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# Focus on digitalisation @ ITB

As this year's ITB Berlin, slated for March 9-13, celebrates its golden jubilee, **David Ruetz**, Head of ITB Berlin, reveals interesting aspects of the upcoming edition that will welcome over 30 per cent new exhibitors.

**AHANA GURUNG**

With the last edition of Berlin recording a participation of more than 10,000 exhibitors from 186 countries, ITB Berlin also reported an increase in business volume which Messe Berlin estimates reached €6.7 billion. Ruetz is optimistic that they will achieve the same numbers this year, despite the difficult economic situation of the world market, the refugee crisis and terror attacks in the country.

Ruetz says, "This year, we expect around 10,000 exhibitors and organisations from more than 180 countries. We anticipate trade visitor numbers to be stable as well." He reveals that around 30 per cent of the exhibitors are newcomers to the show among which numerous countries from Africa will be participating at the mega event after a long absence. "Zimbabwe,

Cameroon, Burundi, and Sierra Leone, are some countries whose appearance at the show after the ravaging Ebola

Vatican City are represented with their own stand. Last year, the Turkish Village was a newcomer to ITB Berlin; this year,

well as tour operators and destination management companies (DMCs), are represented for the first time," he comments.

be represented in large numbers at ITB Berlin. Hall 5.2b, occupied by India, is booked up again and we also expect a strong presence from Indian trade visitors."

ital infrastructure, relevant content and the use of humanoid robots in the tourism industry. Ministers from countries which are forging ahead with the digital transition will be highlighting opportunities and ways in which the tourism industry must adapt. The challenges posed by the current refugee crisis, and in that context the general shortage of specialists, will also be the subject of debate at the ITB Berlin convention."

"India's tourism industry is booming and the country will once again be represented in large numbers at ITB Berlin. Hall 5.2b, occupied by India, is booked up again and we also expect a strong presence from Indian trade visitors."



**David Ruetz**  
Head of ITB Berlin

epidemic marks their return to the tourism market. The arrival of several newcomers from Europe emphasises the increasing importance of ITB Berlin. For the first time, the Vatican Museums and the papal art collection from

Turkey is represented in its own hall with 15 new exhibitors, a new record figure."

Furthermore, Ruetz adds that the demand from Asia remains particularly high. "China Southern Airlines, as

"After the disastrous earthquake in April 2015, Nepal is back with its campaign 'Nepal Now', promoting the country as an attractive and safe tourism destination. India's tourism industry is booming and the country will once again

To live up to the momentous occasion of ITB Berlin's 50th anniversary, a bevy of interesting aspects have been included that guests can look forward to. "Visitors to ITB Berlin will be able to witness the first run of Toshiba's humanoid robot in Europe," informs Ruetz. "Chihira Kanae, the robot, will be welcoming trade visitors on March 9 and 10 while a live demonstration will show her in action during the discussion panel on March 11. Digital revolution will be the main topic at the ITB Hospitality Day with 25 events in total that will address every aspect of digitalisation. The convention, 'Travel 4.0 – the digitalisation of the travel industry', will examine a number of topics, including the dig-

## Highlights

- ← African nations such as Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Burundi, and Sierra Leone have made a comeback on the show after the ravaging Ebola outbreak
- ← The convention, 'Travel 4.0 – the digitisation of the travel industry' will be the focal point at ITB Hospitality Day

## Showcasing India's wildlife

India's wildlife is not just restricted to snakes, tigers and elephants, it goes much beyond. **TRAVTALK** finds out how stakeholders work towards attracting international visitors.

**ANKITA SAXENA**

India's exotic wildlife tourism offerings range from a variety of fauna, yet unexplored, from the lap of the Himalayas to the depths of the Indian Ocean. Giving an account of the diversity **Tejbir Singh Anand**, Founder & MD, Holiday Moods Adventures, says, "Being a niche segment, the demand for this sector has always been high. The Snow Leopard, Kiangs, Marmots, are exclusive to India. The Royal Bengal Tiger, One-Horned Rhinos and exotic bird species etc make India a top wildlife destination in the world."

While the tiger and the rhino attract both domestic and international tourists to national parks, the domestic traveller is higher in num-



**Vikram Madhok**  
Hon. Treasurer, PATA India Chapter, and MD (India), Abercrombie & Kent India

We get tourists from US, UK and France. We provide luxury experiences in the wild



**Tejbir Singh Anand**  
Founder & MD, Holiday Moods Adventures

Bengal Tiger, One-Horned Rhinos and exotic birds make India a top wildlife destination

ber than their international counterparts. **Vikram Madhok**, Hon. Treasurer, PATA India Chapter, and MD (India), Abercrombie & Kent India,

says, "We receive tourists from the US, UK and France. We provide luxury experiences like high tea in the  
Contd. on page 18 ►

## 20% of MOT budget on NE

**Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary - Tourism, Govt. of India, highlights the need for a joint effort from all sectors to boost tourism possibilities in Northeastern states.

**TT BUREAU**

The Ministry of Tourism has shown a special interest in effectively tapping the exceptional tourism potential of the Northeastern states and with several initiatives to strengthen infrastructure, exponential growth in tourist arrivals has been predicted. However, to be able to fully utilise the tourism potential of these states, joint efforts by different sectors, other than the government, is absolutely necessary.

Highlighting the same, **Suman Billa**, opines that several aspects need to be understood to reap the North East's pristine tourism potential effectively. "The first and foremost step in this process is recognition," he says. "As policy makers, we need to acknowledge, understand and get clarity on the potential of the place; only after that can we focus on achieving the goal."



"Currently, these states are being portrayed as Paradise Unexplored. Brand communication needs to be heavily worked and should be consistent."

**Suman Billa**  
Joint Secretary - Tourism, Govt. of India

He identifies another parameter essential for growth and says, "We need to create an atmosphere where tourism opportunities can grow. Years ago when I was with the Tourism Department, Kerala, our biggest success was unleashing the potential of the local entrepreneur. Big hotel chains have not made Kerala into what it is; it is the local entrepreneurs that have made investments and built properties using local materials and adding

authenticity. Hotels are hotels and they tend to be similar everywhere you go - travellers look for authenticity in a place."

Billa further draws attention to the budgets allotted by the state governments and comments that it needs to be increased. "We live in a competitive world - if you want big returns, then you need to invest big," he remarks. Similarly, he mentions that  
Contd. on page 18 ►

# Mobile App for clean India

The Ministry of Tourism has developed a 'Swachh Parayatan' mobile App for citizens to flag issues relating to cleanliness in and around tourist sites. Initially, 25 'Adarsh Smarak' monuments protected by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have been identified for inclusion in the App.



KANCHAN NATH

The 'Swachh Parayatan Mobile App' was recently launched by Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism & Culture and Minister of State for Civil Aviation, at a function in New Delhi. This project is being implemented by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India through DeGS and NIC. Launching the App, Sharma said, "We have started with 25 most visited monuments, as a model and slowly this will be extended to all tourist spots. It is a means to open a channel of communication with the tourists. If garbage is found at the spot we will try to address the issue within one to two hours. Nodal officers have been appointed

and if they do not attend to their responsibilities, they would be held accountable for the same. The suggestions that come through the App need not only be about cleanliness, they may relate to other issues as well. Other such suggestions that come in will also be recorded to further improve that particular spot."

This mobile App is available on Google Search Engine as 'Swachh Paryatan' and android phones and very soon it will be available on Apple and Microsoft devices too. This mobile App shall be monitored by the Project Monitoring Unit of Swachh Bharat Mission in Ministry of Tourism.

On other initiatives taken by MOT to promote tourism,



"The security part of monuments will be with the government, while we propose all other internal facilities, such as cleanliness, greenery maintenance, bookshop and restaurant maintenance be given to different reputed private operators. We will soon start this for five to six monuments and slowly extend it to all."

Dr. Mahesh Sharma

Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism & Culture and Minister of State for Civil Aviation

Sharma said, "We have been handing across the Swagat booklet at the immigration counters, to foreign tourists. The Tourist Infoline '1363,'

which was recently started, is daily getting approximately 1,800 calls." The eTV facility that is now extended to 150 countries has been availed of

by 448,000 people till now. We are also thinking in terms of handing over certain infrastructural facilities at tourist spots into private hands. The

monuments will not be privatised, while the security part of the monuments will be with the Government, all other internal facilities, such as cleanliness, greenery maintenance, bookshop and restaurant maintenance, we propose to give them to the different reputed private operators. We will soon start this for five to six monuments and slowly extend it to all."

"We are also contemplating to have a separate queue at tourist spots, for tourists with high-price value tickets. These tourists will get an easier entry to visit tourist spots, not having to stand in long queues and will mostly be availed by foreign tourists, who have a paucity of time," he added.

# Mega Tourism Investors' Summit in 2016

The Ministry of Tourism is mulling on organising a first of its kind Mega Tourism Investors' Summit in July or August this year to encourage investors to seize the opportunity of investing in the Indian tourism sector.



TT BUREAU

Vinod Zutshi, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "MOT is contemplating on organising a Mega Tourism Investors' Summit around July or August this year for promoting investments in the tourism sector. The summit will witness participation of all important states with their incentives and packages. The summit will provide to the private investors, stakeholders within India and abroad a chance to seize the immense opportunity of investment in the tourism sector in India." He said, "I urge all



Vinod Zutshi  
Secretary, Tourism  
Government of India

stakeholders to make use of this forthcoming mega summit to help us promote **Incredible India** and **Make in India**."

This will be a mega event at the central level to attract investments. Different states are offering different incentives to attract investments, some states have started 'Single Window Clearance' for all hospitality and tourism related facilities, others have exempted the luxury tax, while some are providing facilities at par to those of an industry, he said.

"That is what we want to showcase in front of the hoteliers and travel trade, amusement parks, MICE, adventure, all that is possible, then potential Investors

have to choose, which package is good for them," Zutshi added.

"With cent per cent FDI investment, we are aiming at making it international and bringing in foreign investors. We are going to showcase the infrastructural investments we have done. We have sanctioned almost `600 crore under Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD schemes. In the new financial year we will sanction some more projects. In order to facilitate growth, we need private sector investments. The peripheral facilities will have to come

from the private stakeholders," he added.

MOT's international campaign has already begun. Zutshi added, "The forthcoming financial year will see a more aggressive marketing and promotional campaign from Incredible India all over the world. MOT has sanctioned tourism infrastructure projects over `1,500 crore, in the past six months, which shall continue in the forthcoming financial year. We are hopeful that huge public investment of this nature will trigger and promote private sector investments in the tourism sector."

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## ADTOI Convention from Apr 8-11

Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), which is hosting its seventh convention in Khajuraho, calls for support from the members and the travel trade to make the event a big success.

**SAMAPTI DAS**

ADTOI is hosting its convention and exhibition at Ramada, Khajuraho from April 8-11, 2016. **Jyoti Kapur**, President, ADTOI, says, "After

theme of the convention, sessions and number of delegates has not been decided as yet. It was further revealed that the approximate cost for the package trip of 3 day/4 day is ₹ 7,000, including train travel



**Jyoti Kapur**  
President  
ADTOI



**Sanjay Aggarwal**  
Vice President  
ADTOI

We are working on the integrated tourism circuits with some states. During our convention we want to have a session on this and also on the relation between tour operators and hoteliers, airlines and transporters

**Jyoti Kapur**  
President, ADTOI

a lot of contemplation and spade work we have decided to have our convention in Khajuraho with the support of Madhya Pradesh Tourism. Other states will also be on board." **Sanjay Aggarwal**, Vice President, ADTOI, said that the

from Delhi to Jhansi by Shatabdi Express; travel by road to Khajuraho; stay and sightseeing.

The association is in the process of reviving and rebuilding, and the upcoming

convention will be a gateway for ADTOI to show its strength and address issues of its members.

Talking about the future agenda of the association Kapur says, "We are working on the integrated tourism circuits with some states. During our convention

we want to have a session on this and also on the relation between tour operators and hoteliers, airlines and transporters."

Kapur added that this is the age for cultivating the culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and communication within the industry.

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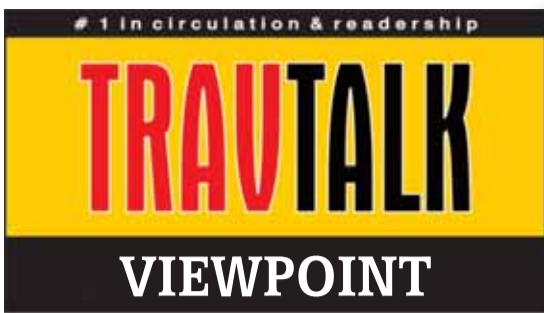
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# 25 years ago



TRAVTALK brings to you the events that made headlines 25 years ago and are relevant to the travel and tourism industry even now.

## SmartFuture

Digitalisation has taken the world by storm. The Indian travel industry, in particular, has considerably warmed up to the change. Just a decade ago, Indian travel agents scoffed at the idea of even getting on to the GDS. Look at the industry now –with Online Travel Agents and travel technology giants expanding their portfolio of offerings, we have come a long way. Acknowledging the power of the digital age, the Ministry of Tourism implemented the e-Tourist Visa and to propagate the country's Swachh Bharat movement, the 'Swachh Parayatan Mobile App' has recently been launched. The Indian Railways have also applied the system of ticketless travelling on local platforms as well where tickets can be purchased online. ITB Berlin's agenda this year highlights the digitisation of the travel industry while FICCI's upcoming Travel & Hospitality Tech Conclave is India's first mega event dedicated to travel and hospitality. With the industry now adapting to technology wholeheartedly, it is evident that the digital era is here to stay.

## Discover real India

The travel and tourism industry is speculating support to be extended by the government in this budget session. The eTV has shown whooping numbers and the extension to 37 more countries apart from the existing 113, will increase tourist arrivals. We offer standardised infrastructure, international services and a warm welcome. The history, art, culture, festivals, tropical forests, wildlife, the Himalayas, pristine beaches, backwaters and the vibrancy of diversity should beckon a traveller to come to India.

Then why is the number hovering? The answer to this is multifold -the global economic situation, terrorism, political unrest and the fact that India has become an expensive destination due to taxation policies, among others. The industry stakeholders along with the government need to pave the way over these potholes. The message of Incredible India must be spread internationally, the value-for-money destination that India is has to be promoted and a sentiment of what India holds for the traveller has to be showcased. India is actually still an undiscovered and unexplored destination!

TOURIST ARRIVALS					
Month	Tourist Arrivals			Percentage Change	
	1989	1990	1991	90/89	91/90
January	1,28,071	1,41,594	1,13,133	10.6	-20.1
February	1,13,098	1,24,692	86,153	10.3	-30.9
March	1,19,665	1,17,543	94,675	-1.8	-19.5
April	82,769	91,708	78,957	10.8	-13.9
May	76,253	77,797	76,028	2.0	-2.3
June	86,393	84,790	79,792	-1.9	-5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,06,249</b>	<b>6,38,124</b>	<b>5,28,738</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>-17.1</b>

### India Inbound in 1991

While 1991 was declared as the Visit India Year, the first six months of the calendar year did not really reflect a happy picture in terms of tourist arrivals. There was a 17.1 per cent fall in arrivals in the first six months of 1991 over the same period in 1990, which many said was because of the Gulf War and political strife in the country.

### Canadian market opens to Air India Flights

- ❖ Air India's direct flight to Canada was resumed.
- ❖ A great part of it is the direct result of the new look promotional effort which Air India has launched in this market.
- ❖ Coincidentally, the high commissioner in Canada, was **Girish Mehra**, formerly Director General of Tourism and Chairman ITDC.
- ❖ He had stated at a seminar in Montreal that he had set for himself two objectives – one to bring back Air India and the other to send more tourists to India.



### Visa Fee Hike Shocks The Trade

FURTHER DROP IN ARRIVALS FEARED

- ❖ An increase of 10 times in the visa fee for visitors from abroad has sent shock waves in the travel trade.
- ❖ The fee has been raised to \$50 for tourist to business traveller on a visit of up to one year.
- ❖ The fee for the period exceeding one year has been fixed at \$100.
- ❖ Strong criticism has come from overseas operators as well.

# 10 most popular monuments

Foreign and domestic visitors have been consistently increasing to world heritage sites in India. TRAVTALK brings you 10 most popular centrally protected ticketed monuments for foreign visitors in 2014.

## 10 Most popular centrally protected ticketed monuments for foreign visitors in 2014

Rank	Monuments	No. of Foreign visitors	Percentage share	Rank	Monuments	No. of Foreign visitors	Percentage share
1.	Taj Mahal, Agra	6,48,511	23.2	6.	Red Fort, Delhi	1,22,477	4.4
2.	Agra Fort, Agra	3,43,483	12.3	7.	Excavated Remain, Sarnath	88,173	3.2
3.	Qutub Minar, Delhi	2,76,043	9.9	8.	Akbar's Tomb, Sikandara	78,528	2.8
4.	Humayun's Tomb, Delhi	2,56,421	9.2	9.	West Group of Temples, Khajuraho	74,706	2.7
5.	Fatehpur Sikri, Agra	2,31,099	8.3	10.	Itimad ud Daulah, Agra	66,186	2.4

Source: India Tourism Statistics 2014



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# New tourism circuits in Rajasthan

With the new media campaign creating a buzz about Rajasthan, the state has geared up to introduce new tourism products and circuits to attract more number of tourists to the state.



ANKITA SAXENA

In 2014, 33.1 million domestic tourists visited Rajasthan, which was up from 30.29 million in 2013 and 1.53 million foreign tourists visited the state, up from 1.43 million in 2013.

Talking about the products on offer in Rajasthan, **Pawan Jain**, Joint Director, Rajasthan Tourism, says, "Rajasthan offers many tourism

fair is organised every year. Pushkar, Shekhawati circuit is also coming up. I am very proud to say that Rajasthan has 75 per cent of the total heritage hotels in India. India has around 187 heritage hotels out of which 137 hotels are in Rajasthan and are destinations themselves."

Discussing the achievements of the state in 2015, Jain elaborates, "In 2015 we

launched the new Rajasthan Tourism Unit Policy. The purpose of the policy was to get more investment and make procedures time bound, which means that the government has to award approvals for tourism units within a time period and the private segment has to implement and commence the project correspondingly. We also organised the event Resurgent

Rajasthan, to attract more investment in the state and the response has been very good. We have also signed 139 MoUs which will bring in more than ` 6,000 crores into the state. On January 15, 2016, we launched our media campaign in order to showcase the fact that Rajasthan has everything to offer to anyone. The campaign has been appreciated by

all players of the industry and we believe that this will bring in a larger number of tourists into Rajasthan."

Discussing the association and support from the private stakeholders of the state, Jain adds, "We have a strong association with the travel trade in the state. The department of tourism works symbiotically with the associations

of travel agents and takes their issues into consideration. We co-invite the travel trade when participating in national and international events and also have a procedure in place to recognise the best performing agents in the state." Jain feels that in the coming time, weddings and MICE segments will be important revenue generators for Rajasthan. 



**Pawan Jain**  
Joint Director, Investments  
Rajasthan Tourism

The new destinations that we are developing are Kumbhalgarh where a fair is organised every year. Pushkar, Shekhawati circuit is also coming up

circuits. The tourists travelling on the Golden Triangle visit Jaipur and nearby places, while on the Delhi-Agra route, Bharatpur is very popular. Udaipur is famous for its lakes and is a popular wedding destination. The forts and sand dunes of Jaisalmer attract many tourists. The new destinations that we are developing are Kumbhalgarh, where a

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# Do weddings in Rann of Kutch

In an attempt to attract more number of tourists to Gujarat, the state is investing in multiple projects to enhance facilities and offer an experience to the tourists.

**TT BUREAU**

With a variety of tourism products on offer, Gujarat Tourism is set to enhance the tourism segment in the state. **N Srivastava**, Managing Director, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, says, "Gujarat has 1,600 km long coastline that needs to be harnessed. Gujarat is also the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi

13.5 per cent higher than the previous year. Srivastava adds, "Ahmedabad, Ambaji, Dwaraka, Surat, and Vadodara, continue to remain top-draw destinations and are major contributors to the gross tourist flow to Gujarat."

On the achievements of the state tourism department, Srivastava says, "Even though the final figures have not been

Discussing the role of private sector in developing tourism in Gujarat, he says, "Without the support of the private stakeholders, the government cannot develop tourism circuits. Thus hotels, tour operators, or other travel trade partners are the biggest contributors in developing tourism."

Talking about extending support to the travel trade, Srivastava says, "We launched the tourism policy in September last year, which offers multiple subsidies and incentives to the private stakeholders to build in Gujarat. To develop tourism further, we need more hotels, local tour guides-both audio and video, new infrastructure, and new activities to make the tourists stay longer." The new policy will be in effect till March 31, 2020. Srivastava also adds, "The state government focus on tourism can be gauged from the fact that the tourism budget has grown exponentially from a mere ₹ 100 crore in 2006 to over ₹ 500 crore currently."

