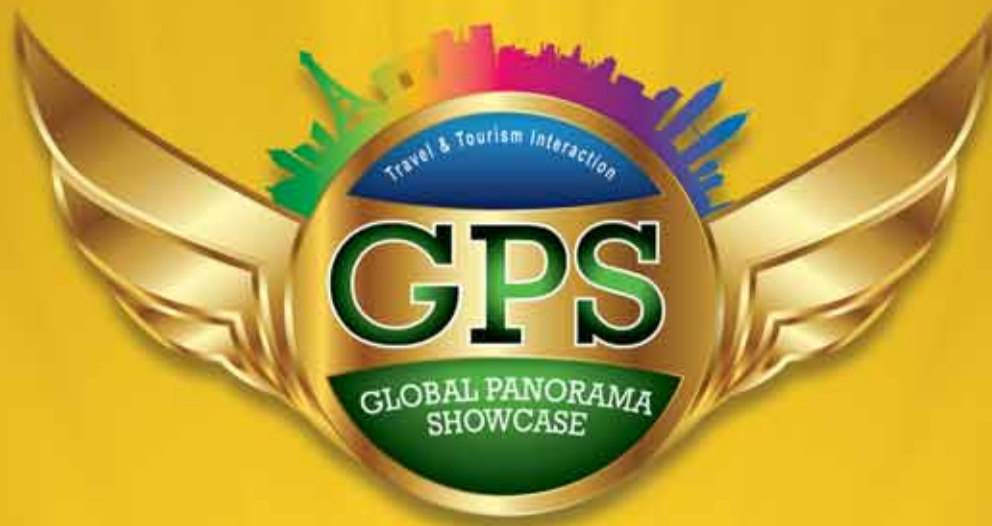
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Metaphors

# Leading & motivating agents

Sunil Kumar, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), underlines his focus as the newly-elected president of United Federation of Travel Agents' Associations (UFTAA).

HAZEL JAIN

**Q**Why, according to you, UFTAA board chose you as the President?

It was not just the board. In UFTAA, you are first elected by the General Body as a Director of the Board. One of the Directors on the board is elected by the General Body as the President or Vice President (VP) or VP (Finance). The General Body was confident that my experience in the industry, my leadership of TAAI and in areas they could assess confidence in our favour, gave me and India an opportunity to lead UFTAA.

**Q**What are your plans as the president of UFTAA?

As a global body, UFTAA's objectives are clear—to be able to connect all associations of the world under one umbrella and take the industry forward. I am delighted that the associations at our recent Annual General Assembly unanimously decided us to lead UFTAA during this most important year. Some of our goals include widening its

“Empowerment is my leadership strategy to manage UFTAA and I have faith that these talented leaders can do wonders. UFTAA has very strong R&D leaders who are consulted frequently and who have great global connections.”

Sunil Kumar

President, United Federation of Travel Agents' Associations (UFTAA) & President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)



scope beyond airline and IATA matters, create greater opportunities for affiliates (individual members) with a global connect, focus on educational programs, educating on Agency Programme Joint Council (APJC), expanding to new member countries, and take on partnerships in specialised fields like destination marketing and technology organisation. The UFTAA board, which comprises nine elected officers will soon meet and assign portfolios and committees.

**Q**How would the new position help the Indian travel trade?

One area of UFTAA's work is to advise associations on airlines and IATA matters. UFTAA has closely worked with associations where areas like sudden change in remittance cycles and similar matters were taken up successfully and the settlement period deferred. Even the APJC's recommendation on Joint Bank Guarantee was supported by UFTAA at the PAPGJC meeting. UFTAA does

help associations and on major matters, support them with meetings on IATA at the HQ level. I am certain that TAAI can certainly utilise UFTAA forum through some challenges that can be placed before the respective global authorities. This position will certainly help.

**Q**Would leading two big associations be difficult?

Thankfully, UFTAA is extremely well-driven by the staff/consultants we have, par-

ticularly in Europe. I am glad that the officers in UFTAA, who are aware that my hands are already full, have assured to take on larger responsibilities. Empowerment is my leadership strategy to manage UFTAA and I have faith that these talented leaders can do wonders. UFTAA has very strong R&D leaders who are consulted frequently and who have great global connections.

**Power Team**

➤ **Sunil Kumar**  
President of TAAI, has been elected as president of UFTAA

➤ **Yossi Fattel**  
GM of Incoming Tour Operators Association (ITOA) of Israel has been elected the VP of UFTAA

➤ **SG Kaka**  
of Kenya Association of Travel Agents (KATA) has been elected as Vice President (Finance) for UFTAA

TAAI signs MoU with Bengaluru college

■ M.S. Raghavan, Chairman, TAAI Karnataka Chapter, has signed a MoU for a period of 3 years with Garden City College of Management (GCCM) in Bengaluru. “Students will get an opportunity to witness specialist presentations and attend industry related seminars/programs organised by TAAI or its partners,” stated Raghavan.

Bachelor of Arts in Tourism, History & Journalism; a three years degree course and Masters in Tourism Administration—a two years Masters course, are being conducted by the Department of Tourism at GCCM. TAAI's endeavour to partner with academia will ensure good talent into the industry.

Jay Bhatia, Chairman of Tourism Council & Honorary National Treasurer, TAAI says, “We initiated this last year and assisted HR College in Mumbai to seek UGC approvals. Our chairperson in other regions and chapters are too in dialogues with various colleges and within the next few months we shall have many more institutions on board.”



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**Vistara, Axis Bank introduce co-branded credit cards**

Axis Bank and Vistara has announced a strategic partnership to launch a distinct travel credit card for domestic travellers. The card will be unveiled early next year. The card will provide preferred privileges and benefits for business and leisure travellers under the carrier's Club Vistara frequent flyer program.

The personalised benefits from the co-branded credit card offering will be tiered depending on the frequency of one's travel, starting with the base card for occasional traveller to a the super-premium credit card for the frequent flyers. The program design promises to be unique compared to other airline cards available in the market.

Phee Teik Yeoh, CEO, Vistara, said, "The Axis Bank Vistara Credit Card is another step by Vistara towards creating a world class travel experience. We know our frequent travellers need a credit card that offers them opportunities to earn points and is widely accepted during their travel across the country."

# ITDC focuses on engaging agents

Umang Narula IAS, Chairman & Managing Director, India Tourism Development Corporation Ltd (ITDC) tells TRAVTALK about ITDC's plan to engage the travel agents to encourage them to get their market share.



DEEPA SETHI FROM LONDON

**QHow is ITDC doing since you came on board?**

ITDC has done very well financially in the last year. We recorded a profit of ₹38.95 crores before tax and that's the highest profit we've had in the last eight years. We are also trying to upgrade our properties wherever required, optimise our revenue streams from the properties and also strengthen the other verticals we are in, besides the hotels. Occupancy also went up last year. We had a very positive response in our flagship hotel— The Ashok. That's the main engine of our ITDC Group.

**QHas competition increased, especially where ARR's are concerned?**

Yes there has been a lot of pressure on ARR's in the first six months, but we are in the season now so let's see how things pan out. What we have seen is that in the first 6-8 months the outside hotels have done much better. They have compensated

for the off-season in Delhi, whether it is Patna or Jaipur.

**QWhat about the involvement of travel agents?**

We do have travel agents booking with us, but that is one area where we are trying to increase their share in our bookings. Their share has been stagnating so that is one area we are really focusing on. We will engage the travel agents and do whatever is possible to encourage them to get our market share.

**QITDC is also involved in education. Tell us about it.**

For hospitality education, we have tied up with the National Council of Hotel Management and opened an institute called the Centre of Excellence (CoE) which is embedded in Samrat Hotel. So the students that come to do this course actually work within the precincts of a functioning hotel and learn-on-the-job.

It is a new kind of step, there are very few institutes that are working from within a



“Their (travel agents) share has been stagnating so that is one area we are really focusing on. We will engage the travel agents and do whatever is possible to encourage them to get our market share.”

**Umang Narula IAS**  
Chairman & Managing Director  
India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)

hotel. There is an All India examination conducted by the National Council of Hotel Management and those students who qualify then opt for the CoE institute. We have a good mix of students.

**QWhat are the green initiatives being taken by ITDC hotels?**

We are always working towards that, we have solar heating plants, we are also working on a solar power plant for the Ashok and Samrat complex. It will not meet the entire requirement but it will feed into the power grid of the hotels. We also have our ETP

and waste treatment plants. Another step we are taking is that we are going to apply for LEED certification.

**QWhat do you have to say about the escalating taxes?**

We would also benefit if taxes were rationalised. We are in the same boat as all the other hotels. Anything that encourages better occupancy is always welcome.

**QTell us about other activities being undertaken at ITDC to diversify.**

We are also doing promotional activities like Sound

and Light shows. We did one in Andaman & Nicobar, which was really appreciated. We also did one in Orissa and we have others in the pipeline, like one on Dal Lake in Srinagar, which is a very beautiful area. It may not be very profitable but it's very encouraging and helps the tourism industry at large. We are getting help from the ministry to finance these projects and we only execute them. The user agencies are the state tourism departments. So, we put everything in place and then hand it to the state government or to a special entity that has got this project done by us. ↴



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# Unlocking Indian skies

► Contd. from page 3

the government is able to offer them customised packages to suit their needs, he claimed. "We are incredible because of the plethora of destinations we have on offer and it is very difficult to discover India completely in one go. That's where

application duration and changing the single entry to multiple entry. The 113 countries where eTV is valid are the potential countries from which we can expect tourists arrivals. Presently, about 15 countries have maximum shares of up to 70-75 per cent. While we are

*While we are consolidating growth from these 15 countries, we are also opening up tourism opportunities from the destinations where we receive lesser arrivals*

**Vinod Zutshi**  
Secretary-Tourism, Government of India

customisation steps in. We therefore offer specific products to different countries, ones that will most likely gain their interest help boost the FTAs," he enthused.

Referring to the new initiatives that have been implemented in the country, Zutshi says that these moves are 'game-changers' for the Indian tourism industry. "The eTV was recently launched and is applicable to 113 countries," he said. "We are currently working on adding more countries and increasing the list to 150, as well as making reforms in the

consolidating growth from these 15 countries, which provide 70-75 per cent tourists, we are also opening up tourism opportunities from the destinations where we receive lesser arrivals. This combined strategy would result in an increase in arrivals from everywhere. Additionally, the Civil Aviation Policy addresses connectivity issues and strives to solve them. In order to reach India, unlocking the skies is crucial and the policy does exactly that."

Zutshi attended the WTM with a delegation consisting of 40 stakeholders from India.

# MICE for Pullman & Novotel

Sebastien Bazin, President-Director General, Chairman and CEO, AccorHotel, and Tristan Beau De Lomenie, GM Delegate, Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, tell TRAVTALK why this property is special.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

The unique combo properties of AccorHotels—Novotel and Pullman New Delhi Aerocity—recently opened its doors for guests. Speaking about the features of the two hotels, Bazin says, "Pullman Novotel has a lot of modern elements in it. The architecture is breathtaking as it is spacious, has volume and is elegant. At the same time it has a feeling of being in India. So when you come to this property, you know you are in India. In fact that's what I want in all my properties that they should be more and more localised."

Lomenie, however, believes that the combo property is the most distinctive feature. He says, "Novotel Pullman Aerocity is unique because this is the first time Accor is developing Novotel and Pullman together. Accor has done that with ibis and Novotel but this is the first time Pullman and Novotel



**Sebastien Bazin**  
President-Director General,  
Chairman and CEO, AccorHotel



**Tristan Beau De Lomenie**  
GM Delegate, Pullman & Novotel  
New Delhi Aerocity

The architecture is breathtaking as it is spacious, has volume and is elegant

This is the first time Pullman and Novotel are being developed at the same location

are being developed at the same location."

Further, he says that the main attraction of the property remains with the MICE

segment. "Our main aim is to develop strong position in the MICE market. We have a large ballroom, which is one of the largest in Delhi and can accommodate up to 1,500

guests. We have large area of meeting with 12 break-up rooms. So our objective is to be a leader in the MICE market in Delhi and having three hotels from the same brand in the hub of Aerocity gives us flexibility to cater to various kinds of delegates," Lomenie explains. Speaking about the location of the two hotels, Sebastien says, "Aerocity is a very good location as it's easily accessible. It is accessible from the airport and from the main city, which is perfect and it will work in favour of us."

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# Should licensing be compulsory for all?

With the Department of Tourism, Govt. of National Capital Territory of Delhi, making licensing mandatory for all tour operators, travel agents, excursion agents, tourist transport operators, **TRAVTALK** finds out from stakeholders how this decision will affect them and whether it should be replicated by other state governments.

**SAMAPTI DAS & AHANA GURUNG**



This is something we have been fighting for, for a long time. Earlier the law was something else when they wanted to reintroduce it few years back. Even with a Ministry of Tourism (MOT) recognition, you had to go through inspections. But

after we protested, if you are recognised by MOT, you'll not go through any inspection. Only you have to submit your recognition papers, the same ones which are filed with MOT, will also have to be filed with the Delhi Tourism and you'll get the license. The reason for this is that there are a lot of unscrupulous travel agencies which have mushroomed outside the railway stations and around who copy the name of Govt of India or MOT, Incredible India. These are the people who fool foreign tourists. Their offices have to be inspected so that some sort of discipline is inculcated in the trade and they don't bring any bad name to the industry. As an association we are against the license raj but also on the other hand we need certain amount of discipline in the industry.

