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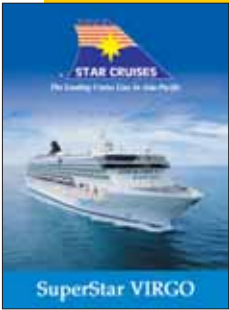
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Flying high in Tier-II, III cities

Airlines are gradually realising the potential of Tier-II and Tier-III cities, leading to an evolution in aviation that has never been witnessed before.



HAZEL JAIN

Consider for instance the opportunities that an international airline like flydubai offers smaller cities like Lucknow, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram when it connects them to a hub like Dubai. Or how Tigerair is connecting the 'Land of Nawabs' to the rest of the world by flying directly from Singapore to Lucknow.

vote to this trend. "Qatar Airways recently introduced daily operations in Nagpur after almost seven years connecting over 150 cities globally to Nagpur and neighbouring areas like Wardha, Akola, Gondia and Gadchiroli that now have direct access to international flights. Air Arabia has been operational in Nagpur with four weekly flights connecting it to most parts of the Middle East and Africa, all

Sunil B. Satyawakta, MD of Lucknow-based Civica Travels and Chairman (Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter) of Travel Agents Association of India, echoes this view. Airlines today are studying new routes to connect Tier II cities with each other and the metros. This minimises flying time, prevents transits at metros (saving high UDF), saves on fuel costs and decreases load on ATCs," he adds.



Mittu Chandilya
CEO and MD
AirAsia India



Teh Yik Chuan
Director Sales & Marketing
Tigerair



Sachin Nene
Regional Manager India
Air Arabia



Harmandeep Singh Anand
Managing Director
Jagsons Travels



Sunil B. Satyawakta
Chairman (Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter), TAAI



Biji Eapen
National President, IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI)

Harmandeep Singh Anand, MD of Nagpur-based Jagsons Travels, gives his

the way up to Turkey. Now, the connection is beyond the Americas," he says.

Biji Eapen, Chairman and CEO of Kochi-based Speedwings Aviation

Academy and National President of IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI), adds, "The government aims to develop airports in smaller towns and offer incentives to carriers operating with less than 100 seats. Also, the decision to waive landing and night parking charges for small aircrafts will attract carriers to operate to non-metro airports. But the trend to have more international flights arriving in smaller towns will not cut costs for fliers. This may help foreign tourists but will warrant an adverse economic situation."

What airlines say

AirAsia India recently added Vizag, Guwahati and Imphal to its network and according to **Mittu Chandilya**, CEO and MD, AirAsia India, all three destinations are doing well. "Connecting the under-served destinations has always been in our plans. It is important to stimulate traffic from and to these destinations as there is so much we can explore in these markets," he says.

Tigerair is another international airline that has shown an appetite for this. **Teh Yik Chuan**, Director, Sales &

Marketing, Tigerair, states, "Currently, connectivity is mostly to larger cities but the desire for air travel among individuals in secondary cities is rising as is their capacity to spend." **Sachin Nene**, Regional Manager – India for Air Arabia, says that India's potential cannot be ignored. "There are a lot of people from these cities who want to travel to other parts of India and the world. But currently they have to use gateways like Mumbai and Delhi. So we make their lives simpler and connect the rest of the world to their homes," Nene opines.

Environment ban hurting adventure tourism

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) ban on camping activity from Kaudiyala to Rishikesh, in Uttarakhand, has left tour operators of the region looking for alternative products. The industry shares its effect on tourist arrivals to the region.



ANKITA SAXENA

Responding to the NGT ban on camping sites in Rishikesh, **Tejbir Singh Anand**, Founder and Managing Director, Holiday Moods Adventures, says, "The ban has affected the number of tourist coming to Rishikesh. The dip could be as alarming as 30-40 per cent loss of business. Few local companies also have shut shop. With no beach campsites available, the accommodation has been restricted to hotels and lodges."

Sanjay Basu, MD, Far Horizon Tours, calls the ban a typical uninformed and knee-jerk reaction and says, "Instead of banning irresponsible defaulters who were polluting the environment, a blanket ban has been imposed on all the camps. As long as the operators are responsible, such eco-tourism activities must be allowed to enrich the economic activity of these remote areas. Eco-tourism creates a fine balance between environment protection and environment usage and



Tejbir Singh Anand
Founder and Managing Director,
Holiday Moods Adventures

The ban has affected the number of incoming tourists. The dip could be as alarming as 30-40 per cent loss of business

must be encouraged all over the country rather than be opposed." Anand, however reflects on the inevitability of the ban and says, "The ban was bound to happen



Sanjay Basu
Managing Director
Far Horizon Tours

As long as the operators are responsible, such eco-tourism activities must be allowed to enrich economic activity

sooner or later. Unchecked growth, without taking into account the carrying capacities, and construction has led to this sad situation."



Vinayak Koul
Director
SnowLion Expeditions

Authorities must help tour operators to promote and market the region rigorously to beat down the ban

Explaining the challenges being faced by service providers in growing this segment, Basu says, "Adventure tourism is in a very nascent

stage. It has not reached its full potential due to lack of accessibility into the remote regions of the country and permissions to create low impact eco-tourism infrastructures. The publicity is only through travel agents and word-of-mouth."

Vinayak Koul, Director, SnowLion Expeditions, says, "The local authorities and the tourism board must help tour operators to promote and market the region rigorously to beat down the ban and spread awareness that rafting and other activities can still be done in and around Rishikesh."

Discussing how travel agents are tackling the ban, Anand says, "Agents are changing programmes now amending the accommodations available and focusing more on activities. Technology is being used and activities are being sold more on e-commerce sites and mobile apps. Both offline and online models are being promoted by travel agents. New adventure zones have come up offering activities like bungee jumping,

zip lining, cycling trails, etc. New campsites are coming up on private lands away from the river."

Talking about the popular source markets, Anand says, "In terms of domestic market, the major sources are the corporate houses and organisations. MICE and educational institutions have boosted adventure tourism in the last decade."

Identifying the trends for adventure tourism in 2016, Anand explains, "The corporate adventure offsites are one of the largest client segment of adventure campsites and this trend should continue to grow for the next few years. The number of travellers aged 15-35 has increased by 42 per cent compared to last year and over 54 per cent of adventure tour bookings are made online. Multi-activity trips, which all age brackets can do, are new entrants into this segment. In fact more than 25 per cent of adventure travellers are women mostly of the age group 35-60 years."

Wellness board set in motion

The Ministry of Tourism assured progress in the realm of medical and wellness tourism at the 1st meeting of the National Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board. The board's framework and agenda were discussed at the meeting.



AHANA GURUNG

In a move to promote the cause of medical and wellness tourism in the country, the first meeting of the Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board was held at Hotel Samrat and was led by **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation. In attendance were experts from medical, tourism and hospitality sectors, other stakeholders and representatives of related government departments, and wellness professionals.

The agenda of the meeting, as explained by Sharma, was to provide a dedicated



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

institutional framework to take forward the cause of promotion of medical, wellness, yoga and ayurveda tourism and any other format of the Indian system of medicine. "The healthcare segment is one of the fastest growing



Suman Billa
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India

segments in India, growing at a rate of 24-27 per cent CAGR over the past three years," he said.

"We want to make use of our world-class facilities and affordable services.

Therefore, the board's role is to act as facilitator to tap the potential of medical and wellness tourism in an efficient

way," he elaborated. Expressing his opinion about the meeting, **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of

Tourism, Govt. of India, said, "Through this meeting, the government is attempting to bring the private sector, government officials and all the concerned agencies under one roof to figure out how, together, we can achieve something that is world class and develop medical tourism into an alternate economic engine for the country," he stated.

Additionally, it was revealed that the board plans to build up a data bank of available resources in the field of medical and wellness services in the country and to develop a mechanism to broadcast such information to source markets. ➔

Paryatak Mitra: Training tourist facilitators

The Ministry of Tourism has started a 10-day long training programme for college-going students including those enrolled with the NCC & NSS, in the age group of 18-28 years. The programme will be implemented by the Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management, first at destinations identified under the PRASAD scheme of the Ministry of Tourism.

The course will attempt to inculcate appropriate tourism traits and knowledge among the trainees to enable them to act / work as Tourist Facilitators (Paryatak Mitra). The first batch commenced on January 12, 2016 at Varanasi. A similar 30-day training programme by IITM will also be implemented to bring up tourist facilitators in the northeast states. It will target undergraduates in the age group of 18-28 years.

Gearing up for 10 mn arrivals in 2016

India recorded 7.7 million foreign tourist arrivals in 2014, and in 2015, the figure crossed 8 million. **Sarab Jit Singh**, Vice Chairman, Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH), shares with **TRAVTALK** recommendations to accomplish a figure of 10 million foreign arrivals in 2016.



KANCHAN NATH

Singh has put across certain recommendations to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, to achieve this target of 10 million foreign arrivals. He says that for various reasons, the tourism sector has shown slow growth rate as compared to corresponding period of previous years. Singh says that in spite of growing capacity across tourist destinations in the country and new destinations coming up, the growth rate is not picking up.

One such issue of concern is the perception of India

“The promotion of Indian tourism products abroad has suffered because many posts in the overseas Indian Tourism offices have been lying vacant for more than a year. This has adversely affected tourist arrivals into India.”

Sarab Jit Singh
Vice Chairman, FAITH



as expensive, particularly in comparison to other competing destinations. "A major reason for this being the tax component, which is 20-25 per cent of the tourist package cost. All other

leading tourist destinations have effective rate of tax of 5-8 per cent only," Singh says.

Lauding the government's e-Tourist Visa (eTV)

scheme, he remarks, "eTV for 113 countries is a good step forward but somehow there isn't enough publicity. Also, many a time due to technical glitches in the website, a tourist

is unable to process the payment." He recommends that eTV should be for a period of 60 days with provision for multiple entries. He also said that one should be allowed to apply for visa six months prior to the date of departure since most holidays are planned six months in advance.

Singh points out that the tariff of luxury trains in the country is in USD, which plays a spoilsport for agents and operators in India and overseas. Not only do the tourists end up paying more, but also

Contd. on page 38 ➔

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TAAI's Joint Bank Guarantee

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) is set to launch Joint Bank Guarantee (JBG) scheme for its members with effect from July 1. It will also create a regional forum involving travel trade associations in the SAARC region.



HAZEL JAIN

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) discussed a line-up of topics during its Managing Committee meeting held recently on the sidelines of IITT exhibition in Mumbai. One such topic was Joint Bank Guarantee (JBG) and **Sunil Kumar**, National President, TAAI, made a presentation on the scheme to ensure that all chairpersons present were informed on the subject and able to de-brief their members.

"We will be rolling out circulars inviting our members to join the JBG scheme by February first week and close the process by March 31, 2016. Those agents who are chosen by the national commit-



Sunil Kumar
National President
TAAI

TAAI's JBG scheme will be in place from July 1 onwards when the new term starts for the new guarantee cover

tee for the scheme will be able to get on board with IATA effective July 1, 2016. They were anyway paid their insurance or guarantee till June 30, 2016.

"So, TAAI's JBG scheme will be in place from July onwards when the new term starts for the new guarantee cover," he said. Kumar, however, refused to share any updates on TAAI's annual convention.

Forum with SAARC trade associations

Kumar said that TAAI is in the process of creating a regional forum involving all the big travel associations, particularly in the SAARC region. He said, "There are so many big travel associations in our neighbouring countries but we

have no contact with them – like Travel Agents Association of Sri Lanka (TAASL), Travel Agents of Bangladesh (TAB), Nepal Association of Travel Agents (NATA), and Travel Agents Association of Pakistan (TAAP). Thankfully, our initiative has been successful, we have reached out to them and there have been responses from these associations.

"We were able to work with SATTE to get some of them invited to the show. TAAI is keen to involve other associations in India and create a strong regional forum of travel and tourism associations within SAARC so that we don't have to stand alone. At the same time we can extend our strength to them as well," he said. ➔

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VIEWPOINT

Wellness demands your attention

In 2016, the focus of tourism is going to be on wellness. People are going through the most trying times with competition at work and long hours at the office. Today, wellness and wildlife go hand in hand; the fresh jungle air and a connection with animals are most sought after to reduce stress and leave you one with nature. The younger generation is also turning to adventure experiences like trekking, river rafting, bungee jumping, and zip lining.

Many of you reading this will probably say we all know about this, if we do then why are we allowing the government to impose the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ban to axe our own feet? Isn't it the responsibility of the state and central governments to take onus of how these camps along the Ganga dispose off their waste? Rules must be imposed with heavy fines to ensure they are not flouted. Why would you take away one of the most popular and economically viable tourism sectors from our industry? Most countries have found a solution to this and we must too!

Tourism for all!

With tourism being one of the most important economic tools for our government, sustainable tourism takes on a new urgency. Not only will the communities around our safari trails benefit greatly with the inflow of travellers, wildlife conservation will also get a boost simultaneously. It is important for the states to help these travellers make the right choices, which will make a difference to the communities while giving them a wonderful experience.

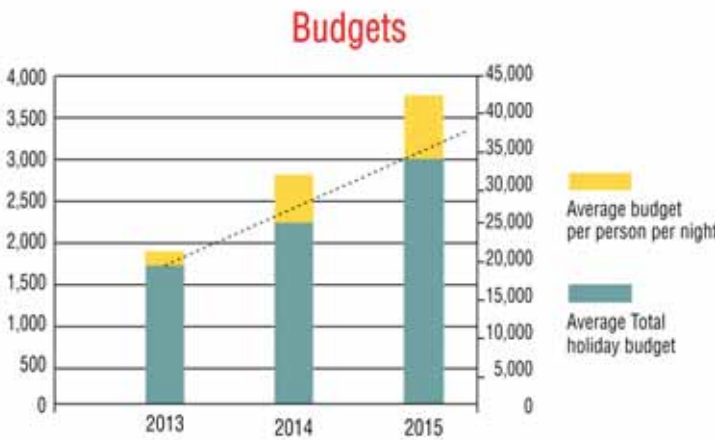
Security is a huge challenge in many popular destinations, but studies show that the effect of even terror attacks is mostly short term. For the past five years, tourism has been steadily growing on a global level, in spite of political turmoil and terror attacks. Even in 2015, according to UNWTO, tourism worldwide grew by 4.4 per cent, with 1.2 billion tourists travelling to foreign countries.

So, if we get the support of the government as promised, we should have a positive outlook for 2016!

30% rise in vacation budget

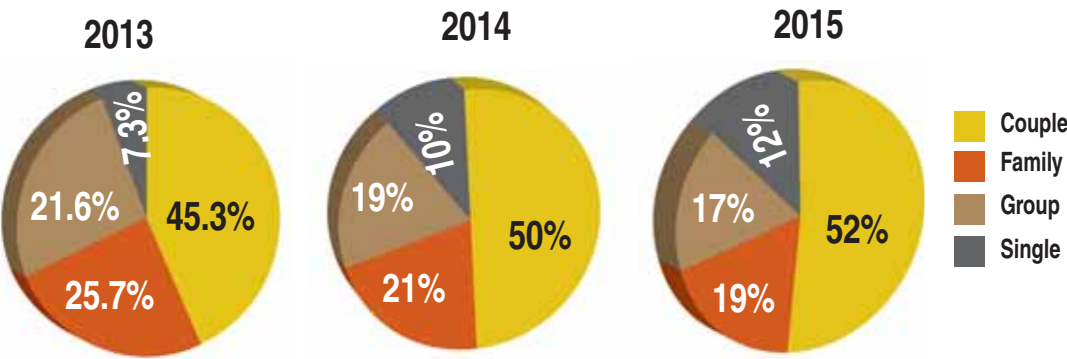
A whopping 1290.1 million domestic trips were planned in 2015, according to data released by the Ministry of Tourism. Also, a 30% increase was seen in travel budget of Indians from 2011-2015.