The tourism policy offers multiple subsidies and incentives to the private stakeholders to build in Gujarat

**N Srivastava**

Managing Director, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat

and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and these two tourism circuits need to be developed. We have the JyotirLinga, which offers variety of spiritual tourism options for both domestic and international tourists." In 2014-15, the total tourist arrivals in the state was 3.36 crore, which was

compiled yet, I can safely say that tourism to the state has definitely increased. The Rann of Kutch festival has been a big success. We have developed around 76 tents and lodges to make the area into a wedding destination during the winter season."

# Odisha eyes domestic tourists

Odisha Tourism is keen on promoting its various tourism products across India with its 10-city roadshow to tap the potential of the domestic market.

**TT BUREAU**

The Department of Tourism (DoT), Government of Odisha, in its bid to attract domestic tourists has organised a 10-city roadshow with the objective of promoting the state

The state also has a progressive and investment-friendly Tourism Policy in operation since April 2013. As per the policy, a state-level Single Window Committee has been created for speedy implementation of the projects. Several

started the Light & Sound Show (SEL) at Dhuli and we will follow this up with a show at Konark and Khandagiri-Udayagiri. Odisha Tourism aims to attract domestic tourists from various parts of the country, for which we are holding roadshows in different cities." Odisha Tourism Development Corporation has also been playing a key role in the promotion and development of tourism in the state.



and its variety of tourism products across India. Leading this delegation was Minister of Tourism & Culture, **Ashok Chandra Panda** along with **N.B. Jawale**, Director and Additional Secretary, Department of Tourism, Govt of Odisha.

incentives have also been announced for the tourism stakeholders as part of promotional initiatives.

Talking about the new products in the state, Panda said, "In August last year, we

## Upcoming Festivals

- ↳ Parab Tribal Festival (November 16-18)
- ↳ Konark Festival (December 1-5)
- ↳ International Sand Art Festival (December 1-5)
- ↳ Dhanu Yatra Festival (Dec-Jan)
- ↳ Mukteswar Dance Festival (January 14-16)
- ↳ Rajarani Music Festival (January 18-20)

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# Trained guides for the West Industry seeks govt support

The Western India Chapter of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) is fighting for agents in Mumbai who are reeling under an acute shortage of quality tourist guides.

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) is playing a pivotal role to take the issues concerning different verticals of tourism and hospitality with the Centre.

**HAZEL JAIN**

Despite the Government of India introducing a tourist guide course for Western India at Gwalior's Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, the city of Mumbai still reels under an acute shortage of quality tourist guides. To tackle this problem from its roots, the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has suggested an idea to the India Tourism office in New Delhi. **N.S. Rathore**, Chairman (Western Region), IATO, says, "We have a big shortage of guides in Mumbai. With the help of **Vikas**



**N.S. Rathore**  
Chairman (Western Region), IATO

**Rustagi**, Regional Director of India Tourism, we have sent a letter to the head office in Delhi regarding this and requested them to conduct the course in Mumbai as well." The same problem occurred in 2009 and

2013 whenever the course was conducted in Gwalior.

He adds that a lot of potential candidates may not be able to live in Gwalior for six months for the course, especially women. "The department has now understood the problem. While the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation is conducting city-specific courses, we are concentrating on the Western India region for the course that includes Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. From our previous two courses we got majority of guides from Khajuraho. Though the course was for Western India, Mumbai got only three guides," Rathore claims. He expects 60-70 women candidates to enrol if the course is conducted in Mumbai.

Another problem was lack of guides at Elephanta Caves since most participants in the first two batches were 65-plus and were unable to walk up. ↩

**TTBUREAU**

The Finance Minister conducted a pre-budget meeting to discuss key recommendations to the budget inviting industrialists, industry chambers and travel associations. Elaborating on the propositions made, **Sarab Jit Singh**, Vice Chairman, FAITH, says, "Currently the effective indirect taxation rate on tourism in India is estimated between 18-20 per cent which is way higher than the total net indirect tax incidence on tourism in other Asian competitors like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, estimated to be 6-9 per cent. Exemption from service tax on tourism exports will make India a more competitive destination."

**Kiran Vinchhi**, Regional MD, ATPI Group, India, says, "The recent initiative by the government to build 150 new airports by 2020 coupled with India's passion for travel could add to robust and advanced growth prospects for India's travel and tourism market. The time



**Sarab Jit Singh**  
Vice Chairman, FAITH

has come when India stands tall on the international radar and for this we are optimistic that the Union Budget will introduce friendly solutions and simpler direct and indirect tax regimes."

Vinchhi adds, "Infrastructure and security of travellers are two concerns for India and we expect the Union Budget 2016-17 to provide necessary measures to address them. In addition, there is a need to boost domestic movement as well as international connectivity in order to present India as a global business brand."



**Kiran Vinchhi**  
Regional MD, ATPI Group, India

FAITH proposed structured Union Budget initiatives like creating a policy environment for Mega Tourism Zones. Singh says, "These zones can be built on the lines of SEZ or national manufacturing zones and will stimulate infrastructure development in the tourism industry." Resonating Vinchhi's comment to boost domestic movement, Singh adds, "Incentivising and reducing the cost of travel on domestic tourists will increase the average spend and increase visitation from the domestic tourism segment." ↩

## ASI defers entry hike till April 1

The entry fee for all Grade I monuments all over India will be increased from ` 250 to ` 750 and from ` 100 to ` 250 from April 1, for all foreign visitors. Rathore says, "We have approached the tourism minister who fortunately is also in-charge of ASI. We have requested ASI in New Delhi and they have deferred it till April. But if they implement this it will be a huge problem for agents. We have suggested that instead of increasing ` 500 in one shot, do it piecemeal - ` 250 in this year and ` 250 in the following year. "Cancellations will only happen when this is implemented. Some of our agents from Germany have said that if this is implemented they may cancel all their departures to India," he fears.

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## 7% increase in Indian arrivals in Germany

From Jan-Nov, 2015, Germany received 658,375 Indian overnights corresponding to a growth of 7% for the same period in 2014.



TT BUREAU

The regions which are most favoured by the Indian travellers in Germany are South West Germany and South of Germany. Amongst the bigger cities, Munich, Frankfurt, Cologne, Stuttgart, Heidelberg, Baden-Baden and Berlin are frequented by the Indian travellers. Neuschwanstein Castle, Zugspitze, Black Forest Highlands and Europa Park amongst many others are popular attractions for this market, according to **Romit Theophilus**, Director of Marketing and Sales Office India, German National Tourist Office (GNTO). Germany fared well with regard to tourism in 2015. Elaborating on the same, Theophilus says, "Even during testing times the number of visitors to Germany has stayed stable. We promoted the theme 'Traditions and Customs' in 2015, which was well received by the travel trade and travellers alike."



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

We promoted the theme 'Traditions and Customs' in 2015, which was well received by the travel trade

Discussing the new products that Germany is introducing to its Indian tourists and the promotional campaigns, Theophilus says, "In 2016, GNTO is promoting the theme 'Nature'. For this, GNTO has introduced a new feature on its website [www.germany.travel](http://www.germany.travel), "Discover your favorite spot," a tool where travellers can indicate their ideal type of vacation (relaxed/ adventurous, beaches/ mountains, secluded/ central) and receive options and inspiration to help plan the perfect holiday."

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## Focus on remote connectivity

The PHD Aviation Summit 2016 saw the who's who of the aviation industry coming under one roof, and discuss how regional and remote connectivity can be bolstered.

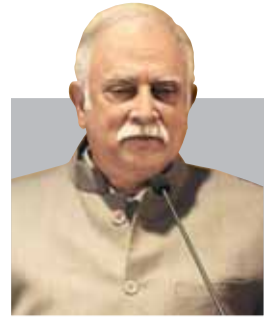


TT BUREAU

The PHD Aviation Summit 2016 was inaugurated in the presence of **Ashok Gajapathi Raju Pusapati**, Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of India. Addressing the gathering at the summit, the Minister said that it is important to connect

regional and remote destinations via air not only to make travelling simpler for foreign tourists but also to promote domestic tourism. Also present during the event were **K. Narayana Rao**, Chairman, Civil Aviation Committee; **Gopal Jiwaraika**, Senior Vice President, PHD Chamber; **Dr. Burak Akçapar**,

Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Turkey; **Anil Khaitan**, VP, PHD Chamber. Other sessions also saw **Sunil Kumar**, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI); **Vipin Vohra**, Convener – Air Freight Council, Freight Forwarders' Association in India (FFFAI) & Past President – ACAAI; **Anil Srivastava**, Joint



**Ashok Gajapathi Raju Pusapati**  
Minister of Civil Aviation  
Government of India

Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; **Bhupesh Joshi**, Co-Chairman, PHD; and **Kapil Kaul**, CEO, South Asia, CAPA.



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**eTV for 37 more countries**

■ The e-Tourist Visa (eTV) facility has been extended to 37 more countries from February 26, 2016, bringing the total count of countries under the scheme to 150.

The new 37 countries included in e-Tourist Visa scheme are Albania, Austria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Iceland, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Moldova, Namibia, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Swaziland, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Trinidad & Tobago, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The e-TV facility was launched by the Government of India on November 27, 2014. Till now the scheme has been extended to 113 countries at sixteen Indian airports designated for providing e-Tourist visa service. Over 7.50 lakh Visas have been issued under the scheme ever since it has been launched. On an average 3,500 e-Tourist Visas are being granted daily to foreign nationals.

# Year of Adventure Tourism in J&K

Jammu and Kashmir has launched its new campaign, 'See J&K in New Light' in order to enhance tourist numbers to the state. The state tourism board organised roadshows in various Indian cities showcasing its new products and offers.



ANKITA SAXENA

An aggressive 360 degree promotional campaign, 'See J&K in New Light' has been launched to create awareness about the destinations in Jammu and Kashmir and to increase the inflow of tourists in the state. Announcing 2016 as 'Year of Adventure Tourism' in J&K, **Farooq A. Shah**, Secretary Tourism and Managing Director, Jammu & Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation, says, "Dara-Harwan in Kashmir and Sanasar in Jammu region are being developed as adventure tourism spots. J&K has huge potential to attract eco-tourism and adventure tourism lovers. We are aiming at targeting tourists from budget category to high end." Shah also added that as J&K has a variety of products to offer domestic tourists are their strength.

The state received 75,000 tourists in January 2016. Talking about the num-



“We have upgraded our infrastructure and recovered all systems of connectivity, even the rail and roadways. Jammu Airport will be upgraded by the end of 2016 and 1000 odd houseboats are also upgraded to offer the best to the tourists.”

**Farooq A. Shah**

Secretary Tourism and Managing Director  
Jammu & Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation

ber of tourists in J&K, Shah says, "In 2015, we received 7.8 million tourists at Katra; Amarnath alone witnessed 3.5 million tourists; Kashmir saw 9.2 lakh tourists while Ladakh saw 2 lakh tourists out of which nearly 50,000 were foreign tourist arrivals."

Discussing the new products on offer, Shah says, "Apart from adventure sports, areas like Patnitop, Baderwah, Sonamarg, Pahalgam and water bodies like Dal Lake,

Manasbal, Wular are being developed. The 2,106 small and medium sized high altitude lakes make J&K an ideal state for water tourism. We are adding affordable helicopter services from Srinagar to Pahalgam and Gulmarg. We have introduced radio taxis, hop-on hop-off buses in Jammu. We are developing river cruises in 2016, and introducing light and sound shows."

J&K is also promoting MICE and Golf tourism

aggressively. Elaborating on the same Shah says, "We have world class golf courses in Gulmarg and Pahalgam and another golf course in Leh is coming up in 2016. We have renovated and upgraded the palace of Gulmarg as a convention centre. Centres are available in Pahalgam and another centre in Jammu is coming up shortly."

Elaborating on the promotional activities of the state, Shah says, "As part of the mar-

keting campaign, 10 food festivals, travel trade roadshows and golf road shows will be organised in prominent leisure and MICE markets. We have upgraded our infrastructure and recovered all systems of connectivity, even the rail and roadways. Jammu Airport will be upgraded by the end of 2016 and 1000 odd houseboats are also upgraded to offer the best to tourists." Shah also revealed that international chains like ITC, Carlson are constructing new properties in the state.

**Tourists' Paradise**

- ← Dara-Harwan in Kashmir and Sanasar in Jammu region are being developed as adventure tourism spots
- ← The 2,106 small and medium sized high altitude lakes make J&K an ideal state for water tourism
- ← Jammu Airport will be upgraded by the end of 2016

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# Tech conclave to encourage innovations

FICCI's Travel & Hospitality Tech Conclave will bring together global leaders as well as start-up innovators to secure new business opportunities, increase brand awareness and to network with key industry leaders.



TT BUREAU

The first ever travel and technology event, organised by FICCI, will be held from March 18-19 in New Delhi. The two-day event will attempt to facilitate communication and exchange of ideas and knowledge between key industry stakeholders, conglomerates, influencers and policy makers and will address the technolog-

ical advancement in the field of travel and hospitality.

The conclave offers a platform for business networking meetings where participants will get the opportunity to interact face to face across the table with prospective clients. Candidates can also exhibit and showcase products by taking a booth or a meeting room which lends a one-on-

one interaction with potential buyers. In addition, a Travel Start-up Knockdown Contest will be held where travel start-up companies will be given 10 minutes to pitch their ideas in front of a panel of judges.

The event also includes talks by key personalities from the travel and hospitality industries who will discuss various topics on revenue manage-

ment, marketing, data analytics, among many others. Some of the key speakers include **Anil Parashar**, President & CEO, Interglobe Technology Quotient, **Mike Kistner**, CEO, RezNext Global Solutions, **Manoj Chacko**, CEO, Business Travel, Kuoni Travels, **Samyukth Sridharan**, President & COO, Cleartrip, **Ankush Nijhawan**, Managing Director, Nijhawan Group &

## Event Highlights

- ▶ Interactive knowledge sessions by industry leaders
- ▶ Business Networking Meetings - Opportunity to interact face to face across the table with prospective clients
- ▶ Exhibition and Technology Showcase - Exhibit and showcase your product by taking a booth or a meeting room
- ▶ Travel Startup Knockdown Contest - A Pitching contest by Travel startups - Travel startup companies are given ten minutes to pitch their ideas in front of a panel of judges

## Another feather in Bonton's cap

Avanish Sharma, Founder & Managing Director, Bonton Group, was recently felicitated with the 'Glory of India' Award at Dubai.



Avanish Sharma, Founder & Managing Director, Bonton Group

The Founder and Managing Director of Bonton Group of companies, **Avanish Sharma** was felicitated by **H.E. T.P. Seetharam**, Ambassador of India to the UAE, in Dubai for his outstanding achievements and distinguished global services towards travel and hospitality industry.

Avanish, who comes from a humble background, received his secondary education from Colvin Taluqdars' College, Lucknow, and graduated in Economics and MBA in Finance. He strongly believes that technology will be a game changer in the travel industry and emphasises on implementing best technology solutions at Bonton.

His focus on technology made him to start Bonton Infotech last year to work on Innovative solutions for trav-

el technology. Bonton Infotech has an experienced information technology team that works as an independent IT company for its clients.

Bonton Tours & Travel LLC, formed in 2008 in Dubai, is a leading destination management company in UAE that serves more than 40,000 tourists every year.

Seeing the potential in India' domestic and international tourism sectors, he started a travel management company in India, Bonton Holidays Pvt. Ltd in 2009. Both India and Dubai companies have seen year-on-year growth in business and infrastructure. The Dubai-based company today owns one of the largest fleets of vehicles and a 110-feet multi-level luxury yacht. Bonton has also extended its footprints at

Mauritius and Sweden by setting up its operations in these destinations.

In 2010 he was awarded in Dubai with India Achievers Award. Travel



Industry recognized Bonton's services in the form of many awards such as Most Innovative Travel Management Company, Best Travel Management Company, Top Travel

Organizers, Market Development Award, Business Development Award.

Avanish, who is based out of Dubai, likes to be connected with the travel fraternity in India as well and loves meeting travel agents and hoteliers to get their direct feedback. He was invited as one of the guests at National CSR Summit along with our Tourism Minister and many other dignitaries from the United Nations, large corporates and government departments. He is serving as director on the board of Vibhs Financial, UK and advisory boards of several other institutes.

Before venturing to become an entrepreneur,

always dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur and hoped to form a big company which would create job opportunities for people of different educational qualifications and skillsets. Blessed with clear vision and astute business sense, Avanish formed his first company, Bonton Tours & Travel LLC in 2008 at Dubai. Bonton Tours & Travels serves more than forty thousand tourists every year.

However, by conventional wisdom, 2008 was not a good time to incubate such ideas due to global financial crisis. He recalls that in times of great stress and continued pressure due to recession in the market, he faced criticism from all his well wishers but his wife, Lakshmi always supported him to plan his long travels of many many weeks to

rise from the hard times. He used to work 20 hours a day and learned a lot. Even today, Avanish feels that listening to his heart was the best decision he made.

CEO, Travel Boutique, **Alok Bajpai**, Co-Founder & CEO, IXIGO.

In addition, participants can look forward to panel discussions and debates on topics such as 'Technology and the new corporate traveller', 'Using Content and Social Media for Travel & Hospitality Business', 'The Future of Travel & Hospitality- What Technology Offers', 'Online Travel Market Places – The Next Wave', including others, at the event.

## Travel management on a click with Routofy

■ Routofy Services, a start-up for travel planning, is providing a multi modal travel experience to its clients through technology. An application-based service, Routofy combines flights, trains, buses and cabs to give users a coordinated travel itinerary.



**Ronak Gupta**  
Chief Executive Officer  
and Co-founder, Routofy

Routofy has tied up with local travel agents in various cities to offer a packaged itinerary from point to point. The company is focussing on the corporate clientele. **Ronak Gupta**, Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, Routofy, says, "We accompany travellers on their journey through our travel assistance such as last-minute cab bookings, web check-in, transport delay information etc. We will be focussing meticulously on corporate accounts and have introduced features for complete travel management such as compliance assurance of company's travel policy, 24x7 hotline for instant response, data-based travel insights to promote savings, etc."

# Direct flights to Indonesia

In order to boost numbers from India, Indonesia is in talks to introduce direct flights and the airline will touch three cities of Mumbai, New Delhi and Chennai.

**HAZEL JAIN**

After free visa-on-arrivals for Indians, Indonesia will soon announce direct flights to India by December 2016. Revealing this was **Saut Siringoringo**, Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia, who said that Indonesia's Minister of Transportation met the concerned authorities at Make in India week in Mumbai for this. "We already have bilateral agreements with India. We were in discussions with various airlines including AirAsia and Garuda Indonesia. But Garuda will not happen this year," he said, implying that AirAsia might be the chosen one. Their target is to start the same before December 2016.

The airline will start with three Indian destinations: Mumbai-Bali, Jakarta-Delhi and Chennai-Medan and will be the only airline operating direct flights for the next eight years. The Consul General added that his government is



**Saut Siringoringo**  
Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia

also looking at increasing the number of ports that can sanction free visa-on-arrivals. "Indians are currently allowed free visas-on-arrival only through nine ports. We will open entry from all ports for free visas this year. We are setting up infrastructure at these airports," he said. Indonesia will soon add more countries who can apply for free visas. Siringoringo also hinted at extending the number of days for free visas-on-arrival from the current 30 days to 60 days.

The country has also been upgrading its internal

tourism infrastructure. Last year it received around 10 million international tourists of which India was a quarter. "In 2015, we expected around 2,50,000 arrivals from India, but the numbers show we have exceeded that with 2,71,000 Indians. In 2016, we expect to welcome 3,50,000 at least. Free visa-on-arrival is one of the factors for this although \$35 for an Indian tourist is nothing," Siringoringo adds.

Indonesia has also increased its budgets for the India market from IDR 1 billion in 2015 to IDR 4 billion this year despite India ranking only number seven among its source markets. The tourism board is now gearing up for PATA 2016 that will be held in Jakarta.

### Fact File

- ➔ 3,50,000 Indian tourists expected in 2016
- ➔ PATA 2016 will be held in Jakarta

# Looking at Bali & beyond

The five-city roadshow conducted by U&I Holidays focused only on Bali with about 25 suppliers travelling to India to meet the travel agents here.

**TT BUREAU**

Bali is a popular destination with Indians and leveraging on this sentiment, the Director duo from Mumbai-based U&I Holidays **Ashish Indulkar** and **Shyam Upadhyay** recently concluded their five-city roadshow that focused on Bali. Starting in New Delhi, the show travelled to Chennai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad and finally Mumbai. Indulkar says, "We were pleasantly surprised by the response. We had committed 100 buyers in each city to our partners but we got more. Delhi got 120 buyers, Chennai saw 96 buyers, Bengaluru had 110 while Ahmedabad and Mumbai were a record-breaking 150 buyers."

Speaking on why they chose to do a Bali-specific roadshow, Upadhyay says, "When we promote Bali we also want people to take extensions to Lombok or Yogyakarta and other places. The focus on Bali attracts the attention of people, and once we do that



**Ashish Indulkar**  
Director  
U&I Holidays



**Shyam Upadhyay**  
Director  
U&I Holidays

we try to capitalise on other regions of Indonesia."

He added that about 2,50,000 people from India had travelled to Indonesia in 2015. Of this, about 90,000 went to Bali. "But this is too less for a destination when we compare it with places like Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. The market is doing very well and we have to shape it up now. The visa-on-arrival is now free for Indians, the departure tax has been abolished and there is a direct flight starting soon this season. With these developments, we expect Bali to double the number of arrivals.