**Subhash Goyal**  
President, IATO



The government is seeking reliability, transparency in affairs, professional guides and people with experience to handle this industry. What is important is that we need a body to regulate the industry. We have previously requested the government to make this industry a professional one, give qualifications so that we can fulfil them. Licensing of agents will therefore assist in curbing fly-by-night travel agents, protect reliability in and ultimately, give India a global credible image.

**Sunil Kumar**  
President, TAAI



It comes as a boon as the licensing will stop fly-by-night tourism companies as well as individuals who are operating from their homes. However, it can also be a hindrance certain regulators and authorities will have a problem. Like, an IATA travel agent already has licensing from IATA, the Ministry of Tourism in India already has an affiliation. So, till the time we get to study what the new policy entails in New Delhi, it gets a bit difficult to pick sides so soon.

**Jay Bhatia**  
Hon. Treasurer, Chairman-Tourism Council, TAAI



We submitted ` 10,000 about eight years back and have not heard about it since then. Once anybody is approved by Govt. of India they don't need the duplication. If they still want to do it, they should honour those ` 10,000, which was deposited with many documents. So they should make this mandatory for those who are not approved by the tourism department, or IATA; and not members of a recognised travel association. However, agents who are already have approvals shouldn't worry.

**Rajan Sehgal**  
Chairman, TAAI-Northern Region



This policy was initially launched by the Delhi government in 2010 during the Commonwealth Games. However, nothing happened. Again, they've become active and are going to conduct inspections. After scrutinising the applications certificates will be issued. Operators in Delhi/NCR can't function without this license. It will have both positive and negative effect as it's going to filter the agents. Operators who don't follow the guidelines will have a tough time.

**Sanjay Aggarwal**  
Vice President, ADTOI

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# Cruising in India grows @18%

The Indian cruise market has seen gradual growth over the past few years with a large number of cruises entering the market. TRAVTALK finds out from industry players the reason behind this growth, how it affects the travel agents and what are the popular cruise destinations for Indians.

**ANKITA SAXENA**

According to **Sudesh Kishore**, President, SeaDream Yacht Club, India, "The cruise industry is growing and has shown encouraging signs of growth over the last five years. The year-on-year growth rate is estimated at 15-18 per cent annually and is showing no signs of decline. This is primarily due to the initiatives taken by the Ministry of Tourism and the State Tourism Boards to support the influx of international cruise liners and introduction of newer norms to boost and sustain the revenue derived."

**Kiran Bhandari**, Co-Founder, Cruise Club, says, "Indian cruisers are now taking longer, more adventurous and luxurious cruise options. Also, booking windows have increased, as cruise bookings are taking place 6 months to a year in advance as well."

**Jenaifer Daruwalla**, General Manager, Maison de

Voyage, adds, "The awareness about cruising has increased along with the disposable incomes and willingness to try new things."

Cruises have become popular with Indian travellers and new destinations are opening up for adventure and leisure travel. Kishore adds, "In keeping with the voyages booked by guests, our travel trade partners cater to requisite visa arrangements for their clients."

Commissions keep the travel agents motivated to sell more cruises. Talking about the commission structures of the companies for the agents, Kishore says, "We offer 15 per cent commission for bookings up to 18 guests and 12 per cent for Charters and Group bookings (more than 18 guests)." Daruwalla adds, "We offer commissions starting from 14 per cent and attractive kickback options to motivate the agents to sell and earn



**Sudesh Kishore**  
President  
SeaDream Yacht Club, India

Keeping with the guest booking, our travel trade partners cater to requisite visa arrangements

more." Bhandari advises agents that as commissions may vary, agents should also look for the best prices.



**Kiran Bhandari**  
Co-Founder  
Cruise Club

Booking windows have increased, as cruise bookings are taking place 6 months to a year in advance

Emphasising on the ways an agent can sell a cruise holiday, Daruwalla says, "Agents need to stress upon the USP



**Jenaifer Daruwalla**  
General Manager  
Maison de Voyage

Awareness about cruising has increased with disposable incomes and willingness to try new things

of the cruise industry and how it is a brilliant way to experience a luxurious holiday packed with fun and exciting

things to do while travelling to different locations." The usage of social media by travel trade partners to promote cruises is also popular. Kishore says, "SeaDream's travel trade partners pitch experiences through pro-active email marketing, website promotions and face-to-face discussions. This helps in educating the elite client about the difference between yachting and cruising."

The travel agents are also incentivised in ways other than commissions in order to sell cruises with greater conviction. "At Uniworld we offer and invite agents to experience our cruises on special industry rates. These rates are quite competitive. For example, a basic cabin on our popular 8 days Bordeaux Vineyards and Chateaux itinerary costs nearly \$3199. However, under this special industry rate the agent would have to pay 20-30 per cent of the cost. This is a super saving for the agent," explains Daruwalla.

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## A Suggested Trail

### Day 1: Touring in Toulouse:

Flag off your self-drive holiday from Pink City Toulouse - the capital of the region. Discover the historic city center of Toulouse and its well-renowned iconic venues such as the Capitole City Hall and the St Sernin Basilica. Gourmands can make a stop at the Victor Hugo covered market which is one of the most prestigious markets in all of France. Include retail therapy on your agenda with a visit to Galeries Lafayette or enjoy a mellow evening in Toulouse with a leisurely boat cruise down the Garonne.

### Day 2: Spirited Encounters in the Gaillac Vineyards (45 min from Toulouse).

Plan a spirited morning with a discovery of the Gaillac vineyards. Start your discovery with a visit of the Saint Michel Abbey which is a Museum of wine housing a selection of authentic Gaillac wines.

Indulge in tastings and plan a pit stop at their shop to take back some souvenirs! At 20 kms from the vineyards lies the UNESCO classified Episcopal City of Albi. Discover Albi's famous sites such as the the Sainte Cecile Cathedral and the Palais de la Berbie (which houses the famous artist Toulouse-Lautrec's museum). Head off from Albi to discover the quaint medieval village of Cordes-sur-Ciel located at a 15 minute driving distance. For an offbeat experience, spend a night in the verdant Gaillac vineyards.

### Day 3: Discovering the Lot Valley and Cahors vineyards (2 hours from the Gaillac Vineyards)

Start your day with a visit to charming St Cirq Lapopie listed as one of the "Most Beautiful Villages of France". A rocky spur standing high above the river, St Cirq Lapopie invites you to discover its network of narrow old streets and houses dating from the medieval period. Tuck into lunch at

Cahors located at 40 km from the village. Stop by at the Cahors Malbec Lounge that is dedicated to Cahors wine and vineyards. Do not miss a discovery of the town classified as a Great Tourist Site of Midi-Pyrénées. Explore the Cahors vineyards through the touristic Lot Valley route that is also home to charming villages. Continue the authentic experience with an overnight in the Cahors vineyards.

### Day 4: Brandy and More in Armagnac (2 hours from Cahors)

An encounter with the world renowned Armagnac brandy awaits you. Plan a visit to Château de Cassaigne, nestled in picture-perfect landscapes to raise a brandy toast! Add a little bit of heritage to your agenda with a visit to Flaran Abbey reputed to be one of the best preserved abbeys in South-West France. Continue the vineyard experience with an overnight in Armagnac wine lands or say *a bientôt* to the Midi-Pyrénées on your way back to Toulouse at 90 minutes from the vineyards.

For more information on the Midi-Pyrénées region, log onto: [www.tourisme-midi-pyrenees.com](http://www.tourisme-midi-pyrenees.com) For more on self-drive experiences in the Midi-Pyrénées, email: [kesbwar.bbagaat@atout-france.fr](mailto:kesbwar.bbagaat@atout-france.fr) or [atoutfranceindia@gmail.com](mailto:atoutfranceindia@gmail.com)



Project co-financed by the European Union. Europe is investing in Midi-Pyrénées through the European Regional Development Fund.

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St Cirq Lapopie (G.D.V.)

# Europe travel jeopardised by terror?

Indian citizens requesting a Schengen visa will not just have to provide biometric data from now but they will also have to brave security issues. TRAVTALK finds out from industry specialist whether these events mar the European holiday experience.

**HAZEL JAIN**



Indian tourists are quite evolved and clear about the destination they wish to visit and I do not think there will be any impact on numbers to Europe due to introduction of biometric. Tour operators will have to just factor in additional time for biometric in their service schedule. Also, Europe is strongly perceived as a high quality, safe and secure destination by Indians. However, if there are more attacks, then surely it will have an impact on numbers. We have not seen any undue cancellations to France or Europe of late. Everybody is travelling as per the schedule with no change/cancellation at all. The entry of refugees into Europe is a challenge for the European governments. However, they are hopeful and will deal with it tactfully.

**Haresh Koyande**  
Founder and MD  
World Travel Studio



In my opinion biometric cannot be the cause of decline in numbers. The US and UK introduced this years ago and eventually it settled down. Since the season is yet to start I don't see much problem as VFS will be facilitating this. However, the entry of refugees and the rising security concerns are bound to have an impact. Most of Western Europe is feeling threatened and tourism is bound to feel the effect.

**Aparna Basu Mallik**  
CEO, Club7 Holidays

We do not see any long-term impact to France or Europe. Europe continues to be a favourite destination amongst Indians and people have the option to choose from more than 15 to 20 destinations in Europe. We have not seen any undue cancellations to France or Europe. I don't think that the entry of refugees will spoil the tourism experience for Indian tourists. Europe has always welcomed refugees and migrants to its shores and they have assimilated with the local population.



**Karan Anand**  
Head (Relationships), Cox & Kings

Numbers from India to Europe have been steadily increasing over the past few years and India has now become a strong source market for them. In such a situation, the stringent visa norms are bound to have a dampening effect on Indian travellers to these destinations. In addition, the recent terror strikes will definitely play on the minds of the people when deciding their holiday plans even though terrorism has now become a global phenomenon and is extremely unpredictable in any part of the world. Though these measures will affect the tourist flow, I feel that these are necessary steps in the interest of security and any country will place their national security on priority. But the queries for the next season have definitely been hit already and we are rethinking on our fixed departure plans. I do not think the entry of refugees to European countries will have any effect on tourism.



**Pankaj Nagpal**  
MD, Travstarz Global Group and Director - National Board & Chairman - North India Region, Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA)



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The introduction of biometric data requirement is not new to Indian tourists. France was the only exception in Schengen agreement until now, and now they are in line with all the countries, hence we do not see any implication of the same. Business travellers to France will gain from this move as they will be granted longer duration visas for their frequent travel to the country. Furthermore, since biometrics of France is accepted by other Schengen countries on reciprocal basis, it will only offer more convenience to Indian travellers. France and Europe have been in the news for all wrong reasons in recent times and the impact is seen on our booking patterns. We have seen few European departures being kept on hold till further notice and few being cancelled altogether. The Indian traveller has started looking for options and Australia and New Zealand are being clear winners.



**Amita Nair**  
Director, Meandering Vacations

## TAAI meet-up in Mumbai



The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) Western Region members met for lunch in Mumbai to reminisce about their respective study tours to Bhutan and China recently

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# Germany for nature

GNTO is promoting Germany as a 'nature destination' in 2016. Romit Theophilus, Director, Marketing and Sales (India), GNTO, tells TRAVTALK about their promotional plans.

ANKITA SAXENA

The German National Tourist Office, India (GNTO) is planning to promote Germany as Nature and Landscape Destination. This was announced at their recent B2B engagement workshops with travel agents and tour operators. The workshops were conducted in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad to present their products and offers to the travel agents.

"We are looking at promoting many things in Germany. Our main agenda is to promote family travel, honeymoon travel and MICE trips in Germany. We are also interested in promoting our theme-based parks. This year we concentrated on Traditions and Customs of Germany and in 2016 we are looking at promoting Germany as Nature and Landscape Destination. In 2016 the products shall be based more on what Germany has to offer as a Nature Destination," says Theophilus.



**Romit Theophilus**  
Director, Marketing and Sales (India),  
German National Tourist Office

We organise meetings, conduct seminars and also provide training to help the agents get better equipped with the products

Germany witnessed around 4,80,000 overnights from India during January-August,

2015. The percentage increase of inbound tourists in Germany in July 2015 was 9.6 per cent over the same period in 2014.

Stressing on training as a useful tool for travel trade and how GNTO engages with them, Theophilus adds, "We are working very closely with the travel agents. We organise meetings with the agents, conduct seminars and also provide training in their offices to help them get better equipped with the products. By next year we hope to launch an online travel agent training tool as well."

The workshop saw 13 German sellers giving an extensive presentation, explaining the travel agents the products highlights as well attractions for the Indian travellers. The partners showcasing their products at the roadshow included Accor Hotels, Intercontinental Berlin, Rail Europe, State Tourism Board of Saxony, The City Tourism Board of Stuttgart and The City Tourism Board of Baden-Baden.

# Going digital @FITUR

The application of new technologies has revolutionised the tourism industry both from the marketing point of view, booking portals and from that of travellers' experiences.

TT BUREAU

The use of new technologies and their association with a type of tourism that is increasingly multi-device will be one of the most striking features of FITUR, the International Tourism Fair due to be staging its 36th edition from January 20 to 24, 2016 at Feria de Madrid.

The prominent role that new technologies will play at FITUR 2016 will be visible in the innovative offering of businesses and exhibitors (airlines that allow boarding passes to be shown on wearable devices; hotel establishments where you can check in from a smartphone, or where a SmartWatch can be used as a room key, etc.), but above all in the specialised sections such as FITUR Tech and FITUR Know How & Export.