Travellers continue to allocate higher budget for holidays



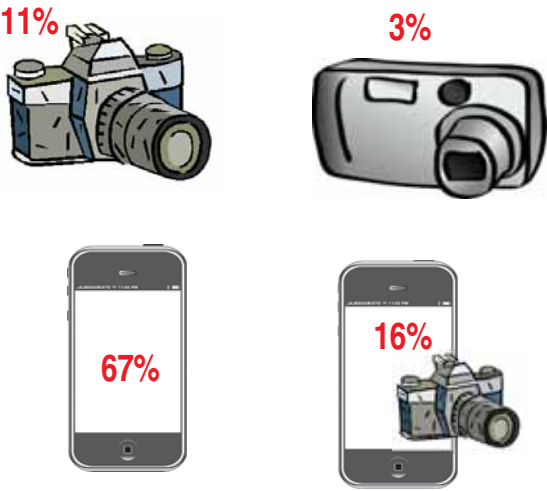
The analysis on the total holiday budget paints a positive picture for travel this year, with travellers twice as likely to increase vacation budgets year on year than cutting spend. Overall travellers planned to spend more on their holidays in 2015. This is evident from the graph as the average travel spent, per person, has increased from INR. 1,086 in 2011 to 3,764 this year. On an average, Indians planned to increase their total holiday travel budget by 30% per cent; from INR. 12,585 in 2011 to 33,368 in 2015. 2016 will see a proportion of travellers planning to travel more, and this number shall increase across almost all markets.

Share of couple and single travellers will increase



The share of holidays planned by couples and singles have consistently increased while the family and group segment see a decline. Hence 2016 shall witness the share of couple travellers crossing the 52% mark, and single travellers - the 12% mark.

Travel to be more visual and social



The proliferation of smartphones, better Internet penetration and arrival of a plethora of travel apps is making travel more visual and social. Sharing moments from holidays on the go has become a critical part of the holiday experience in itself. Travellers themselves are the largest inspiration for others to travel. More than 67% said they prefer smartphones for capturing travel photos, 16% travellers used both smartphones and DSLRs, 11% are DSLR purists, while 3% used a digital point-and-shoot camera.

Source of information: HolidayIQ

RAK targets 1 million tourists by 2018

Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) witnessed 81 per cent year-on-year growth in tourists from India, making India the fourth largest inbound market for the emirate. In an attempt to attract more numbers from India, the emirate has undertaken rigorous promotions amongst the Indian travel trade.

ANKITA SAXENA

India is currently the fourth largest inbound market for the emirate, after Germany, Russia and the UK," says **Haitham Mattar**, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) Tourism Development Authority. Ras Al Khaimah witnessed 16,000 Indian tourist arrivals into the emirate in the previous year. "We saw 81 per cent year-on-year growth in tourists from India. By the end of 2018, the sub-continent is

India as that will help us get into the market faster."

Talking about connectivity to the emirate, Mattar explains, "Emirates is a key partner airline which carries 90 per cent of the tourist traffic through the Dubai airport. Qatar Airways will start flying into Ras Al Khaimah by February 1, 2016. Air Arabia,

also a key partner, lands into the emirate from 10 key destinations. We are open to discussions with key airlines in India to fly directly into Ras Al Khaimah which will support our growth strategy. The airport in Ras Al Khaimah can handle a million visitors. Currently we receive only 400,000 arrivals and thus there is a lot of capacity available."

Discussing the accommodation preference of Indian tourists and average spend into the emirate, Mattar says, "The average spend of tourists, including room night costs, is \$200. Most of the tourists come into the emirate for luxury travel and stay at the Banyan Tree or Waldorf Astoria. Indians coming to Ras Al Khaimah

for weddings had higher average spend of approximately \$300."

Talking about the plans to market the emirate better, Mattar says, "Ras Al Khaimah is primarily a family destination which also offers business, MICE, leisure, adventure and luxury travel. We are looking at appointing a repre-

sentative no later than February 1, 2016 to kick off our activities."

Reaching RAK

Emirates carries 90 per cent of the tourist traffic to Ras Al Khaimah through the Dubai airport



Haitham Mattar
CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority

We observed that though research on destinations is done online, the actual bookings are done through the travel agent

expected to be a big contributor to the emirate's vision to attract one million visitors. We are working towards spreading awareness and conducting events to increase our partnership with the travel trade in India, predominantly in Delhi and Mumbai," added Mattar.

Speaking about Ras Al Khaimah's marketing budget allotted to India, Mattar explains, "The marketing budget allotted for 2016 is 85 per cent higher than that in 2015 out of which approximately 15 per cent is allocated for the India market alone." Mattar also elaborates on the support required from Indian travel trade and adds, "Understanding the Indian travellers' culture, buying and spending habits, we observed that though research on destinations is done online, the actual bookings are done through the travel agent. Thus, we will focus on our association with the travel trade in

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700+ buyers at GPS 2016

Positioning itself as premier travel and tourism interaction platform in the country for Tier II and Tier III cities, Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) 2016 concluded the first leg of its journey in Nagpur with outstanding attendance.



TT BUREAU

The fourth edition of the Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) 2016 that was inaugurated in Nagpur on January 8 started off on a

Harmandeep Singh Anand, Managing Director of Jagsons Travels that conducts and promotes this event, said, "We were expecting around 450-500 buyers but the number crossed 700. We experi-

the timings by half hour in the evening as people were still visiting."

Focus areas

Underlining the reason for putting the spotlight on Central



"We experimented with keeping the first day as a prelude to GPS where six exhibitors made presentations to buyers and frontline staff. This helped the agents gain knowledge of the products and services being offered."

Harmandeep Singh Anand
Managing Director, Jagsons Travels

grand scale with more than 700 buyers attending it from different parts of the region including Vidharba, Khandesh, Akola, Amravati, Jabalpur, Raipur, Nagpur, Satara, Nashik, Aurangabad and Karad.

mented with keeping the first day as a prelude to GPS where six exhibitors made presentations to buyers and frontline staff. This helped the agents gain knowledge of the products and services being offered. We also had to extend

India, Anand said that Nagpur itself has close to 400 buyers at the moment. From this edition, GPS will be on the move traveling from Nagpur to Coimbatore (July 14-15), Kolkata (July 21-22), Chandigarh (July 28-29) and Ahmedabad (August 4-5).

GPS' new CEO

Raju Akolkar was announced as the CEO of the exhibition. Akolkar has been closely associated with GPS and Jagsons for a long time. On being appointed as the CEO, Akolkar said, "This was done to basically have a proper hierarchy system and assign the right work and responsibilities to the right person.

"Apart from providing a meeting platform to the trade, we want to make them aware about the concept of 'Voluntourism' which we have launched this year. We will soon be developing itineraries for this with the help of some of the NGOs in the region.

"We urge everybody in the industry to contribute to this initiative and also create packages for this special interest tourism."



"Though Kolkata is not a Tier II city, we host quality agents from nearby cities like Darjeeling, Gangtok, Patna, and Bhubaneswar. Exhibitors can network with the trade on the first evening followed by networking with the corporates the next.

"We have removed the concept of standees this year. We are also working to introduce a tablet for exhibitors next year to do away with brochures. We have around

10-12 exhibitors who have signed up and those who register early will get an additional discount of 10 per cent. For one city, they pay `1,25,000 plus taxes but if the exhibitor opts for four cities they can avail a 20 per cent discount. Exhibitors can also pick and choose the city," Anand added.

GPS may not repeat the cities in the coming editions but move to others. This edition had seven

international hosted buyers and in 2017, GPS is looking to host 40-odd buyers from across the globe.

Tapping Agents

GPS will be on the move traveling from Nagpur to Coimbatore (July 14-15), Kolkata (July 21-22), Chandigarh (July 28-29) and Ahmedabad (August 4-5)



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'Bali-theme' hotel in Udaipur Dubai caters to Indian taste

Curated on a unique Indonesian Bali theme, The Ananta Udaipur aims to become the largest hotel in Rajasthan in terms of inventory and the biggest wedding hub in the City of Lakes.

TT BUREAU

In 2015, The Ananta Udaipur witnessed 65 per cent occupancy at an Average Daily Rate (ADR) of ₹ 7,500 and an approximate RevPar of ₹ 5,000. Anshul Bhargava, Corporate General Manager, Ananta Hotels & Resorts, says they are working with more than 1,000 travel agents who promote the resort worldwide. "We have something unique and special for all segments of business. Our agents promote the unique concept of Balinese theme in a city of heritage hotels. Our inventory size and variety of venues helps them to attract business," he adds.

Talking about the USP of the property, Bhargava says, "In Udaipur, most of the hotels are heritage based but we offer something different to the city. Our resort is based on Indonesian Bali theme in the valley of Aravalli hills and far from the city life, which is one of the biggest USPs of our property."

Elaborating on hotels in Udaipur offering a combination



Anshul Bhargava
Corporate General Manager
Ananta Hotels & Resorts

We are looking at becoming the biggest resort in Rajasthan with an inventory of 265 rooms and the biggest wedding hub in Udaipur

of heritage and spa, he says, "Ananta is not a heritage hotel. Some heritage hotels in Udaipur began this concept of

combining heritage with spa. Even though it is a great offer for heritage lovers, Indian spa therapies are more popular with tourists willing to experience a healthier side to an otherwise indulgent holiday."

Discussing the resort's future plans, Bhargava says, "Currently we are managing the resort with an inventory of 160 rooms and seven F&B outlets. We are looking at becoming the biggest resort in Rajasthan with an inventory of 265 rooms and the biggest wedding hub in Udaipur. We also target to maintain occupancies above 70 per cent during 2016 along with 100 per cent guest satisfaction."

Ananta Hotels & Resorts is also an attractive MICE destination as the property offers a variety of venues, lawns, sport stadium where corporate clients can arrange their outdoor activities. "We are well equipped with 14,000 sq ft of pillar-less banquet and 42,000 sq ft of banquet lawns for big conferences and royal weddings," he adds.

TRAVTALK speaks to Paul Dunphy, General Manager, Sheraton Dubai Mall of the Emirates Hotel, to know how it is the place for travellers, vacationers and shoppers alike.

TT BUREAU

What is the USP of the hotel?

Connected to the world-renowned Mall of the Emirates, Sheraton Dubai Mall of the Emirates Hotel is a short distance from Downtown Dubai, Media City, and the Dubai World Trade Centre and just minutes from renowned sites like Jumeirah Beach, Wild Wadi Waterpark, and Ski Dubai. The hotel has been operating for the past five years and has become extremely popular among different nationalities including Gulf countries, Europe, Australia, as well as India.

How is the hospitality market in Dubai and how are you dealing with the competition?

The hospitality market in Dubai is very competitive. There is a growth in the number of rooms year on year. However, having a premium product with outstanding features is helping us to keep

up with the competition. Another advantage is our central location with a direct connection to the Mall of the Emirates, which has various shopping and leisure destinations such as Vox Cinema, Magic Planet and over 560



Paul Dunphy
General Manager, Sheraton Dubai Mall of the Emirates Hotel

international brands. Being a Sheraton Hotel, we promote effortless travel and we anticipate our guests' requirements ensuring that their every need is taken care of during their stay, whether personal shopping experiences, exclusive access to

brands or high speed Wi-Fi throughout the hotel.

How do you cater to Indian guests?

Whether it is a family coming for a shopping week-end trip, a younger crowd coming for city events or business, travellers, we ensure that we extend our warm hospitality throughout their stay. We cater for all tastes, with a host of Indian chefs creating regional dishes to suit all tastes as well as a number of Hindi and other regional language speaking staff so guests can freely communicate.

How closely do you work with travel agents?

We have a close relationship with travel agents in India and of course local partners in Dubai. Guests can book the hotel and package their stay with a number of excursions in Dubai for which the hotel acts as a central location for all tours.

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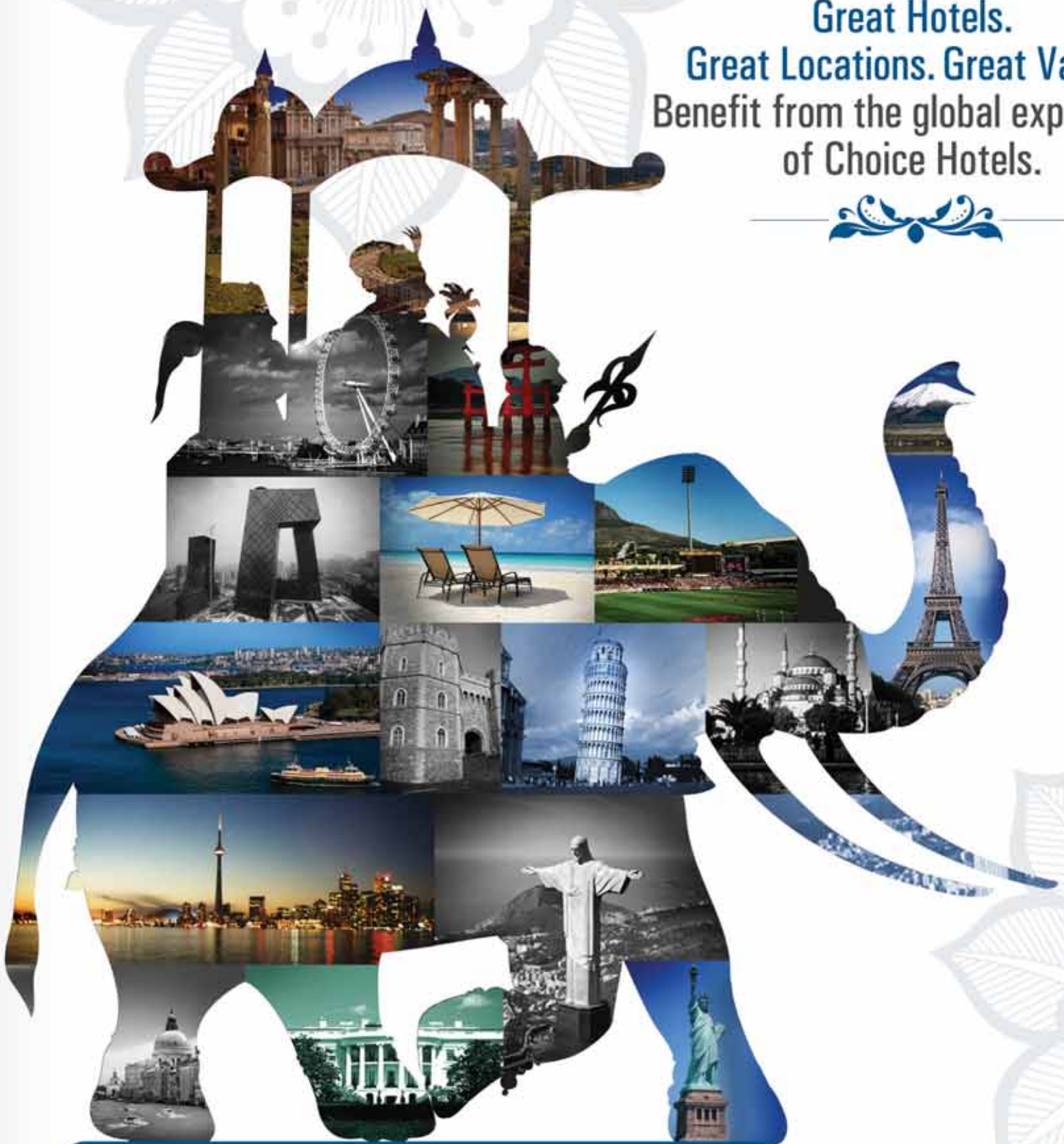
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Wellness tourism needs better marketing

While government's efforts to make India a top destination for wellness and spiritual tourism are underway with campaigns like Yoga Day, TRAVTALK finds out more about the present scenario, challenges and the way ahead.