U&I Holidays will now be increasing its sales teams across India. It has appointed teams in Ahmedabad, Chennai and Bengaluru. But Tier-II cities are important as well like Pune, Nagpur, Raipur and Hyderabad.

"We will also open new markets and appointing a representative in Dubai soon who will look after the Middle East market. We will also venture into Europe; we already have a representative in Malaysia as it is the third largest market for Indonesia. In Sri Lanka also we have a representative."

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# AI connects Delhi-Vienna

Come April 6, Air India will commence flights between Delhi and Vienna, making it the national carrier's eighth European destination. The flight will operate thrice a week on AI's Boeing 787.

**NISHA VERMA**

On this latest addition to Air India's destination list, **Pankaj Srivastava**, Director-Commercial, Air India, said, "We are very happy to announce that we would be connecting Delhi directly with Vienna in Austria with our flagship aircraft Dreamliner 787. This flight would be thrice a week, operating on Wednesdays, Fridays, Sundays and would return next morning."



**Pankaj Srivastava**  
Director-Commercial  
Air India

destinations like Bangkok, Kathmandu, Colombo and other destinations connected through Delhi.

The Delhi-Vienna direct flight was announced within three months of the national carrier launching a direct flight to San Francisco, which has recorded a Passenger Load Factor of around 80-85 per cent. "The San Francisco flight is doing exceedingly well. We got only 40 days before the launch to sell the flight and we are happy to say that the first few months of operations resulted in operational surpluses," said Srivastava.

With these two big announcements Air India is on a brand building spree. Srivastava revealed, "We are ensuring that the on time performance is improved and cleanliness of the aircraft is there. We are also improving our customer service experience, and have upgraded our catering, which would eventually help in building the brand."

Austrian Airlines will replace its existing five weekly services to Vienna, in turn connecting to over 25 destinations in Europe. "We already have a strong presence in Europe with direct operations to seven cities, and Vienna would be the eighth. We would be getting around six Dreamliners by the end of this year, then we will look at new markets like Barcelona, Madrid, Copenhagen and Stockholm."

However, Air India is using its existing fleet for the Delhi-Vienna flight and will be offering further connections in India as well as international

## Vienna Connection

- Delhi-Vienna-Delhi will depart at 1400 hrs from Delhi and arrival at Vienna at 1845hrs (local time)
- The return flight will depart from Vienna at 2245hrs and arrive in Delhi at 0925hrs (IST)

# AirAsia X restarts Delhi-KL

AirAsia X has re-launched flights on the Delhi-Kuala Lumpur (KL) route from February, making it the airline's seventh destination in India.

**TT BUREAU**

Restarting operations on the Delhi-Kuala Lumpur route after three years, Air Asia X's move comes in time to fill the gap created by Malaysian Airlines. Speaking at the launch of the flight, **Benjamin Ismail**, Chief Executive Officer, Air Asia X Berhad, said, "The new flight not only would offer better connectivity to Kuala Lumpur, but also to other countries like Japan, Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam through our extensive network."

Revealing why the route was restarted, he said, "Earlier the foundation was not made, and when we came in, the distribution channel was not set up. I think it was the right time to pull out. But I think in the last three years we have done a lot of work in India with Air Asia India and have learnt a lot. We work together as a brand. There is a huge sales team as well as a commercial team in



**Benjamin Ismail**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Air Asia X Berhad

India, which we have started now, and Delhi is our seventh destination in India."

However, on working with agents in India, Ismail said that in India, they can't ignore the agents. "In Asia, the market is very FIT driven and almost 85 per cent booking is done online. But there are markets like Indonesia where majority of people don't have credit cards and cannot do online bookings. I believe even India has the same issue. So we have to work with the agents and they are big in rural areas," he added.

In terms of expansion, however, Ismail said that they currently want to start operating only in two cities where they had stopped operations—Delhi and Mumbai. "After Mumbai we want to look at Amritsar, Ahmedabad and other smaller cities, which don't have any bilateral issues and are open markets. But currently we only want to focus on Delhi," he said.

We fly to almost every South Indian destination from KL. The missing link was Northern India, which we have started now. Delhi is our 7<sup>th</sup> destination

India, and they know the right people and help us. We fly to almost every South Indian destination from KL. I think the only missing link was Northern



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# Give fillip to jungle experiences, safaris

## Involve private sector

► Contd. from page 2

wild to offer tourists a luxury experience."

**Shobha Mohan**, Founder Partner, RARE Destinations, points out that Wildlife Tourism has been on the rise, based on the increasing number of visitors coming to their lodges. "There is an increase in numbers to lesser known parks like Pench, Tadoba and Satpura which takes pressure off parks like Ranthambore, Bandhavgarh and Kanha and indicates that the traveller is looking at more than just tigers and jeep safaris as jungle experiences," she adds.

Elaborating on the products on offer in wildlife tourism, **Sanjay Basu**, Managing Director Far Horizon Tours, says, "From eco-lodges ranging from 3-5 star and deluxe categories to very high quality expedition style river cruise ships like the M.V Mahabaahu on the Brahmaputra river from which elephant, jeep and boat safaris are being done in Kaziranga National park are available." Mohan identifies species such as leopards, sloth bears, gaurs, elephants, wild dogs, reindeer, snakes,



**Shobha Mohan**  
Founder Partner  
RARE Destinations

Marketing Wildlife tourism has a very narrow scope presently because the entire diversity of offerings are not being projected.

etc. also make for a good wildlife experience.

Basu feels that India's wildlife is an undersold story with a high degree of focus on the tiger alone and not much promotion of the vast variety of fauna available. Mohan



**Sanjay Basu**  
Managing Director  
Far Horizon Tours

India needs to get across the message globally that it is the world's second best destination for wild mammals

adds, "Marketing Wildlife tourism has a very narrow scope presently because the entire diversity of offerings are not being projected."

Talking about the challenges being faced by this segment, Madhok identifies that



**Vinayak Koul**  
Director  
SnowLion Expeditions

The uncertainty in safari prices is a serious crisis amidst lack of infrastructure and facilities inside and around the parks

this segment picked up well in the last quarter of 2015 but has not flourished yet in comparison to previous years. Basu says, "Incredible India needs to get across the message globally that India is the world's second best destination for wild mammals and one

of the best destinations for bird species."

**Vinayak Koul**, Director, SnowLion Expeditions, adds "The uncertainty in safari prices is a serious crisis amidst lack of infrastructure and facilities inside and around the parks. Fewer numbers of allotted daily safaris from the parks is hard to manage during season time and non-practical time limits to book safaris months in advance is a deterrent."

Anand feels that selling wildlife is a very specialised sector. It is imperative that the agents spend time on ground with firsthand knowledge. Knowledge of flora, fauna and photography is the expectancy. Right season, up to date knowledge of the changes in habitat, stories revolving on the particular national park, make packaging even more interesting.

The industry feels there is a need to promote wildlife apart from the tigers and lions and hopes for better government initiatives and campaigning on a global scale to harness the potential of wildlife tourists.

► Contd. from page 2

public infrastructure needs to be developed at important hotspots which will then trigger the private sector to build up the infrastructure.

A major component of any place with high tourism potential is its brand image. "Just as everyone associates Kerala as God's Own Country, the North East needs to have a similar identity," Billa shares. "Currently, these states are being portrayed as Paradise Unexplored. Brand communication needs to be heavily worked and should be consistent."

Furthermore, the Government of India has allocated 10 per cent of MOT's budget towards the North Eastern states to promote development. Billa states, "For the past few years, we have been exceeding the limit up to 15-20 per cent. Apart from that, we have formed circuits under the Swadesh Darshan scheme on eco development and wildlife etc., along with a special North East circuit. We are putting a lot of money into these states. What I am keen to see is matching private investments."

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9 Dec. 2015 onwards	CZ360/359	A330-200	4 seats	24 seats	47 seats	141 seats	216 seats



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## Philippines brands 100 radio cabs



Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines, branded 100 radio cabs in Pune and Ahmedabad. The branding coincides with the 'Visit the Philippines Year (VPA) 2016' roadshow, which the tourism department conducted for its travel trade partners in the cities of Pune and Ahmedabad on February 22 and 24, respectively.

## Hyderabad prepares for SKÅL

Newly-elected president of SKÅL International, Nigel Pilkington identifies trends in the travel industry and talks about India's booming tourism sector.



AHANA GURUNG

SKÅL Delhi recently held its Annual Ball where SKÅL International's Executive Committee graced the networking event with their presence. Pilkington shares that apart from attending the exclusive event, the other agenda of their trip to India is in Hyderabad. "Since the

SKÅL World Congress will be held in Hyderabad in 2017, we are heading there to sit with the Hyderabad team and see what we can do to help," says Pilkington. "We plan to gather over 700 SKÅL leagues next year."

Referring to SKÅL International's latest initiatives, Pilkington informs that

modernisation is the next step. "During my tenure, I want to introduce change in this 82-year-old institution," he shares. "We need to change with the changing times, and as a result, we have introduced new categories for membership such as medical and sports tourism. As always, we will be constantly looking to increase our membership and grow our family."

Witnessing global trends, he feels that travellers have matured. He says that now, people want to experience more than just going to places.



Nigel Pilkington  
President, SKÅL International

Since the SKÅL World Congress will be held in Hyderabad in 2017, we are heading there to sit with the Hyderabad team and see what we can do to help

He elaborates, "They want to understand the culture, try different cuisines, network and connect with people from other cultures. One-on-one travel has become more popular than travelling in groups. Apart from that, while larger hotels will always do well, the smaller ones have become equally popular." He adds that environmental and sustainable tourism have also become an integral part of the industry.

While the tourism industry all over the world continues to grow, Pilkington opines that India's booming tourism sector is one of the fastest growing ones in the world. "The addition of new routes has opened it up to the world and every year, India draws a multicultural set of tourists. And with the way the government is taking steps to improve infrastructure, the industry can only grow." 



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# Rwanda ties with TAAI, TAFI Preserving India's heritage

The East African country, Rwanda will work with TAAI and TAFI to showcase its tourism potential to travel agents, especially with direct Rwanda-Mumbai flights from this September.

The 5<sup>th</sup> India Heritage Tourism Conclave 'Making Incredible India – Swachh, Sundar & Sashakt Bharat,' was held at Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

TT BUREAU

The Rwanda Tourism Chamber has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) as well as the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) to promote the destination in India. The

with TAAI on February 18 during OTM Mumbai in the presence of **Jay Bhatia**, Treasurer and Tourism Council Chairman of TAAI, and **Marzban Antia**, Vice President of TAAI. Later that evening, Rwanda also signed a MoU with TAFI during its event 'Remarkable Rwanda' in the presence of TAFI

workshops, roadshows and fam trips. We will be guiding them on how to increase numbers, what they need to do for that, how they can increase MICE volumes, and advise them on what Indians look for in a destination." Rwanda Chamber of Tourism will work with TAAI to promote tourism in both countries.

Ahmed says, "The idea is to see how to increase tourism from India to Rwanda and the other way round. We will now be working out a plan with Rwanda. At the moment, the travel trade in India does not have enough exposure to Rwanda and what it has to offer. With the soon-to-start direct flights from September, we are sure the numbers will increase both ways." RwandAir will be coming into India for the very first time with four weekly flights from Mumbai to Dar-es-salaam and Dar-es-salaam to Kigali. Rwanda is trying to acquire flying rights to connect Mumbai with Kigali directly on RwandAir.

National President **Zakkir Ahmed**, **Anny Batamuriza**, Vice Chair of Rwanda Tourism Chamber, and **Linda Mutesi**, Tourism Marketing Division Manager, Rwanda Development Board.

Bhatia explains, "We are going to promote bilateral tourism between India and Rwanda through education,



presence of a sizeable delegation from Rwanda that was visiting India for the first time, led by **H.E. Ernest Rwamucyo**, High Commissioner of Rwanda, New Delhi showed how serious the country is in tapping this market.

Rwanda Tourism Chamber is an integral part of the Rwanda Private Sector Federation. It signed an MoU

KANCHAN NATH FROM JAIPUR

The day-long conclave was organised by PHD Chamber and supported by the Ministry of Tourism (MOT). Special addresses were given by **H.E. Sabit Subasic**, Ambassador of

An extensive study on Tourism was also launched at the event. The first technical session saw discussions on "Opportunities and Challenges- Making Incredible

tions" was discussed in the last session of the day.

Addressing the conclave, **Anil Khaitan**, Vice President, PHD Chamber, said, "16 airstrips in Rajasthan are not in use, these are in Jhunjhunu, Kolana, Lalgarh, Hamirgarh, Daura, Naugaul, Noon, Phalodi, Sirohi, Sojat, Sawai Madhopur, Tarapura, Mount Abu Road, Thana Gazi, Parihara and also that three airports, which are in the hands of private groups, have not started. We really need to work on this and improve connectivity. Small town connectivity has to be made; this will help increase tourism by leaps and bounds."

**Parvez Dewan**, Advisor to the Governor, Jammu and Kashmir Government, said that there is a trend among hotels to have a sense of the place; this is well evinced in heritage hotels especially in Rajasthan. He urged hoteliers to definitely have a library in their hotels with books on heritage.



Bosnia and Herzegovina; **Ajay Data**, Chairman, Rajasthan Chapter, PHD Chamber; **Vijay Goel**, President, Heritage India Foundation and former MP, and special guest **Parvez Dewan**, Advisor to the Governor, Jammu and Kashmir Government.

India: Swachh, Sundar, Sashakt Bharat," followed by a second session on "Importance of Start-ups in contributing to the restoration of Indian heritage and hospitality" and "Role of Royal families of India in preserving Indian heritage for across all genera-

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EVENTS, MEETINGS, INCENTIVES, CONFERENCING, EXHIBITIONS,

# Nepal's tourism agenda on global stage

PATA Nepal is organising 'The Bloggers and International Media Conference' this year as part of its tourism recovery plan and as a showcase for tourism products.

TT BUREAU

**Suman Pandey**, Chairman, PATA Nepal Chapter, says that in the wake of the earthquake, a team of experts from PATA International assisted Nepal to chalk out a Crisis Management and Tourism Recovery plan. One of the key aspects of the plan addresses the need for an effective international campaign that sends the message of normalcy in the country to international shores.

"The Bloggers and International Media Conference will be held this year. This move comes as part of the recovery plan to show them the long-lasting beauty of the country. Participants will also be taken on Fam trips to various locations in the country which are well known for culture and heritage, landscape, wildlife, and adventure tourism," he informs.



**Suman Pandey**  
Chairman, PATA Nepal Chapter

"Redefining our brand image is also one of the chief features which have been implemented well with the tagline 'Nepal back on top of the world'. Social media also plays a crucial role in spreading the word of Nepal's readiness to welcome back tourists," says Pandey.

"There is no dearth of investment from the private sector, but the government has to provide an effective environment where growth can be encouraged," he opines.

# Rebuilding strong tourism foothold

Nepal Tourism Board has launched 'Nepal Now,' a marketing campaign directed towards propagating positive and fact-based information on the country's progress. **Deepak Raj Joshi**, CEO, Nepal Tourism Board, shares the intricacies.

AHANA GURUNG

Tourism is one of the main contributors to Nepal's economy and a way to enhance the image of the country, informs Joshi. "Our policies are focused on encouraging sustainable tourism, equitable distribution of tourism benefits thereby leading to greater harmony," he shares. "We are also focusing on increasing tourism through product diversification with promotion of potential tourism areas and domestic tourism. Expanding economic opportunities and increasing employment in the tourism sector by growing inbound tourism in Nepal has been our top priority."

While recovery efforts have been ongoing post the devastating earthquake, NTB has conducted a series of promotional activities to spread the message of normalcy in the country. Joshi comments, "We've been hosting tour and media fam trips, participating in major trade fairs in major source markets across the

world, and are deeply involved in the promotion of different events and campaigns. Our efforts are directed towards disseminating positive and fact-based information on

user generated content from its website [www.nepalnow.org](http://www.nepalnow.org) and social media handles. Even in this short while, the campaign has gained immense popularity and suc-

cess, with constant photos and status updates from visitors, which reiterates that Nepal's strong position on the global tourism map will always prevail," he says. However, only a joint effort from every segment of the industry would ensure an efficient recovery, feels Joshi.

"We've been hosting tour and media fam trips, participating in major trade fairs in source markets across the world, and are deeply involved in the promotion of different events and campaigns."



**Deepak Raj Joshi**  
CEO, Nepal Tourism Board

Nepal with a message that all is well and normal again in this Himalayan country."

Joshi further adds that their 'Nepal Now' campaign has been quite successful in imparting this message since its launch in August 2015. "The campaign aims to show the true picture of Nepal through

### Nepal Fact file

- ← 33 of a total of 35 trekking routes were unaffected
- ← 1,890 climbers received permits in Autumn 2015
- ← International and national events such as Pokhara Street Festival, Chitwan Elephant Festival, Kathmandu International Film Festival, Kathmandu Mountain Bike Fest, along with cultural celebrations took place
- ← Annual trend of Indian tourist arrivals to Nepal by air between 100,000-150,000 in the last decade

## 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.

A long table banquet at the world famous **Mughal Room**, High Tea or Sun-downer, Bar-b-que at the terrace **Sunset Lounge**, over looking the Taj Mahal & Agra Fort, an AV for the group at **Arjumand hall**, the new **Checkers Buffet**, the refurbished rooms & bathrooms, Gym by the garden, recreation center and signature massage at **Adiba Spa**, enrich the overall holiday experience.

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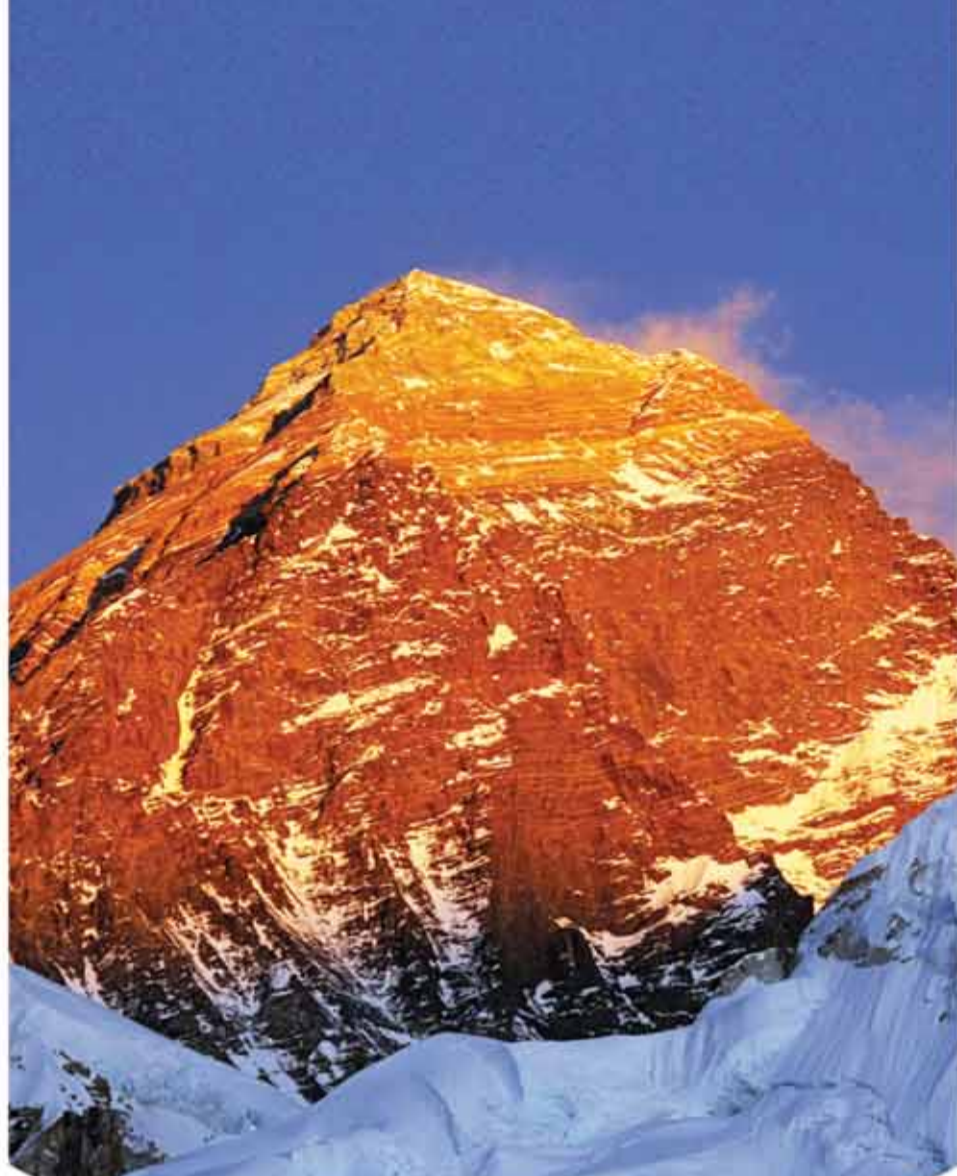
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## 24.8% growth in Bhutan's inbound

The Kingdom of Bhutan received 166,589 tourists in 2015, registering a growth of 24.8% over 2014.