The FITUR Tech Tourism Innovation and Technology Forum organised in collaboration with the Instituto



Tecnológico Hotelero, ITH, is becoming consolidated at its 10<sup>th</sup> staging as a standard in tourism innovation and technology. The meeting will showcase the technological advances that are impacting on tourism and on traveller behaviour, which is increasingly technical and connected with destinations. The forum will also feature the application of artificial intelligence to the tourism business to make it more competitive.

Furthermore, the fourth staging of FITUR Know How & Export, promoted by SEGIT-

TUR, the State Corporation for Innovation Management and Tourism Technologies, will focus on more transformative solutions in integral tourism management and its projection abroad. Special relevance will also be given at this forum to projects by entrepreneurs and start-ups associated with technological development, such as tourism apps.

In short, technology and tourism are coming together at FITUR 2016, demonstrating the trade show's commitment to the innovations being generated in the travel industry.



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# METV to boost tourism

Thailand's recent update on the six-month Multiple Entry Tourist Visa (METV) has given Indians another reason to visit the country more frequently.

AHANA GURUNG

Indian travellers who frequent Thailand on a regular basis can now rejoice, for the much-awaited six-month multiple entry tourist visa (METV) has been implemented by Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs starting November 13, 2015. **Runjuan Tongrut**, Director, North and East India, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), says, "From January to September, we received over eight lakh Indian visitors and are expecting the numbers to rise to 10 lakh by the end of the year. We are hoping that the METV will give fillip to these figures and more Indian travellers will visit Thailand." She states that India currently ranks sixth on Thailand's list of source markets, but with India's high tourism potential, it would reach to fifth position by the end of next year.



**Runjuan Tongrut**  
Director, North and East India,  
Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

**METV can only be applied at a Royal Thai Consulate or through agents—it is not available online**

The much-awaited METV comes as a huge boon to trade and frequent travellers. Giving more details about the same,

Tongrut elaborates, "The fee for the METV is 5,000 baht, which approximately comes to ₹ 10,000. It is valid for a period

of six months and one can enter and leave the country as often as they want, provided they leave the country every 60 days. However, she clarifies, "METV can only be applied for at a Royal Thai Consulate or through agents—it is not available online."

With the implementation of several new initiatives, such as the recent addition of Dreamliner Boeing 787 on the Bangkok-New Delhi route by Thai Airways, Tongrut is hopeful about next year's outcome. "Thailand has proven to be a popular choice for Indians, especially for destination weddings and family vacations," she says. "We continue to promote these aspects and also focus on honeymoon and sports tourism. Thailand is a golfer's paradise and golf tourism has constantly been on the incline. Moreover, numerous groups have been visiting Thailand to participate in marathons and for the same purpose, special marathon packages are on offer, in association with TUI," she adds.

# St. Moritz woos agents

The alpine resort in the Engadin valley in Switzerland—St. Moritz—is celebrating 150 years of winter tourism and makes for a fine package for travel agents to sell.

TT BUREAU

As the birthplace of winter tourism and having hosted Winter Olympics twice already, St. Moritz in Switzerland is reaching out to travel agents and tour operators in India this winter.

**Ariane Ehrat**, CEO of Tourism Organisation Engadin St. Moritz, was in Mumbai recently to meet the trade and find out what Indian travellers are looking for and how St. Moritz could match those demands. "We need to know what their requirements are and what activities they like to do in winter if they don't like skiing or hiking. We have a host of other products like culinary, wellness, medical, nature, etc. We are targeting two segments—HNIs for leisure and corporate for MICE," says the World Ski Champion. The destination is also promoting its Christmas markets.

She, however added that the NTO is not offering



**Ariane Ehrat**  
CEO of Tourism Organisation  
Engadin St. Moritz

**We are open to individual offers for big MICE groups that are less than 500 pax, depending on the size of group and overnight stays**

any deals and incentives to the trade for MICE as of now. "But we have to do that in the

future. We are open to individual offers for big MICE groups that are less than 500 pax, depending on the size of group and number of overnight stays. Anyone who is not already our trade partner can also associate with us and sell St. Moritz," Ehrat says.

St. Moritz is promoting ready packages as well as helping the trade develop tailor-made ones. It is currently promoting a deal where travellers can travel on all (more than 30) mountain railways for free if they stay longer than one night in St. Moritz. It will tap more cities once it gets more budget.

She says, "It is just a matter of time for us before we reach other cities in India. We have seen a rise in Indian arrivals. It is currently at 5,000 overnight stays in St. Moritz. But this is not enough. Our goal is to bring in 10,000 overnights in five years. It is better to grow slowly and steadily."



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# TAAI prepares for the new chapter

TAAI members gathered at Kempinski Ambience Hotel, New Delhi, on Nov 19, 2015 to discuss the objectives and aims of the association, as well as to familiarise and guide the committee members. The meeting was followed by a networking session over cocktails and dinner.



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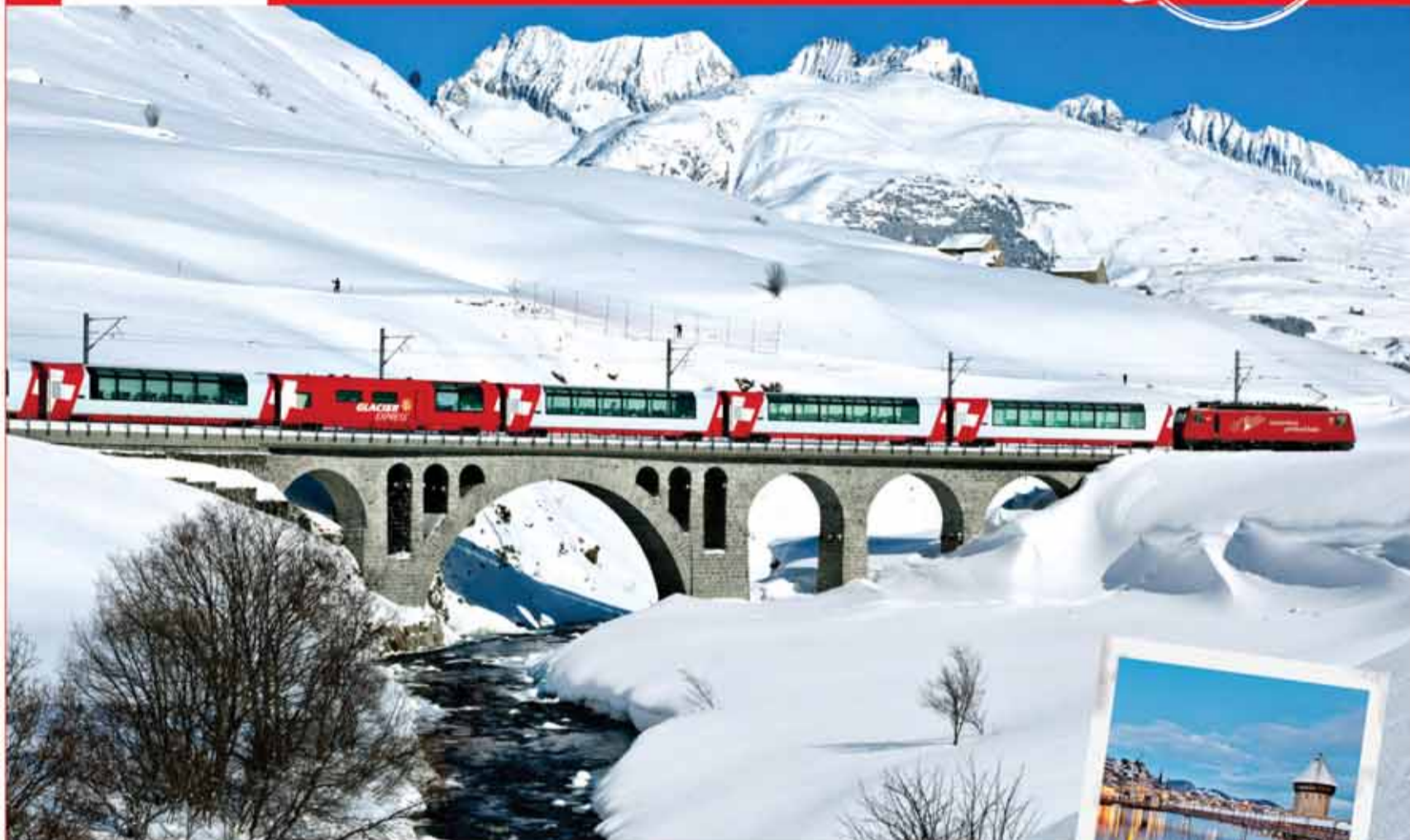


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# RANCE.

# Upbeat on India

Dimple Ramburn, Director of Business Development and Emerging Markets, Starwood Hotels & Resorts – Mauritius, tells TRAVTALK about the brand and its india plans.

TT BUREAU

With Indian tourist arrivals rising at a high rate into Mauritius, Ramburn shows optimism for further growth from the country. "India as a feeder market has incrementally increased, year over year, in all markets; and especially for Mauritius. As in June 2015, Indian tourist arrivals increased 17.5% over 2014, only to be outdone by Chinese visitors (60%). India is in our top 10 source markets for all 3 Resorts in Mauritius," says Ramburn

Further she discussed about the MICE facilities at the group's properties in Mauritius, saying, "Le Meridien Ile Maurice and Westin Turtle Bay Resort & Spa Mauritius capture more conference business as their facilities accommodate larger groups. Previously, they jointly held an Indian wedding for 3000 people. The St. Regis Mauritius Resort, in its three years of operation, has hosted large



**Dimple Ramburn**  
Director of Business Development and Emerging Markets

Indian weddings and receptions of 150-300 people."

Ramburn also listed the marketing initiatives, saying, "We have built a dedicated site just for the villa—www.stregisvillamauritius.com. Aside from partnering with our luxury tour operators and agents, we have also reached out to high-end concierge service providers and villa estate agents."

She laid stress on the importance of staff training, "A challenge, particularly for the Indian Ocean Resorts, is

that there are limited resources for recruiting on an island destination and all hotels/resorts are vying for the same pool of talent. With increased development, and allure of cruise ship employment, the pool becomes that much more limited, and hotels more competitive. Thus, providing proper training and an encouraging work environment are vital to our associates' future success."

Stressing on the assistance provided by travel agents and tour operators, Ramburn says, "We hold our relationships with travel agents and tour operators in high regard. For a destination like Mauritius, that is still relatively up and coming in markets outside Europe, these agents are our voice to the potential guests." She adds, "In addition to the limited flight lift into the country, our partners make it seamless for our guests to book their holiday packages and assist our Sales Team on the island."

# Regal ride with VIA Rail

VIA Rail Canada recently introduced the Prestige Sleeper Class service. Ashish Saran, Account Head, VIA Rail Canada, tells TRAVTALK how travel agents can avail the product.

TT BUREAU

"VIA rail offers a cost effective, efficient mode of travel in Canada all year round in all weather conditions. Travel agents can view the fares, check availability and also book their tickets sectors online through their login

offers modular leather 'L-formed' seat by the day, which turns into a murphy bed for two by the night, facing a vast window to admire the stunning sights of Canada.

"The travellers on VIA Rail Canada Prestige Sleeper Class are attended by mindful



**Ashish Saran**  
Account Head  
VIA Rail Canada



stocked mini-bar," explains Saran. The new service offers its travellers an all inclusive epicurean experience. "The gourmet incorporates local fortes and choice of Canadian wines in the solace of the dining car," adds Saran.

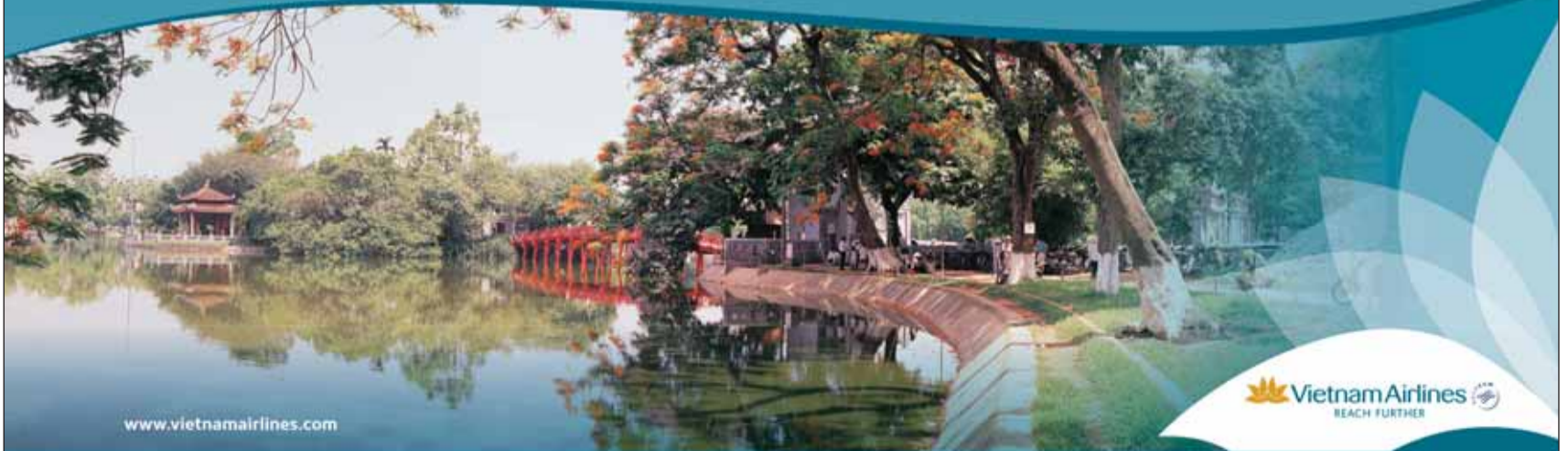
accounts which can be created by VIA Rail upon request and fulfillment of certain conditions," says Saran.