TT BUREAU

Discussing the support from the government to market the wellness and spiritual tourism segment, **E M Najeeb**, Chairman, IATO Kerala Chapter, says, "India has been promoting wellness tourism, cultural and spiritual tourism already through their promotional campaigns, travel fairs, and roadshows." **Vikram Madhok**, Hony. Treasurer, PATA India Chapter, adds, "Even though the government is taking initiative in mapping tourism, they have to step up their game to see better results. India needs to be in the news more for all the right reasons. We need to enter the international market at a faster rate."

Discussing the Yoga day campaign undertaken by the government, **Ravi Gosain**, Hony. Joint Secretary, IATO says, "Last year when Yoga Day was announced, there was a lot of publicity by the Indian embassies overseas



E M Najeeb
Chairman
IATO Kerala Chapter

India has been promoting wellness, cultural and spiritual tourism already through their campaigns

and the Ministry of Tourism which had a positive impact on promoting yoga centric tours to India. Many foreign tour operators are now interested to add 2-3 days



Vikram Madhok
Hony. Treasurer
PATA India Chapter

Even though the government is taking initiative in mapping tourism, they have to step up their game

of yoga activities in their regular program."

Discussing the popular circuits for wellness and spiritual tourism, Najeeb says,



Ravi Gosain
Hony. Joint Secretary
IATO

When Yoga Day was announced, there was lots of publicity by the Indian embassies overseas and Ministry of Tourism

"Buddhist locations like Bodhgaya, Rajgir and Nalanda are popular attractions for tourists from Japan and countries in the Far East. Places like Varanasi, Sarnath, Ramnagar,

Haridwar and Rishikesh have been attracting spiritual tourists. Indian pilgrimage locations like Shirdi, Tirupati, and Palani are also gaining popularity. Apart from these the renowned ashrams like Osho Ashram is also getting international devotees in plenty." Madhok adds, "The circuits are also concentrated in and around Kerala and Karnataka. Most of the tourists coming for this segment stay for five nights to nearly 14 nights, excluding the ones coming for medical wellness."

Identifying the major source markets of the foreign and domestic tourists, Madhok says, "The major source markets where we market the segment are Australia, the US, the UK, Germany, France, Spain and Belgium." Najeeb adds, "The traditional spiritual tourism originating locations are Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, and China for Buddhism. The US, UK, Germany, France and other European countries are interested in the

spiritual branches of yoga and meditation."

Talking about the challenges faced by travel agents to market this segment, Najeeb says, "For the tour operators, the huge investments required in marketing the products regularly is a challenge. We should fine-tune the segments of tourism before we promote and market. If the agents have to float programmes and packages for wellness and spiritual tourism, the country has to be projected continuously as an ideal destination for the same." Madhok adds, "The challenges are deficit ground infrastructure, eTV's limitations, cleanliness and safety issues."

Popular Sites

Buddhist locations like Bodhgaya, Rajgir and Nalanda are popular attractions for tourists from Japan and countries in the Far East

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25 Oct. 2015 – 8 Dec. 2015	CZ360/359	A330-300	N.A.	30 seats	47 seats	196 seats	273 seats
9 Dec. 2015 onwards	CZ360/359	A330-200	4 seats	24 seats	47 seats	141 seats	216 seats



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IATO sends 1200 emails to PM Office

IATO has reportedly sent over 1200 emails to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of their 'A Message a Day' campaign to highlight the perils of the tourism industry and to further inbound growth.



AHANA GURUNG

In 2015, India witnessed a total of 80.16 lakh foreign tourist arrivals registering a growth of 4.4 per cent over 2014. While the growth was evident, inbound tourism has been sluggish the past year and according to **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, the year was "not as great as expected."

Furthermore, **Gour Kanjilal**, Executive Director, IATO, states that the past year has seen a very alarming slowdown in tourism arrivals into India and consequently, in business for a vast majority of IATO members. "Although official government figures may show small increases, the actual situation on the ground for the organised tourism sector as reported by our members and partner hotels is very different," he shares.

As a result, IATO recently conducted the campaign "A Message a Day" with the agenda of highlighting several issues that have been plaguing the Indian tourism industry to the Prime Minister's attention and to urge him to provide substantial support. During the five-day campaign, IATO members sent e-mails to the PM's office expressing the problems they faced with suggestions on the solutions.

IATO President, **Subhash Goyal**, states, "Our motive is to express how each member feels about the industry, the problems they are facing and what action needs to be taken, to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the highest level of government for positive assessment."

"As a team effort, one issue on each day is highlighted and emailed to him - issues that mainly pertain to high irrational taxes, how taxes are out pricing us, how reduction in taxes would help reduce our package costs and make it competitive and will encourage more visitors, poor e-Tourist Visa system and

growing problems, employment opportunities through tourism, need for global marketing etc. We are making sincere efforts to set a high standard for the Indian tourism industry with MOT's support," he adds.

Each day of the campaign highlighted areas of concern like the e-Tourist Visa system, employment in the

tourism industry, entrance fees at monuments, and need for new marketing strategies.

"The response was overwhelming," shares Kanjilal. "Over 1200 emails were sent to the PM's Office by the end of the fifth day. Now, we just hope that effective actions will be taken to further the growth of the industry and the country."



"Our motive is to express how each member feels about the industry, the problems they are facing and what action needs to be taken, to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the highest level of government for positive assessment."

Subhash Goyal
President, IATO



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Clarification

In the story on Uniglobe that ran in the January 1st issue, the gross annual turnover of all its agencies was quoted as '300 crore' which should have read '3,000 crore'. We regret this printer's devil.



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500 buyers attend IITT 2016

The third edition of India International Travel & Tourism (IITT) fair, held in Mumbai from January 15-17, 2016, celebrated travel with new initiatives like 'IITT Connect'. The event saw 400+ Exhibitors, 300 Fully Hosted Buyers and 200 Corporate Buyers.



TT BUREAU



Our new initiative—IITT Connect—which is speed-dating for the trade, connected a number of buyers and sellers over table-top meetings. We had MICE buyers with a buying range of minimum ₹ 15-25 crore. This was appreciated by the exhibitors as they got to meet buyers from companies like Cipla, IDBI, Torrent, Kajaria, and Somany. We saw around 200 buyers over three days for IITT Connect.

Manish Gandhi

Director Operations

Asian Business Exhibitions & Conferences (ABEC)



This year (IITT) was much better in terms of content. We have also grown in terms of revenue by 30-35 per cent. The response has been fabulous and has grown by 50 per cent. This year we had 500 hosted buyers and almost 1,500 brands.

Mohit Mewani

Exhibitions Director

ABEC



IITT is a very important platform and this was my first time. It focused on domestic tourism, which is a good pick. It is a melting pot of inbound, outbound and domestic markets. IITT can focus more on domestic and promote inter-state tourism with participation from all states. Even the states can come prepared with some itinerary for the B2C market. This is a good step but they need to have this exhibition on a much larger scale with more domestic buyers.

Jyoti Kapur

President

ADTOI



The quality of this exhibition has really gone up over the years. The sellers and buyers who attended this fair have become selective. This shows that the organisers are focused on the kind of people they are inviting. I congratulate them on a great exhibition and I am sure it will improve with every edition.

Guldeep Singh Sahni

President

OTOAI



Exhibitions like IITT are good and offer quality networking opportunities and make people aware of what is happening in the industry. Since these events happen on the cusp of the outbound season which is the time when we are in a position to introduce new products and pricing in the market, they are very valuable for the trade and dnata will continue to support such exhibitions.

Ashish Kishore

Country Head

dnata



The exhibition has been good with a good number of footfalls and looks very promising.

Hussain Patel

Director

atlatravelonline



IITT is a very concentrated B2B exhibition and this is our second time here. They have a good focus on the B2B market and the quality of buyers and sellers that we see here is very high. The exhibition has a lot to offer to the trade.

Rajesh Nambiar

Executive Vice-President

Ottila International



The IITT exhibition has been excellent this year. The organisers have promoted it well and done a great job of connecting hotels and airlines with travel agents. I hope it grows bigger and bigger every coming year.

GMJ Thampy

Chairman & Managing Director

Riya Travels



IITT is a very important show as it is the first exhibition of the year. The branding and promotion of this exhibition was done well and the introduction of new initiatives like IITT Connect helped the trade meet new and quality people here.

Jaal Shah

Group Managing Director

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NEWS

- ❖ ATF 2017 in Singapore from Jan 16-20
- ❖ 51st FHRAI Convention in Indore from Sept 23-25, 2016
- ❖ Up to 2% increase in UK Visa fees
- ❖ Now, sell and book packages on Goa Tourism web portal
- ❖ Tigerair adds flights to Hyderabad & Trichy
- ❖ Over 9 lakh Indians visit Singapore in 2015
- ❖ 100-room Eastin Hotel Kurseong, Darjeeling to open in April
- ❖ Vienna records 49 per cent rise in Indian travellers in 2015
- ❖ GoAir commences night flights to Port Blair
- ❖ Minor Hotel Group launches Oaks Brand in India
- ❖ OYO Rooms crosses 1 mn hotel check-ins

Hotels going green

Several top hotels and resorts have adopted innovative practices to reduce carbon footprints and ensure environment conservation.

TT BUREAU



We use LED lights which are high on energy efficiency. All our guest rooms and public areas are on low consumption power lights. Advance water saving flow restrictor in all our wash rooms help us restrict the water flow up to 1.3 litre per hour and guest rooms are also equipped with water saving dual-flush cistern tank. We also use ETP & STP water plant for recycling.

Vijay Dudhatra
Chief Engineer,
Courtyard by Marriott Bhopal



Most of our hotels are completely run on solar heating system for hot water and external light. Our new hotels at Jammu, Agra and Goa, have been designed in a way to allow enough natural light into rooms thus reducing forced lighting usage at least during the day. Most of our units are on LED lights. Generators are serviced periodically to ensure the emission is well within limits. We ensure that we have recycled water available from sewage treatment plants for flushing and gardening.

Rishi Puri
Vice President, Lords Hotels and Resorts



The Wyndham Green programme not only focuses on improving environment but also includes other initiatives such as reducing carbon footprints, tracking energy consumption. The Ramada Vineland is one of the first in the Wyndham Hotel Group family to use solar panels to power its campus.

Deepika Arora
Regional Vice President – Eurasia,
Wyndham Hotel Group



We are trying to reduce carbon footprints in the areas of solid waste management, energy efficiency, water conservation and preservation. Colour coded bins are used in the kitchen for storing the separated waste. Systems like skylight, triple glazed windows, solar energy and energy efficient lighting have been integrated into the hotel from its very foundation.

Varun Sahani
General Manager, The Orchid Mumbai



Novotel Hyderabad Airport has opted for using solar panels for hot water generation, tremendously decreasing diesel/power consumption, switching to bio-diesel for our equipment, using steam condensate to produce hot water and recycling condensed water, using LED for all electrical and lighting systems.

Maverik Mukerji
General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Airport



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Agra: thematic convention hall

Travel agents should get better deals from airlines to sell more in advance and do better marketing, says **Rupak Gupta**, Joint Managing Director, UP Hotels (Clarks Group of Hotels), & DDP Game Changer, India Hospitality Awards – North & East, 2015.



VAISHALI DAR

QHow is the company doing since you came on board in 2010? What has changed?

UP Hotels is now looking at various options for restructuring to enable growth. We were lucky to remain out of the expansion boom and because of that we are a zero debt company.

QWhat about the involvement of travel agents?

Travel agents should get better deals from airlines to sell more in advance, do better marketing and increase the hotel component to keep it sustainable.

QWhat do you have to say about the escalating taxes?

Taxpayers should be given more support and priority by the authorities to enable them to earn more and pay more taxes at a lower rate, provide employ-



Rupak Gupta
Joint Managing Director, UP Hotels (Clarks Group of Hotels)

Taxpayers should be given more support by the authorities to enable them to earn more. Escalating taxes one way has not helped the industry

ment and buy goods and services. Escalating taxes one way has not helped the industry.

QTell us about other activities being undertaken in your company, especially the MICE facilities that UP Hotels has to offer in India.

We have the latest and the only thematic convention hall in Agra, which has become an instant draw for anyone who sees it.

QWhat are the green initiatives taken by the group?

Our Agra hotel is a fully R.O. Hotel, entire hotel is on mineral water due to our water systems. We have the Crystal Award for Hygiene, The HACCP for food safety, etc. We have our own rain water harvesting and have participated in the Swatch Bharat Abhyaan by adopting to clean the roads on all four sides of us as prescribed by The Hotel Association of India.

India, 3rd strongest market

IHG's InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort was officially launched recently. **Shantha de Silva**, Head, South West Asia, IHG, shares the unique features of the property and talks about robust domestic demand.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI FROM CHENNAI

InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort was recently launched and is not at all like regular resort properties. "Every single aspect of the resort has been thoughtfully put together. This resort is not like other resorts you see in the country; whether it's the design elements, the unique bridge across the centre, the way services are designed and so on," said **Shantha de Silva**, Head, South West Asia, IHG.

He remains positive about the hospitality market in Chennai. "South India has been growing as a hub and that's why we have been growing our presence in South India too. Interestingly enough Chennai will be the first city in India to host all the four of our brands," Shantha said.

As far as expansion is concerned, Shantha shared his robust plans for the upcoming years for the group. He

said, "Currently we have around 25 hotels in India across 14 cities. We have 51 hotels in the pipeline in the next three to five years. So we will be double in the next three to five years. India, per se, is the third largest growth market for the IHG Group. Our primary growth market is the US followed by China and the third largest is India. Over the next 10 to 15 years, we plan to have 100 to 150 hotels both operating and in the pipeline."

About the future of inbound tourism, he said, "If you look at the numbers, tourism has been growing, but I think India also has a large domestic demand factor. With the infrastructure improving; lot of investment coming in and with airports and business hubs increasing, we see a lot of domestic travel increasing as well. India sees about seven/seven and a half million international arrivals but there



Shantha de Silva
Head, South West Asia, IHG

With lot of investment coming in, and with airports and business hubs increasing, we see a lot of domestic travel increasing as well

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Dream Cruises to Far East in Nov

Completing Genting Hong Kong's trilogy of brands with one for each segment of the cruise market, Dream Cruises will sail to the Far East via Mumbai this November, giving agents a chance to sell packages from India.



HAZEL JAIN

Genting Hong Kong has added yet another brand to its portfolio – Dream Cruises – that was launched in India at the recently concluded Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) 2016, which took place from January 8-10 in Nagpur.



Naresh Rawal
Vice President – Sales
Star Cruises (India)

Naresh Rawal, Vice President – Sales, Star Cruises (India), said, "With this new brand, Genting Hong Kong will now




Genting HK appoints Cruise Club as PSA

Genting Hong Kong has appointed Pune-based Cruise Club as its Preferred Sales Agent (PSA) in India with effect from January 1, 2016 making it the 12th PSA in India for Genting Hong Kong cruise brands. **Kiran Bhandari**, Co-founder of Cruise Club, said, "Cruise Club was already a PSA for Crystal Cruises before Genting Hong Kong acquired the brand. We will now sell Dream Cruises and Star Cruises as well. We are the only partner for Crystal in India and we are excited to bring a range of nearly 25 different cruises for the trade." The company is currently developing a technology that can help potential clients experience cruising through virtual reality. It now has sales teams in New Delhi, Ahmedabad and Bengaluru apart from Mumbai.

offer cruising products in three different segments—Star Cruises that will be promoted as a contemporary brand, Dream Cruises as the premium brand and Crystal Cruises as the luxury brand. The ship will make its way from Germany to Singapore via Colombo, making a stop in Mumbai on its way in the last week of October or first week of November 2016, just after Diwali. We will be opening

bookings for this once we have the dates and itineraries confirmed. This will be a dry run and the ship will be stationed out of China for regular sailing."

Dream Cruises will be priced higher than Star's existing cruises. Itineraries will include two-, five- and seven-night cruises. Rawal added, "There is a lot of excitement for us as well as the trade for this new product,

which will really raise the standard of cruising in Asia. We are yet to finalise the dates and days when the cruise gets into Mumbai so that agents can start selling a Mumbai to Colombo or Mumbai to Singapore itinerary. Mumbai will be one of the ports where we will pick up passengers. The package pricing is still not out as we are working on it but we expect Mumbai to Colombo cruise to be around three nights." 