TT BUREAU

The Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) is increasing its efforts to promote the kingdom's offerings by actively participating in international trade fairs and organising roadshows in key source markets, informs **Namgay Wangmo**, Marketing Manager for Regional Market, TCB. With the intention of making Bhutan's tourism products well-known in the international markets, Wangmo says that TCB will be participating in events like ITB- Berlin, JATA, SATTE, OTM and few other travel fairs. "We will also be organising seminars, roadshows and other tourism events in some of our major source markets," she says.

Eco-tourism, culture and heritage, festival tourism, adventure and sports tourism, are some of the country's most popular products. While spiritual tourism has always been



**Namgay Wangmo**  
Marketing Manager for Regional Market TCB

sought-after, wellness tourism is also catching up in the industry with several high-end properties providing services for wellbeing. "With the introduction of helicopter services, helicopter tours have become quite popular as well," Wangmo reveals, adding that homestays are a popular option with travellers as it gives them a one-on-one experience in the daily lives of the Bhutanese.

Bhutan's top five source markets are India, China, the U.S., Thailand and the U.K, she reveals.

## Customisation: Key to hospitality

**Sibi Mathew**, General Manager, Taj Tashi Thimphu, says that new experiences have become an integral part of guests' demands and identifies customisation and efficiency to be the most sought-after qualities in Bhutan's hospitality industry.

AHANA GURUNG

Located in the capital city of Thimphu, Taj Tashi embodies the very essence of Bhutanese traditions in its architecture in a contemporary setting. The property comprises a total of 66 rooms and suites, the Jiva Spa, two restaurants, a bar and a tea lounge, in addition is a 2,700 square feet conference hall with a capacity of 300 guests in theatre style and 150 guests in sit-down style seating, among other amenities, informs Mathew.

"India has remained the number one source market for Taj Tashi followed by USA and China," he informs. "Figures from Tourism Council of Bhutan show a total of 99,709 tourist arrivals as of August 31, 2015, of which 32,877 were international visitors and 66,832 regional visitors. Visitors from India, Maldives and Bangladesh are considered as regional tourists. Regional tourist arrivals continued to increase this year, as

of August 31, regional tourists recorded an increase of 77.25 percent compared to the same period last year." In 2014,

opt for newer experiences. "With the rising demands of the millennial market, the economy, and changing trends

factor, the primary focus is to improve efficiency in service and quality of food and service. Hotels are constantly weaving

"Customisation being the key factor, the primary focus is to improve efficiency in service and quality of food and service. Hotels are constantly weaving into unconventional spaces for guests to unwind and network in a better manner."

**Sibi Mathew**  
General Manager, Taj Tashi Thimphu



Bhutan received 133,000 tourists in total, out of which 68,000 were Indians, comprising 51 per cent of the total tourist arrivals. Mathew further says that the addition of Bhutan Airlines flights from Delhi to Paro observed upsurge in flow of tourists from India last year.

Addressing trends in the hospitality industry in Bhutan, Mathew says that guests now

in the F&B space, customers are driven less by brand loyalty and more by the search for novelty," he shares. Mathew also comments that hotels are becoming more efficient and customisable with services. "We have observed that a lot of the restaurants are dumping the concept of scrambling for clean menus while hotels are getting rid of chemicals and additive items in their menus. Customisation being the key

into unconventional spaces for guests to unwind and network in a better manner."

Mathew also highlights the country's increasing popularity for MICE and shares, "Of late, Bhutan has gained popularity to host meetings and conferences as it serves well as an offsite destination with unique experiences like river side picnics, rafting and short mountain hikes."

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# Changing roles of women in tourism

Once a male bastion, women are exerting themselves in all vocations in the tourism industry so much so that they are now becoming ambassadors of Brand India. To celebrate International Women's Day, TRAVTALK speaks to leading women of the industry.

HAZEL JAIN



Travel was my calling and fortunately it was easy to make that shift. I've been a part of this industry for 13 years and I have always seen this profession dominated by women. But only now have they started taking leading roles in the industry, spearheading companies and being recognised for their leadership. Indeed, women have redefined their roles and profiles and made a shift from the lower and middle category to the top.

**Sheetal Munshaw**  
Director – India, Atout France



The evolution of aviation in the 90's created many jobs and I was one of the lucky ones. Women played a major role at hospitality and airport counters, reservations desks, customer service, cabin crew, etc., but decision-making was still a male bastion. There were hardly any women managers/entrepreneurs. Fortunately, there was an influx of talented women from other industries and today, we see women entrepreneurs and managers driving some of the biggest tourism companies in India.

**Deepali Wagle**  
Director, Meandering Vacations



The role women play has changed over the years. Earlier, there weren't too many women in representation and in fact, there weren't so many representation companies here back then. But women were always part of this industry and even heading companies and the number only increases every year. Women now prefer being in the field rather than sitting in office. They have become ambassadors of India and can influence foreign travel agents and DMCs the right way.

**Anjum Lokhandwala**  
Founder and CEO, Outbound Konnections



The role women play in this industry has evolved just like in all other professions. We come across more and more women entrepreneurs today. With so many opportunities in tourism boards, representations of DMC's, etc women are seen in all spheres and are doing brilliantly well. We rock!

**Anju Tandon**  
CEO, Ark Travels



Storming a male bastion has turned into a habit for women now. Traditionally, women worked under someone's tutelage but never headed organisations. That has changed today. Being versatile, women have been constantly adding immense value and creativity to the industry. Moreover, international tourists feel reassured when they interact with an Indian female counterpart. Tourism is all about dealing with people and it suits women well.

**Tasneem Udaipurwala**  
Director, Wingspan Group



Women play a key role in positively influencing the international community. India Tourism as a whole needs to play a critical part in influencing international tourists, which means that when India represents itself in international trade, sports and tourism road shows, there must be a delegation representing women. This would portray that India leads by example and that if women are given key portfolios, the nation itself is safe.

**Jenaifer Daruwalla**  
General Manager, Maison de Voyage (Division of Zaka Group)



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# Making it big with small hotels

With his new product-Tree Life Hospitality, **Himmat Anand**, Founder, Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels, is set to make it big with small properties.

TT BUREAU

After tasting success with his first venture, Anand is now coming up with a new hospitality solution—Tree Leaf Hospitality. "I wanted to create a second brand so that we could be true in our offerings to our guests and Tree Leaf came about. We also wanted to expand our scope of activities. Tree Leaf Hospitality offers expertise right from the concept stage, where we actually get involved with owners in design, building and then operating. Owners have the option to choose any or all of these services. So the three key areas we cover are pre-opening services, operational services, and management services. However, we will not waiver from our core belief – small is beautiful and profitable. Tree Leaf Hospitality will operate in the 10 to 20 keys space," he says.

He claims that this is not just a marketing solution, but a management solution for small properties, "I have realised that many owners who build small



**Himmat Anand**  
Founder, Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels

Tree Leaf Hospitality offers expertise right from the concept stage, where we actually get involved with owners in design, building and then operating

stand-alone properties, do not give any deep thought to design, functionality and most importantly—where would the business come from and what is their market segmentation? This

is where Tree Leaf steps in. I believe that many small stand-alone properties lack the ability and band-width to position their property effectively on social media and in the online space, both of which are critical for success. Branding, reputation management, website development and up-gradation are also not given the importance they deserve," says Anand.

Only a month old, Tree Leaf Hospitality will be managing a beachfront property called Marari Sands in Kerala. There is a property in the Nubra Valley and one with Shirdi. Talks are on with two properties in the national parks of Madhya Pradesh. Stressing on the need for technology, he adds, "Tree Leaf Hospitality understands and believes in the reality that technology is the only way forward. So although we are a small brand, we are very proud of the technology driven internal systems, processes and controls that we have in place in our properties, across all departments."

# A glimpse of Delhi's heritage

Haveli Dharampura by WelcomHeritage opens with great excitement among the travel industry. Located close to the Jama Masjid, it is a unique experience for all heritage lovers.

SAMAPTI DAS

Haveli Dharampura by WelcomHeritage recently opened its doors at Chandni Chowk in New Delhi. The haveli in particular dates to

says, "it's not exactly a hotel but a monument in itself. It will be a very different and new experience for all the guests. This is a place where one can stay, eat, organise exhibitions and cultural programmes. One can

have been able to restore it. One can experience the true ambience of a haveli here as we have included outdoor activities like kabootarbazi (pigeon flying) and patangbazi (kite flying)," he says.



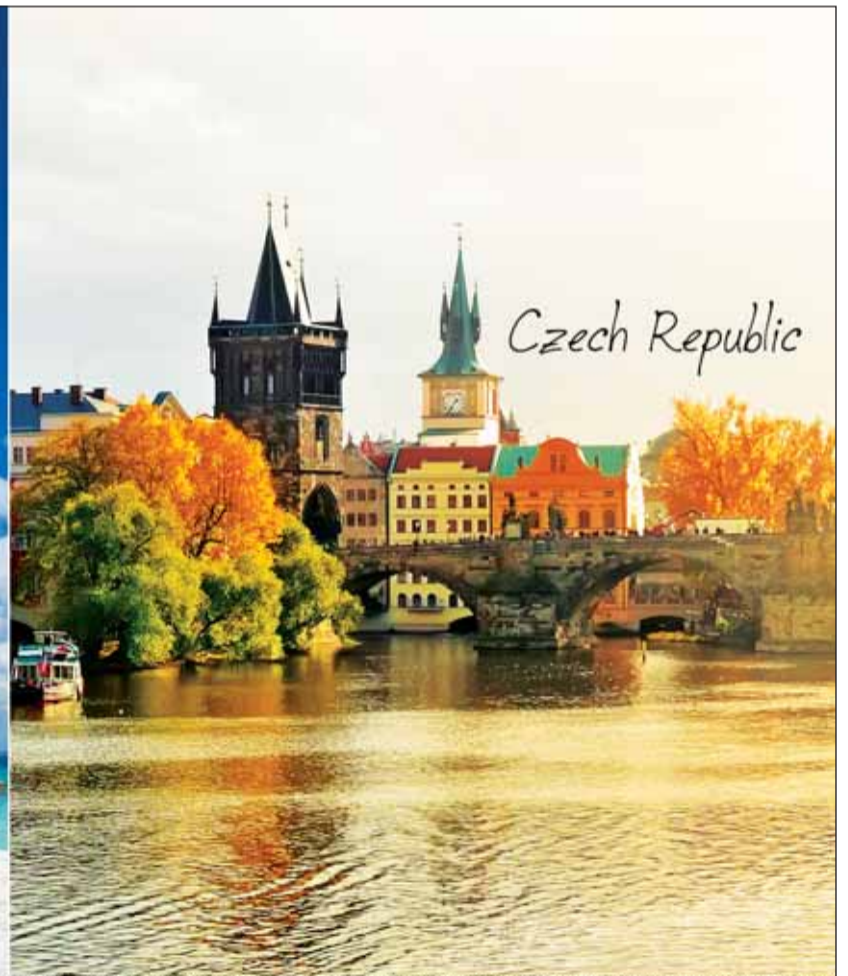
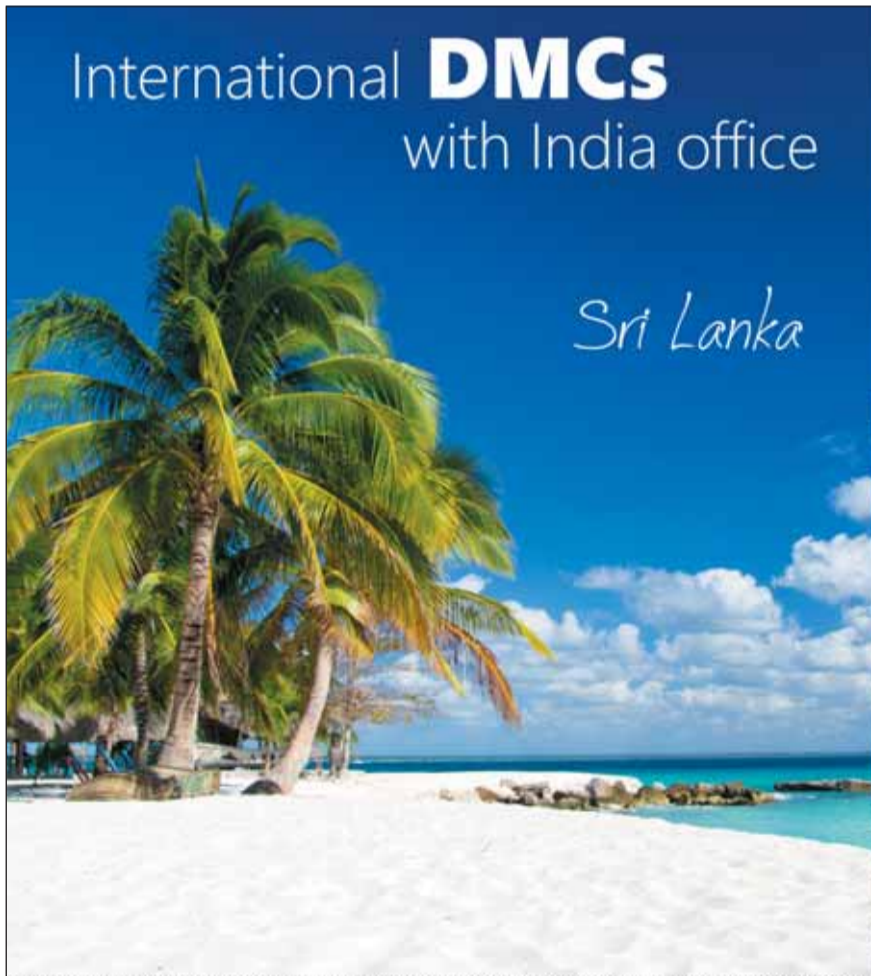
1887 AD. It has 13 rooms which include three Jharokha rooms, four Diwan-e-Khas rooms and six Shah Jahan suites. It has two restaurants, 'Lakhori' and rooftop 'Baradari', serving Indian, Mughlai, Continental and local street food.

feel calm amidst the chaos of Chandni Chowk." Goel says they are involving travel agents to attract foreign as well as domestic visitors.

Vijay Goel, President, Heritage India Foundation, and Former Member of Parliament recalls that they took over the two centuries old property when it was in a deplorable condition. "With six years of hard work, we

**Sunil Gupta**, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels, says to flag this haveli is a moment of pride for them. "WelcomHeritage is right now operating 42 properties. Our current agenda is to spread the brand and open properties in locations where we are not present like in Karnataka, Odisha, UP and MP," he adds.

**Sunil Sikka**, Head-Marketing & Business development, WelcomHeritage Hotels, is optimistic about this property in the heart of the national capital. "We are happy that we have something in the heart of the city which we never had. Everybody is thrilled about the property and I am sure that this haveli will be the most popular one in Delhi and will definitely do well."



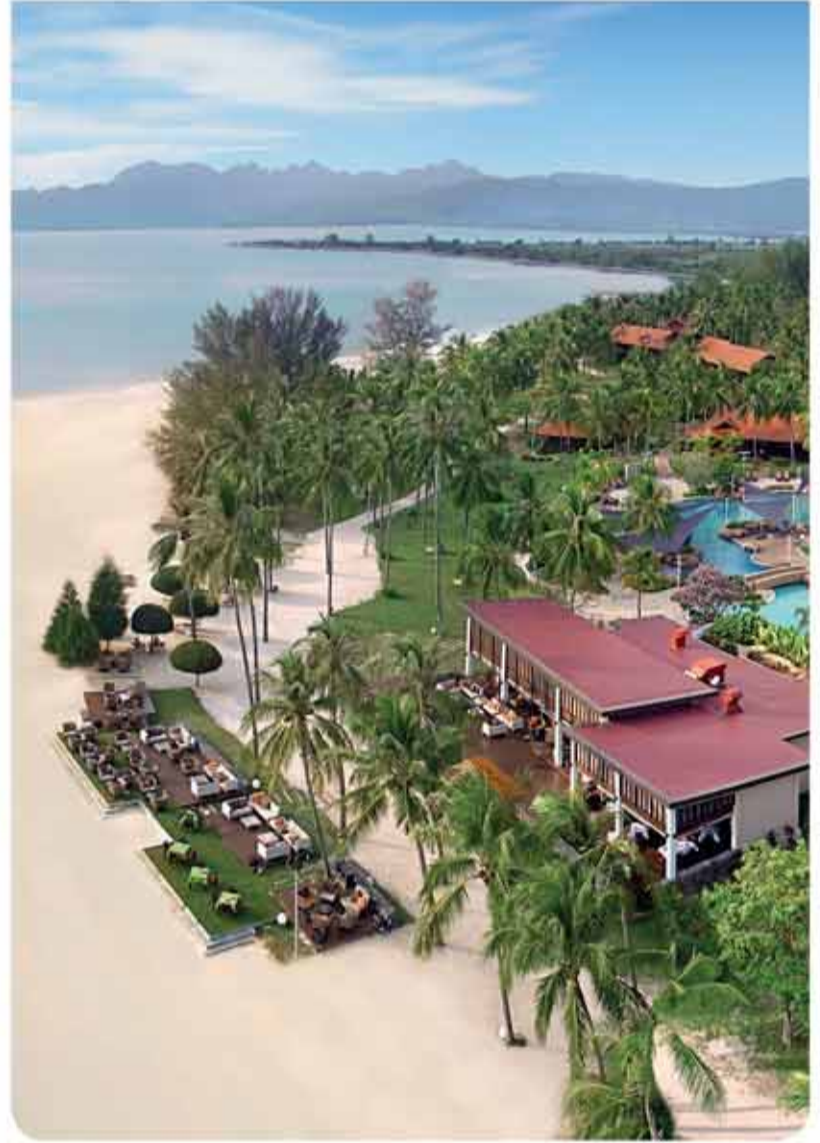
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# Pride's 1<sup>st</sup> upscale hotel

The Pride Group of Hotels launched their first upscale hotel, Pride Plaza Hotel, in New Delhi Aerocity, reveals **S.P. Jain**, Managing Director, the Pride Group of Hotels.

TT BUREAU

Regarding the USP of the property, Jain says, "Pride Plaza Aerocity is a hotel which is planned keeping in mind the Indian culture and provide Indian experiences to guests, whether they are foreign or Indian, coming from far and wide. The basic purpose is to



**S.P. Jain**  
Managing Director  
Pride Group of Hotels

provide guests an outlook about what Indian culture and hospitality is all about. We have provided different art works in each room, representations of which are in and around Delhi.

Besides this we have artworks in our public area which shows the culture and colours of India. We have done the same thing for the food. Our focus remains on Indian food besides foreign cuisines which obviously are there for foreign guests. We have trained our staff to give personalised service wherein they deliver our Indian motto, that is, *Atithi Devo Bhava*. This remains our main focus — whenever a guest walks in he should feel he is in India and carry a strong memory that inspired him to come back again and again."

Pride Plaza Aerocity has 385 rooms out of which 288 are operational right now. Also the starting tariff is ₹ 7,500++ for single occupancy.

### Proud Moment

- The hotel has 385 rooms out of which 288 are operational at present.
- The property represents Indian culture and art in all forms through art work in each of its rooms and lobby.

# Beating off-season woes

Seasons Hotel and Resort Nainital offers 4-star services to its guests with views second to none, claims **Ashok Kumar**, MD, Xperience India Hotels and Resorts.

TT BUREAU

Xperience India Hotels and Resort added Seasons Hotel and Resorts Nainital to its list of offerings in mid-2015 and Kumar informs that the response has been increasingly positive till date.



**Ashok Kumar**  
Managing Director  
Xperience India Hotels and Resorts

"We received tremendous acceptance from the public," he shares. "During peak season, we experienced more than 90 per cent occupancy rate and fared quite well even during the lean season." Kumar says that the hotel's strategic location, near the Mall Road, has been instrumental in the success of the property. He says, "Seasons Hotel is located hardly 100 metres from the Mall road. It consists of 16 well-appointed guest rooms out of which eight have balconies that overlook the mesmerising Naini Lake. All rooms are well equipped with amenities and services while there is ample parking space around the hotel."

During peak season, we experienced more than 90 per cent occupancy rate and fared quite well even during the lean season

"We utilised this gap as our strength and used it to add to our growth," he says. "We

take pride in our highly trained staff that brings forward the best services to our guests. In addition, a central reservation office located in Delhi makes it easier for our trade partners to make bookings or contact us for any queries. The office makes business more accessible and efficient and thus helps in our growth even further."

To expand their reach into more cities, Kumar says that they have also opened an office in Ahmedabad. He shares, "Tourists from Gujarat and Maharashtra are our biggest clients, who often opt for luxury, which is why we have recently opened doors of our newest office in Ahmedabad. Additionally, we also have a central reservation office located in Delhi makes it easier for our trade partners to make bookings or for any queries. The office makes business more accessible and efficient and thus helps in our growth even further." ➤

# Technology solutions on the go

Clay Telecom has launched counters at international airports in New Delhi and Chennai with plans to add more in the coming months, says its executive director **Gaurav Dhawan**.