The new class has many new features to offer its clients. This exquisite lodging with a private bathroom and shower

and customised attendant service all through the trek. It is intended to offer travellers genuine feelings of serenity, with priority reservations in the dining car and priority baggage handling. The clients can enjoy in-cabin entertainment with a flat screen TV and a fully

Discussing the expectations from the market, Saran says, "We have many agents who book VIA Rail on a regular basis although the Prestige Class of Service has just been launched and we hope we will receive a good response for the coming season in 2016."

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Kolkata	18 January, Monday	10:00 - 14:00	The Oberoi
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Hyderabad	21 January, Thursday	10:00 - 14:00	The Park Hyatt
Mumbai	22 January, Friday	10:00 - 16:00	The Palladium

# Great flexibility with ASP 7-city Turkey roadshow

With the launch of a revamped version of its Aussie Specialist Programme (ASP) in India, Tourism Australia wants to offer the travel agents greater flexibility.

TT BUREAU

After conducting an extensive review with travel agents, Tourism Australia has decided that its destination training programme—Aussie Specialist Programme (ASP)—needs to be revamped so as to equip the agents with enhanced knowledge, better understanding with real-time information and latest happenings in the Australian tourism industry.



**Nishant Kashikar**  
Country Manager (India & Gulf)  
Tourism Australia

As a result, the Aussie Specialist website has been revamped to allow its trade partners the flexibility to browse the site across all tablets and mobile devices. The new version consists of interactive training modules, itinerary suggestions, fact-sheets, latest industry news updates, destination FAQs and an interactive map.

Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager (India & Gulf), Tourism Australia, claims, "The interface of the revamped module is user-

friendly, interactive and engaging to make it appealing and convenient for our travel partners to use. Currently, we have close to 2,100 Aussie Specialists in India and we expect the figure to cross 3,000 by June 2016."

Explaining how the new version of ASP is different, he says, "The new programme is divided into three mandatory modules—an introduction to Australia, one covering all states and territories and one on building itineraries, plus two optional modules that are

experience-based. All eight of our state and territory tourism partners have joined us, enabling Australia to speak with 'one voice' when promoting its tourism products."

This, he said, was done to cater to the evolving needs of the Indian traveller and to suggest itineraries to suit their requirements. The new programme will allow the agents to effectively promote and sell Australia to discerning and demanding Indians who now prefer to take multiple vacations in a year as against annual vacations. "With an aim to further engage with our trade partners and familiarize them with the latest version of the program, the Aussie Specialist trainers will provide face-to-face training in key markets of Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Ahmedabad for frontline travel sellers," Kashikar reveals, adding that Australia has witnessed record arrivals from India this year.

TT BUREAU

TravelShop Turkey, an inbound tour operator headquartered in Istanbul, is set to go on a seven-city roadshow in India from December 7- 15, 2015. The roadshow kicks off at New Delhi, on Dec 7; followed by Kolkata the next day. Soon afterwards, Hyderabad hosts the roadshow on Dec 9; Chennai on Dec 10; Bangalore on Dec 11; Ahmedabad on Dec 14; and finally Mumbai on Dec 15.

Speaking on the occasion, **Murtaza Kalender**, CEO,



"We have been working with the Indian market since 2006 and give high importance to it. We are happy to be in India again."

**Murtaza Kalender**  
CEO  
TravelShop Turkey

## TravelShop Turkey roadshow dates

Dec 7	New Delhi
Dec 8	Kolkata
Dec 9	Hyderabad
Dec 10	Chennai
Dec 11	Bangalore
Dec 14	Ahmedabad
Dec 15	Mumbai

TravelShop Turkey, says, "We have been working with the Indian market since 2006 and give high importance to it. We are happy to be in India again and look forward to meeting with Indian agents to give presentations about Turkey," he adds.

The roadshow will include presentations on airlines, hotels and prod-

ucts, along with B2B network meetings with hotel representatives and TST departments. The Turkish Tourism Board; Consulate General in Mumbai; a representative from New Delhi Embassy; Consulate General in Hyderabad; Turkish Airlines' representatives and four managers from the best five-star hotels from Turkey will be present at the event to network and impart one-on-one information to Indian travel trade partners.

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# Sarovar Premiere enters Agra

Crystal Sarovar Premiere is the latest five-star property added in Agra. Lokesh Kumar Upadhyia, General Manager, Crystal Sarovar Premiere Agra, tells **TRAVTALK** what they are doing to promote Agra beyond the Taj.



TT BUREAU

Crystal Sarovar Premiere is the latest five star hotel in Agra. The property is strategically located on Fatehabad Road, Agra's tourist hub and is approximately 1.5 kms from the Taj Mahal. It is a full service premium hotel with exquisitely furnished 136 rooms of which 72 rooms have the

as well. Agra beyond the Taj is what we talk about to agents or guests who wish to know more about this historic city. The untouched destinations such as Chambal Safari, chini ka Rauza and many more, are lesser known but important destinations for the guests who wish to explore Agra, beyond the Taj Mahal."

According to Upadhyia, as custodian of brand India and in particular brand Agra, it is Sarovar Hotel's endeavour to do justice by bringing out the hidden treasures of the city. He adds that they wish to break the traditional barrier and showcase the lesser-known monuments of the city and try and explore the unexplored.

Agra has moved from being one to two night destination among MICE and the inbound segment.

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts is currently spread over 48 destinations and has got 12 hotels in its pipeline. The ARR of Crystal Sarovar Premiere Agra is ` 5,000.



**Lokesh Kumar Upadhyia**  
General Manager  
Crystal Sarovar Premiere Agra

Agra beyond the Taj is what we talk about to agents or guests who wish to know more about this historic city

picturesque view of Taj Mahal. The hotel also has a rooftop swimming pool and Indian specialty restaurant.

Upadhyia says that as a destination, Agra has 52 per cent inbound business (FIT/GIT) and hence, it is important to be very closely associated with the travel agents. Jointly the hotels and the agents provide the best of hospitality experience to the foreign and domestic guests travelling to Agra to see one of the 'Seven Wonders of the World', the Taj Mahal.

He also says, "It's been over a decade now that Agra has witnessed many national and international conferences. It has interestingly turned into a city for destination weddings

## Quick Facts

- ✦ The hotel is 1.5 kilometres from the Taj Mahal
- ✦ The hotels adds up as the group 5<sup>th</sup> property in UP



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# WTM 2015 attracts 50,000 participants

World Travel Market London 2015 saw an impressive 49,275 participants, according to unaudited figures. The event saw 30,344 visitors, including buyers from the WTM Buyers' Club, which was a 20 per cent jump from WTM London 2010-2014. More than 1.1 million on-stand connections took place over the four days from Nov 2-5, leading to more than £2.5 billion in industry deals being negotiated and signed.





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## 15 DMCs on show

The multi-city roadshow conducted by the Akquasun Group turns out to be a huge success.



TT BUREAU

Akquasun's recently-concluded multi-city roadshow titled 'Akquasun Global B2B Roadshow 2015' that touched six cities—New Delhi, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad,



Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru—received an overwhelming response from the travel trade.

According to **BA Rahim**, Group Director and CEO, Akquasun Group, this year's B2B roadshow was even bigger with agents showing immense interest in knowing all Akquasun's DMCs, online system and new additions to the group such as Philippines and South America.

He says, "We thank everyone for their support and contribution for the splendid

response and success of the event. Year 2015-16 will also record an increase in overall contribution to the business from the respective markets. The response from all the six cities was more than we expected. We added some

new agents in our portfolio from northern India. Apart from Akquasun's 15 DMCs we had 38 participants including global sales offices in India from Starwood, Shangri La and Marriott Hotels."

He added that 2015 had been a great year for Akquasun with business increase of 30 per cent and they are expecting to double business volumes in 2016 with the new online system in place. The online system, along with the introduction of Akquasun Global B2B MICE and its new DMCs in

Philippines and South America were the main focus areas of this roadshow. "Every city received good footfall. It was almost 50 per cent more than what we expected. In Mumbai we estimated 250 and we welcomed almost 400-plus agents who came to meet all our DMCs and our participating partners," adds Rahim.

**Sujit Nair**, Founder and Group MD, Akquasun Group, says, "The show was well attended and all the participants were very satisfied with the response. We believe the footfall was excellent in Ahmedabad and Delhi specially. Also all major travel agents attended the show in Chandigarh."

The show saw almost 53 participants this year, compared to 27 last year and was attended by a record number of agents. "We had 250 agents in Delhi, 150 in Chandigarh, 220 in Ahmedabad and 400 agents in Mumbai. The focus was more on the DMCs we own and operate across the globe and introducing Philippines and South America this year. We also had major brands like Starwood, Marriott, One & Only, Banyan Tree, Chimelong, Regal Group of hotels, IHG, Beachcomber Group, Villa Hotels and tourism bodies like Macau and Seychelles," Nair adds.

## Bridging information gap

Trip Tap Toe has recently launched B2B operations catering to agents. Manuraj Singh Johar, CEO, Trip Tap Toe, talks about the offerings of this online platform.



TT BUREAU

With a seven year stint in hardcore corporate B2C travel solutions, Trip Tap Toe has recently opened the doors of its online flights and hotels booking engine to its country wide network of agents. **Manuraj Singh Johar**, CEO, Trip Tap Toe, says, "Being in the market for such a long period, Trip Tap Toe promises to bring many value added features for its entire agent base."

For Johar, trained executives are of utmost importance to be able to set apart from competition and prides in providing exactly that. "Each of our customer support executive has been trained rig-



**Manuraj Singh Johar**  
CEO  
Trip Tap Toe

orously to provide one on one services to our agents," he says. "During the entire length of my experience in the travel industry, I realised how, as a sub agent, even I would sometimes get lost in search of information and well researched advice. This is the gap we seek to fill," he adds.

Commenting on other areas of importance, he says, "We have alliances with worldwide aggregators of airlines, hotels, and other travel related products to get the best rates possible under a single window. Moreover, we are setting up a dedicated in house technology team for continuous tech development. By providing aggressive credit support, we hope to target a wide network of Tier II and Tier III city agents. While agents normally get credit facility only for flights, we are extending credit for hotel bookings as well."

Currently operating from Gurgaon, Trip Tap Toe plans to open sales offices in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Kolkata.

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# Custom-made packages in focus

Manju Sharma, Managing Director, Jaypee Hotels, believes that the taxation structure should be rationalised and tells TRAVTALK how Jaypee Hotels works closely with the travel trade fraternity to develop custom-made packages for their clients.




ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

**Q** *Competition in hospitality industry is getting tougher with the advent of international brands. How do you plan to deal with it?*

Jaypee Hotels & Resorts has been in operation since past 35 years. Our company has evolved system procedures and SOPs for every aspect of running hospitality products. With a team of professionals at every level, who have joined Jaypee Hotels from varied national and international backgrounds,

Depending on the segment and market being handled by the travel agents attractive packages are designed regularly to maximise the productivity through travel agencies. We work very closely with the travel trade fraternity and develop attractive and engaging products and custom-made packages for the prospects. They are an integral part of our industry hence indispensable.

**Q** *In your view, what is the future of tourism industry in India?*

Tourism should be recognised as priority sector for various reasons which have been talked about enough. The taxation structure needs to be rationalised. Tourism and hospitality should not be viewed only as products but it should be viewed as an economic activity which is capable of creating all round development of an area, state and country. 



**Manju Sharma**  
Managing Director  
Jaypee Hotels

We work closely with the travel trade and develop attractive and engaging products and custom made packages

Jaypee surely has become a premium hotel brand. In current scenario, our focus is on consolidating our inventory. With economic growth in near future, we will consider expansion.

**Q** *What is the future of hotels in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities?*

The improved connectivity to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities and the expanding of the infrastructure has attracted the investors to invest in this market. With airports coming up in these cities and improved infrastructure, there is a good inflow of inbound and domestic tourists. A number of Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities have been promoted by India and the respective state governments. Also, with increase in the per capita income of Indians and rise of middle class, there has been a steady growth. This forays the tremendous sprouting of hotels in these cities.