Water tourism is the way forward

The first Jal Mahotsav is being organised by Madhya Pradesh Tourism in order to tap the potential of water tourism in the state. The festival, from February 12-21, 2016, expects to see large turnout of domestic and international tourists.



TT BUREAU

Jal Mahotsav will be a 10-day water festival, which will be held at Hanumantiya, in the Khandwa district on the banks of Indira Sagar Dam, one of the largest man made reservoir in Asia. Ten cottages have already been built by Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC) and another 120 tents will be set up on the land parcel to allow accommodation at the venue," says **Tanvi Sundriyal**, Additional Managing Director, MPSTDC.

Discussing the various activities that are being offered at the festival, Sundriyal says, "Water Tourism is an untapped segment, which has a lot of potential. The activities are divided into land, water, air and island activities. There are wildlife and bird watching facilities also made available on the islands." Madhya Pradesh Tourism reintroduced its various tourism circuits under various segments of travel like wildlife tourism, religious tourism, heritage tourism and Wonders of the World.



Tanvi Sundriyal
Additional Managing Director
MPSTDC

Without private participation and investment, the government cannot develop a destination to its full potential

Speaking at the event, **Om Vijay Choudhary**, Executive Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism, explains, "We wish to develop Hanumantiya not only for Jal Mahotsav but as a year-round destination with the support of



Om Vijay Choudhary
Executive Director
MPSTDC


We wish to develop Hanumantiya not only for Jal Mahotsav but as a year-round destination

the private sector." MPSTDC is planning to modify policies to accommodate the private investment and collaboration.

Elaborating on the same, Sundriyal says, "The Madhya Pradesh government is going to

take out Wildlife Recreation Rules, where the forests will be demarcated into reserve forests and recreation sectors so that the balance is not disturbed. The tour operators can offer night camps, trekking and bird watching in the forests too. For Jal Mahotsava the permissions are in place but this segment of tourism is going to be institutionalised soon."

Talking about the various incentives being provided to the private sector for investing in MP, Sundriyal adds, "Without private participation and investment, the government cannot develop a destination to its full potential. We are revitalising the Tourism Promotion Unit to address private investment queries in tourism."

Based on the tourism policy of the state, MP Tourism will invite tour operators, hoteliers, and private stakeholders to start building in the state based on an annual license fee and not the revenue share model. The tourism department would also provide tax exemption like luxury tax and entertain tax depending on the destination. 

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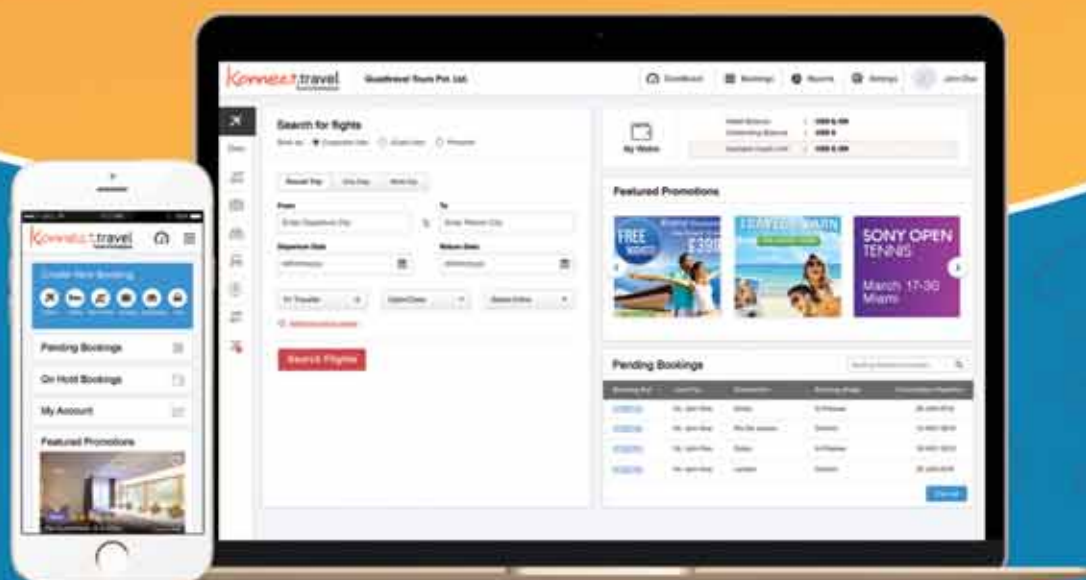
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Working capital for agents

Indifi Technologies, an enabler for SME funding in India, allies with Travel Boutique Online, in a bid to ease travel agents' working capital constraints.

TT BUREAU

Through this association, Indifi will provide working capital to the travel agents, who are unable to scale their businesses due to financial limitations. This mutually benefiting alliance provides travel agents with the right amount of finances, supporting them to conduct more business. Furthermore, a proper transaction behavior will help Indifi make a superior assessment of the travel agents' business, thereby allowing lenders to make informed credit decisions.

Adding insights to the association, **Ankush Nijhawan**, Co-founder and CEO, Travel Boutique Online, commented, "While airlines have moved to a weekly payment settlement cycle, corporate customers continue to work on credit with travel agents, thereby creating a working capital gap for travel agents. Our partnership with Indifi allows us to bring a solution for our travel agent network".

Commenting on the partnership, **Alok Mittal**, Co-founder and CEO, Indifi Technologies said, "Although the last few years have witnessed a significant amount of investment in start-ups and SMEs in India, many



Ankush Nijhawan
Co-founder and CEO
Travel Boutique Online

investors and lenders have not been able to provide working capital solutions due to lack of credible data. By bringing in the transaction behavior of travel agents, we enable lenders to effectively address this segment"

Putting things in perspective, the settlement cycle for travel agents, i.e. the time within which travel agents are required to pay to airlines after booking tickets, has been shrinking with time. Currently, it is 7 days for scheduled airlines, whereas low cost carriers charge at the time of booking itself. On the contrary, corporate customers generally takes 30-45 days to pay travel agents for the tickets booked. This creates a working capital gap, which limits the travel agency's ability to grow. More than 50 travel agency partners have benefited from the platform.

The association is meant to counter these shortcomings of the industry. Furthermore, in terms of credit assessment, a reliable analysis of the travel agent's earnings has never been factored in credit decision making process. However, this association will allow a proper analysis of the earnings of the agents to make a comprehensive credit decision.

ANA boosts seating capacity

Tsuneo Katagiri, General Manager- Mumbai Office, All Nippon Airways Co., talks about the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner and company strategies.

TT BUREAU

QBrief us about the latest addition to your fleet?

From this year we will be operating a bigger aircraft which is the Boeing 787 Dreamliner from March 27 onwards. Currently, we operate a Boeing 737 which is a business jet. The Boeing 787 Dreamliner will start operations from March 27 and will have the staggered seats which are known to be more comfortable as compared to the seats in the current aircraft. The new aircraft will have four times more capacity than the current aircraft which we operate, so passengers will have a comfortable flight.

QSeating capacity of Boeing 787 Dreamliner?

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner will have 46 seats in the business class, 21 seats in premium economy and 102 seats in the economy class. So in total we will have around 169 seats.



Tsuneo Katagiri
General Manager- Mumbai Office
All Nippon Airways

We have started to discuss about MICE and tour packages with some travel agents as of now

QTell us about your marketing strategies.

Currently, our business aircraft capacity is only about 40 seats so we will increase the capacity by four times with

the new launch. With the addition of the new aircraft we will work with travel agents regarding tours to Japan. We also want to focus more on MICE market and seaman fare along with tourism market in Japan.

We have started to discuss about MICE and tour packages with some travel agents as of now. The market has huge potential and we will try to tap the market working closely with more and more travel agents in the coming time.

Currently, we operate two flights from India to Japan one flight from Mumbai and one from Delhi. We would like to expand our business in India but currently we would stick to the existing destinations.

Room for More

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner will have 46 seats in the business class, 21 seats in premium economy and 102 seats in the economy class

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5-city Bali roadshow from Feb 5-12

Mumbai-based DMC, U&I Holidays, caters to Indonesia and offers complete packages that include hotels, transfers, sightseeing, meals, etc. **Ashish Indulkar**, Director, U&I Holidays, shares with **TRAVTALK** the details of its upcoming five-city Bali roadshow and talks about the products which will be showcased for the travel trade.



TT BUREAU

QWhat is the focus of the Bali roadshow?

Numbers to Indonesia, especially Bali, are on an upward trend and growing at a fast pace. Last year around 90,000 people travelled to Bali alone. We have been in this industry since the last six years and have seen the market grow exponentially. So this year we decided to strengthen our base even further by organising a Bali roadshow for all our existing as well as potential trade partners. The roadshow will showcase various products from Bali to travel trade in the five cities that we will travel to.

QWhat products will be promoted at the roadshow?

We have invited 25 participants from Bali including hotels and other allied services like the Bali Zoo and even Indian restaurants. There will be a mix of branded, star cat-

egory hotels present at the roadshow.

QWhat is the schedule of the show?

The roadshow will be a table-top, one-on-one session in which everyone will be able to meet the participants from Bali. The show commences in New Delhi on February 5 from 10 am to 4 pm followed by cocktails at 7 pm, where we expect His Excellency Rizali Wilmar Indrakesuma, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, to join in as well. On February 8, we will be in Chennai from 10 am to 4 pm. On February 9, will be in Bengaluru and after a day's break, we will be in Ahmedabad on February 11. Both the events would be from 10 am to 4 pm. The roadshow will finally conclude in Mumbai on February 12 from 10 am to 4 pm followed by cocktails at 7 pm. His Highness, the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia, would be present at all the other cities



“Our product works very well in India because our reservation is centralised from Mumbai. Our USP is no international calling, no language barriers, quick reverts, most competitive rates and to top it all efficient service deliverance.”

Ashish Indulkar
Director, U&I Holidays

except New Delhi. We are expecting more than 100 travel agents per event in each city.

QHow was business in 2015 for U&I Holidays?

We saw a 14 per cent growth in 2015 as compared to 2014, handling around 12,000 passengers to Indonesia from India in 2015 that included MICE, FITs, weddings, etc. Our product works very well in India because our reservation is centralised from Mumbai. Our USP is no international calling, no language barriers, quick

reverts, most competitive rates and to top it all efficient service deliverance. Our existing clientele is extremely satisfied with our excellent service standards and they swear by it. Check-in reminders, prompt check-in reports, client updates on a daily basis, efficient feedback mechanism are some of the advantages of working with U&I Holidays.

QWhat are your focus areas for 2016?

Our focus will remain on Bali with a clear target to increase last year's production

in terms of numbers, since that is India's favourite destination currently when we talk about Indonesia. However, we will also focus on other destinations like Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Ubud, Lombok and Komodo Islands which are coming up really well. This year we are also launching our online portal which will help us penetrate the market even better. We are also developing our events team which will look after big events like weddings in Bali.

QWhat trends do you foresee this year?

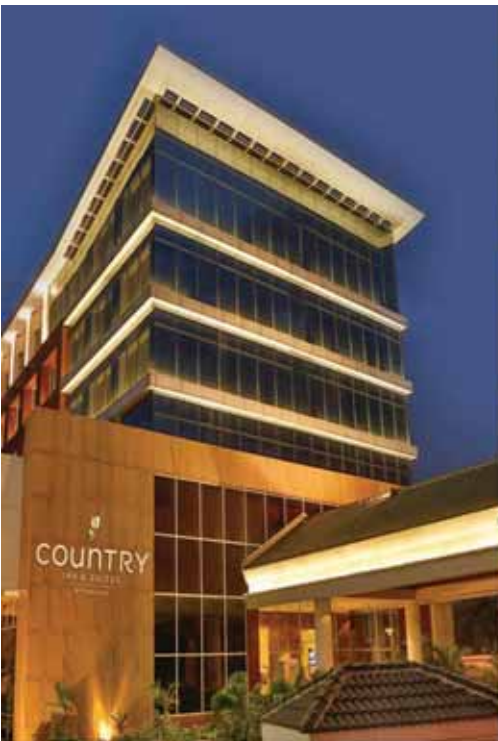
This year looks promising in terms of tourist numbers. Certain sectors like MICE are picking up very well. There are a lot of groups happening this year. Bali is also a very popular wedding destination and a lot of hotels are promoting themselves for this market.

QHow has terrorism affected tourism?

Fortunately, Indonesia has not been affected by the recent terror incidents. Indonesia is a very peaceful country and the people are very friendly and helpful. Indonesia remains a tourist-friendly destination, whether it is Bali, Sumatra or Java or any other place.

Roadshow Dates

- February 5: New Delhi
- February 8: Chennai
- February 9: Bengaluru
- February 11: Ahmedabad
- February 12: Mumbai



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5% commission on Sri Lanka packages

SriLankan Airlines has tied up with Colombo-based Aitken Spence Hotels to offer joint packages to the Indian market where agents stand to earn a five per cent commission from both parties.

TT BUREAU

SriLankan Airlines along with its business partner, Aitken Spence Hotels, have come up with a joint promotion to offer an attractive package to travel agents in India. This includes special airfares along

Apart from this, agents can earn five per cent of the total package, from the airline as well as the hotel.”

The delegation led by Perera promoted these joint packages in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. Sri Lankan Airlines has spent around ` 14 million to promote this in the Indian market,

including in cinemas so that end travellers can ask their agents for this product. Perera adds, “We are also conducting education programmes for agents to make them aware of the package, how to sell them in the market and what benefits they can reap. Those agents who cannot make it for the workshops will receive the details via e-mail.”

Explaining the package details, **Suranga Ratnayake**, General Manager, Aitken Spence Travels, says, “If the agents are able to sell a certain number of packages, they will win free packages. One of them is the ‘Fun & Sun’ three-night package in the south coast of Sri Lanka including a visit to Colombo. Another package will cover culture

which includes Kandy and Nuwara Eliya. With this, we will cover the highlights of Sri Lanka that are popular with the Indian market. We have also included some sites from the Ramayana trail in the second package.”

Perera reveals that 2014 recorded around 2,47,000 Indian tourists arriving into Sri

Lanka. “But this number already touched 3,35,000 by 2015 end, which is a 30 per cent increase. Among all the source markets for Sri Lanka, India ranks number one in terms of tourist arrivals.” The airline will be conducting a roadshow on February 17, 2016 where it will invite around 100-150 corporates.



Udeni Perera
Manager (Western India)
SriLankan Airlines

SriLankan Airlines is offering a 20 per cent discount on all flights

with attractive hotel rates and sightseeing. **Udeni Perera**, Manager (Western India), SriLankan Airlines, says, “We have an attractive proposition



Suranga Ratnayake
General Manager
Aitken Spence Travels

If the agents are able to sell a certain number of packages, they will win free packages

for agents for this competitive package that is valid from January to March which is generally a low season in terms of Indian tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka. SriLankan Airlines is offering a 20 per cent discount on all flights.



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Australia-India sign MoU

In a bid to facilitate bilateral tourism, Australia India Travel and Tourism Council (AITTC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI).

TT BUREAU

Shanker Dhar, Vice Chairman, Australia India Travel and Tourism Council (AITTC), says, "As Australia and India are major tourism generating markets for each other, sharing about half a million tourists, AITTC and OTOAI joining hands is an instrument of promoting understanding between the two countries and shall give further boost to the growth of tourism. India is already one of the fastest growing source markets for Australia and has moved three places up to become its eighth largest market."

This MoU is an instrument of enhancing cooperation between the two organisations and working together in multiple areas of mutual interest, promote better understanding of tourism assets, and resources of the two exciting destinations, Dhar adds.