TT BUREAU

**Q**Tell us about some of your initiatives for 2016.

We have huge expansion plans in India and abroad. To make the footstep strong in the industry, Clay Telecom has infused a fresh funding of \$1.5 million. We have started with launching airport counters at Delhi and 3 counters at Chennai and plans to launch other such counters are in the pipeline. We have also entered into new strategic alliances with travel agencies, banks, airlines, channel partners etc. to offer innovative and customised solutions to the customers. Considering the high demand of solutions from various HNI's/Travel/Business houses, we are planning to introduce various data solutions for all segments to ensure connectivity all over the world.



**Gaurav Dhawan**  
Executive Director  
Clay Telecom

We have strategic partnership with over 40 networks worldwide that enable us to offer solutions in over 200 countries. To have a better mix of price and technology, we have launched full MVNO in top travel market. This enables us to create unique products for traveller markets and allows us to manage the entire customer cycle from our back offices in India. To ensure consistent services across the world, we have retail operations in five continents including India, UK, USA, Japan and South Korea. Our presence is also increasing every year; we have cur-

rently expanded in over 25 locations with over 150 distribution point of contacts across India.

**Q**How do you counteract competition in the industry?

To ensure unparalleled services, we bring innovation while customising a solution that can benefit the customers during their travel. We are also working towards leveraging the existing alliances and adding new networks to ensure connectivity worldwide.

Starting from Global Email Services for BlackBerry, Global Prepaid Solution to the recent Global Data Solutions and China Prepaid SIM, we are the first company to introduce a telecom solution at a competitive price. Our support doesn't end till the SIM is delivered at their doorstep; we have dedicated customer support team who provides 24x7 back-up support for quick resolution during the trip. ➤

**Q**What efforts have been made to ensure seamless services?



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## Lavasa targets 1.5 lakh visitors

With new tourism offerings and hotels coming up in India's first smart city, Lavasa is all set to get record number of visitors this year.



TT BUREAU

Lavasa, touted as India's first smart city, is adding more products to its portfolio every year to attract visitors. **Rajiv Duggal**, Chief Executive Officer, Lavasa Corporation Limited, reveals, "Lavasa will always remain special because of multiple reasons ranging from being India's first smart city, the awesome weather, enchanting beauty that changes from day to night, a mesmerising lake front, over 50 and more kinds of cuisines on offer, addition of world class tourism activities and above all the love of 11 lakh tourists with average 1.8 day stay at Lavasa every year."



**Rajiv Duggal**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Lavasa Corporation Limited

In fact, Duggal said that 2016 should see this figure reach 1.5 lakh with an average stay of 2 nights, thanks to the new offerings in tow. "Our adventure activity based camp – Xthrill – has added

many new innovative products and continues to be a favourite with corporate team building. We have added the Jetovator along with new water based activities. We intend to commence nature walks with star-gazing in March 2016. The first Novotel Resort, along with a Holiday Inn Express property, are slated to go live this year."

Lavasa is also a popular destination for many events, says Duggal. "Apart from large events that we do once every quarter, this year we are planning on a large film festival that will take place at Lavasa, and we expect to showcase some of the best

movies from around our region. We also intend to commence roadshows in key tourism generating markets this year. Medical tourism will be another strong focus for us," he added.

Another highlight is the Lavasa International Convention Centre (LIICC), which is the third largest stand-alone international convention centre in the country, claims Duggal. "Business travel to Lavasa is large, with the addition of over 300 hotel rooms in 2016, and we should see this number increase even further. We do around 206 days of conferencing at this moment," he added.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Swosti luxury resort in Chilika

The Swosti Group is all set to launch its first luxury resort near Chilika Lake, Odisha in November for the domestic and international travellers in the region.



TT BUREAU

Talking about the new opening, **J.K. Mohanty**, Chairman & Managing Director, Swosti Group, says, "The Swosti Chilika Resort has 82 keys (presidential suite, pool villas, quad villas, hotel block), houseboats, spas, yoga centre, herbal gardens, water sports and much more. Keeping in mind the tourism potential of Chilika Lake and lack of resorts of international quality in the region for both high-end domestic and foreign tourists, Swosti Group would be unveiling the resort in November 2016. The company has also acquired land parcels for hotel and resort projects at Puri, Satpada and Bhitarkanika, all coastal areas within Odisha."



The Swosti Premium has the largest room inventory in Odisha, the largest convention facility in Eastern India and is a unique hospitality abode endowed with a host of facilities.

The Swosti Grand, has been renovated and is now one of the finest premium Boutique Hotel in the city. The Swosti Palm Resort is located on the shore of Gopalpur-on-

Sea. The historic lighthouse at Gopalpur-on-Sea will be converted into a tourist spot with state-of-the-art facilities very soon in the first phase of a project initiated by the centre, he informs.

Mohanty says, "All three of our properties have performed par excellence in 2015. Last year we conducted many mega residential conferences.

The occupancy in all our hotels was above 70 per cent with RevPar at `3,050 for Swosti Premium, `2,750 for Swosti Grand and `2,400 for Gopalpur Palm Resort. The ARR's were `4,950 of Swosti Premium, `4,050 of Swosti Grand and `3,050 of Gopalpur Palm Resort, Gopalpur-on-Sea."

Talking about new products that Swosti Travels, the travel agency of Swosti Group is offering in 2016, Mohanty elaborates, "Swosti Travels has recently launched exciting tour packages in absolutely new destinations in the state of Odisha. Most of the national and international tour operators have joined us to promote Odisha better."

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TT BUREAU

**Sandeep Shetty**, General Manager, Products and Operations, WOW Holidays, says, "We are a B2B company and create a WOW experience for both, the travellers and our travel trade partners. We also suggest out of the box and refreshingly new excursions and sights to the regular destinations." WOW Holidays is expanding the DMC operations

to Australia and New Zealand. Elaborating on the association with travel trade, Shetty says, "We assist our partners by imparting trainings to the staff and agents. We support them right from designing the itineraries, brochures and promotional materials to the actual operations and on tour branding." Shetty identifies the most popular destinations amongst the Indian travellers in 2015 and the emerging destinations

for 2016. He says, "Europe being an all-time favorite with Indians, Switzerland and France were the most popular countries visited in 2015. Australia has a great potential for growth in the coming years."

He adds, "Our strategy is to deliver 100 per cent satisfaction and value for money to our partners to garner more market share."



**Sandeep Shetty**  
General Manager, Products and  
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# 15% rise in charter travel

With the need for air ambulances and the govt looking at making dormant airports operational, charter aircraft business will only grow, says **Manav Singh**, Chairman, Imperial Holding Group.

TT BUREAU

With increasing disposable income in India, chartering an aircraft is no big deal for those who have the money. Echoing the same thought, Singh says, "Charter travel in India for the past six years has been growing at a steady 15 per cent a year, which is set to accelerate with many state governments—especially from the South and Northeast—setting up programs to make obsolete airfields operational. This is also true in the case of helicopter charters, wherein many state governments have started implementing plans for a number of helipads in their districts."

He adds, "The upper middle class is also growing and they have begun to charter for leisure as well as business purposes. This would also help those in need under the air ambulance segment, which gets regular income for charter operators."

For this reason, Imperial Air is expanding its fleet to



**Manav Singh**  
Chairman  
Imperial Holding Group

We have submitted applications in the DGCA to land at critical airfields where a few charter aircrafts go, like Leh, Kulu, Shimla, Srinagar and Kathmandu

cater to all segments. "Soon, Imperial Air's fleet would be able to cover 90 per cent

of the demand of corporate charter aircraft in India. In a year or so, we would look at intercontinental jets as well," he adds.

He further adds, "We are involved in domestic and medical evacuation services on a daily basis, and in two months it will get into international medical evacuations. We have submitted applications in the DGCA (Director General Civil Aviation) to land at critical airfields where a few charter aircrafts go, like Leh, Kulu, Shimla, Srinagar and Kathmandu."

Singh elaborated on their business model, saying, "Apart from regular ad hoc clients, we have religious packages, which offer same day/next day returns for ultra busy clients. Other than website promotions, we do extensive e-marketing and live presentations for travel agents, who form 20 per cent of our clientele. We also offer them incentives to market our fleet," he says.

# Caper eyes outbound

With new plans and projects underway, Caper Travel Company is certainly on an upswing. **Bharat Bhushan Atree**, Managing Director, Caper Travel Company, tells us more.

TT BUREAU

While many people claiming that the inbound industry is not doing so well, Atree claims that while tour operators are getting a little conservative in terms of spending and expansion, Caper is actually spreading its business in all domains. "We feel that it is an opportunity for us to enhance our operations and explore new markets. We know that the times are changing and we are adapting ourselves for different things," he says.

Talking about his company, Atree claims, "In 2015 we had 100,000 passengers coming in to India through us." The Caper Travel company has several brands under its umbrella, such as Hi-Life Tours, an online B2B portal which focuses on niche and high-end travel; Amantran, headed by **Deepak Bhatnagar**, looks into Japanese and Russian markets, Aayan Journeys focuses on the Australian and Far East



**Bharat Bhushan Atree**  
Managing Director  
Caper Travel Company

Softtix is our in-house software company offering high-end software, integrating our technology with our business partners in India.

markets, their hospitality brand-Era Hospitality, as well as its aviation arm Jet Concepts. The company also has recently launched their software arm.

"Softtix is our in-house software company offering high-end software, integrating our technology with our business partners in India. These are B2B2B software, and can control online hotel inventory, tour packages, air tickets, charter operations, and everything required by a travel company. At this point our software is capable of handling 500 bookings everyday with only six people working on it. Nobody in India has this kind of technology and we are looking at showcasing this product both in the local and overseas markets in 2016," Atree claims.

Atree informs that they are starting their outbound as well as domestic operations and are opening offices in major Indian cities like Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and a few cities in Punjab under the brand EasyHols. "We want to work with consolidators and partners, who have been sending groups to us, and now we want to reciprocate and send travellers from India to them," he adds.



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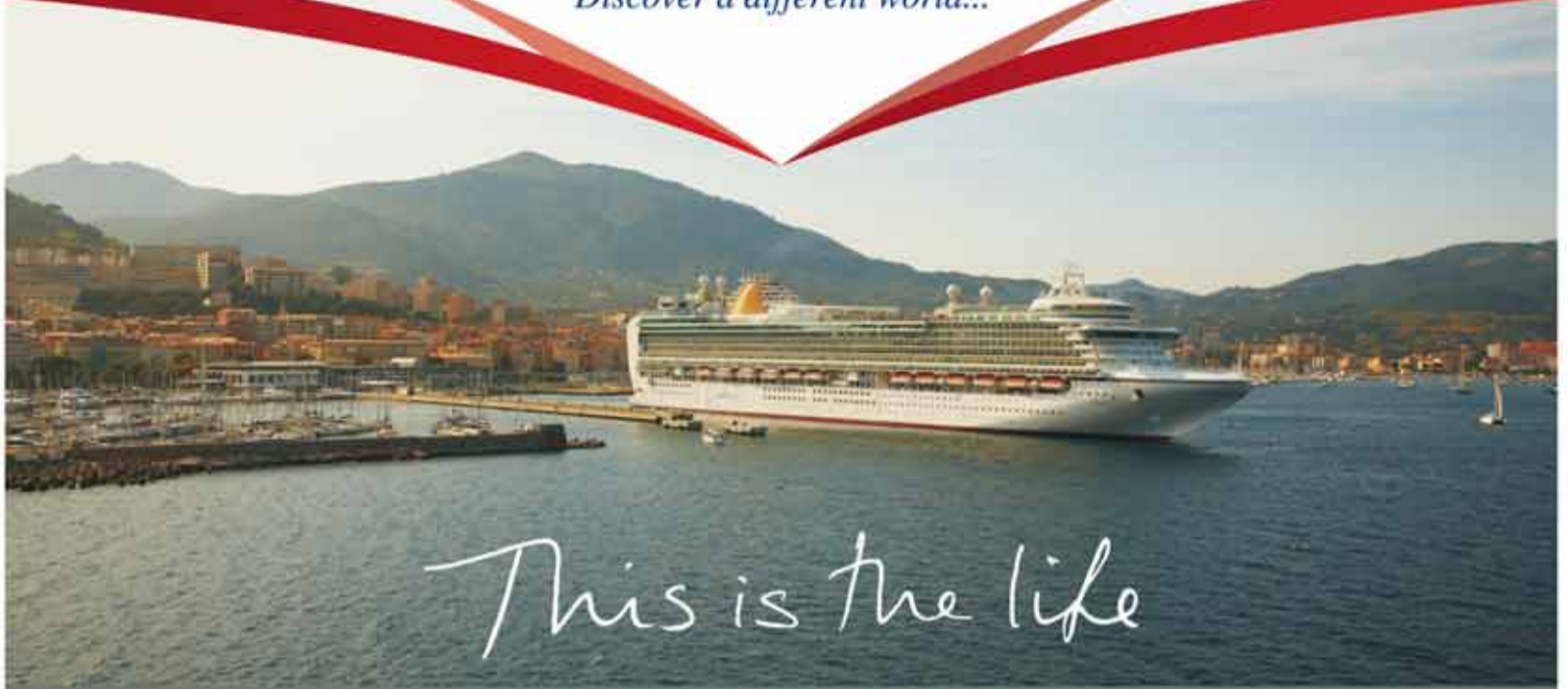


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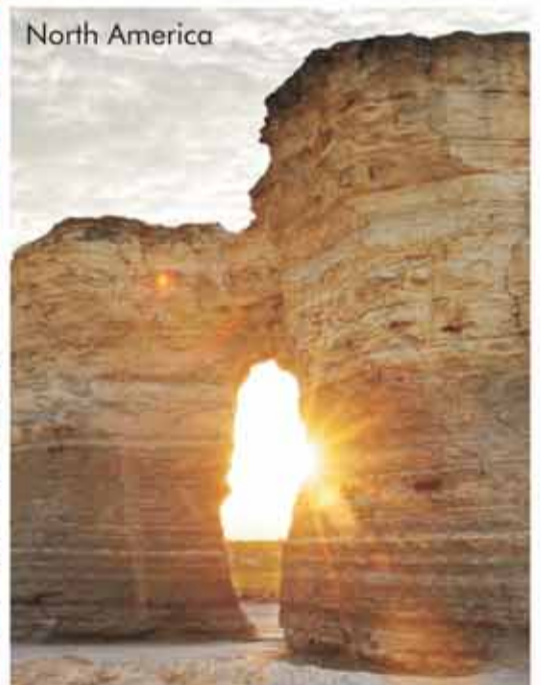
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# Central Europe gets popular Expanding into Tier-II & III

Tourism Enterprises represents world's renowned Destination Management Companies (DMCs) in India and offers services to outbound operators in India.



With Central Europe gaining popularity in the India market, Tourism Enterprises is also offering trips in Prague, Vienna, Salzburg, Budapest and Munich through a DMC brand in Czech Republic. **Ravi**

6,000 tourists through our Indian outbound tour operators to several countries, the most popular being Dubai, Sri Lanka and Greece."

"We have many enquiries in pipeline, so we hope coming summer will produce good numbers to this destination.

Talking about the assistance offered to Indian tour operators, Gosain says, "We reach our trade partners through personal visits, mailers, trade fairs and arrange local city based seminars. We ensure the quality, stability and reliability of the DMC which we promote in the Indian market."

Elaborating of the plans for 2016, Utkarsh adds, "We are working and planning investment in international DMCs to set up our own DMC to give trust and value to our B2B network in India. We already have a partnership in Haryard Tours-Dubai and Tourism Enterprises-Sri Lanka."

Gosain points out a trend of increased family travel and incentive groups. Gosain says, "We are focussing on the family segment of travel as this segment is inclined towards personalised trips and spends more in comparison to fixed departure tours."

Through our partner Travel Ways in Greece, we operated over 800 passengers in six months and are hopeful to do better in 2016," says **Kumar Utkarsh**, India Sales Head, Tourism Enterprises.



**Ravi Gosain**  
Managing Director  
Tourism Enterprises



**Kumar Utkarsh**  
India Sales Head  
Tourism Enterprises

**Gosain**, Managing Director, Tourism Enterprises, says, "2015 proved to be a successful year in terms of increased travellers as well as addition of new DMCs to our portfolio. In 2015 we sent over



Wingspan Holidays plans to increase its partnership with agents in Tier-II and Tier-III cities across India through personal visits, advertisements and social media.

In 2016, Wingspan Holidays intends to strengthen its sales support team as well as launch their new website with more than 200 suggested programs with reference images and detailed must do excursions. **Tasneem Udaipurwala**, Director, Wingspan Holidays, says, "We plan to increase our reach to the Tier-II and Tier-III city agents across India through personal visits, increased advertisements and social media."

Talking about the target segment of the company, Udaipurwala adds, "We have the expertise to cater to all kinds of diverse travel requirements including MICE, luxury and ultra luxury travelers as well as small private friends and family groups."

Discussing the association of the company with travel agents, Udaipurwala explains, "Wingspan Holidays has been working closely with the ever expanding network of B2B



**Tasneem Udaipurwala**  
Director  
Wingspan Holidays

We have been working closely with B2B travel trade agents and tour operators. Every year we develop new packages offering attractive commissions

travel trade agents and tour operators. Every year we develop new packages offering

attractive commissions to benefit the agents. We constantly provide product updates through regular mailers, destination guides, and advertisements in trade journals."

Speaking about the new products on offer for the industry, Udaipurwala says, "Every year we introduce newer less-travelled destinations for the matured clientele. Last year we sent large number of FITs and Incentive Groups to Georgia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. This year we have some great value Fly Cruise offers to Europe and Japan."

### Spreading Wings

- In 2016, the company is offering some great value Fly Cruise offers to Europe and Japan
- They plan to increase their reach to travel agents in Tier-II and Tier-III cities agents across India

# Minar Travels: GSA for Trans Asia Airways

Minar Travels has been recently appointed as the General Sales Agent (GSA) for Trans Asia Airways, Taiwan, and has also launched a new online B2B travel portal.



Speaking about the appointment of Minar Travels as a GSA and its roles, **Harvinder S. Duggal**, Managing Director, Minar Travels, India, says, "Trans Asia has plans to extend its operations in the India market and we are responsible for their marketing support in India."

Elaborating on the activities to be undertaken to market the airline, Duggal adds, "We provide the infrastructure and manpower to the airline to help them foray into the Indian market. One of the roles is to be a facilitator of information to the agents, provide them with adequate product knowledge through social media, regular mailers, newsletters and meetings and workshops. The dedi-

cated staff for the airline is responsible for sales, airport handling, fuelling, and other services depending on the kind of agreement that the companies have." Duggal also says that training of the appointed GSA's staff is of utmost importance. Explaining the same, Duggal says, "Any market that the airline forays into, they have to understand the market requirements and personalise

services. The airline maintains a standard quality of services across its operations and thus the staff of the GSA undergoes first an in-house training and then also sent for training by the airline where they are briefed about the functioning and quality standards of the airline."

### New B2B portal

Minar Travels also launched its online B2B portal

called TravBoon. Elaborating on the features of the portal, Duggal says, "TravBoon is an exclusive platform for Mahan Air Sales. Leading LCC and full service domestic carriers are available for booking. More than 24 hotel suppliers have been integrated for online booking. The portal offers both domestic and international tour packages for the tour operators. We offer a fully inte-



**Harvinder S. Duggal**  
Managing Director  
Minar Travels, India

grated and secured payment gateway along with a 24x7 customer support."

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# Credit card payments: Right foot forward

With Air India's announcement to accept corporate credit cards of travel agents for payments, travel industry claims that it will act as a trigger for other airlines to follow suit.

**NISHA VERMA**

Much to the excitement of the travel trade, Air India recently agreed to accept travel agents' corporate credit cards for bookings and payments. This was revealed by **Sunil Kumar**, President, Travel Agents

travel trade's transactions with Air India much easier."

The travel fraternity echoes this sentiment. **Rajan Sehgal**, President, TAAI-Northern Region, says, "The move comes as a small light in a tunnel, and is very encouraging for us since it would give

says, "The initiative will definitely help the agencies and improve the situation, especially while dealing with corporate clients." **Arunima Kundu Sharma**, Director - Marketing, Avatar India Holidays, adds, "It is going to be very useful, because it gives us the credit window, which airlines do not



**Surpal Singh**  
Director  
Maxxfun Holidays



**Arunima Kundu Sharma**  
Director - Marketing  
Avatar India Holidays



**Krishendu Mukherjee**  
Director  
Long Drive Holiday



**Pankaj Srivastava**  
Director-Commercial  
Air India



**Rajan Sehgal**  
President  
TAAI- Northern Region



**H.S. Duggal**  
Managing Director  
Minar Travels India

Association of India (TAAI), after their meeting with **Ashwani Lohani**, CMD, Air India; **Pankaj Srivastava**, Director-Commercial, Air India, and other representatives of the national carrier. Srivastava agreed, "The move has made

some kind of credit benefit to the travel agents." According to **H.S. Duggal**, MD, Minar Travels India, says, "It should have been done much earlier and would support the travel trade fraternity." **Surpal Singh**, Director, Maxxfun Holidays,

give the agents directly as one has to pay immediately to the carrier after making a booking."