**Q** *Do you offer any incentive to the travel agents? How important are agents for your hotel?*



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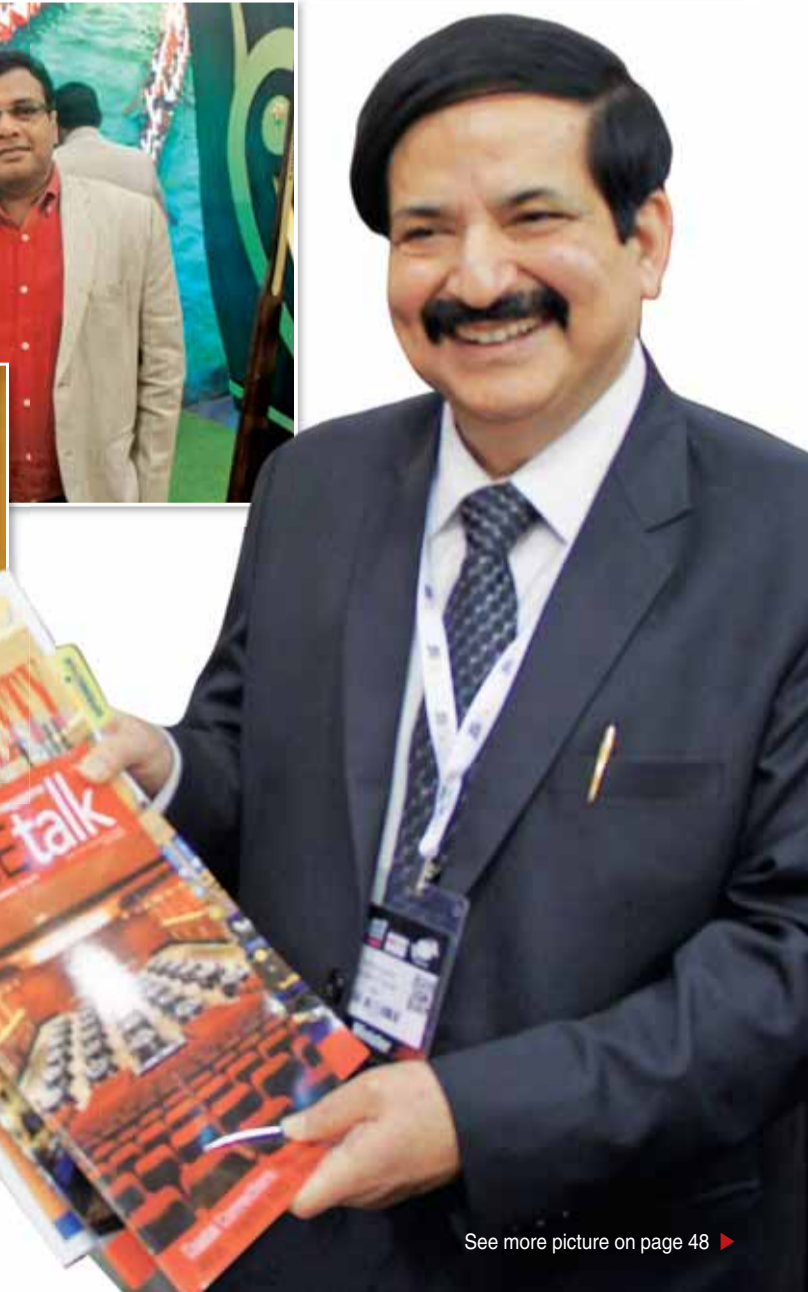
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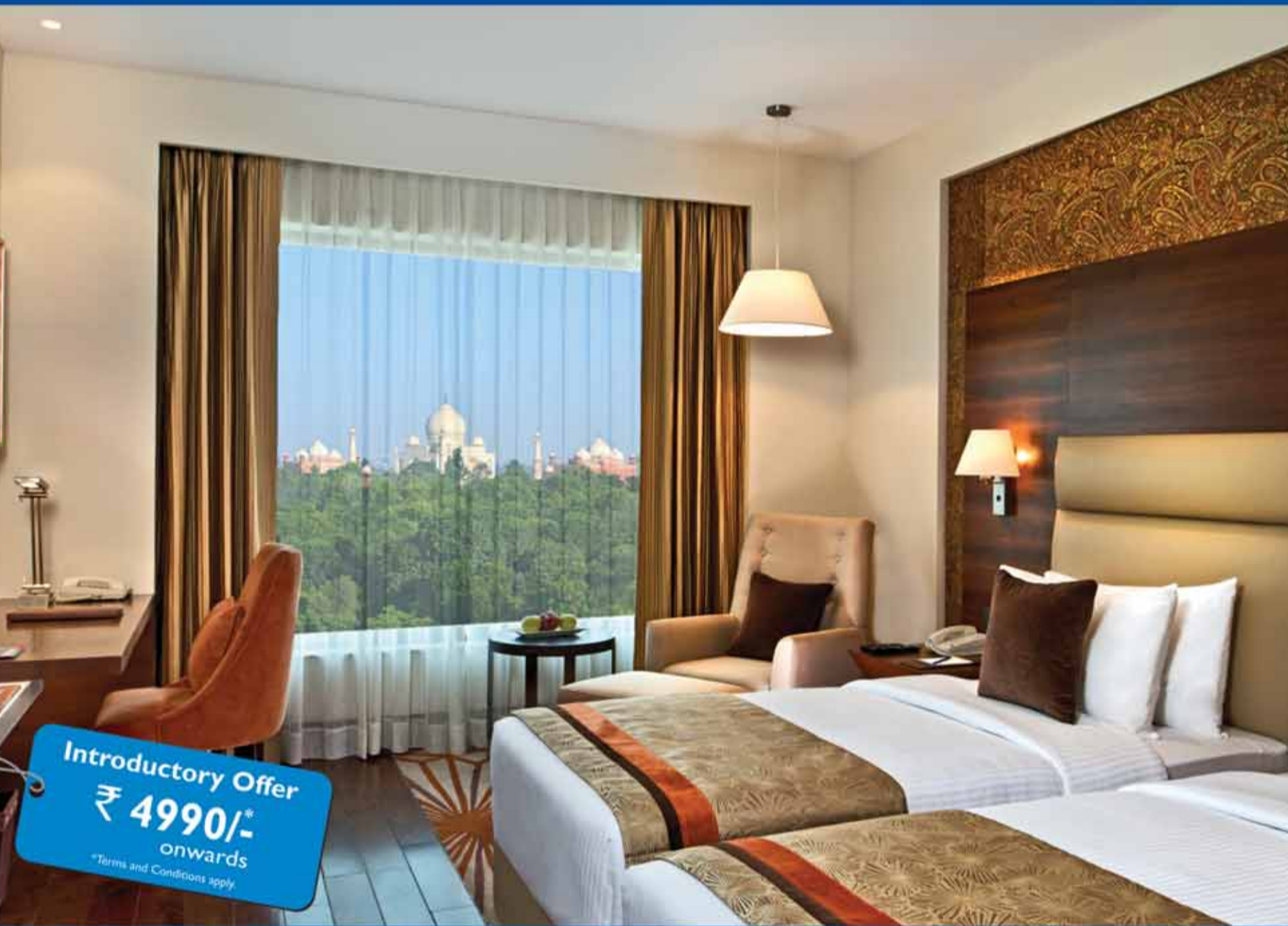


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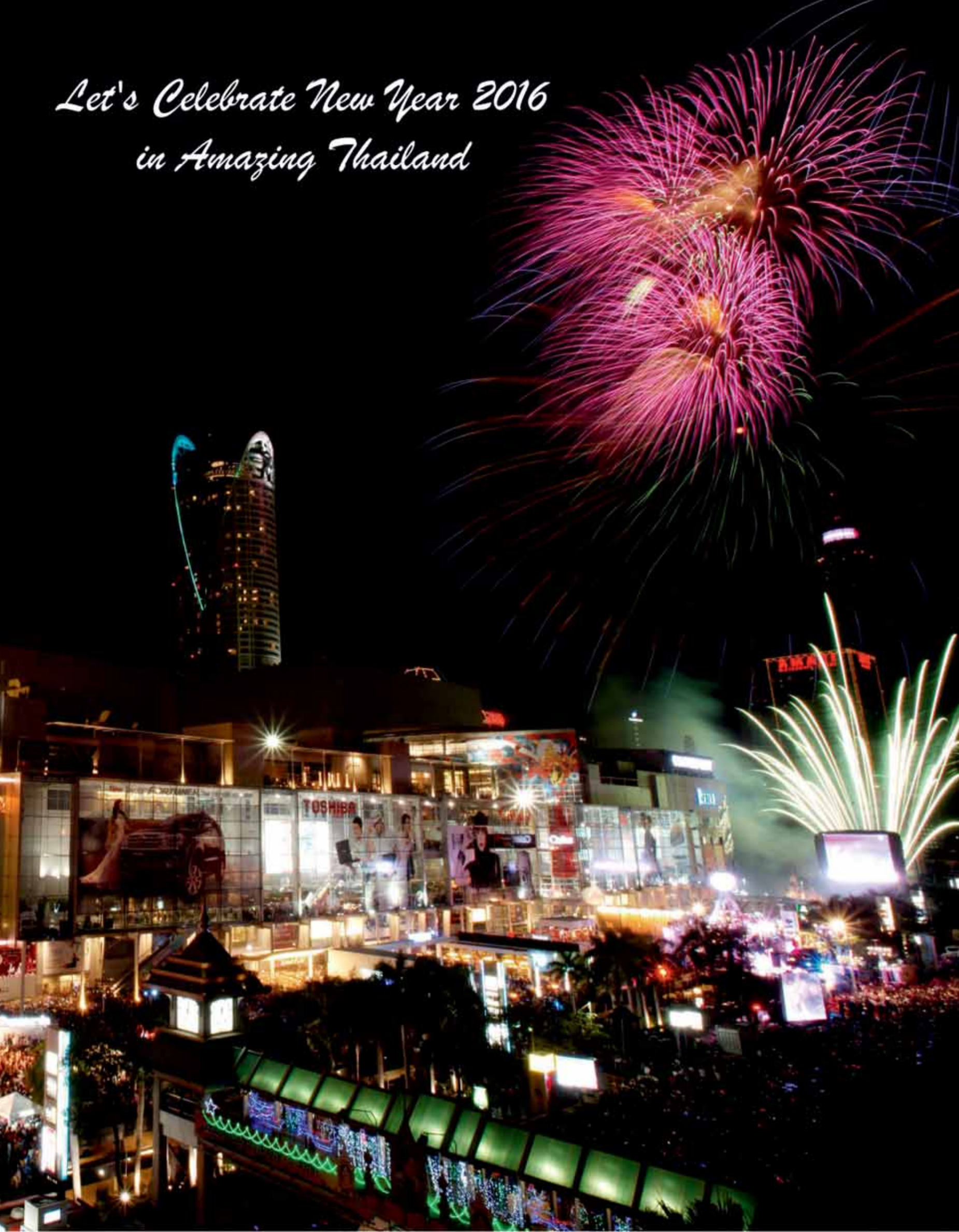
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# Philippines set to host ATF 2016

The ASEAN Travel Forum, slated for Jan 18-25, 2016, at Manila, Philippines, will host around 1,600 travel professionals from around the world. With 70% booths already secured, exhibitors are showing huge interest in the event.

TT BUREAU

**P**Come January, Manila, Philippines, will be home to the 35<sup>th</sup> edition of the ASEAN Travel Forum (ATF), which will welcome close to 1,600 travel industry delegates from over 50 countries. Scheduled to be held from January 18-25, 2016 at Entertainment City, the week-

stronger friendships between our nations.”

One of the major highlights of the event is TRAVEX, which a trade-only mart and offers opportunities for ASEAN travel product suppliers to meet qualified buyers from around the world via scheduled appointments. This year,

TRAVEX has gained attention from a majority of corporate exhibitors such as CHM Hotels, FRHI Hotels and Resorts, Intercontinental Group, among many others, who have already confirmed their participation.

The forum provides an ideal opportunity for interna-

tional buyers and media to network, gain latest information on ASEAN tourism products and services and learn about tourism trade in the region. Approximately 1600 delegates attend ATF TRAVEX every year, along with more than 400 validated and qualified international buyers and local media. ↴



**Ramon R. Jimenez Jr.**  
Secretary of Tourism  
Philippines

While the forum will allow for the exchange of ideas, we also hope that these meetings will build stronger friendships between our nations

long event will include key activities including the three-day TRAVEX—travel trade mart from January 20-22, 2016. The annual event involves all the tourism industry sectors of the 10 member nations of ASEAN—Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Keyed up about the event, **Ramon R. Jimenez Jr.** Secretary of Tourism, Philippines, expresses, “The Department of Tourism (DOT) is honoured and proud that Philippines is hosting ATF 2016. He further adds, “We hope that beyond the conference walls of this meeting, you experience our country in different ways—from our diverse natural wonders to our rich cultural heritage and the warmth of the Filipino people. And while this forum will allow for the exchange of ideas for the progress of our economies, we also hope that these meetings will build

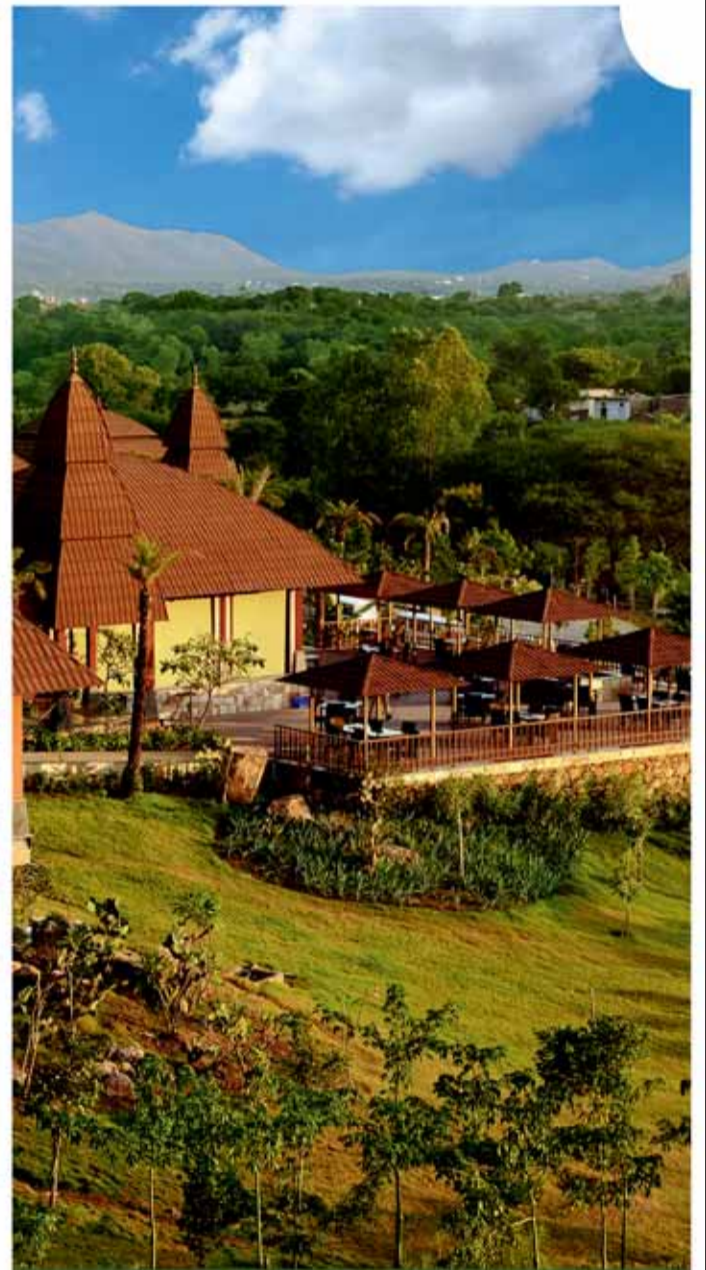


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# East takes Maya home

The East India Travel Awards were held at Holiday Inn Chandigarh on November 19, 2015 to honour the best in travel and tourism industry in the Eastern region. TRAVTALK spoke to some of the award winners.