Speaking at the event, **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI, says, "With



Shanker Dhar
Vice Chairman
AITTC

This MoU is an instrument of enhancing cooperation between AITTC & OTOAI

this MoU, the main agenda is to share best practices of the trade, provide Australia with destination information, training sessions, correct knowledge regarding the



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President
OTOAI

With this MoU, the main agenda is to share best practices of the trade

top performing segments, the traveller type and travel shows in which they can participate to enhance the tourism between India and Australia."

Yunnan unveils its products

Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) recently met with the Yunnan Provincial Development Commission to share their tourism products and give a fillip to tourism.

AHANA GURUNG

The Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Commission and OTOAI came together at The Lalit to share and

President, OTOAI, says, "Yunnan is a good destination but not many Indians are aware about its tourism potential or that there are direct flights to Kunming. Once the

Chen Shuyun, Deputy Director, Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Commission, is hopeful that the exchange would be productive. "This year is a very important one for us since it is the Visit China year," he comments. "Yunnan is rich in culture, cuisine and architecture - it has diverse tourism resources ranging from high-end options to affordable ones, hot springs, golfing, cultural and religious tours, among many more. It meets the satisfaction of all kinds of groups. This meeting is a very good platform for both sides to strengthen bilateral cooperation and contribute to tourism and the economy."



discuss the tourism potential of both countries and increase tourist footfalls. The meeting commenced after a brief on the agenda followed by presentations from both sides on what the destinations have on offer.

Speaking on the occasion, **Riaz Munshi**, Vice

marketing campaigns go about in full swing and people are made aware of Yunnan's tourism products, I'm sure it will be a success. Today, we are here to familiarise the delegates from Yunnan about the Indian market and to give them an idea on what to expect from Indian tourists," he shares.

Direct Connect

- Shandong Airlines four weekly non-stop flights between New Delhi and Kunming
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JEWEL IN THE CITY OF TAJ MAHAL

Agra's iconic hotel, **The Clarks Shiraz**, with the distinction of hosting legends like Jackie Kennedy, Neil Armstrong, Mohammed Ali, is recently rennovated and become the latest 5 star delux hotel in the city.

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Targeting 40,000 Indians

SouthWest Germany has recorded a growth of 23.3 per cent with 27,615 Indian visitors for the period of January to October 2015. They aim to host 40,000 Indian travellers in 2016.



India is the second-fastest growing market for SouthWest Germany after China, recording a growth of 23.3 per cent during January-October, 2015 with 27,615 visitors. **Hector Dsouza**, Director-India, SouthWest German Tourism, says, "India is miles ahead. It still has the highest number of overnights per visit, currently it's 5.9 days per visit. The international average for SouthWest Germany is 2.3 days. For the period ended October 2015, we recorded 162,843 overnights from India. By the end of 2015 we will have 200,000 overnights, which we targeted at the beginning of 2015. We are now expecting 40,000 Indian visitors in 2016 doing 250,000 overnights, an increase of 25 per cent from 2015."

According to a German National Tourist Office (GNT) worldwide poll, international visitors chose six destinations in SouthWest Germany



Hector Dsouza
Director-India
SouthWest German Tourism

among their top 25 places to visit in Germany:

Europa-Park

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Heidelberg Castle and the Old Town of Heidelberg

Straddling the Neckar River, Germany's number four attraction has been a favorite for centuries, with its romantic ruined castle, old cobbled streets and

Germany's oldest university (1386).

The Lake Constance region

At number seven, Lake Constance is dotted with medieval towns and criss-crossed by ferries.

The Romantic Road

Rated at No. 10, from the Mainz River to the Alps, travellers will see fairy-tale castles, medieval towns and glorious countryside.

Black Forest Nature Reserves

Covering more than 7,000 sq. km, the Black Forest at number 11 includes Germany's two largest nature reserves.

Freiburg Minster

Germany's only Gothic church tower at number 24 was once labelled as 'the most beautiful tower in Christendom'. The 380-ft spire was built between 1200 and 1330.

Chalo South Africa: 58,373 Indian arrivals during Jan-Sept



South African Tourism's 13th annual roadshow arrived in Delhi on Jan 20 with the South African Tourism Board leading the 50 member delegation of traders. **Monika Iuel**, General Manager-International Marketing, South African Tourism, shared that the country received 58,373 Indian arrivals during January-September 2015. **Hanneli Slabber**, Country Head, South African Tourism, announced that the Chalo South Africa campaign and the T20 World Cup campaign would give impetus to Indian arrival numbers.

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Sharjah Tourism comes calling

To foster and develop a closer working relationship with key members of the travel industry, Sharjah National Tourism Authority (SNTA) and Air Arabia hosted roadshows in Delhi and Mumbai. The roadshows proved to be an excellent opportunity to explore the diverse aspects of Air Arabia as well as Sharjah's tourism offerings.



Aviation Summit-2016

Indian Civil Aviation -Benefits beyond Borders

February 18, 2016 @ 9.30 a.m; PHD House, New Delhi

Chief Guest

Mr. Ashok Gajapati Raju Pusapati
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FOCUS AREAS & TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

- I. Regional & Remote Connectivity:-**
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 - States Perspective
 - MOCA & Airports Authority of India (AAI)
 - Airlines Perspective -Full Service Carriers & Low Cost Carriers
 - Impact on Tourism Growth
- II. Global Best Practices - Practical Solutions:-**
 - Airlines Perspective
 - International Aviation Associations
 - Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM's)
 - Manufacturers & MRO Industry
 - Aircraft Acquisitions & Fleet Management Companies
 - Other Relevant Stakeholders
- III. General Aviation Key Issues:- National Civil Aviation Policy-NCAP2015**
 - NCAP2015 -Impact on the Industry
 - Suggestions from the General Aviation Sector
 - Scheduled & Non- Scheduled Operators
 - Impact on the Industry & Tourism Sector
- IV. Cargo Sector: Vital Role**
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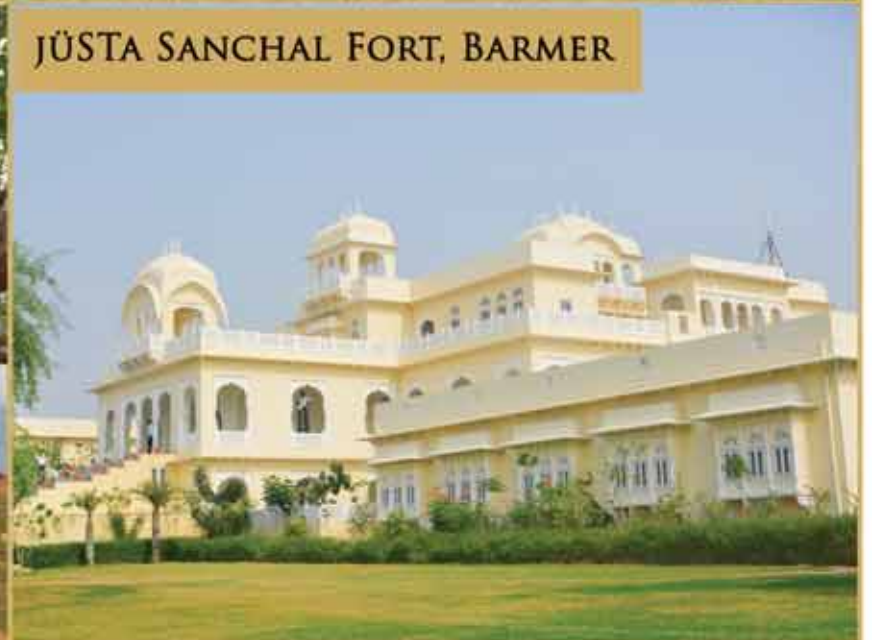
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8 new flights on IndiGo routes

IndiGo has eight new flights in its domestic network connecting Delhi to Chennai, Chennai to Kochi, Guwahati to Delhi and Hyderabad to Delhi, with effect from January 27, 2016.

TT BUREAU

Both corporate and leisure travellers will have the opportunity to avail this service. With 679 daily flights connecting 39 destinations, these new flights will further consolidate IndiGo's position as the fastest growing airline in India.

Commenting on the new flight schedule, Aditya Ghosh, President, IndiGo, said, "We are delighted to announce the take-off of our new flights from Delhi, Chennai, Kochi, Guwahati and Hyderabad. The increased flow of tourist and business traffic to and from these cities gave us the perfect opportunity to launch additional flights and serve more passengers on board. We are confident that these new flights will prove immensely popular and convenient to our travellers."


Effective January 27, IndiGo introduced second non-

stop daily flight between Chennai and Kochi, third daily non-stop flight between Delhi and Guwahati, ninth daily non-stop flight between Hyderabad and Delhi and 10th daily non-stop flight between Delhi and Chennai.

IndiGo's 100th Airbus A320
In conjunction with the New Year, IndiGo added 100th Airbus A320 aircraft to its fleet.

The delivery of the 'VT - IDR' aircraft to join its fleet was marked with small ceremony at Terminal 1D, IGI Airport, New Delhi.

Ghosh said, "10 years ago we had dreamt of one day being a part of 100 aircraft airline. Our sincere gratitude to over a 100 million customers who have chosen IndiGo and are the reason for us to have



“The increased flow of tourist and business traffic to and from these cities gave us the perfect opportunity to launch additional flights.”

Aditya Ghosh
President
IndiGo

reached this milestone. Today, it's difficult to describe all the emotions running through us but as we look at our 100th aircraft it gives us the quiet confidence and courage to dream bigger dreams of establishing a large world class air transportation network in this country and the region enabling a billion Indians to fly closer to a billion opportunities!"

Five day appointment window for passports

■ Passport services can now be availed with greater convenience in a five-day appointment window, shared the Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India, on Twitter. As part of a citizen-centric initiative, the new provision would allow applicants to choose any appointment date online from the earliest five available dates while scheduling appointment for passport related services.

Steps to liberalise the police verification procedure for passport issuance have also been implemented with the paperless end-to-end digital flow of Police Verification Report (PVR) process, further reducing the time required for PVR within the desired time limit of 21 days. Henceforth, normal passport applications of all first time applicants furnishing Aadhaar, electoral photo identity card (EPIC), permanent account number (PAN) card, and an affidavit in the format of Annexure-I will be processed on post-police verification basis without payment of any additional fees, subject to successful online validation of Aadhaar number. Furthermore, mPassport Police app has been launched for digital submission of PVR by field officers. 1.20 crore passport services were rendered in 2015 registering an increase of 21 per cent over 2014.



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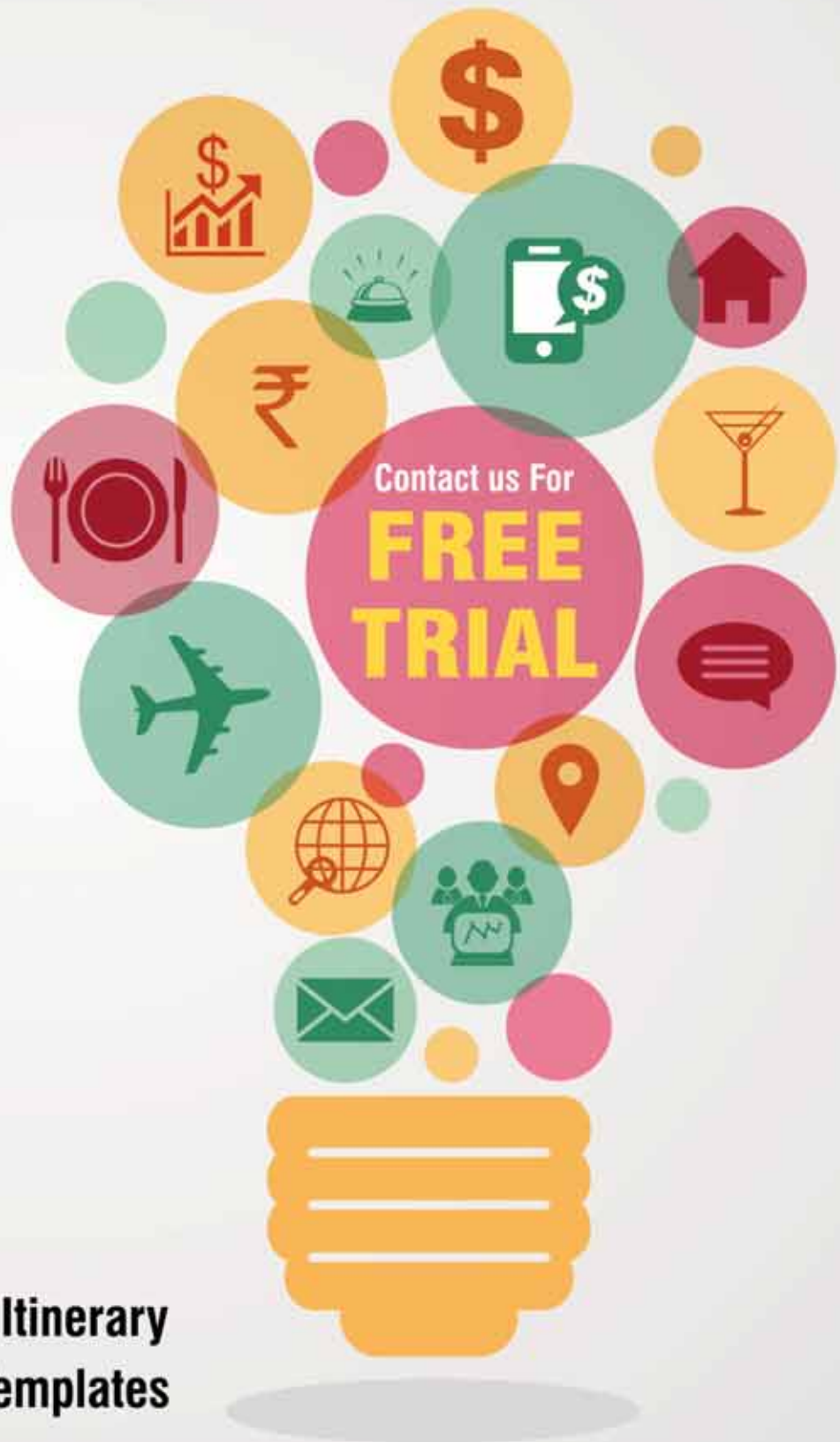
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Direct Mumbai-Rwanda flights from Sept

Making its presence felt in India for the very first time, RwandAir has announced direct connections to Mumbai starting this September in order to dig into MICE traffic from India.

TT BUREAU

RwandAir, the national carrier for Rwanda, will commence direct flights from Rwanda to Mumbai effective September, 2016. **Clarence Fernandes**, India representative, Rwanda Development Board, reveals, "RwandAir will be coming into India for the very first time with four weekly flights from Mumbai to Dar-es-salaam and Dar-e-salaam to Kigali on A-330 with first, business and economy class. They will initially come in with 244 seats and as the demand

able that allows tourists entry to three countries— Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda. Visa-on-arrival is also available but one has to apply in advance for a visa acceptance letter and visa will be stamped at the point of arrival for a fee of \$30 for Rwanda only and \$100 for all three countries. "We hope that when RwandAir starts flying, Tanzania will also be part of this EAC visa. It is already one

of the five member countries for the East Africa community of which Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi are also part. The airline will also do some activities together with Rwanda Tourism starting with participating in OTM 2016 where we will bring in tour operators and hotels from Kigali Rwanda. We are also doing a two-city roadshow in Bengaluru on February 17 and

Mumbai on February 19," Fernandes adds.

MICE on radar

He says that a sizeable amount of traffic is business and the focus, therefore, is very strongly on MICE. "We recently launched a new MICE brochure. We also have Kigali Marriott which will open at the same time along with Radisson and ZINC giving us

800 additional rooms in star categories. We would definitely work out special packages for big MICE groups. We would work out incentive packages for corporate along with our private sector partners. As a government agency, Rwanda Tourism will facilitate with the local trade," Fernandes says.

The Rwanda Development Board is still

working on the final budget for India. It is currently working closely with various travel bodies like the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) and others to showcase Rwanda's tourism potential as well as investment opportunities in the sector.