However, it's still to be seen if this move will change how the industry has been operating. **Krishendu**

**Mukherjee**, Director, Long Drive Holiday, says, "Once the sales will increase through this instrument, others will follow suit." Arunima claims, "It is definitely an example. When Air India can do this why not other airlines?" Duggal adds, "Airlines are already accepting credit card payments from customers booking online, and there should not be any discrimination between a direct customer and a trader partner."

While everyone agrees that all airlines should permit the use of credit cards, Singh believes, "The domestic airlines should first come forward, especially Jet Airways, which

is also flying international." Others say that SpiceJet and Indigo should be next in line to offer the facility to travel agents. Sehgal, being a representative of TAAI, says, "We are already in talks with Jet Airways and some European Airlines, but it might take some time before we get confirmations from any of them."

The travel fraternity believes that it is important for airlines to work in tandem with the travel trade. Duggal says, "It is in the interest of airlines to take travel agents along with them since they are not only selling air tickets but are also providing other essential serv-

ices for travellers. The interest of travel agents must be protected by the airlines, as international travellers are still not fully ready to book online tickets." Mentioning other initiatives that the airlines should offer travel agents, Mukherjee says that they should get "good commission and better access to book tickets with login ID and Password." Sehgal, on the other hand, says "It's important for airlines to standardise the commission rates for all IATA agents. We have reported our problems to the airlines as well as different ministries, and now it's in the hands of the government and DGCA to take it forward."

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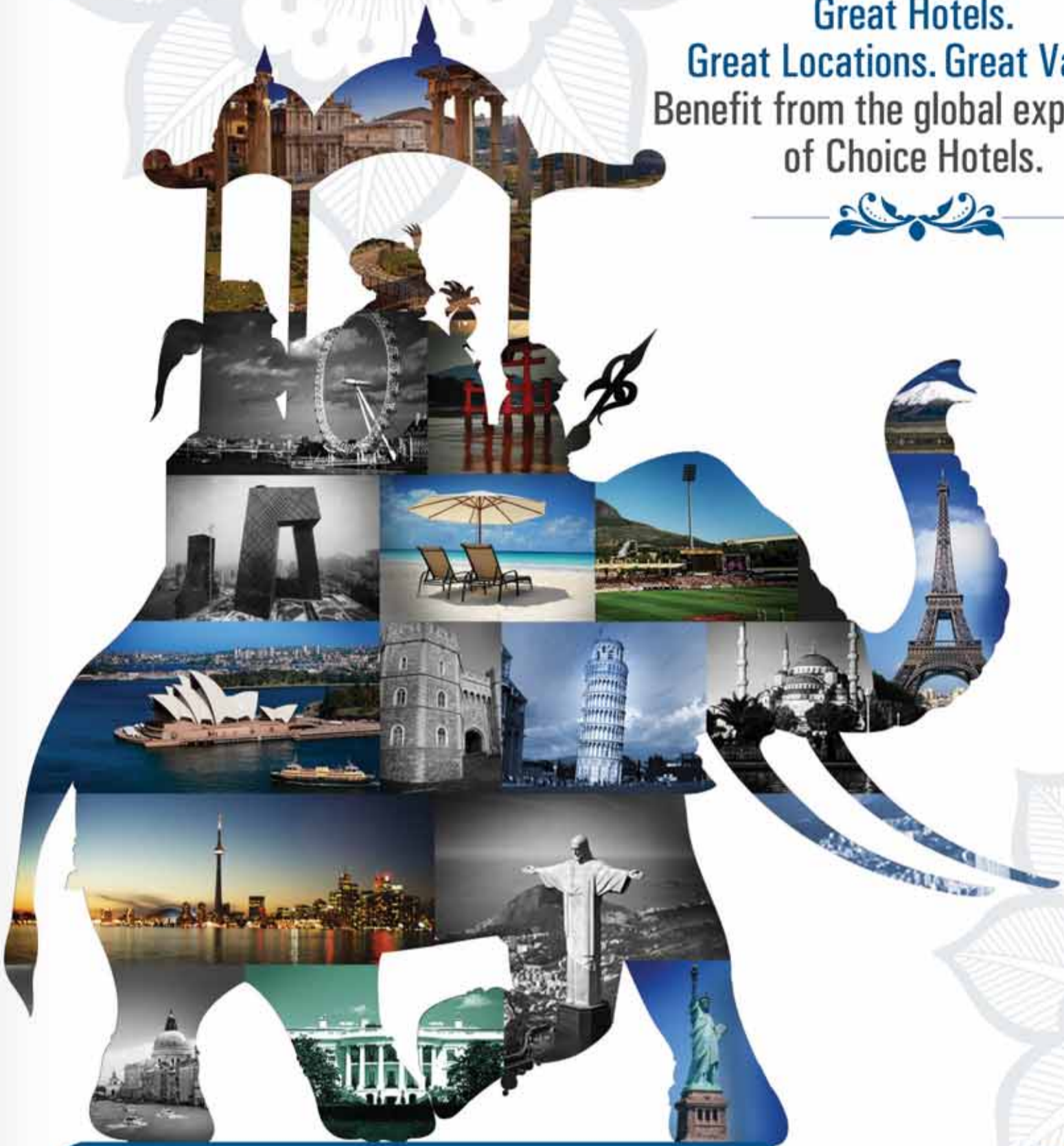


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# Rajim Kumbh Chhattisgarh

where saints go marching in



Every year, sages from all across the country visit Rajim, Chhattisgarh, during Kumbh Mela, which begins on Maagh Purnima and lasts till Mahashivratri. This year the festival is being celebrated from February 22 till March 7.



As per Hindu mythology, the Kumbh Mela can only take place at a spot where the Almighty Himself resides. Rajim is believed to be the home of Lord Vishnu's reincarnated form, Rajiv Lochan. According to legend, Rajim was created when the nectar from Lord Vishnu's lotus fell on the spot where now stands Rajim's most famous temple - The Rajiv Lochan Temple.

Rajim, one of the holiest places in Chhattisgarh lies at the confluence of Mahanadi, Pairi and Sondhur rivers. Owing to its location, it is often classified as the Prayaga of Chhattisgarh. It is also believed that a pilgrimage to the

Jagannath temple of Odisha is incomplete without a visit to Rajim.

Every year, sages from all across the country visit Rajim during Kumbh Mela, which begins on Maagh Purnima and lasts till Mahashivratri. Mahashivratri, here, is celebrated with extreme faith and vigour. Lakhs of devotees visit Rajim to take the holy dip in river Mahanadi. The Mahanadi enjoys the same status as that of the Ganga. Hence, bathing in and performing rituals at the banks of the Mahanadi is considered very sacred. Rajim Mahatmya mentions that Mahanadi is known as Chitrotpala after its junction with Pairi, and Utpalesvara before.





# 10 new sites in Tribal Circuit

With focus on development and promotion of tourism products in the state, Chhattisgarh is geared towards big growth in numbers.



NISHA VERMA

With 44 per cent of forest cover and 32 per cent tribes, Chhattisgarh has immense potential for tourism, according to **Dayaldas Baghel**, Tourism Minister, Chhattisgarh. "The state boasts deep forests, rivers, mountains and rocks. A total of 55 spots have been recognised as tourism sites, and we have developed hotels and other facilities there. We are also

Mainpat and Dantewada. Almost 10 tourist sites in Chhattisgarh have been added to the tribal circuit and we will further develop it," he said.

Talking about the arrivals in the state, Baghel says, "The state is attracting around 7,000-8,000 international tourists, while the number of domestic tourists is in crores." He added that Chhattisgarh

tourism department is promoting the state very aggressively, and the fact that the destination is not very crowded, makes it very special.

"We are working towards getting the private sector to develop tourism products in the state on PPP model and are also inviting major hotel chains to invest in new projects," he revealed.

## Tourism Minister's rendezvous with vintage cars



The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of 21 Gun Salute International Vintage Car Rally & Concours Show was flagged off from historic Red Fort by Chief Guest **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Tourism & Culture, and Minister of State of Civil Aviation. The event showcased 125 vintage cars and 65 vintage bikes on roads of Delhi.



**Dayaldas Baghel**  
Tourism Minister  
Chhattisgarh

We are working towards getting the private sector to develop tourism products in the state on PPP model and are also inviting major hotel chains to invest in new projects

planning to add other such spots to the list soon," he adds.

With the MOT already showing interest in developing the Tribal Circuit under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, Baghel is upbeat on the opportunity to attract tourists to the state. "Government's Tribal Tourism Circuit fund worth ₹100 crore, sanctioned for Chhattisgarh, will facilitate development activities in tribal pockets of Bastar, Chitrakote, Jashpur, Kanker, Jagdalpur,

### Tourist sites in focus for development

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The day long 5<sup>th</sup> India Heritage Tourism Conclave, held at Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, saw participation from 250 heritage and culture experts, tourism enthusiasts, hoteliers, travel trade and dignitaries.



## Genting Dream comes calling

Agents can sell a new premium cruise brand this Diwali and even experience it when 'Genting Dream' docks in Mumbai on October 29 on its way to China.

TT BUREAU

Premium cruise brand, Dream Cruises' first ship 'Genting Dream', which was launched in India this January, will dock in Mumbai on October 29, 2016. **Thatcher Brown**, President, Dream Cruises, who was in Mumbai to make this announcement, said, "We will announce the price of the packages agents can start selling by March. We will offer a really good value proposition to our trade partners and the commission structure will be similar to the one of Star Cruises. Itineraries will include 2, 5 and 7 night cruises. As of now, we don't have plans to make Mumbai a permanent stop for it. We consider Dream Cruises as Asia's first premium cruise brand."



**Thatcher Brown**  
President  
Dream Cruises

**We will announce the price of the packages agents can start selling by March. We will offer a really good value proposition to our trade partners**

The ship will be stationed out of China for regular sailings and will be priced higher than Star Cruises' existing cruises. Mumbai will not be part of its regular sailings. Brown added that his team will use the Star

Cruises references and take advantage of the relationships already built by the Star Cruises team. "We wouldn't be

sitting here if it weren't for Star Cruises. We will honour these relationships but at the same time also look to increase our reach and portfolio of experts in India," he says.

The ship will have the same itinerary as Star Virgo. It will be ready by October 12, 2016 and start sailing from October 13. It will dock in Mumbai on October 29 at 7 AM and depart from there at 5 PM. It will then go to Colombo, Singapore, Hong Kong and China. "Our trade partners will be able to see the product first hand. All sectors are sellable starting Mumbai," he adds.

### Dream-like sail

➤ Genting Dream has 1,700 staterooms, 35 restaurants and bars, various entertainment areas, outdoor adventures, rejuvenation facilities and more.

➤ Its sister ship World Dream will sail in November 2017

## Punjab: New MICE spot

Punjab Tourism is restructuring its tourism products and aims to be among the top five contributors to tourism in the country by the end of 2016.

ANKITA SAXENA

Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board (PHTPB) is focussing on developing new tourism products in the state. **Navjot Pal Singh Randhawa**, Director Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Government of Punjab, informs that the state government has made investments in infrastructure development, marketing and publicity of tourist sites.

World Tourism Organisation (WTO) together with PHTPB is working on a feasibility report and marketing strategy to market Punjab as a tourist destination. Randhawa adds, "A MoU has been signed between PHTPB and IRCTC to boost religious tourism and a luxury train has been started from Jan 1, 2016, connecting Kumb, Varanasi, Ajmer Sharif Dargah and some other pilgrimage sites." Punjab is also developing eco-tourism sites. Elaborating on the same, Randhawa says, "We commissioned a study for design of

**Business tourism is the fastest growing section of the international tourism market and Amritsar and Jalandhar can be promoted as MICE destination in Punjab**

**Navjot Pal Singh Randhawa**  
Director Tourism and Cultural Affairs Government of Punjab

Eco-Tourism Maps for Wetlands of Punjab to facilitate better appreciation of the natural heritage, emphasise values and promote tourism."

PHTPB is promoting Punjab as a MICE destination. He says, "Business tourism is the fastest growing section of the international tourism market and Amritsar and Jalandhar can be promoted as MICE destination in Punjab."

The number of tourists in Punjab has increased year on year with largest number of foreign tourists coming from the

UK and the US. Randhawa says, "Punjab Tourism is in the process of restoring the heritage monuments. We are focusing more on developing more tourism products and hope to be one of the top five states contributing to tourism in India by the end of 2016."

He informs that the state has some special packages and itineraries to offer to the travel agents. They are also developing products like Farm Tourism, Holla Mohalla at Anandpur Sahib, Kila Raipur Games (Rural Olympics), and Sufi Festival. ➤



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# Synergise ARR in 2016

Jean-Michel Cassé, Senior Vice President, Operations, AccorHotels India, talks about the group's plans for India and how he has seen the hospitality scenario change here in the past eight years.



KANCHAN NATH


Elaborating on the plans for 2016, Cassé said, "This year is a critical one for us with 10 hotel openings in the region. Currently, we have 35 hotels and two convention centers, together with the newly-added properties we will have 45 hotels by the end of 2016. In the pipeline we have another 45 hotels to be developed within the next two to three years."

"In 2015, we have met budget performance through volume and achieving higher hotel occupancies. The budget set for 2015 was a little higher than previous years but we are still unable to raise our average

ther expansion in India and it is our 100<sup>th</sup> Pullman property to open globally. Both Sofitel and Pullman are amazing products in great locations."

"I came to India in late 2008 and it was at the beginning of the financial crisis meltdown followed by the Mumbai attacks a few weeks later and that led to the whole industry

collapse. It is also during that period we saw the effects of an oversupply in most Tier-I and Tier-II cities and some of these cities were badly affected by these three factors together. Between 2008 and 2013, we saw a slow economic recovery but the turning point came in 2014 where the demand exceeded supply with a stabilised market. In 2015,

hotel occupancies in India increased over 60 per cent across the industry but our biggest hurdle remains the ARR. Our objective is to synergise the ARR across the region and we remain upbeat with the economic recovery in the market with the government taking precautionary measures such as the implementation of eTV." 

## Goa tourism launches helicopter joy rides

The Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) has introduced helicopter joy rides from Park Hyatt to Arossim in South Goa. The GTDC and Pawan Hans joint venture saw as many as 75 passengers on the day of the launch. Nilesh Cabral, Chairman, GTDC, said, "We now have helicopter rides and hot air balloons, which will serve as a huge attraction for tourists to Goa. There is a lot more to come in the months ahead and we are optimistic that all these new initiatives will go a long way in putting Goa on the map for world class adventure and leisure tourism."



Jean-Michel Cassé  
Senior Vice President, Operations,  
AccorHotels India

Our objective is to synergise the ARR across the region and we remain upbeat with the economic recovery in the market with the government taking precautionary measures

room rates. This was the biggest hurdle and difficulty for the industry last year, so that will be our objective for 2016 and I believe we should be able to achieve that," he said.

Talking about how the luxury brands of AccorHotels are doing in India compared to the existing local luxury brands in the country, he shared, "Sofitel Mumbai BKC has had an amazing last three years. Today the hotel is doing extremely well with service quality and maintaining high service standards. The recent opening of Pullman New Delhi Aerocity in November lays the foundation for the brand's fur-

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## Thailand's quality leisure products

After receiving the highest ever tourism revenue of 1.4 trillion Baht in the history of the Thai tourism industry, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) strives to continue the success with a new marketing strategy.

AHANA GURUNG

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi has commenced this year with the appointment of their new Director, **Isra Stapanaseth** taking over this significant position with North & East India, Bangladesh, Bhutan & Nepal as his areas of responsibility.

In 2015, the Thai tourism industry hit the highest record in its history, receiving tourism revenue of 1.4 trillion Baht with a 23 per cent year-on-year increase, attracting 29.8 million international tourist arrivals, growing at 20 per cent over 2014.

"We received over one million Indian visitors last year, which is a very big accomplishment," says Stapanaseth. "A growth of 14.64 per cent was recorded in 2015 and we anticipate growth of 10 per cent this



**Isra Stapanaseth**  
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand,  
New Delhi

year. India is the sixth source market for Thailand and one of the most important. Aggressive marketing in the B2B and B2C domains is one of our priorities with concentrated efforts to promote weddings, honeymoon, and golf, mainly the luxury segment of Thailand. We will continue to raise awareness about Thailand's attractions and the numerous celebrations we have on offer through Fam trips and pro-active advertising."

This year, TAT aims to position Thailand as a quality leisure destination and has adopted a new strategy for the country's tourism branding. With 'Quality Leisure Destination through Thainess', Thailand aims to enhance the average length of stay, increase traveller expenditure and improve the overall quality of the tourist rather than focusing just on the arrival numbers.

## 2 new ONYX hotels in India by 2019

Thailand-based ONYX Hospitality Group is set to open its Amari-Noida and Amari Residences GIFT City Ahmedabad, in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

TT BUREAU

India is the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest market after Thailand and China for ONYX Hospitality Group, which manages popular brands like Amari, OZO, Shama, Saffron, and Oriental Residence Bangkok. "We receive strong numbers from the regional markets as well as the Middle East, Europe, UK and Australia. Our two key Thai properties have gained popularity among Indian

weddings," says **Debrah Pascoe**, Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, ONYX Hospitality Group.

The company recorded a healthy year-on-year growth in 2015. "Our average room nights grew by over 14 per cent. India witnessed the largest growth of 28 per cent in comparison to 2014," she says. The group functions through local DMCs in India and direct queries of the

agents go to its local sales team offices for any support or information to aid them. The Amari Residences Pattaya in Bangkok is scheduled to open in mid 2016, four projects in Malaysia are scheduled to open over the next two years, OZO Hoi An, in New Hoi An City, is scheduled to open in early 2017, three openings in China over the next three years and two new properties in India by 2018 and 2019.



**Debrah Pascoe**  
Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, ONYX Hospitality Group

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Day 6 Delhi Depart

Arrival: Delhi  
Departure: Delhi

Hotel	3*	4*
Twin Share (USD)	210	285
Extra Bed	85	104

**PACKAGE INCLUSION**

- Hotel accommodation 05 Nights at 3\* hotel with breakfast
- All sightseeing as per itinerary by A/c car
- All taxes

**PACKAGE EXCLUDE**

Supplements cost would be USD 100 for below mention services

- 1) Entrance of monuments (Delhi-Agra-Jaipur-Fatehpur Sikri)
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- 4) Battery bus at Fatehpur Sikri
- 5) Elephant ride at Amerfort ,Jaipur

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Day 7 Jodhpur - Jaisalmer  
Day 8 Jaisalmer  
Day 9 Jaisalmer - Bikaner  
Day 10 Bikaner - Mandawa  
Day 11 Mandawa - Delhi  
Day 12 Departure from Delhi

Arrival: Delhi  
Departure: Delhi

Hotel	3*	4*
Twin Share (USD)	550	825
Extra Bed	220	340

**PACKAGE INCLUSION**

- Hotel accommodation 10 Nights at 3\* hotel with breakfast
- All sightseeing as per itinerary by A/c car

**PACKAGE EXCLUDE**

Supplements cost would be for USD 150 for below mention services

- 1) Entrance of monuments (Delhi-Jaipur-Pushkar-udaipur-jodhpur-jaisalmer-bikaner-mandawa)
- 02) Cycle rikshy ride in Delhi
- 03) Elephant ride in Amerfort ,Jaipur
- 04) Boat ride in Udaipur
- 05) Camel ride in jaisalmer
- 06) Camel breeding farm in Bikaner

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# U&I Holidays' 5-city Bali roadshow

U&I Holidays, a DMC for Bali, recently held their first five-city roadshow in India. The roadshow kicked off from New Delhi on Feb 5, followed by in Chennai on Feb 8, Bengaluru on Feb 9, Ahmedabad on Feb 11 and Mumbai on Feb 12 respectively. TRAVTALK brings you glimpses from the roadshow in Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

AHMEDABAD



MUMBAI



# Thai Smile to connect BKK to Tier-II cities

In an exclusive interview with TRAVTALK, Viset Sontichai recently appointed Director, Indian Sub-continent of Thai Airways talks about the challenges of the Indian market.

**NISHA VERMA**

In his first visit to India, Viset Sontichai is at the helm of affairs, not only for India but also for Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. However, he says, unlike Australia and Thailand, which are retail markets, India is very different. "In India, there is a lot of wholesale, VFR, and inter-

good MICE business from India. "We give importance to India, because this market has a lot of MICE business to Thailand as well as to Australia, which works perfectly for us," says Sontichai.

"In 2015 the PLF for Delhi was around 75-80 per cent. However, we were not very lucky in Chennai because

of the floods, resulting in 50 per cent PLF from there. In Mumbai, we saw 80 per cent PLF in the last two months. For India, our PLF was on average 60 per cent last year. However, I would love to see it rise to 70-80 per cent this year," he adds.

Elaborating on the new plans, Sontichai says, "We have set a target of having 100

flights per week to India in the next five years. In fact, with the strategic position that India has, with Asia on its east and Europe on its west, we would love to operate from here to UK, which we used to do earlier. However, instead of Heathrow, which is very crowded, we are looking at connections to Manchester or Birmingham."