## CHIEF GUEST

It's been an honour to be a part of these awards. I think the trophy 'Maya' is very charming. I thank SanJeet for bringing these awards to the tri-city and giving the people of this area an experience of something as big as this.

**Basanta Rajkumar**

*Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Government of Punjab*



## GALLERY OF LEGENDS

Hospitality is a passion for me and I would say it is my passion by default. We are looking forward to support from the government in the future and hopefully things will improve. I would like to thank my family for their support and SanJeet for this great honour and for his initiative.

**Rajindera Kumar**

*Working Director, Ambassador Hotel, New Delhi & Former President, HRANI, Senior MC Member and Chairman, Convention Organising Committee*



## DDP Game Changer

I am really honoured. Durga Das Publications has 'gold standards' in the industry for a very long time now. They come up with the best magazines in India. I always appreciate the work DDP does and how things are put together in his company. Maya is like the Filmfare awards of the industry. SanJeet has the right personality to take this forward. Awards like these give motivation to the industry, because our industry is looking for recognition.

**Rupak Gupta**

*Joint Managing Director, U.P. Hotels*



## DDP Trailblazer Award

India Travel Awards is happening for the first time in Chandigarh and I am very thankful to DDP for doing something this big in the city.

**Prem Pal Gandhi**

*Chairman, KC Group of Institutions Colleges and Hotels*

## Face of the Future

It is an honour and pleasure to be among stalwarts of the industry. My hospitality journey started about 10 years back. It has been an exciting journey. I am extremely thankful to DDP Publications because they have invented a platform to celebrate the achievers of the industry in various fields.

**Bjorn Noel Deniese**

*Vice President Sales & Marketing Mayfair Hotels & Resorts and Director, Mayfair Spa Resort & Casino at Gangtok, Sikkim*



## Entrepreneur of the Year

This is the second time I am attending the India Travel awards after the West India Travel awards in Goa. I feel it is a great initiative and something like these awards was highly required in our travel trade industry to recognise the achievers in various verticals of the industry. I hope it continues to inspire us to work harder to win it year on year.

**Shashank Shekhar Mishra**

*Chief Executive Officer, Sports Konnect*



## Best Tour Operator-Inbound- Clubside Tours and Travels

We are actually glad that The East India Travel awards are in Chandigarh as major source market of tourism lies in the north. The event allows us an opportunity to connect with the travel trade across the regions and appreciate the good work done by the trade.

**Sumit Periwai**

*Director, Club Side Tours & Travels*



## Best Golf Destination-Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

I feel the award ceremony like the India Travel Awards is a catalyst in raising the expectations from the industry and also help in its development. It recognizes the good work and achievements of the trade and motivates the others to work harder to aspire to win an award.

**Chanyuth Sawetsuwan**

*Assistant Director, North & East India Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)*

## Best Travel Technology Provider- ecare Technology Labs

It is a great feeling to be honoured in front of the industry in which we work so hard and collaborate to do better.

**Vivek Sanghi**

*Vice President-Business Development ecare Technology Labs*

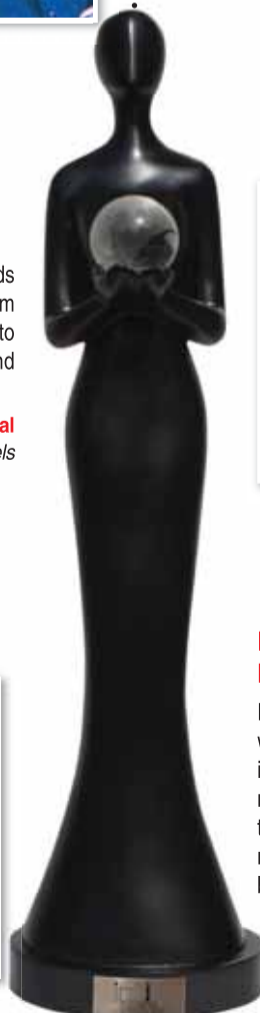


## Best Destination Management Company-Jet Setters

It is most important to note that in a social atmosphere where the stalwarts are returning awards, we are receiving awards for our work. The award ceremony has taken me by surprise because I could not fathom that the travel trade industry could also be honoured in such a unanimous manner. I have attended many travel shows but the India Travel awards in particular has surely made me feel proud that we honour the hard work of this industry as well.

**Tarakeshwar Singh**

*Director, Jet Setters*



# Recognising hard work & talent

East India Travel Awards identifies and rewards excellence, and inspires the industry leaders and stakeholders to continuously raise the standards of their products and services. **TRAVTALK** brings you the top awardees from the glittering awards night.



## ► DDP GAME CHANGER

**Rupak Gupta**, Joint Managing Director, U.P. Hotels, the 'DDP Game Changer' is felicitated by **Basanta Rajkumar**, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Govt. of Punjab, Mrs. India 2015 **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**, and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



## ► DDP TRAILBLAZER

**Prem Pal Gandhi**, Chairman, KC Group of Institutions, Colleges and Hotels, the 'DDP Trailblazer' is felicitated by **Basanta Rajkumar**, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Govt. of Punjab, Mrs. India 2015 **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**, and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



## ► FACE OF THE FUTURE

**Bjorn Noel Deniese**, Director Mayfair Spa Resort & Casino Gangtok joins the 'Face of the Future'. He is felicitated by **Basanta Rajkumar**, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Govt. of Punjab, Mrs. India 2015 **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**, and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



## ► ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

**Shashank Shekhar Mishra** - CEO, Sports Konnect was awarded the 'DDP Trailblazer'. He is felicitated by **Basanta Rajkumar**, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Govt. of Punjab, Mrs. India 2015 **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**, and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group



## ► BEST GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (GDS)

The award was given to **Travelport Galileo** and received by **Sandeep Dwivedi**, Chief Commercial Officer, InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ). He is felicitated by **Basanta Rajkumar**, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Govt. of Punjab, along with Mrs. India 2015 **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**



## ► BEST GENERAL MANAGER

The award was given to **Jai Kishan** of Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences. He is felicitated by **Basanta Rajkumar**, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Govt. of Punjab, and Mrs. India 2015 **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**



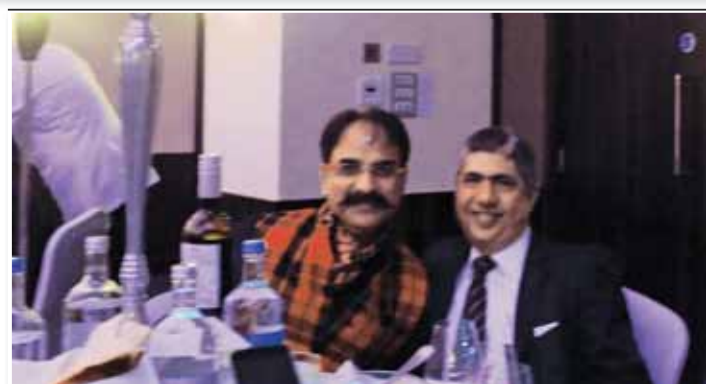


# network talk

a social networking session

# Getting together

Network Talk was an exclusive event organised by **TRAUTALK**, The Luxury Hotels Group, and The Montcalm Hotel, London on the sidelines of World Travel Market 2015. It was a fun-filled evening with an interactive congregation of colleagues and contemporaries from the travel industry to catch up over cocktails and dinner.



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# Industry on women tourists' safety

The world's leading tourism countries are also considered the world's safest. TRAVTALK finds out from industry leaders about how we should work to change the mindset of Indians towards foreign travellers, especially women, to make them feel safe.



INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA

The Ministry of Tourism, in consultation with State Governments and Union Territory Administrations, has proposed to station Tourist Police at prominent spots. The governments of several states and UTs such as Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa have deployed Tourist Police, in one form or another. The ministry launched a scheme providing Central Financial Assistance for installing Tourist Facilitation Security Organisation (TFSO) at identified tourist destinations in 2012, introduced on a test pilot basis in Jaipur, Golconda, Kushinagar and Shravasti. The Ministry has set up the Incredible India Helpline to address and guide tourists during emergencies.



**Subhash Goyal**  
Chairman, STIC Travel Group and President, IATO

Delhi is an example of a city with a culture of welcoming tourists, including women. The environment is generally peaceful for both tourists and citizens. Delhi Police has taken several steps for ensuring the safety of tourists, especially women. Incidents of misbehaviour with tourists have been extremely rare. The police's presence at all local tourist sites should generate confidence amongst women travellers coming to the city. There are also toll free helplines for women.



**Ravi Dadhich**  
General Manager, Delhi Tourism

There is great focus on safety, however, whether we have been able to build institutions that are effective, remains a big question mark. The key element is the perception of foreign tourists. Media plays a big role in that perception and government can think of a mechanism for constructive communication with the media in such matters. We need to create a mechanism of 'one stop' help for tourists and create positive communication with potential tourists about 'dos' and 'dons'.



**MP Bezbaruah**  
Former Secretary and Permanent Representative (Hon), UNWTO



It's a case of 'all talk and no action'. Tour operators try their best to provide drivers and guides who belong to the trade, and all efforts are made to make clients feel safe. Clients are properly briefed to look after themselves and avoid populated areas if they are alone. But obviously, this isn't enough. While 'tourist police' is a good concept, they are mainly present only at major monuments. They haven't fanned out everywhere. Today's clients are no longer coming to visit monuments. They are seeking a more fulfilling holiday with various experiences, and the tourist police don't play a role in this. This creates a situation where clients are vulnerable.

**Homa Mistry**  
Managing Director, Trainblazers

## INVITING BUYERS FOR APPROVED HOTEL LAND CHENNAI

A Leading Hotel Company wishes to sell 2.35 acres in Sriperumbudur, Chennai. The land is on the Chennai-Bengaluru Highway, opposite Saint-Gobain in Sipcot, and in close vicinity of Samsung, Dell, Hyundai and other leading multi-national companies in Sipcot HI-TEC SEZ. 168 room hotel construction plans are fully approved.

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[landspr@gmail.com](mailto:landspr@gmail.com)

I feel that we are heading in the right direction, and overall, the India experience has risen a few notches up for women travellers from the moment they touch down in the country. Our airports are now considerably friendlier, the staff more courteous, and there is quick Immigration clearance etc. The companies involved have to be responsible and adopt certain measures. On our part, we ensure that the drivers used for such guests are company drivers, We also use 1<sup>st</sup> class, 5 star and luxury hotels which have good security levels, and lady travellers are assigned rooms designated to them. We also ensure that lady guides are used for sightseeing as far as possible. Generally speaking, the experience at our monuments is getting better, and there is a feeling of being secure, especially with tourist police being present.



**Vikram Madhok**  
Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent,



The safety element is crucial in the promotion of any country as a tourist destination, especially for women. While crimes against women are to be strongly condemned, their negative impact is compounded by the fact that they are repeatedly aired on news channels and become headlines in foreign newspapers. We need to improve our systems. Safety standards have to be improved across the board, at airports, rail stations, tourist sites, and elsewhere. Drivers and guides have to be up to the mark as they play a role in creating a country's image. Tourist police and information literature are not enough. We have to create faith in country through comprehensive marketing.

**Rajan Sehgal**  
Chairman, TAAI Northern Region

This issue hasn't been tackled seriously enough. Though the government has announced measures for the security of lady travellers, nothing tangible is visible on the ground. Some state governments have deployed tourist police cadres, but these are limited to sight-seeing spots. Obviously, much more needs to be done. The government has to take complete charge and crack the whip. It should focus on changing the mindset of the people and make them aware of their responsibility as hosts, especially towards women visitors and travellers. Merely providing tourist police or any other security measure will help, but not solve this problem.