Clarence Fernandes
India representative
Rwanda Development Board

We would work out incentive packages for corporate along with our private sector partners

increases the airline will scale up to 274 seats. This will be the shortest route, connecting Mumbai and Kigali. Dar-e-Salaam has a large Indian population so it was most practical to do a stop-over here." RwandAir will also organise a Fam for Mumbai agents post the launch.

The airline is strengthening its presence in India by attending exhibitions, with the latest being TTF-OTM in February. Fernandes says 2015 saw around 11,000 Indian visitors entering Rwanda, which they want to scale up dramatically once these flight services commence. Currently, Rwanda is connected to India via other airlines including Qatar Airways, Ethiopian and Kenya Airways.

There is now an East Africa Tourist Visa (EAC) avail-

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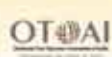


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Cozmo Travel, Sharjah to invest ~ 10 cr

Sharjah-based Cozmo Travel, which was recently appointed as Air Arabia’s GSA in India, has plans to open outlets in metros and Tier-II and Tier-III cities and eventually establish a DMC at key points to bring inbound traffic into India.

 HAZEL JAIN

Air Arabia, the Sharjah-based UAE national budget airlines, recently changed its GSA of 10 years—Track India to Cozmo Travel. The airline assured its trade partners that business will continue as usual. A part of the Air Arabia Group, Cozmo has huge expansion plans for pan-India in 2016 with a minimum budget of ~ 10 crore. **Jamal Abdulnazar**, CEO, Cozmo Travel, assured its travel agent partners and tour operators a smooth transition.

“We are new in India but we have great expectations from this country. We want to be an agency for everyone: rich and poor, budget and luxury, corporate and retail, online and offline. We are also looking at

We are looking at a DMC in Goa and Kerala in the initial stage and then Central India and Delhi

Jamal Abdulnazar
CEO, Cozmo Travel

establishing a DMC in India to bring in inbound traffic and probably look at a DMC in Goa and Kerala in the initial stage and then Central India and Delhi. We will be opening a lot of outlets as well – besides the Air Arabia office, we will be opening six branches in the six metros and then towards early next year we will be present in the secondary cities. We need to have 24 offices by 2017 and then have an online presence,” he said.

A five-year old company, Cozmo Travel recorded a turnover of AED700 million last year alone. Speaking about why it chose to have a presence in India, Abdulnazar said, “The numbers are here (in India) and since we are owned by a semi-government organisation, we get a lot of government benefits and access to visas with unlimited quota.”

He added that apart from the paid up investment of ~ 10 crore in India for 2016, Cozmo Travel will be bringing in more investments as it is developing different verticals here. “Since we are owned by Air Arabia, it’s easy to do business with them. We have better access

to their inventory and pricing leading to a faster turnaround time than an outsider. In the offing are roadshows, marketing activities for the trade, and workshops in different cities,” Abdulnazar added.

Shalini Rajan, Head of Sales, Air Arabia, who was in

Mumbai to meet its trade partners, spoke about the airline’s plans for this year and said, “We will be announcing new routes soon but we are waiting for some official sign-offs. We are diversifying our business to different parts and interesting places - not India but internationally. India-specific plans

are there if the Indian government gives us rights. It’s been a while since we launched a new route in India. Whether we get a Tier-II or Tier-III city in India, we will make it work because these cities today have a lot of people who want to travel and would welcome direct flights.”



Jamal Abdulnazar with Shalini Rajan



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PPP model on the rise in Haryana

Dr. Sumita Misra, Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Haryana, talks about several initiatives being taken across the state under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) umbrella.



AHANA GURUNG

QWhere do you see India tourism going in 2016?

India tourism is all set to grow by leaps and bounds in 2016. The Government, in cooperation with various state tourism, is continually coming up with innovative plans to cater to a continuing stream of tourists. A major thrust is being laid on tourism promotion that will boost the economic growth and will generate ample employment opportunities too. The efforts of the Ministry of Tourism to promote the country's various tourism products through its campaigns under the Incredible India brand - both for international as well as domestic markets will surely reap dividends in the coming year.

QElaborate on the initiatives Haryana Tourism has undertaken.

Many new projects like amusement parks, adventure camps and hotels are being taken up across the state under the Public Private Partnership. Haryana Tourism is giving fillip to farm tourism, an initiative undertaken in partnership with the farm owners of the state and offers special holiday packages in these chosen farms. An ambitious project of a floating restaurant, first-of-its-kind in Haryana, has been planned for the picturesque Karna Lake. Karna Taal at Karnal is being developed by HUDA and afterwards Haryana Tourism will set up a food joint here. Haryana Tourism plans to start off adventure sports activities at Surajkund, Faridabad and also Tikkar Taal Tourist Complex, Morni. Meanwhile, the upgrading and renovation of the existing facilities at the Tourist Complexes to match the latest standards in the hospitality industry is in full swing.

QIn your opinion, what are some of the challenges for the industry?

Infrastructure still remains the most important impediment in realising the high potential that the tourism industry holds for India. But hopefully in 2016, we will surely inch much closer to realising our endeavour to provide reasonably good accommodation options, better transport network, more tourist centres and safe and clean surroundings for tourists. India is endowed with rich natural and historical wonders that interest tourists from across the globe and this is a major engine of economic growth. At the same time, the

rural lifestyle, top-class competitive medical facilities and destinations high on adventure should be aggressively promoted overseas in the coming years.

QWhat is the foremost agenda this year?

Our clear-cut agenda for the coming year is to reinforce that Haryana is a perfect vaca-

tion land and offers all kinds of facilities at Haryana Tourism's 42 Tourist Complexes that are equipped with 838 air-conditioned rooms. We intend to further develop the tourism potential of the state by harnessing the untapped locations, offering competitive facilities and promote them across the globe to enhance the tourist footfall.

“Our clear-cut agenda for the coming year is to reinforce that Haryana is a perfect vacation land and offers all kinds of facilities at Haryana Tourism's 42 Tourist Complexes.”

Dr. Sumita Misra

Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism
Government of Haryana



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New tourism products on the anvil

Uttarakhand Travel Professionals Association has been constituted to facilitate tourism in Uttarakhand and help tour operators of the region.

TT BUREAU

Talking about the newly formed association, **Ravi Gosain**, President, Uttarakhand Travel Professionals Association (UTPA), says, "It is a very new association and we are in the process of registering it as of now. We have formed this association to develop Uttarakhand Tourism and help tour operators of the region."

Discussing the criteria for membership to the association, Gosain explains, "We have 500 members who have consented to be a part of this new organisation. To be a part of this association, the members have to be natives of Uttarakhand and have to belong to the travel and hospitality industry. The membership is open for individuals and not companies and these individuals will have their own network with tour operators and



Ravi Gosain
President
UTPA

travel agents to function across the country."

Speaking about the agendas of the association, Gosain says, "We have selected some key areas where we feel we have to work in. Creating tourism products is one of the main agendas and since our members belong to the tourism and hospitality industry, they are well versed with which products can be offered that can garner good responses."

Promote India overseas

▶ Contd. from page 3

foreign tour operators tend to lose their profits. All other tourist products in India are sold in local currency. Similarly, the tariff for luxury trains should be in INR. He adds, "We have certain examples where operators have stopped promoting these trains because of such issues, resulting in cancellations of more than half of the departures in October 2015 by these trains."

Talking about baggage allowance, Singh says, "On international flights, 23-30 kgs is the baggage allowance per passenger which has been reduced to 15 kgs by domestic airlines, creating lot of problems for the tourist. Every time they check-in, they are asked to either pay excess baggage charge or take out stuff from their check-in baggage. This irks

tourists, further discouraging them from shopping in India. Thus, we lose additional source of earning foreign exchange."

Deliberating on promoting Brand India overseas, Singh notes that the promotion of

year in advance, that's why it cannot be taken into consideration at this point of time i.e. at the beginning of the season. Foreign tourists end up paying much more than their Indian counterparts, but there are no special facilities available for

eTV for 113 countries is a good step forward but somehow there isn't enough publicity. Also, many a time due to technical glitches in the website, a tourist is unable to process the payment.

Sarab Jit Singh
Vice Chairman, FAITH

Indian tourism products abroad has suffered because many posts in the overseas Indian Tourism offices have been lying vacant for more than a year. This has adversely affected tourist arrivals into India.

them. Very few facilities have been made available for foreign tourists around the monuments such as toilets, parking, drop off and pick-up points," he says.

For strengthening inbound tourism, Singh stresses on developing the Buddhist Circuit, besides better arrangement for tourists during summer months in the form of shaded walkways, early monument visiting time, and enhancing international connectivity.

Noting that there are plans to increase entrance fee to Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-controlled monuments by 30 to 100 per cent, Singh fears this will further hamper inbound tourism. "The package costs are announced by operators more than one

Tourism Dampeners

- International flights have 23 to 30-kg baggage allowance per passenger but domestic airlines only allow 15 kgs
- Plans to raise entrance fee to ASI-controlled monuments by 30 to 100 per cent

Zillious moves into SE Asia

B.Rajan, Director Sales, Zillious Solutions, talks to TRAVELTALK about the success of the tech company's products and challenges in the international market.

TT BUREAU

Since 2009, Zillious has been providing state-of-the-art travel technology to Travel Management Companies (TMC) in India. Their product, the Corporate Booking Tool, was received with a positive response and has so far become a runaway hit.

"We did not want to be run-of-the-mill," shares Rajan. "We wanted to be a specialised company so that's when the idea of Corporate Booking Tool came up. It filled a gap in travel technology during that time." Rajan enthuses that the product was warmly welcomed by the corporate sector who they now frequently work with.

When asked about the reason for success, he explains, "At that point of time, this feature was not available in India at all. We're proud to be pioneers in this area. However, now we are competing with the



B. Rajan
Director Sales
Zillious Solutions

We wanted to be a specialised company so that's when the idea of Corporate Booking Tool came up

international market which is by far very stringent on cus-

tomisation and product enhancement. There are larger players there who have established themselves and want to tap the global market." Zillious recently expanded operations to the Middle East and is planning on expanding towards South-East Asia to Indonesia as well.

He further adds that Zillious' work principles have largely contributed to their achievements. "Every agency environment is created by Zillious based on the requirement of the agency or a customer," he states. "What a TMC wants is what we give them. Moreover, we constantly upgrade the system to remain in tune with the times. We have also launched the mobile app, with the intro page in Arabic to cater to our Middle East audience, where customers can directly make their bookings. Then app has proved to be a major plus point for us."

Weddings boost ARR by 15%

Anand Nair, GM, Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere (VSP), Vayalar – Kerala tells us how weddings resulted in better ARR in 2015 and plans ahead.

ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

What is the USP of the hotel?

Located in an unexplored part of Kerala – Vayalar, which is near Cochin, the property is easily accessible from Alleppey and Kumarakom, with the main attractions within 45 minutes drive from the hotel. We have a concept called Floating Cottages, which is a unique room category, and offer the finest experience at the resort. Floating gently on the waters of our private lake, every room has a private Jacuzzi on a balcony overlooking the backwaters.

Also, one of our USPs is the room size. The Superior room at the property offers 510 sq ft of space and the Deluxe rooms offer 645 sq ft of luxurious environment. The suites start at 745 sq ft and go on to 960 sq ft, making all our rooms abundantly spacious and perfect for families as well as couples.



Anand Nair
GM, Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere (VSP), Vayalar – Kerala

Are you offering incentives for agents?

In addition to the special promotional rates as well as customising and creating tailor-made packages to suit individual requirements, we have been organising various Fam trips for agents from across the country to visit the property and experience our products and services. We have welcomed teams of agents as well as their FTOs whenever any of them are visiting Kerala to come and experience a stay with us.

Now, wait for 35 seconds to book online railway ticket

In an effort to further strengthen its Passenger Reservation System (PRS) and smooth the process of booking tickets online to genuine buyers, the Ministry of Railways has announced a number of measures on the IRCTC website. "Now, a 35-second compulsory wait has been applied before booking an online ticket to prevent faster booking through any other unscrupulous means," said A.K. Manocha, Chairman and Managing Director, IRCTC, at a combined conference.

Manocha said that due to increased demand of e-ticketing and capacity constraint, the Next Generation e-Ticketing (NGeT) System's capacity to book tickets has been upgraded to book 15,000 tickets per minute. Furthermore, only two tatkal tickets can be booked for single user ID in opening tatkal hours from 10-12 hours.

In addition, a multilayered security with deep defence has been applied to control hacking of the NGeT system, along with periodic external audits conducted by Standardization, Testing and Quality Certification (STQC), Govt. of India to check the system for vulnerabilities.

How was the business in 2015?

2015 was not a great year for us in terms of growth. The only positive aspect was that unlike many other hotels, we did not show any degrowth. We started giving enhanced focus on positioning VSP as the ideal choice for the destination wedding segment and as a romantic getaway. This brought in good results with 11 destination weddings happening at VSP in 2015 that helped increase our ARR by over 15 per cent. The Arab market also has been showing good promise and growing at a high pace. Most of the other traditional sources have remained stagnant.

Suiting Needs

- The suites start at 745 sq ft and go on to 960 sq ft, making all our rooms abundantly spacious and perfect for families as well as couples

Agents are strong business partners

Philip Saunders, Chief Commercial Officer, Kuwait Airways, is excited about the India market, which will be witness to the airlines' upgrade in terms of new fleet, new routes and possibly even a new image.



HAZEL JAIN

QWhat will be your focus for this year?

Kuwait Airways still has a significant voice in India but it's not what it once was. We are aiming to rebuild its position here. The revival of a really strong tourism industry in India is also being accompanied by a revival of Kuwait Airways.

QHow is India performing for you?

We are seeing a change in the load factors from India. We will succeed here for three reasons – first, our new schedules with new destinations like Ahmedabad and Bengaluru while consolidating our operations in other places by introducing double-daily flights to Cochin that we did in December 2015. The second reason why things will continue to improve for us is the growth of Indian market and also because our strategy is focused on depth rather than breadth. We want to introduce more frequencies as we can and get more relevant to Indians living in Kuwait. A third reason is that we are recruiting the right people to engage with the travel agents to find new ways to co-operate with them.

QHow do agents benefit from working with you?

Our IATA commission is still three per cent in India apart from some incentive we offer to our agents. Our relationship with travel agents in India and globally has been mostly based on reservations. I now want to move forward into an environment where we become strong business partners apart from being an effective sales channel.

QTell us about your new fleet.

We have received a whole new fleet of A-320 and A-330 aircrafts in the last 10 months. We have brand new aircrafts coming into Ahmedabad and Bengaluru. This year, we are focusing on introducing 10 B-777s with an extended range which will join our fleet in


November 2017. They will also enable us to fly more efficiently to London and New York.

QWhat about seat configuration?

We will continue for the time being to operate business class into India depending on the aircraft type. However, we need to find

inventive ways to sell them out of the Indian market. All of our aircrafts at the moment have only economy class. But that's something we may change over time. India is more of a volume market at the moment.

QSo your main focus is to upgrade?

Kuwait Airways needs to develop. One of our priorities is also to increase our expenditure on marketing. We increased it six-fold in 2015. What you will see now is more presence in the Indian sub-continent. We need to freshen up the Kuwait Airways brand and bring it to the 21st century. 

“Our relationship with travel agents in India and globally has been mostly based on reservations. I now want to move forward into an environment where we become strong business partners.”

Philip Saunders
Chief Commercial Officer,
Kuwait Airways



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Increased Frequency

Kuwait Airways has increased twice double daily to Cochin. It recently added three flights to Ahmedabad and Bengaluru each, which will go five flights from March in both cities simultaneously due to high demand.

3rd weekly Mahan Air flight to Delhi

Mahan Air in collaboration with Minar Travels organised a networking dinner in New Delhi to commemorate its associated travel partners. The airlines also celebrated the introduction of the third weekly Mahan Air flight from Tehran to New Delhi and the launch of their travel portal.