**Sunil Kumar,**  
Head of Sales - North India, Thai Airways

"From Delhi itself, we have 18 flights a week, which will increase to 19 in April, and it is quite phenomenal when it comes to number of seats that is more than 5000 per week. Mumbai has a daily departure with a bigger aircraft with a capacity of 350 passengers per day. We are also looking at talks between governments of both countries, where if the bilaterals are worked out, we could add more frequencies into cities like Bangalore and Chennai at a later stage."



**Viset Sontichai**  
Director, Indian Sub-continent  
Thai Airways

We are looking at starting Thai Smile from Ahmedabad and Chandigarh to Bangkok

net sales. Here we work basically with agents, OTAs, as well as from our website," he says. He claimed that their sales teams in India work with the agents very closely.

Thai Airways is also focussing on connecting to Tier-II, Tier-III cities, says Sontichai, "Through Thai Smile, we want to start operating to secondary cities in India, where we can't operate on bigger aircrafts. We are looking at starting Thai Smile from Ahmedabad and Chandigarh to Bangkok." In fact, he adds, "We target connectivity from India further to Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Japan, and even to the Philippines and Bali."

However, he doesn't disagree with the fact that there is competition from other airlines connecting Indian cities to Bangkok. "India is a tough and price-sensitive market. Fortunately Thai Airways stands as a premium airline unlike most of our new competitors, which are low cost carriers. Since we offer connectivity to Thailand and beyond, it works to our advantage. Also, with 58 flights a week from India to Thailand, we have the best frequency than anyone else," says Sontichai.

He also said that this frequency is useful in getting

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AITF Azarbaijan, 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Apr



COTTM China, 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Apr



SITT Russia, 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Apr



KITF Kazakhstan, 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> Apr



CXSRITE China, 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> Apr



Connections MEETINGS Spain, 29<sup>th</sup> May-1<sup>st</sup> Jun



Connections LUXURY Thailand, 19<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> Jun



BITE China, 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> Jun



DDP Travel Wedding Show, India, 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Jul



LA CITA USA, 30<sup>th</sup> Aug-1<sup>st</sup> Sep



DDP Travel Technology Show, India, 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Aug



ASTANA LEISURE, Kazakhstan, 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> Sept



JATA Japan, 22<sup>nd</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> Sept



DDP Travel Experiential Show, India, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Oct



Connections LUXURY Brazil, 16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> Oct



CITE China, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Dec



DDP Travel Business Show, India, 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Dec



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# LHW's program for agents

With a portfolio of 400 luxury properties in 300 destinations, The Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) is all set to roll out a special program for travel agents.



NISHA VERMA

India is a growing market for LHW, says **Philip Ho**, Senior Vice President, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific, LHW, and he claims that approximately 15 per cent of their total business comes from India. "The Indian economy has been growing at a high GDP for the last five years and much of it can be attributed to the growing middle class. It is a market to invest because of increasing outbound travel as well as growing domestic and inbound travel."

Owing to this growth, LHW has new plans for the Indian market. "Firstly we want to explore possibilities of business in India beyond the metros and reach out to Tier-II and



**Philip Ho**  
Senior Vice President, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific, LHW

Tier-III cities. Secondly, we might be doing a new brand launch this year. And lastly, since the luxury travel business in India is travel agency oriented, we have rolled out a program called VITA-Very Important Travel Agency for our trade partners, which would offer special benefits for them and the end consumer," says Ho.

Divulging more details about VITA, he says, "We have created VITA to make the travel advisor the hero in front of their customers. We are offering VITA status to selected travel agents and it would entail benefits and recognition to them. Amongst the benefits, the end customer will get VIP status at our hotels, which would include meet 'n' greet, upgrades on availability, and a welcome gift on behalf of the agency. In fact, if we come to know of any special likings or occasion of the guest, we make exclusive arrangements for the same."

Stressing on the importance of travel agents for their business, he says, "Our business has been growing by almost 25 per cent every year

for the last five years. And 75 per cent of it comes from travel agencies, which shows how significant they are for us."

However, this year LHW did not organise its annual roadshow for the trade, which brings many partner hotel representatives from around the world to India. Ho explains,

"We want to take a peaceful approach to things. Instead of bringing 20-30 hotels from different countries having different themes and styles, we want to be more targeted. We think it'd be easier for our travel agency partners to thematically group hotels together and sell accordingly and we are working towards that." 

## Railways to open e-Ticketing to foreign debit/credit card holders

■ Railways Minister **Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu** announced during the Railway Budget 2016 that the e-ticketing facility will be open to foreign debit and credit cards for foreign tourists and NRIs in the next 3 months.

He also announced that the 'Vikalp' (Alternative Train Accommodation System) scheme introduced in October 2015 will be expanded to provide choice of accommodation in specific trains to wait-listed passengers.

Rail Minister introduced



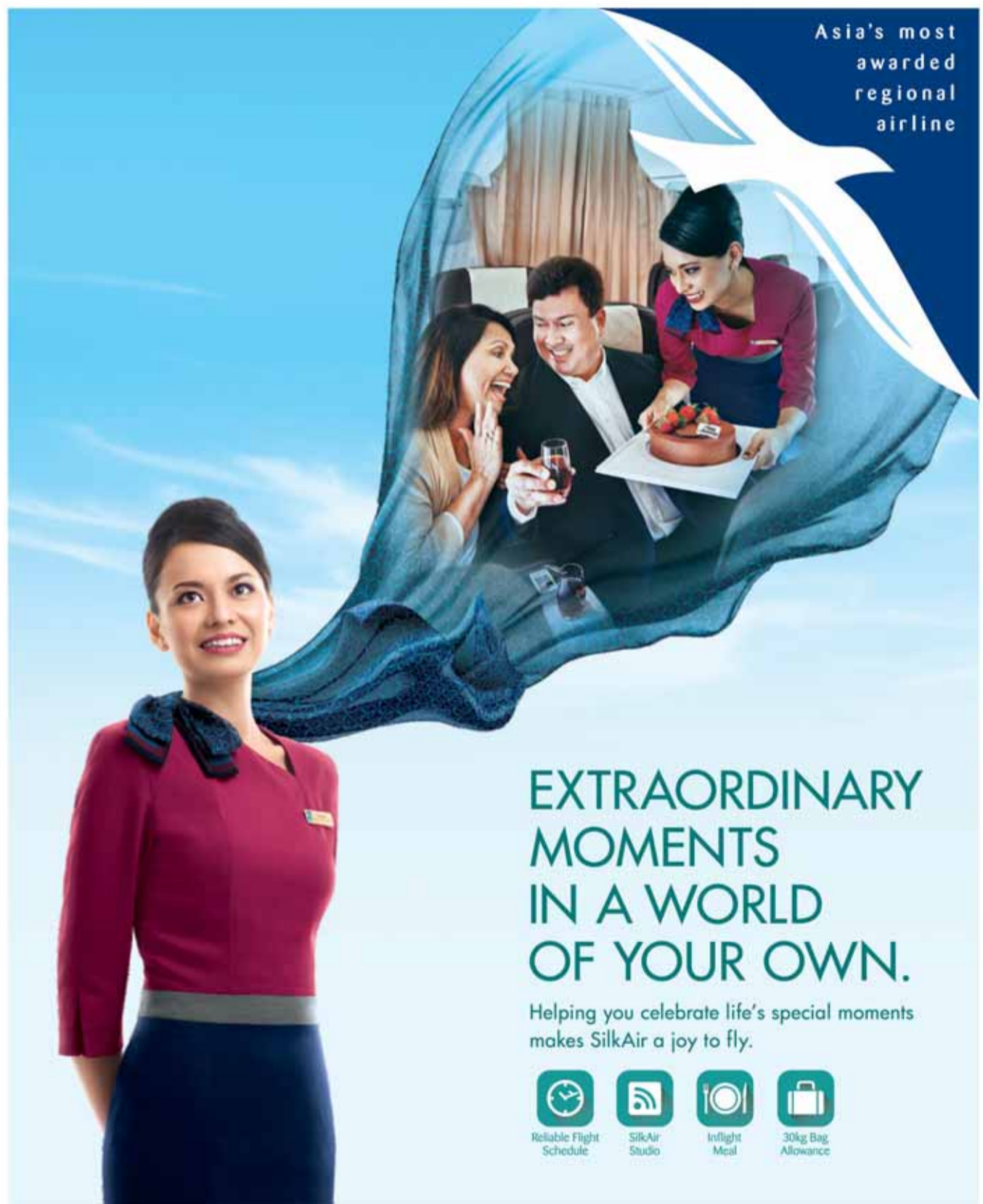
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Capacity of e-ticketing system has been enhanced from 2,000 tickets per minute to 7,200 tickets per minute and will support 1,20,000 concurrent users as against only 40,000 earlier.

The Ministry of Railways announced a slew of measures in the Railway Budget 2016 on February 25 for domestic, foreign and NRI tourists.



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# 2016

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June 2016



Friday, August 5<sup>th</sup>



Friday, November 25<sup>th</sup>



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# Switzerland offers Art Tourism

Promoting niche tourism, Switzerland goes beyond its beautiful landscape and tested tourism products for the mature Indian traveller.

TT BUREAU

2015 has been a promising year for Switzerland Tourism as they registered a 20 per cent growth in hotel overnights from India. They also witnessed an increase in sales for rail tickets indicating that the numbers of FIT travellers are also on the rise.

Making most of the opportunity to encourage the individual traveller, Switzerland Tourism recently participated at the Delhi Art fair. "Switzerland Tourism is now diversifying and concentrating on the individual and mature traveller who is interested in products beyond our beautiful landscapes. We

Basel is famous for its tri-national river cruise as it is on the border of Germany and France. It's possible to have breakfast in Switzerland, lunch in France and dinner in Germany.

Further highlighting this interesting new campaign, Zemp adds, "The art campaign goes worldwide and it is really something which Switzerland



**Claudio Zemp**  
Director-India  
Switzerland Tourism

We have a new association of Art Museums in Switzerland and we think this (Delhi Art Fair) is an ideal platform to showcase this product

regards with great potential. For India, this is clearly a niche space and we continue to show different sides of

Switzerland." The promotion will continue in Mumbai with a performance by a Swiss orchestra.

For the travel trade, Switzerland is hosting the Snow Travel Market and is focusing on the ski winter destinations. Switzerland Tourism has also re-launched its webinars and E-learning facilities and will organise STE in November this year. An India workshop in Switzerland is also in the pipeline for September 2016.



**Ann Miller**  
Sales Manager India  
Basel Tourism

We have over 40 museums in Basel, galleries, and public art and we host the most important art show in the world, Art Basel

came to the art fair as we have a great product in Switzerland for modern art and contemporary art. We have a new association of the Art Museums of Switzerland and we think this is the ideal platform to showcase this product. We are participating with the city of Basel, which is the arts capital of Switzerland," says Claudio Zemp, Director-India, Switzerland Tourism.

Basel is the capital of art and architecture in Switzerland and has a lot to offer the Indian traveller. "We have over 40 museums in Basel, we have a lot of galleries, and public art and we host the most important art show in the world, Art Basel. All art lovers from across the world meet up in Basel every June," says Ann Miller, Sales Manager India, Basel Tourism. Beyond art,



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# Trans India Holidays launches BigBreaks

Trans India Holidays Group recently launched 'BigBreaks,' an online travel agency that allows travel customisation to the last detail. The launch of the portal was celebrated with fanfare among the travel trade fraternity in Delhi.



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## Special Andaman packages

MakeMyTrip's special Andaman packages includes a direct flight to the island from Bangalore, and also offers customised women traveller packages. **Ranjeet Oak**, Chief Business Officer-Holidays, MakeMyTrip, talks about the latest trends of domestic travel.

TT BUREAU

Domestic travel has constantly been on the rise with people travelling more frequently within the country. Oak says, "One of our initiatives to promote domestic travel has been the launch of holiday packages to Andaman, with special direct flights from Bangalore to Port Blair. People had to go to Chennai or Kolkata to travel to Andaman; we wanted travelling to be more convenient for them and have given them another option of departing from Bangalore. We have already seen an 85 per cent seat load factor since its launch with a majority of families opting for the package," he says. The packages to Andaman, inclusive of sightseeing, start at ₹ 29,999.

Referring to other initiatives, Oak says that MakeMyTrip will be offering



**Ranjeet Oak**  
Chief Business Officer-Holidays  
MakeMyTrip

Very soon, we will be launching packages for women only, and will be looking to offer more unique destinations

more packages that target a more specific group. "Very soon, we will be launching packages for women only, and will be looking to offer more unique destinations," Oak shares. He informs that one of the packages to Andaman has also been customised for women only.

Oak further adds, "Young Indians are becoming more and more used to the idea of frequent travel and they constantly look to travel to less commercial destinations. Indonesia, Jordan and Singapore are some of the most popular destinations currently. Numerous travellers are also opening up to China these days and show interest in exploring the country. Thanks to the availability of information on the click of a button, they are updated about more holiday options." When it comes to short-haul destinations, Bhutan and Sri Lanka have a high demand among Indians, he conveys.

## IITTM Gwalior sets sustainable tourism agenda



The Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM), Gwalior, organised the 8<sup>th</sup> Directors' Conclave last month. It revolved around the topical theme of 'Make in India; Setting the Agenda for Tourism Sustainability.' This year delegates and speakers from countries such as France, Malaysia, Italy, Dubai and Sri Lanka, among others, added to the depth of the deliberations. **Sandeep Kulshreshtha**, Director, IITTM, feels that the 'outcome of the conclave was fruitful and tourism sustainability got new direction, with global standards and local practices'. He felt that the international delegates had given a new flavour to the deliberations-- view shared by many. It was declared that the 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Euro 2016 Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy Conference will be held at the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Gwalior.

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# Delhi gets a new heritage hotel

The newest addition to Delhi's heritage attractions is Haveli Dharampura by WelcomHeritage in Chandni Chowk, New Delhi. The renovated 13-room heritage Haveli, which dates back to 1887 AD, was recently inaugurated in the presence of tourism and hospitality big wigs.



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## FITUR reaches a record high

With nearly 50 Indian participants, FITUR registered a record in business participation, with 9,605 businesses, 3.4 per cent more than the previous year.



The International Tourism Fair, FITUR, organised by IFEMA in Madrid and supported by the World Tourism Organisation, has generated a profusion of business, collaboration agreements and new clients for all its exhibitors.

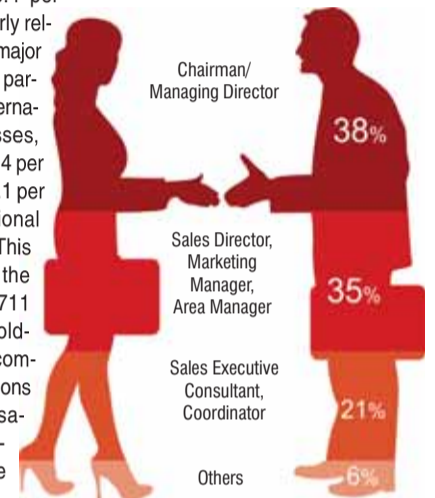
In 2015, the number of Spanish travellers to India reportedly grew by 15 per cent. This growth was very welcomed and FITUR 2016 reinforced India's promise to this market. India's participation grew remarkably as did the show. The event again registered a new record in participation, which coincides with the best figures for the tourism industry in Spain and worldwide. Particularly noteworthy was professional participation with 124,659 visitors and two per cent growth, consolidating the high international representation that in its two previous

editions had already shown growth of 7 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. With this IFEMA raises the figure for the economic repercussion this major event had on Madrid, more than €210 million.

FITUR also registered a record in business participation. A total of 9,605 businesses participated, an increase of 3.4 per cent. Particularly relevant was the major advance in the participation of international businesses, which grew by 4 per cent against 3.1 per cent of national participation. This edition saw the presence of 711 main stand holders between companies, institutions and organisations, representing three

per cent growth, with the incorporation of 178 new businesses of which more than 50 per cent were international. This international trade show was inaugurated by the Queen of Spain who also visited the India pavilion and FITUR was attended by 80 tourism ministers and top authorities from the five continents.

### Trade Visitor Distribution



## BIT 2016 gains momentum

With the exhibiting areas divided amongst leisure, MICE, luxury, and sports tourism, BIT Milan continues to be a promising international trade show as it spreads its wings beyond the region.



DEVIKA JEET FROM MILAN

From India to Iran, Sri Lanka to Nepal, and Turkey to Japan, countries from across the globe showcased their tourism offerings at the BIT international travel fair held in Milan from February 11-13. This

now. While all these years the show has been stagnating but this year particularly has been very good. More buyers are showing interest in India and I have met some new people. The Italian market is overall very

"While the most prominent and popular cities amongst Indians are Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan, but we have now seen a growing interest in regions such as the Tuscan region, Capri and the Amalfi coast. This is the new segment that is being popularised amongst Indian travellers," says **Vineet Gopal**, India Hosted Buyer Coordinator, BIT Milan. The participation of Indian buyers at BIT has also substantially grown. "From four buyers five years back to 84 buyers this year tells us the importance of the Indian market," he adds.



**Vineet Gopal**  
India Hosted Buyer Coordinator  
BIT Milan



**Tina Kanugu**  
Director  
Bathija Travels

three-day fair hosted exhibitors from over 100 countries, 2,000 companies and over 1,500 buyers to promote and develop their businesses. The exhibiting areas were divided amongst the leisure world, MICE, luxury and sports tourism.

"I have been participating in the show for the last five years

good for India as Italians love exploring the country," says **Ravi Gosain**, Managing Director, Erco Travels.

From the Indian outbound perspective, the interest in food and wine and cultural tourism continued to register the best performance just like shopping tourism.

"BIT is one of the largest and the most informative shows held in Italy. It helped me find details about regions in Italy that I hadn't even heard of being a travel agent. In this super setting, I got to meet people and gather useful information," mentions **Tina Kanugu**, Director, Bathija Travels. BIT is an event that brings together trade operators from all over the world. Sponsored by Fiera Milano, BIT takes place every year, since 1980.

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**SriLankan launches package with Cinnamon**

■ SriLankan Airlines has launched an attractive package with Sri Lanka-based Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo. The two nights, three days Colombo package titled 'See Shop Party Colombo' is priced at ₹ 19,999 plus airport taxes and includes airfare, transfers, and full board accommodation at the five-star resort.

Travellers can buy this package from Bengaluru, Chennai, Cochin, Trivandrum, Madurai, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Delhi. **Lalit D'Silva**, Regional Manager for Indian Sub-Continent, SriLankan Airlines, says, "This is part of the many promotional strategies aimed at increasing the number of Indians to Sri Lanka because India is the second-largest market for us after China. We have allocated a certain number of seats in all our flights for this package." This package is valid from March 1, 2016 up to a year.

**Rohan Karr**, Executive VP, John Keells Holdings and Sector Head—City Hotels, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, said, "We tested this out in India among the travel agents and tour operators before launching and they found it very attractive. Of the 19 million total outbound from India, only 300,000 came to Sri Lanka last year and this shows that there is a lot of potential."

**Malaysia taps smaller cities**

Tourism Malaysia is set out to tap the India market through Tier-II & III cities and attract families and shoppers to the country.



After a subdued 2015, Tourism Malaysia is prepping up for a comeback on the tourism front and plans to draw Indian tourists to the country with a slew of initiatives. Between January- September 2015, Malaysia recorded 539,820 Indian tourist arrivals while 2014 received a total of 770,108 between January to December 2014.

In spite of the hurdles, **Dato' Daljit Singh Dalliwal**, Board of Director, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, shares that the footfall from India is anticipated to grow by at least 10 per cent, following AirAsia's decision to reintroduce direct flights on the New Delhi-Kuala Lumpur route. "Now that there is increased direct connectivity between the two countries, we are expecting a large number of tourist arrivals from India," he says. "Additionally, we have noticed that a major number of tourists come from Tier-II and Tier-III cities and to make the most of these high-potential



**Dato' Daljit Singh Dalliwal**  
Board of Director  
Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board

markets, we are looking into introducing flights from Kuala Lumpur to Ahmedabad and Amritsar as well."

Furthermore, **Datuk Musa Yusof**, Senior Director, International Promotion Division – Asia/Africa, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, informs that they are portraying Malaysia as the perfect shopping hub to families in India. "In 2014, an Indian tourist would spend an average of RM 436.2 per day," he comments. "Malaysia is a shopper's paradise. To build up on this aspect, we are campaigning for the yearly sale events which occur thrice a year. The



**Datuk Musa Yusof**  
Senior Director, International Promotion Division – Asia/Africa,  
Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board

1Malaysia Super Sale is slated to be held from March 1-31, followed by the 1Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival from June 15-31 August, and the 1Malaysia Year End Sale from November 1-December 31."

Yusof elaborates that they are working towards providing a wholesome experience to the traveller. The first-ever 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox World theme park in Genting Highlands will be ready by next year. "We also toured India on a sales mission on Feb 22 in Delhi and in Chennai on Feb 29. With ample amount of marketing, we are certain these measures will help boost the arrivals," he adds.

**Scotland's roundtable with trade**

Visit Scotland gathered its top trade partners and travel associations in Mumbai for a roundtable discussion.