**Lajpat Rai**  
President, Lotus Trans Travels,



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## 2016 EVENTS



FITUR Spain, 20<sup>th</sup> Jan



BIT Italy, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb



TTE UK, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb



BTS UK, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb



VKONECT LEISURE India, Mar



MITT Moscow, 23<sup>rd</sup> Mar



UITT Ukarine, 30<sup>th</sup> Mar



Connections LUXURY Italy, 3<sup>rd</sup> Apr



AITF Azarbaijan, 7<sup>th</sup> Apr



COTTM China, 12<sup>th</sup> Apr



SITT Russia, 14<sup>th</sup> Apr



KITF Kazakhstan, 20<sup>th</sup> Apr



CXSRITE China, 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr



BITE China, 24<sup>th</sup> Jun



Connections LUXURY Thailand, 19<sup>th</sup> Jun



VKONECT WEDDING, India, July



LA CITA USA, 30<sup>th</sup> Aug



VKONECT LUXURY India, Sept



Connections MEETINGS Ecuador, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept



ASTANA LEISURE, Kazakhstan, 21<sup>st</sup> Sept



JATA Japan, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept



Connections LUXURY Brazil, 16<sup>th</sup> Oct



VKONECT MICE India, Nov



CITE China, Dec



Connections MEETINGS Spain, 11<sup>th</sup> Dec



To participate in any of the above event, please contact:  
**Sarika: sarika@ddppl.com, +91 9810191852**  
**Devika: devika@ddppl.com, +91 9818767141**

# EVENT TALK

## DECEMBER 2015

### INTERNATIONAL

3-5	China	CITE
9-12	Portugal	Connections Meetings

### NATIONAL

1-3	Bhuj	Rann Utsav
3	Delhi	European Quartet B2B Workshop
4	Bengaluru	European Quartet B2B Workshop
5	Mumbai	European Quartet B2B Workshop
4-6	Hyderabad	India International Travel Mart
5-7	Jaipur	India Travel Mart
5-13	Kolkata	East Himalayan Expo
7	Delhi	TravelShop Turkey Roadshow
8	Delhi	Sharjah Tourism Road show
8	Jaipur	North India Travel Awards
9	Mumbai	Sharjah Tourism Road show
10	Chennai	TravelShop Turkey Roadshow
11	Bengaluru	TravelShop Turkey Roadshow
14	Ahmedabad	TravelShop Turkey Roadshow
11-13	Madurai	India International Travel Exhibition
18-20	Siliguri	Tourism Fair
22-24	Mumbai	Travel Tourism Trade Fair – World Travel Trade Mart
23-27	Haridwar	CII Uttarakhand Fair

## JANUARY 2016

### INTERNATIONAL

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

### NATIONAL

8-10	Nagpur	Global Panorama Showcase
8-10	Chennai	Travel & Tourism Fair
14-16	Kochi	India International Travel Mart
15	Kolkata	Tourism Fiji Roadshow
15-17	Bengaluru	Travel & Tourism Fair
15-17	Mumbai	India International Travel & Tourism Exhibition
18	Delhi	Tourism Fiji Roadshow
18	Kolkata	South African Tourism B2B Roadshow
19	Ahmedabad	Tourism Fiji Roadshow
19	Delhi	South African Tourism B2B Roadshow
20	Mumbai	Tourism Fiji Roadshow
21	Bangalore	Tourism Fiji Roadshow
21	Hyderabad	South African Tourism B2B Roadshow
22	Mumbai	South African Tourism B2B Roadshow
22	Chennai	Tourism Fiji Roadshow
22-24	Nagpur	India International Travel Exhibition
22-24	Coimbatore	Holiday Expo
22-24	Mumbai	Travel Tourism Trade Fair – World Travel Trade Mart
23	Hyderabad	Tourism Fiji Roadshow
29-31	Delhi	SATTE

## FEBRUARY 2016

### INTERNATIONAL

11-13	Milan, Italy	BIT
24	UK	Travel Technology Europe
24	UK	Business Travel Show

### NATIONAL

1	Mumbai	Koh Samui Roadshow (Tourism Authority of Thailand)
1	Kolkata	Global Destinations B2B event
2	Ahmedabad	Global Destinations B2B event

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

# Oman Air flies to 5 Indian cities

From December 1, 2015, Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, will increase its frequencies to some key destinations in India.



TT BUREAU

In a major move, Oman Air will double its connectivity from Muscat to Bengaluru and Kochi and will operate 11 flights to Lucknow and 10 flights to Jaipur, weekly. Adding frequency to Goa, Oman Air will now fly daily from Muscat as compared to six flights per week.

With the increase in the number of flights, Oman Air will now offer more than 5,000 additional seats to these key Indian sectors and will operate Boeing 737-800 and 737-900 aircraft. Once the uplift in frequencies



“With daily or double daily flights to all our eleven destinations in India, we are delighted to be offering many more air travellers the opportunity to fly with us and strengthen our presence in the Indian market.”

Sunil V.A.

Senior Manager Sales, ISC, Oman Air

has been introduced, Oman Air will operate a total of 126 flights per week between Muscat and its destinations in India.

Oman Air flies to 19 destinations in the Indian Subcontinent (ISC) that includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, out of which 11 destinations in India.

opportunity to fly with us and strengthen our presence in the Indian market.

“Our new flights to Bangalore, Kochi, Goa, Lucknow and Jaipur will offer improved connectivity and convenience for both leisure and business travellers. This move not only supports the growth of tourism in Oman and India, but will also help to promote vital trade partnerships between the two countries. We are confident that our additional flights will be greeted with enthusiasm by both our frequent flyers and those who are new to Oman Air.”

Sunil V.A., Senior Manager Sales, ISC, Oman Air, said, “The demand for travel from Muscat to key destinations in India has been consistently on the rise. With daily or double daily flights to all our eleven destinations in India, we are delighted to be offering many more air travellers the



# United Airlines’ 10 years in India

United Airlines, the only non-stop carrier to the US from India, celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its services into the country. Dave Hilfman, Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, United Airlines, tells **TRAVTALK** about their plans.



ANKITA SAXENA

“We have seen excellent growth from both corporate commercial travel as well as the leisure side. We have tough competition, which keeps us on our toes to do better,” says Dave Hilfman, Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, United Airlines, speaking on the response from India in the last 10 years.

Discussing the association with the travel agents, Hilfman says, “We are very involved with various travel agencies in India as they form a very important arm of business generation. Harvinder Singh, Sales and Country Manager, watches over the agent community in India very carefully. Hilfman further adds, “We conduct agent training sessions for our travel trade partners, where depending on the most relevant topics like new products, fares etc, the corporate clients, small or large groups are educated and



“We have always valued the market demand but as of now we have no plans to expand. We are focused on our service from New Delhi and Mumbai and are not planning on flying to more cities in India currently.”

Dave Hilfman

Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, United Airlines

updated.” United works closely with Star Alliance partners Lufthansa and Air India to coordinate fares, Frequent Flyer Access and Mileage Plus Programs.

After the completion of 10 years, United does not plan to expand its services in India. “We have always valued the market demand but as of now we have no plans to expand. We are focused on our service from New Delhi and Mumbai and are not planning on flying to more cities in India currently.

Having said that, India is a huge market and we will look out for any opportunity with time,” explains Hilfman.

Discussing about MICE and group travels, Hilfman says, “We are very focused on this component of the business. Appropriate discounts and recognition of focused travel, like special group handling, is catered by United Airlines”

The carrier is also looking at expanding its fleet, reveals Hilfman, “We have added over

2000 aircrafts in the last five years. We would be the only airline to have the most modern fleet in the world. Starting in December 2015, we are adding 25 new Dreamliner 787s; we would be taking delivery of 300 777 aircrafts in December 2016 and by 2018 United Airlines shall have A 350-1000.” Hilfman also says, “We are happy with the two cabin product. We are not adding any other product in terms of cabins, but we certainly have added new products in our in-flight entertainment and F&B segment.”

# Bulgaria to attract tourism from India

Nikolina Angelkova, Minister of Tourism, Republic of Bulgaria, talks about the need to ease the visa process for Bulgaria in order to boost the number of Indian tourists visiting the country.



SAMAPTI DAS

Angelkova met **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Union Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, in New Delhi recently to discuss how the two countries can cooperate to promote tourism sector to boost the number of Indian tourists visiting Bulgaria. "It is my first visit to India but certainly will not be the last. The proposed discussion with FICCI, has allowed us a platform to conduct meetings with key players in the travel industry to gather knowledge and information about the market that will help in promoting Bulgaria to the Indian travellers," she says.

Angelkova adds, "In Bulgaria we have requested the Ministry of External Affairs to consider and be flexible about opening more visa centers in India at various locations. We have a visa consulate in Delhi but we understand that it is not always convenient to travel to Delhi from different parts of India which results in loss of time and eventually in visiting Bulgaria. By stating the example of France and Germany, we are in the early stages of negotiations with the Ministry and hopefully by next year we will have something more concrete."

Expressing the support from FICCI towards Bulgaria, **Jyotsna Suri**, President, FICCI, says, "Bulgaria is taking its tourism very seriously and the interest shown by the Tourism Minister of Bulgaria shows that they consider India as a potential market. We are very happy that they chose to collaborate with us."

Angelkova explains, "We have worked with travel agents previously but on a limited basis. We are very open and helpful to aid the travel and tour operators

with information, Fam trips and awareness about Bulgaria."

India Tourism had conducted a seminar for travel agents in Sofia, Bulgaria in November 2014, which was attended by 69 travel agents. Lack of direct air connectivity between India and Bulgaria is one of the major

reasons for small number of tourists travelling between the two countries.

A press conference followed the B2B event on November 24, 2015, where **Petko Doykov**, Ambassador of Republic of Bulgaria announced the Tour of Champions 2016 Second

Edition to be hosted by **Shiv Kapur**, Golfer, on May 23-29, 2016. "I support the initiatives taken by Bulgaria to promote tourism in India and hope that the efforts will be fruitful for both the countries," says Doykov. The Golf Tournament is an attempt to nurture golf tourism between India and Bulgaria.



(L-R) Jyotsna Suri felicitates Nikolina Angelkova

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## Bulgaria Files

- India Tourism had conducted a seminar for agents in Sofia, Bulgaria in 2014
- Petko Doykov, Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria announced the Tour of Champions 2016 Second Edition to be hosted by Shiv Kapur, Golfer, from May 23-29, 2016

## VISA TALK



### Indonesia Tourist Visa Exemption for Indian Citizens

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia has waived off Tourist Visa for Indian citizens and foreign nationals of 75 countries and territories. This waive is granted for 30 days, non-extendable and cannot be converted into another type of visa (valid for tourism purpose only). The visa exemption can only be applied at certain immigration checkpoints. A few of which are as follows.

Soekarno-Hatta International Airport-Jakarta, Ngurah Rai International Airport-Bali, Kualanamu International Airport-Medan, Juanda International Airport-Surabaya, Hang Nadim International Airport-Batam. For more information please logon to [www.udaanindia.com](http://www.udaanindia.com)



### Malaysia Visa on Arrival

Indian and Chinese nationals arriving from a third country which can be any of the following Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia-are eligible for a Malaysia Visa on Arrival, provided they meet all of the following criteria:

For visitors arriving through entry points as follows: Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (KLIA2), Bayan Lepas International Airport, Pulau Pinang, Sultan Ismail, Senai Airport, Johor, Kota Kinabalu International Airport, Sabah, Kuching International Airport, Sarawak. Requirements: Valid visa from third country, Confirmed return ticket, Carrying minimum of USD1000 in cash.

Visitors are allowed to stay only for 7 days.



### Additional Requirement for Congo DRC Business Visa

With immediate effect, applicants applying for a Congo business visa have to provide a sponsorship letter on a letterhead from the inviting company based in DRC. The letter should be dated, signed by the authorised signatory, bear the company official stamp and be attested by the General Directorate for Migration (DGM).



### Nigeria STR Work Visa

The High Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, New Delhi has announced that, with immediate effect, the submission and collection of Nigeria STR work visa (Subject to Regularisation) has been outsourced to Online Integrated Solution (OIS), Delhi. Hence, all Nigeria STR work visa applications will be submitted to OIS. For visa fee and other related charges kindly contact [udaan@udaanindia.com](mailto:udaan@udaanindia.com) or visit [www.udaanindia.com](http://www.udaanindia.com)

### Visa Snippets:

With immediate effect, Finland visa applications (short stay) will be submitted at Finland VFS visa application centres located in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Kolkata and Hyderabad. For contact details and addresses of the respective centers please logon to our website [www.udaanindia.com](http://www.udaanindia.com)

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**Ashish Kumar**  
Managing Partner-Agnitio Consulting  
LLP, a Delhi-based operating partner and consulting firm



VAISHALI DAR

### Redefining Operations

E-ticket has brought in efficiency in travel transactions. "Smartphones and mobile apps have continued to disrupt the operating model. More than 33 per cent of transactions of all OTAs are done through mobile. MakeMytrip (MMT) has grown to a valuation of 1.1 billion dollars; Yatra in a matter of eight years has grown to a 1000+ team and 5.5 million users per month. Travel companies have made their operations more streamlined and customers are spoilt for choice," says Kumar.

### Online Travel Sales

OTAs share in overall transactions has increased significantly and are threatening the traditional ticketing models and TMCs. MMT, Yatra, Cleartrip and Goibibo make up almost 90 per cent of the entire OTA market in India, which is growing roughly at 40 per cent+CAGR. According to PhocusWright, in 2014 more than 39 per cent bookings were done in India through channels. Mobile accounted for nearly 20 per cent of booking transactions value and it is projected to hit \$3.2 billion by 2017.

### New Products

Yes, a lot needs to be done around personalisation of travel through learning; dynamic itinerary planning along with integrated third party location based services. Augmented reality and predictive analytics will be a huge game changer.

### Future of Car Rental

There are challenges that need to be addressed around security and compliances—travel and transport being no different. The industry has come back strongly after such strin-

gent actions by the government and it has actually helped improve their processes and user experience. A lot of companies are developing 24X7 security applications, panic button support related products and services integrated in the car rental services; and driver screening processes to provide assurance to passengers that they are being tracked and any support as required is available at a short notice. ↴

## 4.3 per cent rise in FTAs till Oct: MoT

■ The Ministry of Tourism has revealed that FTAs in India during January-October 2015 were 62.88 lakh, recording a growth of 4.3 per cent compared to the same duration last year with 60.28 lakh FTAs and a growth of 11.4 per cent over January-October 2013.