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The 35th ASEAN Tourism Forum 2016 was held in Manila, Philippines, and was attended by over 2,600 delegates from around the world. The event was inaugurated by President of the Philippines H.E. Benigno Simeon Aquino III. ATF 2016 saw 1000 exhibitors connecting with 457 buyers from across the globe.



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CHIEF GUEST

Dr. Mahesh Sharma
Hon'ble Minister of State for Tourism,
Culture (Independent Charge) & Civil Aviation
Government of India

Objectives

- To provide a platform for open house discussion between officials of Central & State governments and industry stakeholders.
- To promote cleanliness drive in order to protect and preserve natural heritage
- To discuss the challenges being faced by industry and government to maintain the par excellence site environment to hold the interests of tourist belonging to diverse culture, regions and ethnicity
- To provide a platform for Private sector investors of Tourism Industry regarding issues and opportunities affecting investment in Heritage Tourism in India.

- To provide suggestions / recommendations to improve the business skills and global best practices to preserve Indian Heritage.
- To invite suggestions on new innovative strategies to assist Tourism businesses, Tourism destination promotion in India and enhancing their marketing and positioning across the world.
- To promote Heritage Tourism across the globe in a sustainable manner keeping in view the carrying capacity of the destinations.

Stakeholders

- Captains of Tourism and Hotel industry
- International & National Tourism experts
- Corporate Groups with investments in infrastructure /hotels projects
- Indian and Foreign Tour Operators
- Vacation Planners
- Institutes imparting Tourism related Education
- State Tourism Board
- Airlines
- Entertainment/Activity Managers and Coordinators
- Tour Managers
- Tour Guides
- Historians/Storytellers and all other stakeholders

Take Aways

- Latest thinking from senior industry and policies from government leaders
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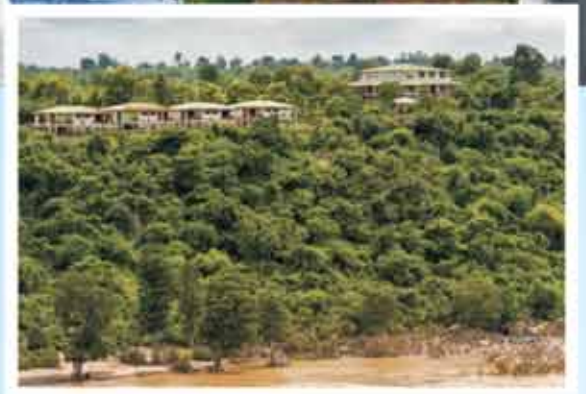
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Fitur: Reinforcing trust in Ibero-America

In 2015, the number of Spanish travellers to India grew by 15 percent. This growth was very welcomed and Fitur 2016 reinforced India's promise to this market. India's participation grew remarkably as did the show. Fitur received 232,000 visitors, 9,605 businesses from 165 countries with 178 new exhibitors. The India pavilion was inaugurated by Spain's Queen Letizia and Kerala Tourism won the Best Stand Award.



Rise in occupancy in 2015

Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre offers multiple MICE facilities, says **Mayuresh Deodhar**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre, winner of the Best Business Hotel in West India Travel Awards 2015.

VAISHALI DAR

QWhat makes Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad a favourite with corporate travellers?

Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad has one of the largest pillarless ballroom of 5400 sq. feet with a clear ceiling height of 15 feet along with a pre-function area of 2240 sq. feet and an outdoor terrace garden of 3000 sq. feet. We have five meeting rooms with a total area of 3000 sq. feet ideal for small to medium conferences and events.

QTell us about how the occupancy in the past year?

There has been approximately 500 plus rooms added into the inventory since 2014/15 in the upscale segment in Ahmedabad. In spite of the new inventory being added, the market recorded a growth of 4.8% in occupancy.

QPlease share the hospitality trends in 2016.

Social media is embedded in every step of the deci-



Mayuresh Deodhar
Director of Sales & Marketing
Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre

In spite of the new inventory being added, the market recorded a growth of 4.8% in occupancy

disparity between a brand promise and its execution is immediately brought to the forefront, given the transparency of the media. Further a customer is now able to “unbundle” the entire travel itinerary, as the Internet provides abundant clarity about guest experiences and unrestricted price comparisons between products. From exploration of options and choice to customer reviews and satisfaction, technology is gradually becoming the center of client-consumer interactions.

QTell us about the future plans of the hotel?

Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad has a couple of new initiatives. At Bella, Italian restaurant, we will launch our new menu launched in February along with the inauguration of pastry shop in March. We will continue with the IHG Green Engage programme to the next level. The hotel is also expected to launch its liquor store on 2016.

sion-making process for consumers. This can be both an opportunity and a threat. Any

Leela Hotels in Jaipur & Agra

Rajiv Kaul, President, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, tells **TRAVTALK** about the hotel's growth in 2015, its plans and expectations from 2016.

KANCHAN NATH

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts witnessed a modest growth in room rate of about 5 to 8 per cent in 2015 over 2014. Occupancies have also grown by about 2 to 5 per cent.

“Overall there is a top line growth of 7 to 8 per cent; it's a single digit growth. We all were hoping it will be 15 per cent growth, but that is not the case. We expect the fourth quarter to be three strong months, but what we are getting is three strong weeks. Certain weeks can be engines of growth, but by and large it is flat. Oversupply has neutralised. Rates today are less than what they were eight years ago in rupees and in dollars it would be even worse,” Kaul says.

The three properties in the Delhi-NCR, operated by the Leela Group, are very different from one another as they cater to three different market segments and price points. Kaul mentions, “The Leela

Palace, New Delhi, Chanakyapuri, does not have negotiated rates (90 per cent of the business is on non-negotiated rates). The Leela Ambience Gurgaon Hotel & Residences has only 15 per



Rajiv Kaul
President
The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

cent of its business as MICE, while the Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi, will have 60 per cent of the business as MICE.”

Talking about their prospective joint venture partnership, where The Leela Group

will be the managers in line with their asset light growth strategy, Kaul comments, “We are going to start work in Jaipur by February. We hope to have that ready in a year's time. It will be a 56-room Leela Palace Hotel. We hope to break ground in April or May in Agra, which will also be a luxury hotel. Agra will take close to three years, and will be a 90-room luxury property, with all rooms overlooking the Taj Mahal.”

On the inbound market, he adds, “Inbound has gone down; however I am still optimistic. The US market is showing growth, and it will continue to do well particularly because their dollar is strong. We have to be selective in Europe because there are certain countries that will do well and others will not. The Russian market is down in a big way. That is definitely a deficit that we have to overcome particularly for Goa and other leisure destinations.”

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Industry maps new

India Travel Award winners —travel and tourism industry stalwarts — identify new exotic destinations to explore in domestic, inbound and outbound segments. While Goa, Leh, Ladakh, Kerala and NorthEast states look promising for inbound and domestic travel, professionals identify Seychelles, Dubai, South Africa, Thailand, Bali, USA and Eastern Europe as popular outbound destinations.



In 2016, destinations like Goa, Kerala, Andaman, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Darjeeling and Sikkim will be popular in the domestic segment. The outbound market is expected to grow for destinations like Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Turkey, Switzerland, Bali, Sri Lanka, Canada, and South Africa. We expect to see new source markets emerging in destinations like Croatia, Scandinavia, Southern France and Ireland.

J.T. Ramnani
Managing Director
Vensimal World Travel Agents

In 2016, I can see Seychelles coming up very fast. With security issues making home in a traveller's mind, Europe may not be a favourable destination along with the Schengen visa provision, which may actually prove to be a dampener for the countries. For the Buddhist circuit, Cambodia, Hong Kong are still doing well but other markets like Singapore and Russia may actually come up better in the coming year.



Pankaj Nagpal
Managing Director
Travstarz Holidays & Destinations



Destinations like Delhi, Agra, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Kashmir, Kerala, and Odisha shall be popular in 2016. New destinations like Varanasi and Gujarat are generating interest. The other new destinations are the NorthEast states followed by Coorg, Mysore, Karnataka, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh for Buddhist circuits along with Nepal. In the outbound segment, South east destinations will continue to grow along with Hong Kong, Dubai, Macau and China. East European countries like Hungary, Czech, along with a mix of popular countries such as Switzerland, Italy, France and Spain will attract Indian travellers. Regular travellers will continue to explore the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Discreet Indian travellers will explore the wildlife regions of African countries.

Om Prakash Sahgal
Director
In ORBIT Tours



The United States has been a popular market and is continuously growing. With direct flights and increased frequencies, this destination will definitely see higher numbers. Scandinavia and Eastern Europe are great potential markets. Thailand has been a popular destination till now but I see the numbers declining with increase in airfare and other destinations catching up.

Akarsh Kolaparth
Director
7M Tours



One of the most attractive destinations in Eastern India is Chilika Lake. Eco-tourism, wildlife and culture tourism will emerge in 2016. Places like Similipal, Satkosia Gorge, Tikarpada, Gahirmath Turtle Sanctuary, Chilika Lake and, Debrigarh will see a boost. Apart from this, India has great potential for medical tourism as well as eco-tourism. With little initiative from concerned ministry like world-class healthcare facilities, highly-skilled medical professionals and implementation of latest technologies, medical tourism can contribute about 25 per cent to India's GDP.

Jitendra K Mohanty
Managing Director
Swosti Group

Northeast states and Andaman & Nicobar Islands have remained out of the regular itineraries for tourists visiting India. Northeast presently accounts for less than one per cent of India's tourist arrivals. With a renewed focus from the government, we are hoping the tourist arrivals in the Northeast will improve. Major focus is expected in terms of cultural, MICE and wellness tourism. Assam and Sikkim have had the largest number of domestic tourist arrivals in the region and this is expected to grow consistently over the next year.



Suresh Periwal
Managing Director
Clubside Tours and Travels



In terms of inbound as well as domestic tourism, we are looking at East India as a potential growing market for tourists as it is still an unexplored destination. Like Kerala and Gujarat, which have done robust marketing, we hope to see West Bengal coming up as an important destination, which can be accessed easily and allows a variety of experiences for the travellers. In 2016, promotion of inter-regional tourism shall be of importance.

Debjit Dutta
Director & CEO
Impression Tourism Services (India)



In 2016, Goa will be a popular destination in terms of domestic travel. NorthEast states and Kerala are expected to see good growth in the inbound segment while destinations like Turkey and Spain shall see the growth in terms of outbound tourism. Bulgaria and Slovakia will also be popular in 2016. For the inbound market, the major source market will be China.

Sunaina Chatterjee
Chief Executive
Incentives and Conference Planners



Europe is still the most popular destination and in 2016 this trend shall continue for regular travellers. However, newer destinations are expected to come up. We can see Iceland, Bulgaria, Serbia and Croatia foraying into the list of most popular destinations in 2016.

Sriram Rajmohan
CEO & MD,
Club7 Holidays

In 2016 the usual Europe, Dubai, United States and Far East will remain popular. However, Indian travellers are evolving and ready to explore newer place and we believe Georgia, Botswana, Japan, Brazil, Oman and Bhutan are expected to gain popularity with Indian clients. In terms of domestic and inbound tourism, Kerala, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Ladakh are expected to gain popularity along with the Northeastern states. Internationally, places like Finland, Iceland and Greenland and South America in general have great potential.



Hussain Patel
Director
atlastravelonline



Long haul destinations in Europe and the Americas are likely to be slightly affected this summer due to the unrest and terrorist attacks in recent past. As Indians are becoming more concerned about the security when choosing a destination, the new and off-beat tracks of Southeast Asia, China, and Oceanic countries will be in more demand along with the all-time favourable city breaks of Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore. Private sightseeing, adventurous excursions and luxury accommodation will also be in great demand.

Chandhi Patnaik
Owner and Travel Curator
TRAVEL AT BLUE



Indonesia emerge, emphasising small getaways to beach destinations.

Sajjan Gupta
CEO, Vayu Seva

destinations in 2016

Other than the popular ones, this year destinations like Iceland, Bulgaria, Croatia, French Polynesia, Mongolia, Namibia and Morocco will be in clients' consideration list, particularly the well-travelled tourists. We are already seeing an increase in bookings to these destinations. The demand for Africa is again picking up and in 2016 the numbers should go back to its normalcy.



Haresh Koyande
Founder & Managing Director
World Travel Studio

For the domestic and inbound segment, whilst Agra, Jaipur, Kashmir, and Goa always steal the show; Delhi, Darjeeling, Shimla, McLeodganj are gaining attention. Leh and Ladakh have always been popular however a few off-beat destinations like Chittorgarh, Ranakpur, Bundi, Fatehgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Samode and Northeast are gaining popularity.

2016 shall find traffic flowing towards Sikkim, Coorg, Manali, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Rishikesh, Kodaikanal, Wayanad, and Mount Abu though Spiti Valley, Auli, Shillong, Matheran, Pahalgam are also catching up. As per the trends and travellers' choice, 2016 will be more about exotic destinations. For the outbound segment, apart from Southeast Asia, Middle East and Europe, Indians are certainly looking at New Zealand, Australia, France, Seychelles, Madagascar, Greece, Spain and the US. The traffic to Maldives, Sri Lanka, Dubai, Bali, Mauritius shall certainly register a handsome rise in headcount in 2016.



Syed A Asim
Executive Director
Borton Holidays

Countries like Singapore and UAE have reinvented, taking advantage of the cultural and natural heritage and investing in trendy modern structures. Immigration policies, ease of getting visa, high-end exclusive activities and well-known international hotel brands are few of the factors that generate trust and interest. For domestic MICE, Delhi and Hyderabad have a great combination of old world charm and modern facilities that make them perfect for business conferences. India is becoming a weekend destination (subject to more turnaround flights being introduced) and experiential travel is booming.



Amit Aggarwal
Managing Partner
Wish Bone India



In the domestic segment, Gujarat, Kashmir, Goa and NorthEast states like Nagaland and Mizoram will emerge due to good flight connectivity. In the inbound segment, Kerala, Varanasi and Rajasthan will witness a boost. The outbound market will see tourists visiting beach destinations like Seychelles, Maldives, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Reunion

Island will be the emerging destinations in 2016. Abu Dhabi will also be another transit destination, which will emerge due to new connectivity by the airline to various points in India.

Vikas Sarawgi
Director
NSC Holidays and Hotels

In 2016 we can expect Australia, Europe, Seychelles and Bali to be popular destinations. South Africa will continue to receive more numbers in the coming year. Maldives has not been able to generate large numbers but in the coming year it is expected that this destination will come up better. For MICE, China has great potential to be a good source market.



Sanjay Kothari
Director and CEO
Just Holidays

From last many years, Thailand has been among the top travel destinations of the world offering variety in tourism sector. Owing to ultramodern atmosphere, exotic nightlife, scenic beaches and religious aura of temples, the land appeals to a number of tourists and Thailand will be at the top in 2016 in terms of popularity. I think the entire Arctic region will be a hit among the tourists and emerge as a popular tourist destination among other destinations like Turkey, Guyana, Kenya and Mongolia. In fact, I also see India as a potential tourist destination in 2016.



Nishant Pitti
Chief Executive Officer
Easy Trip Planners



Prague, Vienna, Philippines, the US, along with other popular destinations of Southeast Asia and Europe, being popular in the coming year.

Zelam Chaulal
Director, Kesari Tours

In the domestic segment this year, the most popular destinations will be Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Kashmir, Maharashtra, Kerala, Assam and Uttaranchal. The inbound segment will see tourists visiting mostly UP, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The outbound segment will grow to Europe, Russia, South Africa, Maldives, Mauritius, Dubai and cruises will be popular in the European countries, USA, Dubai, Mauritius and Maldives. The most popular source markets to emerge in 2016 will be USA, Scandinavian countries, India, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Egypt and Russia. I think the travel and tourism industry still remains a disorganised sector. We still need stringent guidelines and protocols that must be followed to seek license registration and authorisation of new tour operators and agencies. Having thorough product knowledge and providing value for money is the need of the hour for the industry.