During October 2015, 6.80

lakh FTAs were recorded compared to FTAs of 6.68 lakh during the month of October last year, registering a growth of 1.7 per cent over October 2014. Among the top 15 source countries, the growth was highest from Bangladesh (15.22 per cent), followed by USA (12.99 per cent), UK (11.31 per

cent), Sri Lanka (3.69 per cent), Germany (3.62 per cent), Canada (3.58 per cent), Australia (3.37 per cent), Malaysia (3.03 per cent), France (3.01 per cent), Nepal (2.67 per cent), and China (2.55 per cent). These top 15 countries account for 72.73 per cent of total FTAs during October 2015.

The percentage share amongst the top five ports receiving FTAs was highest at Delhi Airport (33.95 per cent) followed by Mumbai Airport (16.90 per cent), Haridaspur Land check post (8.73 per cent), Chennai Airport (7.50 per cent) and Bengaluru Airport (6.19 per cent).

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**The Orchid**

**Mumbai**

**Varun Sahani** has joined The Orchid, Mumbai as the General Manager. Earlier he worked as GM, Jaypee Greens Golf and Spa Resort, Noida. Sahani carries an experience of over two decades. An IHM graduate, he has worked with some of the leading hospitality brands. He specialises in operations and sales. He has also been associated with various hotels from the project stage and has experience in pre opening and establishing operations. As a team leader his forte extends from revenue management, budgeting, strategic planning and cost control.



**JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar**

**Mumbai**

**Nikita Gonsalves** has been appointed as the Director of Sales at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. Prior to joining the JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, Gonsalves was the Director of Sales at the Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa. She holds an MBA in Marketing. Her vast portfolio includes prestigious brands like The Marriott Group, Taj Hotels and the Hilton Group before she made her way into JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. With nine years of experience in the hospitality industry, she brings on board notable expertise in developing strategies for pricing, weddings, catering, MICE, Business Transient as well as overall revenue management including handling online travel agencies.



**Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal**

**Bengaluru**

**Rishi Neoge** has been appointed as General Manager of Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal. With over 19 years of experience, he has held several positions in Food and Beverage within the leading luxury and business hotels across India like ITC, The Imperial, IHCL and IHG to name a few. Neoge looks forward to the opportunities and challenges that the new assignment brings his way. Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal is part of Wyndham Hotel Group that offers free Wi-Fi, a well equipped gymnasium, executive lounge and meeting rooms, spa and sauna facility, and a gleaming azure outdoor swimming pool.



**Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre & Courtyard by Marriott**

**Hyderabad**

**Sunny Ghaiee** has been appointed as the Director of Sales & Marketing for Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre & Courtyard by Marriott Hyderabad. He brings with him over 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry handling sales and marketing. He has worked with several hotels in various capacities. He started his career with Marriott in 2010. He graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Studies from IGNOU.



**Park Plaza**

**Noida**

**Ankur Mehrotra** has been appointed as the new Director Sales & Marketing at Park Plaza Noida. Before joining here, he worked with Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group for three and a half years. With an enriching experience of 12 years, Mehrotra aspires to direct all sales and marketing efforts towards achieving the operational goal of the hotel. Previous assignment was with Country Inn & Suites Sahibabad as Director of Sales. He has previously worked at The Claridges, Jaypee Hotels and InterContinental Hotels.



**JW Marriott**

**Chandigarh**

JW Marriott Chandigarh has appointed **Anang Chaturvedi** as the new Director of Sales & Marketing for its 164-room property. In this role, Chaturvedi will be creating and overseeing the hotel's yearly business and marketing plans, as well as managing the sales team. He started his career with the Marriott group and has been with them for the past 13 years. He has recently joined JW Marriott Chandigarh from Courtyard by Marriott, Mumbai. He graduated from Gujarat University and holds a Diploma in Hotel Management from IHMCTAN, Mumbai.



**Rahul Korgaokar** has been appointed as the Director of Operations at Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre and Courtyard by Marriott, Hyderabad. He brings with him over 10 years of experience in the Food & Beverage department. He started his career in 2003 with The Oberoi Mumbai as Restaurant Manager. He was also part of the pre-opening team of the first Movenpick Hotels & Resorts in Bangalore. He joined the Marriott in 2013 as Director of Food & Beverage at the Goa Marriott Resort & Spa.



**eRevMax**

**London**

eRevMax International, the leading provider of hospitality technology and distribution solutions, has appointed **Jyoti Kumar Saraf** as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to spearhead its international financial operations. Saraf joined the company as VP-Finance in August this year and has now been promoted as CFO following his exceptional performance over the last few months. He is a highly accomplished finance professional and brings over 22 years of relevant experience across multiple sectors. He will be overseeing all financial management and reporting, including corporate accounting for the company globally.



**Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai**

**Mumbai**

**Rashi Honrao Gakkan** has been appointed as the Learning & Development Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai, Vashi. With around six years of experience in the hospitality industry, Gakkan has worked with renowned brands like the Marriott, Accor, Hilton and Starwood. She has been part of two landmark pre-opening teams, namely the Westin Mumbai Garden City and the Sofitel Mumbai BKC. She holds a Masters in Organisational Psychology. Gakkan has also led some very successful quality assurance training audits.



TALKING PEOPLE

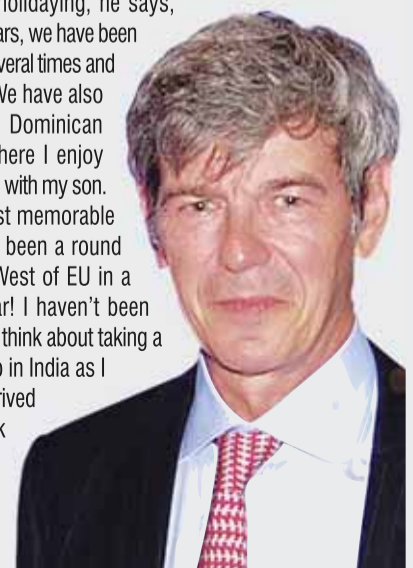
**Claudio Zemp**, Director (India), Switzerland Tourism, practices yoga and meditation. "I have already started practicing and I find it a very good way to relax. I have travelled within India and my favourite destination here is also the hardest I've visited. My first stop when I came to India was Varanasi and it was an eye-opener. I was suddenly thrown into a totally new world. But I had some of the best times there. It was probably the most intense experience I have had. I have also travelled all over Rajasthan," he says. Zemp is quite a good skier having grown up in Switzerland which he feels is difficult to continue in India. "But I've heard of a place in Kashmir that has good skiing slopes. So I want to check out what the Indian competition is doing," he adds.



**Jamal Humaid Al Falasi**, Director, Dubai Cruise Tourism, doesn't have time to relax. "I play a lot of sports as it keeps me in good shape and clears my mind. Swimming and fishing also give me peace and a break from work. I also enjoy traveling and like to discover Asia. I visit a new Asian destination every year and have covered China, Korea, Japan, Thailand and Malaysia. I have even repeated countries but with a different itinerary. I do go to Europe, but Asia remains my favourite," he says. "I'm trying to discover India slowly," he adds.



**Yves Perrin**, Consul General of France in Mumbai, says that he doesn't take stress easily. "A few of my favourite activities when I was in Paris were to ride back home on a motorcycle and once home, work in my garden. These made me forget the stress of that day!" he adds. He also collects pens as a hobby. On holidaying, he says, "Over the years, we have been to Greece several times and we love it. We have also visited the Dominican Republic where I enjoy wind-surfing with my son. But my most memorable holiday has been a round trip to the West of EU in a camping car! I haven't been able to even think about taking a pleasure trip in India as I have just arrived but I look forward to travelling here as well."



I visited Gujarat during Uttarayan. I saw adults draped in childhood, decorating the canvas of the sky with colourful kites that soared, drifted and dipped at the flick of one's wrist. In all the pulling and cutting of the kite strings I didn't realize when the excitement and affection started tugging at my heartstrings. Nowhere else had I witnessed such amazing bonding among competitors but here. Next time too, the kites will fly high, painting the sky. Will you be there?



8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016

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OCM 16

# Rajasthan eyes domestic tourists

With an increased budget for marketing this year, Rajasthan Tourism is reaching out to travel agents and tour operators to update them about the new and upcoming products. G.S. Gangwal, Joint Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, reveals more.



HAZEL JAIN

## Q You have a renewed focus on domestic tourists. Why?

Earlier, we used to focus mostly on international tourists. But, now we are developing a marketing and promotional campaign for international as well as domestic tourists. The Chief Minister of Rajasthan is very pro-tourism and is always guiding the department officials.

planning and discussion stage as of now, since it requires the involvement of the forest as well as the irrigation departments as we don't want to disturb the ecology. There are a few places in Udaipur where we will be starting cruises by 2016.

We are also promoting night or summer tourism, since the summers are extremely hot here. Six months ago, we

## 10-city roadshow

The Tourism Department of Rajasthan organised its first-ever roadshow titled 'Visit Rajasthan' in association with Federation of Hospitality & Tourism of Rajasthan. The 10-city roadshow started with Ahmedabad (Aug 27-28) and travelled to New Delhi (Sept 25-26), Chandigarh (Sept 28-29), Mumbai (Oct 26-27), and Pune (Oct 28-29), and will now be going to Chennai (Dec 7-8), Bengaluru (Dec 10-11), Kolkata (Jan 8-9), Guwahati (Jan 11-12) and concluding in Hyderabad (Feb 11-12).

## Q Has there been any increase in the tourism budget?

It used to be around `12-15 crore some years ago. The state government has increased it to `45 crore in 2014. So we are already on track.

## Q What new initiatives is Rajasthan Tourism taking?

The Rajasthan Government has started working on a new tourism unit policy, which will offer government land on subsidised rates for tourism units such as hotels, resorts, etc. The state government has identified 100 such units of land in key locations like Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Jaipur. We want to have good hotels in our state and attract investors for this with a thrust on budget hotels. This will not be under PPP but on private basis.

## Q Do you offer incentives for this?

Yes, we do. If anyone wants to buy land either on agriculture or residential land, it will be converted freely without any conversion charges. Moreover, on purchase of any land to build a hotel, the investor will get 50 per cent concession on stamp duty. The government has also exempted a 10-11 per cent luxury tax of `3,000 for the new hotel units for seven years as an incentive. We have also doubled the FAR from 2.5 to 5 to act as an incentive. Apart from this, we will also reimburse up to 50 per cent VAT to all new units under the new tourism unit policy for seven years. A restaurant currently levies 13 per cent VAT on the menu items. We have been offering these incentives since 2015. ↴



G.S. Gangwal

Joint Director, Department of Tourism,  
Government of Rajasthan

The state government is now starting to aggressively market itself to the rest of India and the world. We are also thinking of having a brand ambassador.

## Q What is the agenda behind the roadshow?

We want to tell travel agents and tour operators about our new and upcoming products. Rajasthan has a lot of lesser-known destinations. This roadshow is to promote all these things and is part of the bigger marketing campaign. The priority for the current government is tourism. Hence, we are focusing on tourism in a planned manner. We are also planning to conduct a familiarisation tour for the trade.

## Q What are the new products that you are promoting?

The state government has decided to start cruise tourism in the many lakes of Rajasthan just like in Dubai. It will be done by Lama Tours, which also runs similar operations in Dubai. We will start the cruise in Udaipur. It's in the

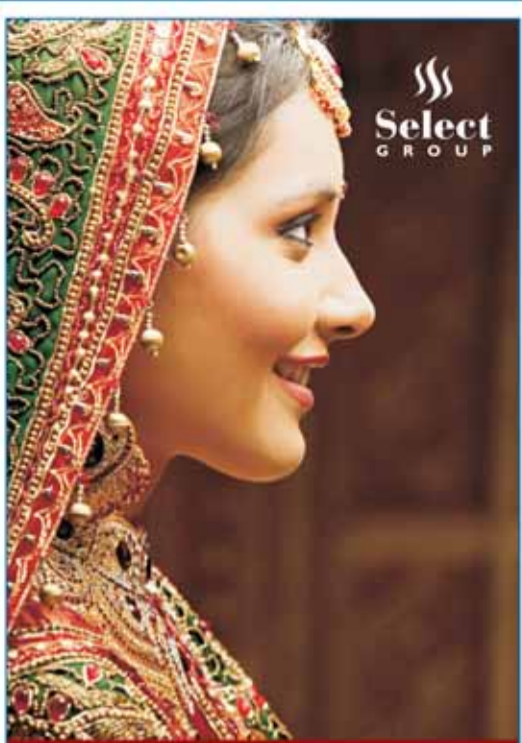
started this in Amer Fort and Albert Hall, Jaipur. As part of the initiative, tourists can board a coach, like Volvo, with a restaurant, and go around Jaipur in the night. The night tour includes sound and light shows (in Chittaur, Kumbalgarh, Jantar Mantar) and ends with dinner.

## Q Kindly share the figures for domestic tourism in the state.

Rajasthan wants to grow its domestic tourism. In 2013, we recorded 14.4 million tourists followed by 33 million in 2014. By 2018, we want to take this to 50 million.

## Q What about Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs)?

Foreign Tourist Arrivals have also been increasing steadily. In 2013, we had more than 14,37,000 foreigners that had gone up to 15,26,000 by 2014. We want to increase this by 10 per cent, i.e. one million by 2018. Maximum arrivals are from Europe and the US. We will now do some promotional events there and roadshows next year.



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