Meghana Gautam
Director
Hither and Thither Tours and Travels



Apart from Australia and New Zealand, which are currently in demand, guests are seeking holidays at destinations which are less popular in India, like Croatia, Macedonia, Bora Bora islands in Tahiti. Honeymooners are seeking solace in Santorini Islands, Greece, Taormina and Lake Garda region in Italy. We are definitely witnessing a change in preferences of Indian travellers. Domestic guests are moving beyond Kashmir and Himachal circuits to Northeastern states Odisha, wildlife of Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan. Though the Far East will see substantial traffic in 2016 too, we are seeing demand for newer destinations, like Scandinavian countries. Australia and New Zealand will consolidate their position as favourite destinations with India. Korea and Japan are also coming up in a big way.

Shiv Wagle
Director
Meandering Vacations

I feel, in terms of inbound segment, Sikkim in Eastern Himalayan sector will be very popular in 2016. Also, Maharashtra and Gujarat will emerge as the most popular source markets in the coming year. In 2016, we will focus on working hard and hand in hand with private and government sectors to promote tourism in the Eastern Himalayan region so that the situation improve and the region receives more number of footfalls.



Chandra Prakash Bhatner
Director
Neptune Holidays



Maud LE BARS
HR Group Manager
Shanti Travel

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U&I Holidays Bali roadshow	Delhi	Feb 5
India Travel Mart	Chandigarh	Feb 6-8
U&I Holidays Bali roadshow	Chennai	Feb 8
Tourism Fiji roadshow	Mumbai	Feb 9
Austrian National Tourist Office roadshow	Mumbai	Feb 9
U&I Holidays Bali roadshow	Bengaluru	Feb 9
IBTM Arabia	Abu Dhabi	Feb 9-11
Austrian National Tourist Office roadshow	Ahmedabad	Feb 10
Tourism Fiji roadshow	Mumbai	Feb 10
India Expo	Hyderabad	Feb 10
6 th India International Hotel, Travel & Tourism Research Conference (BCIHMCI)	Delhi	Feb 10-12
Tourism Fiji roadshow	Ahmedabad	Feb 11
Austrian National Tourist Office roadshow	Delhi	Feb 11
U&I Holidays Bali roadshow	Ahmedabad	Feb 11
BIT	Milan	Feb 11-13
Tourism Conclave	Jaipur	Feb 12
India Expo (India Gulf Expo)	Chennai	Feb 12
Tourism Fiji roadshow	Delhi	Feb 12
U&I Holidays Bali roadshow	Mumbai	Feb 12
TTF (Delhi Tourism Fair)	Delhi	Feb 12-14
Tourism Fiji roadshow	Kolkata	Feb 13
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India Expo	Ahmedabad	Feb 14
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CSTF	Mumbai	Feb 18
OTM	Mumbai	Feb 18-20
Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart	Agra	Feb 21-23
DOT Philippines roadshow	Pune	Feb 22
Visit Scotland & Eitihad Airways roadshow	Mumbai	Feb 22
Tourism Malaysia sales mission	Delhi	Feb 22
Visit Scotland & Eitihad Airways roadshow	Delhi	Feb 24
Tourism Malaysia sales mission	Kolkata	Feb 24
DOT Phillippines roadshow	Ahmedabad	Feb 24
TTE	London	Feb 24-25
BTS	London	Feb 24-25
Tourism Malaysia sales mission	Mumbai	Feb 26
IITE	Vijaywada	Feb 26-28
Visit Scotland & Eitihad Airways roadshow	Chandigarh	Feb 26
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New, competitive offers for agents

After a slow year in 2015, STHI Holidays India, is hopeful for a better, exciting 2016. With new focus on long-haul destinations, the company is offering new, competitive products to its agents. **Gagan Kumar**, Director, STHI Holidays, India, talks about the company's strategies in 2016.



TT BUREAU

Discussing the USP of STHI Holidays India, Kumar says, "We provide the best services to B2B agents and offer competitive rates among other destination management companies. We provide a 24x7 support system to all customers and on ground support system to all our clients."

According to Kumar, 2015 was a slow year for the travel industry. Kumar says, "Numerous reasons affected the



“We are introducing new packages for our agents which will be more competitive in price and will be beneficial for them to allow them to sell in their markets to earn more profit.”

Gagan Kumar
Director
STHI Holidays, India

Talking about new offers that the company is planning to offer its agents, Kumar says, "We are introducing new promotional packages for our agents which will be more competitive in price and will be beneficial for them to allow them to sell in their markets to earn more profit." Kumar also adds, "Bigger offers are on the way for the coming season for all agents."

Plan for 2016

- STHI Holidays India will focus on Bali, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Dubai
- STHI Holidays has 24x7 support system to its customers and also on ground support system

travel industry, the biggest being economic slowdown." However, being hopeful about the coming year, Kumar adds, "In 2016 we will be focusing on our regular destinations, namely Bali, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Dubai. We will work to increase our numbers and apart from that, we will focus on long-haul destinations."

Explaining the marketing strategies in place for STHI Holidays India, Kumar explains, "For the coming year our motive is to provide new packages to our clients based on their taste and budget. Our main strategy will be based on the current market scenario which will be beneficial for the agents."

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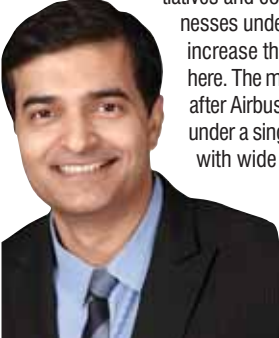
RezNext has appointed **Zubin Bilimoria** as President, Revenue Management Service. This follows the company's decision to expand its consulting services to international geographies while also adding to the offerings in the revenue portfolio for customers globally. Bilimoria is a seasoned hospitality professional and has held various leadership roles in global organisations. He was most recently Managing Director Indian Subcontinent at Profitroom. Before Profitroom, he was associated with ResNet World as its Managing Director for India. At RezNext, Bilimoria will lead the consulting services division and demonstrate the value of RezNext's integrated solution suite backed by industry leading services and turnkey support.



Airbus Group

Mumbai

The Airbus Group has appointed **Ashish Saraf** as its Vice President, Industry Development, Strategic Partnerships and Offsets. Saraf, formerly with Tata Sikorsky, will pilot Airbus Group's initiatives and conceive new ones for all the businesses under Airbus Group India, and aim to increase the company's industrial footprint here. The move to appoint Saraf comes soon after Airbus Group united its Indian divisions under a single company. An industry veteran with wide experience in offsets, industrial relations, Greenfield start-up development and strategic partnerships, Saraf started his career with Dassault Systems and Deloitte Consulting.



Yatra.com

Mumbai

Vikrant Mudaliar has been appointed as the Chief Marketing Officer of Yatra.com. He will be responsible for leading marketing activities across all Yatra.com business-lines and group entities. He will be responsible for all traffic and consumer marketing initiatives across web and mobile platforms. Mudaliar brings with him over 17 years of experience and has handled leadership roles across business management, marketing, sales and strategy functions. He previously served as Chief Sales & Marketing Officer at Lenskart.com. While his longest stint was with Tata Sky for close to a decade, he has also previously worked at General Motors India, Jumbo Electronics Dubai and Pepsi Foods Ltd.



Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group

Singapore

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has appointed **Camilla Chiam** as Vice President of PR & Communications for Asia-Pacific. She will be a member of the Asia Pacific Executive Committee. Chiam will lead the PR & Communications team in developing and implementing strategies to increase the visibility and further enhance the perception of Carlson Rezidor and its hotel brands, in support of the Group's expansion in Asia Pacific. She will be in charge of the region's internal and external communications activities, increasing Carlson Rezidor's share of voice in the media and public sphere.



Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan

Pune

Nasir Shaikh has recently joined Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan as the General Manager. Prior to joining Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan Pune, he was the Director of Operations at Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre where he led the operations teams to drive sales and service to excellence. Known for his excellent leadership skills, innovative thinking and creative approach, Nasir has over 15 years of work experience to his credit. Since his first stint at Le Royal Meridien in 2000 as a Management Trainee, Nasir has worked across various verticals in the hospitality sector with brands like the JW Marriott and Westin among others.



Radisson Blu Hotel, New Delhi, Paschim Vihar

New Delhi

Rohit Bajpai, a seasoned hospitality professional with a celebrated career spanning over 16 years, has been appointed as the General Manager for Radisson Blu Hotel, New Delhi, Paschim Vihar. After embarking on his professional bandwagon with ITC hotels in 1999, Bajpai left an indelible mark with the launch of Peshawri at the iconic Grand Maratha Mumbai. Prior to this, Bajpai was serving as the General Manager at Radisson Blu Hotel, New Delhi Dwarka.



Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai - Marriott Executive Apartments

Mumbai

With an experience of 14 years in the hospitality industry, **Babita Kanwar** has been re-appointed as the Hotel Manager at Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai - Marriott Executive Apartments. In her new role, Kanwar will be responsible for all the key operational areas. She joined Marriott India in October 2001 as part of the preopening team at the JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu; where she spent six years.



The Imperial

New Delhi

An astute professional with 22 years of experience, **Anil Kumar** joins The Imperial New Delhi as Director of Engineering. He has relevant experience in design review, project management, architectural and interior finishes of world class style. With his earlier tenure at The Park New Delhi, Uppals Orchid Hotel, Piccadilly Group, Aman Resorts New Delhi, Hilton Group New Delhi along with Globacom Ltd. Nigeria, Kumar has successfully executed these projects with effective leadership and support across all the platforms.



Hotel The Royal Plaza

New Delhi

Faisal Nafees has taken over as Director Operations at Hotel The Royal Plaza. He has more than 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry. In his current role, Nafees will be responsible for developing procedures, business finance, overseeing day-to-day operations and operational policies. In his previous role at Hotel The Royal Plaza, Nafees was Executive Assistant Manager. He played an important role in setting up of the SSKY Bar & Lounge.



TALKing People

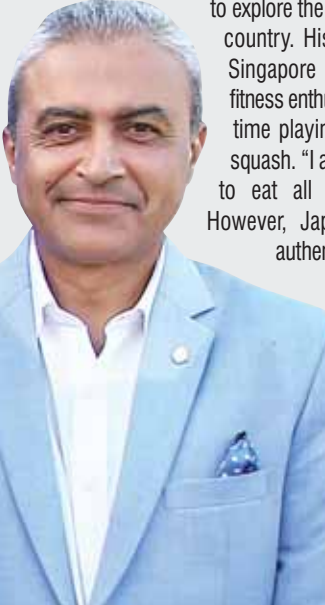
Rajan Sehgal, Chairman, TAAI Northern Region, says he loves travelling to Srinagar, Goa, Kerala and Chandigarh in India and among foreign destinations he likes visiting Malaysia, Thailand, and European countries like Switzerland and Austria. Sehgal prefers GoAir and IndiGo and sometimes Air India among airlines. He says Qatar Airways, Austrian Airlines and Thai Airways are his international favourites. "I like to stay at ITDC group of hotels in India, while abroad the hotel choice usually depends on the destination," he said. He likes to gorge on Indian and Chinese cuisines. Sehgal plays golf as a hobby and travelling he says is both his business and passion.



Daniella Tonetto, General Manager—Sales & Marketing, The St. Regis Macao, Cotai Central and Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central, says she has visited India on several occasions. "Almost 10 years ago I assisted in opening of the Westin Sohna Resort and Spa in Gurgaon, so I was based there for eight weeks. That's when I travelled the Golden Triangle." For business, she likes to travel to Delhi. "Internationally I love Europe and Italy especially, the food and the shopping. Since Kent is home, Australia will always be special for me," Tonetto says. Her favourite airline is Cathay Pacific.



Vijai Singh, General Manager, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort, says he would love to travel to Leh, Ladakh. "This destination has been on my list forever now," he says, adding that he would also like to explore the eastern states of the country. His favourite airline is Singapore Airlines. Singh is a fitness enthusiast and spends his time playing sports especially squash. "I am a foodie and I love to eat all kinds of cuisines. However, Japanese, Indian and authentic Chinese cuisines remain my favourite," he adds.



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Unknown to many, Gujarat has a host of adventures that the passionate can pursue. There are camping sites, forest tours and other exciting adventure activities like sky diving, paragliding, national and wildlife park tours and much more.

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Goa leaps forward with heli-tourism

With 'Carnivals of the World Merge' theme, Goa Carnival 2016 has gone international, hosting artists from Europe and South Africa. **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC), shares the new initiatives of Goa Tourism and expectations from 2016.



ANKITA SAXENA

QWhat is new at the Goa Carnival this year?

Goa is the only state in India to have a formal carnival with a legacy of over 100 years. The carnival will be observed in four key cities of Goa namely Panjim, Margao, Vasco and Mapusa from February 6-9, 2016. Goa has truly gone international this year with a theme, 'Carnivals of the World Merge', where cultures are being adapted from South Africa and Europe. Artists from the Liverpool Carnival of United Kingdom and the South Africa Carnival of South Africa along with Goa Carnival from India will travel in a cross cultural exchange. The European Commission has taken up Goa Carnival as one of the case studies to study and assimilate the various carnival cultures of the world and share best practices.

QWhat are your expectations from the carnival?

We are expecting at least four lakh tourists spread over the week. Even though our peak seasons are till end of December, through festival tourism, the early months of the year are added to the

A 365-day destination

In 2014-15, we received 1128 charters which reduced marginally by around 200 charters in 2015-16. The growth of tourism in Goa has been 30 per cent in 2015 out of which approximately 8-10 per cent is credited to the eTV facility. The reduced number of Russian charters has been compensated by eTV, where now we see tourists coming from places like the US and the Middle East even during the monsoon periods to witness rains in India. So now Goa is a 365-day destination.

Dilip Parulekar

Tourism Minister, Goa



are getting a higher end of the tourists which means more revenue for fewer foot-falls, a model which every state aims for.

QWhat are the new initiatives taken by the state?

We have commissioned KPMG to chalk out a tourism policy for Goa, which should be crystalised by mid of 2016. Goa is promoting avitourism in the state to offer an ontological experience to tourists. We

that the state is going to introduce in the coming year. Sea plane rides will begin from end of January and on January 26, we will launch heli-tourism in partnership with Pawan Hans. We hope to convert Goa into a super power of tourism in India.

QTell us about the new booking portal of the government?

The Goa Tourism website will be converted into a one-stop shop to book packages and experiences, the first tourism board to introduce this facility. It will be the only market place to offer these services, which will be backed by a 12 hour call centre and will be available on smartphones. The booking portal will be available in six international languages. A personalised itinerary will be made to accommodate all activities. Travel agents will be given a login ID to book packages for their clients. They can load their own packages into the system and sell based on commissionable rates, built into the portal. We are also deliberating to tie up with airlines to offer airline specific packages. Goa has also launched, in collaboration with IRCTC, special carnival packages of four days, which can be booked on the IRCTC or GTDC website.

QHow is the state working with travel agents?

All the new activities are being conducted by the private sector where we are only acting as facilitators to ease out the permission process and share revenues earned from these services. The private sector is making the investments and the government is supporting them by promoting them on their portal.



“Travel agents will be given a login ID to book packages for their clients. They can load their own packages into the system and sell based on commissionable rates, built into the portal.”

Nikhil Desai

Managing Director
Goa Tourism Development Corporation
(GTDC)

season where occupancy levels are over 90 per cent. Out of the total number, I am expecting one third to be foreign tourists.

QHow has domestic tourism fared in Goa?

The domestic tourism segment has done very well for Goa. In fact the domestic tourists are now elbowing out the foreign tourists. The spending budget of domestic tourists has increased, so we

are the first state to introduce beach safety. More than 700 safety personnel are stationed at beaches to address all safety and security issues of the tourists. Amphibious vehicles for duck tours, will be commercially launched in February. Other adventure tourism activities like motorised paragliding, bungee jumping etc., are also being introduced. Water parks, food heritage boat cruises, bicycle tours, house boats, horse trails, caravan tours are unique offerings

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