Visit Scotland gathered its top tour operators and travel trade associations for a roundtable discussion in Mumbai on the sidelines of its three-city roadshow. **Vineet Lal**, Senior Market Manager (Long Haul & Emerging

ences and also working on a program of education both in Scotland and in India so people on both sides understand how to do business with each other."

Among those invited were associations TAAI, TAFI, and OTOAI, along with



Markets), Visit Scotland, said, "We, along with Etihad Airways met a lot of our top trade partners and travel trade associations in Mumbai to look at how we can increase the volume and value of the Indian market to Scotland. A lot of the conclusions were around the ability to communicate what Scotland has to offer, communicating Scotland's top experi-

VisitBritain, SDI, British Council, and tour operators. "We don't have any official MoU with the travel associations but our relationship is so good that we have an ongoing understanding to use their channels to promote Scotland," he adds. Mumbai saw around 100 attendees at Scotland workshop and around 50 at the networking dinner.

# Connecting Delhi to 3 Chinese cities

Shandong Airlines recently announced its flights connecting New Delhi to three Chinese cities of Kunming, Jinan, and Qingdao. This was announced to the travel trade in Delhi during an event at The Park hotel.





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# NEWS

- ❖ Railways to introduce tourist circuit trains
- ❖ 6.8% growth in FTAs in Jan '16 over Jan '15
- ❖ 252.3% growth in tourists arrival on e-Tourist Visa in Jan '16 Jan '15
- ❖ MOT launches Tourist Infoline number 1363 in 12 international languages
- ❖ Jet and Korean Air enter codeshare
- ❖ IRCTC ties up with OYO Rooms
- ❖ Govt mulls opening up 5 Andaman & Nicobar islands to tourists
- ❖ Mumbai-Tokyo daily on ANA from March 27
- ❖ 108-room Courtyard by Marriott Raipur opens
- ❖ Kochi airport's 3<sup>rd</sup> terminal launched on Feb 26
- ❖ Addis Ababa-Delhi double daily from Mar 26

## MOT steals the show at Caravan, Motor, Touristik (CMT), Stuttgart 2016

India was the Partner Country in one of the world's largest public trade fairs for Tourism, Leisure Caravan, Motoring viz. the "Caravan, Motor, Touristik (CMT), Stuttgart 2016" from January 16-24. The Ministry of Tourism participated in the fair through the India Tourism Office in Frankfurt. The India Pavilion was inaugurated by **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, **Sevala Naik**, Consul General of India in Munich and **Richard Bleinroth**, CEO, Messe Stuttgart. During the 20 minute slot given to India, a five minute visual presentation of the Film 'Find what you seek' was followed by a speech made by the Joint Secretary, MOT and a performance by the Cultural Troupe from Rajasthan (sponsored by ICCR), which was appreciated by one and all.



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## 2 lakh Indians by 2018

Turkey's private sector is showing keen interest in India because of which Turkey is expecting a huge surge in Indian tourist arrivals in the coming years.

TT BUREAU

By participating in exhibitions, trade shows and collaborating with travel agents, the arrivals from India to Turkey will soar for sure, says **Ozgur Ayturk**, Coordinator, Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Directorate General of Promotion, Asia and Pacific Section. "In 2015, Turkey saw a 10 per cent growth from India, which was nice but below our expectations. However, the interest of the Turkish private sector in India is higher than usual. As the ministry we facilitate the engagements of the private sector from Turkey with the Indian travel trade by creating the right platform."

He claimed, "In 2015 we had 130,000 Indian arrivals in Turkey, and we are expecting this figure to reach 200,000 within one or two years." In order to achieve this figure, "we are participating in tourism exhibitions along with the private sector. Apart from



**Ozgur Ayturk**  
Coordinator, Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Directorate General of Promotion, Asia and Pacific Section

We are also collaborating with the private sector for some joint projects to target various segments like MICE, FITs, weddings groups & honeymooners

that we are organising roadshows in Tier-I and Tier-II cities in India. We are also

collaborating with the private sector for some joint projects to target various segments like MICE, FITs, weddings groups as well as the honeymoon sector," he said.

While Germany is the biggest source market for Turkey, Ozgur is very positive about India. "Every year we receive five million German travellers to Turkey, and we already have other European conventional markets. Why we are interested in India and other Southeast Asian destinations is the fact that these markets have a really big potential.

"About India, it's not only us saying that, but reports of all other tourism organisations state that around 50 million Indian travellers are expected to travel international by 2020. I was reading somewhere that since 2013 more than 12 million new passports have been issued by the Indian government, which itself is a good indicator that India is a growing market," he added.

## Kiwi Link only in Mumbai

Tourism New Zealand is creating targeted itineraries along with Kiwi specialists based on its 'Active Considerer' Monitor with Mumbai being its only focus for this year's Kiwi Link India.

HAZEL JAIN

Research forms the core of all strategies that Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) develops and it is evident in the tweaks it has made to its activities this year. To start with, it has made its Kiwi Link India more focused this year with only Mumbai on the agenda. Steven Dixon, Regional Manager South & South East Asia, Tourism New Zealand, says, "Kiwi Link is aimed at educating our trade partners about the destination and understanding their clients' requirements. Last year, we held it in Mumbai and New Delhi but this time we will focus only on Mumbai."

He adds that the tourism board is looking to invest heavily in India. "We will invest more with our travel partners which means we will be having a lot of communication with them, educate them about New Zealand and understand the requirements of Indian travellers. We currently get around



**Steven Dixon**  
Regional Manager South & South East Asia, Tourism New Zealand

We have different packages on our website which our trade partners have developed for this target audience

45,000 Indians, which in itself is an increase in growth of around 23 per cent. But our research says that there are a lot more people in India who

want to visit New Zealand," Dixon says.

TNZ does a quarterly survey in each of its key markets to understand the status of progress and traveller preferences. "We use this as a way to narrow down our audience, what we call the 'Active Considerer' market. Of the 1.25 billion people in India, there are around 32 million that are actively considering visiting New Zealand," Dixon adds.

Based on the findings from the survey, TNZ has developed specific itineraries along with its trade partners. "It's a targeted approach. We have different packages on our website which our trade partners have developed for this target audience," Dixon says.

At the time of going to press, TNZ had around 68 specialists. It continues to refine the program and promote it to attract the trade to become Kiwi specialists.

## UK's preferred agency scheme

The United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) office will launch a preferred agency scheme to facilitate visa applications through trusted and accredited travel agents in India.

TT BUREAU

**James Brokenshire**, Immigration Minister, United Kingdom, announced the 16<sup>th</sup> visa application centre (VAC) in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh to apply for a visa to the UK and Europe. "We have been reflecting on the feedback from our partners and applicants and thus have announced a number of changes to facilitate the visa process for the India market," says Brokenshire.

UKVI has enhanced the eligibility criteria for super-priority visas to those applying for a visit or work visa. "The eligibility criteria for the 3-5 day priority visa service will also be expanded allowing more applicants in India the opportunity to get a visa decision faster," adds Brokenshire.

The new online application can be accessed from [www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa](http://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa) and is a shorter form than the form on Visa4UK with questions written in plain



**James Brokenshire**  
Immigration Minister, United Kingdom

We will train agents so that they can verify applicants on UKVI's behalf and ensure the applications submitted are genuine

English which will be translated into Hindi, Tamil and Gujarati later. The service is mobile device friendly, enabling application forms to

be completed on mobile phones or tablets.

UKVI will also increase the visa fee by 2 per cent from April for study and visit visa applications. Explaining the process, he says the visa fee hike is an annual norm and is normally implemented post the financial year. UKVI is expected to introduce a preferred agency programme in India targeting larger bookings through the agents. Brokenshire says, "We are piloting the scheme with approximately 50 Indian travel agents to test the elements and are working on steps to roll out the scheme to more agents. We expect a third of our visa applications to come through the preferred agent scheme in the future. We will train agents so that they can verify applicants on UKVI's behalf and ensure the applications submitted are genuine" said Brokenshire. The new scheme will allow UKVI to work more closely with trusted agents who will be accountable for the applications they verify, added Brokenshire.

## Fiji: one stop away for Indians

With Fiji Airways offering direct flight from Singapore to Fiji, the traffic to the island nation from India will only get better now as passengers will be able to fly to Fiji with only one stop.

TT BUREAU

After interacting with hundreds of Indian agents on the lack of easy connectivity to Fiji last year, **Faiyaz Siddiq Koya**, Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Government of Fiji, is rejoicing that the connectivity from India to Fiji has improved with only one stop in Singapore. "Last time when we came to India for our roadshow, there was great interest in people in coming to Fiji, but I think the biggest issue they had was connectivity. However, now we have resolved that and from April 6, Fiji Airways will be offering direct flight from Singapore to Fiji. This would allow passengers from any city in India to fly to Fiji with only one stop in Singapore."

With this connectivity, they are now upping their marketing efforts, "Tourism Fiji will be doing its own marketing in and around India with our team, Fiji Airways and the Ministry of Tourism. We are



**Faiyaz Siddiq Koya**  
Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Government of Fiji

From April 6, Fiji Airways will be offering direct flight from Singapore to Fiji. This would allow passengers from any city in India to fly to Fiji with only one stop in Singapore

not targeting any one sector, and our marketing strategies are focussed across the board for different kinds of tourists. Last year, the majority of tourists to Fiji included those on holiday or honeymoon. However, we would also want to promote adventure tourism, weddings and even MICE. We have great convention facilities. However, unlike the Middle East, where you can do a convention of 1,000 people, we are only looking at an event for 500-600 people.

Claiming that with the announcement of the new air connection, they are getting great response from the travel agents and they might see a surge in arrivals to Fiji from India, Koya said, "We had roughly nine percent growth from India on the figures to the year before. Looking at around 3,500 visitors each year from India, we believe that the improved connectivity to Fiji will see a much better growth."





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Kuklos, the revolving restaurant in Leysin

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# India makes an impact @BIT 2016

The international travel fair, BIT (Borsa Internazionale del Turismo) brought together trade operators from all over the world to do business with Italy. Sponsored by Fiera Milano, BIT took place in Milan and attracted a large Indian contingent. With more than 1,500 hosted buyers, more than 2,000 participating companies, BIT has been an international meeting point for decision makers, professionals and buyers in the luxury, MICE and leisure tourism arena.





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# eTV promises stronger inbound

With a variety of tourism circuits and products, India is increasingly becoming a favourite with travellers from across the globe. TRAVTALK finds out from industry stakeholders and India Travel Award winners about which tourism products make India a favourable tourist destination.



ANKITA SAXENA



The diversity in India is itself a factor that attracts inbound traffic. Indeed, very few countries in the world offer what India does that is a mix of culture, heritage, spirituality, cuisine, sun, sand, surf, snow and much more. There is something for everybody and everybody is welcome to India.

**Prakash Bang**

Managing Director, roomsXML Solutions



India has everything to offer to a discerning traveller. Ayurveda brings people from far off lands. Above all, the warm hospitality extended by Indian people is a booster to Indian tourism. Extending eTV facility for medical and business travellers, increasing the time period of stay from 30 to 60 days and increasing the application

**Madan Kak**

Chief Executive Officer, Minar Travels



Despite the economic turmoil globally, India has held strong. India's outbound growth is testimony to that. Increased number of passports issued indicates that more number of people are travelling and India is seen as one of the strongest potential markets in international tourism business. The eTV facility is attracting larger numbers

and India is being looked at as an easy and diverse country in terms of its tourism products.

**Ankush Nijhawan**

MD, Nijhawan Group & Co-founder & CEO, Travel Boutique Online

India evokes curiosity amongst tourists and mostly people visit the country to experience its culture. India caters to all segments from the budget to the high end tourist. It offers standardised products in all categories and thus makes it a destination to visit.

**Anand Nair**

General Manager

Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere



The very fact that India is a diverse country makes it our most important tourism asset. One can experience all seasons, highest mountains, best of beaches, backwaters and white desserts. A traveller can experience multiple cultures, cuisines, within one country with each state boasting of its own distinct culture, language and food.



**Pankaj Nagpal**

Managing Director, Travstarz Holidays and Destinations and Travelrezonline.com

The rich history, culture, architecture of India has always been popular among international tourists. Every tourist spot in India makes it a favourable destination. Odisha as a destination offers places like the Chilika Lake, Satkosia Gorge, Similipal, Bhitarkanika, Samukha Beach, Satpada, wildlife, mangrove forests and much more.



**J.K. Mohanty**

Chairman and Managing Director, Swosti Group



India is more than a land of spice and space. The allure and emotions that India evokes is significant. India offers various tourism products. Notable places are Mahabodhi Temple, Hampi, Khajuraho, Ajanta and Ellora and the Taj Mahal. There is spiritual and wellness tourism, medical tourism, nature tourism among others. All the factors lead up to making India as a great tourist

destination with lots of still untapped potential.

**Rajeev Jalnapurkar**

Chief Executive Officer, Ramoji Film City



India has a variety such as nature, history, adventure, jungle safaris to even partying hubs. We have some world famous heritage palaces and tombs, several ancient religious monuments, National Parks and beach resorts that attract tourists by the millions. We are still a land of mysteries to many and India never ceases to amaze people.

**Rajneesh Malhotra**

GM, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Hyderabad Banjara Hills



India is well-connected to major international routes via airways, waterways, roadways and local transport allowing easy access. A bustling film industry and related infrastructure also adds to the attraction of the country. Aided by cosmopolitan cities offering a confluence of the old and new, India provides ample leisure and recreation options for visiting

tourists along with wellness and spiritual connect.

**Neil Paterson**

General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC).

India is home to various cultures, communities and religion. Tourists visiting India can embrace wide flavour of the exquisite rich culture of the country. There is something charismatic in every corner of the country. 'Athiti Devo Bhava' makes Indians very hospitable to their guests and with the emerging 5 star facilities hotels along with mid-scale hotels, every tourist can be accommodated.



**Bandish Mehta**

General Manager, Hotel Novotel Pune Nagar Road

India's diverse offerings in terms of variety of physical landscape and cultural patterns, knows no bounds. India offers various categories of tourism like history, adventure, spiritual tourism etc. Recently, India has emerged as a major healthcare destination. In continuation to the Make in India campaign, we should now embark on a 'Travel to India' campaign to promote India as a unique travel destination.



**Jai Kishan**

General Manager, Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences

India is a country of unbounded territories. The heterogeneity of India attracts tourists globally. Destinations like Goa, Kerala, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat etc boosted the numbers initially but India has more to offer. Ease of travelling, international and Indian luxury hotels, safety, security for international travellers and the exchange rate gives travellers a cushion to come and spend in India.



**Ranganath Budumooru**

General Manager, Holiday Inn Express and Suites Hyderabad Gachibowli



With diverse destinations and products, India's tourism industry is reaching a level of being called a 'niche destination' and is ready to offer the evolved traveller innovative travel products. Today when travellers are exploring newer experiences and visit Leh, Ladakh, Sikkim, Nagaland and Andaman, they seek experiential travel clubbed with comfort.

**Rajnish Sabharwal**

Chief Operating Officer, The Ultimate Travelling Camp



India's diversity in terms of topography, history, heritage, culture makes it a unique distinction. The attractions include beaches, forests, wild life and landscapes for eco-tourism; snow, river and mountain peaks for adventure tourism; centres of pilgrimage for spiritual tourism; Yoga, Ayurveda, natural health resorts and hill stations also attract tourists.

**Sandeep Johri**

General Manager, Novotel Ahmedabad



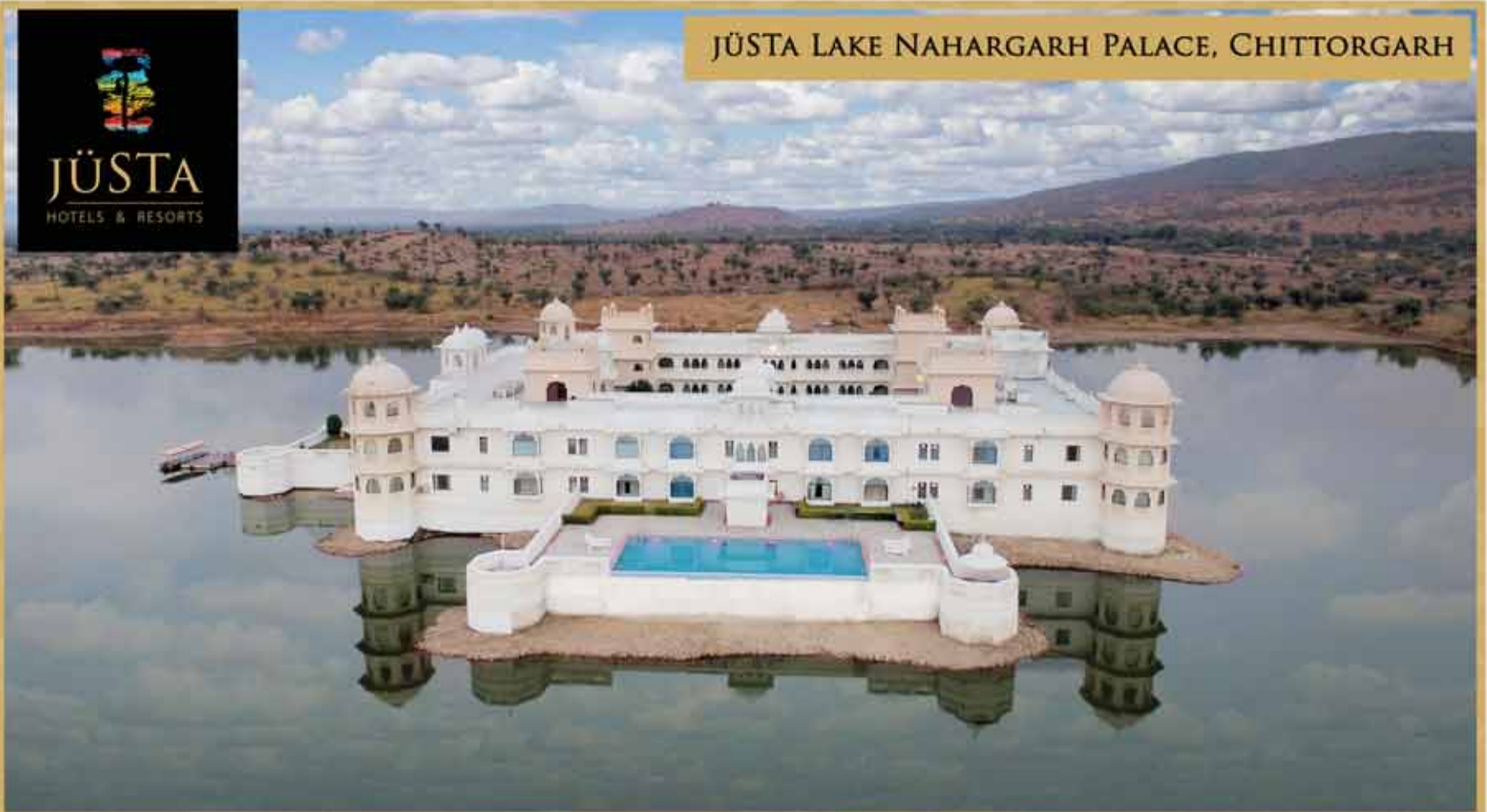
India offers a variety of products in every region. From culture, heritage, cuisines to medical, wellness and spiritual tourism products, India has everything for every tourist. The variety and curiosity of the country makes it a favourable destination for both the domestic and the international tourist.

**Riyaz UC**

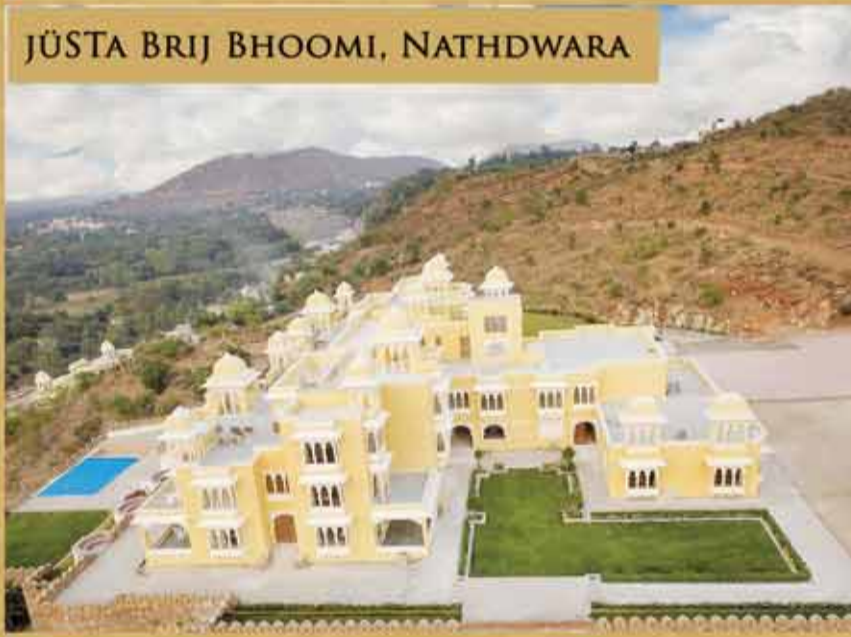
Managing Director, Spiceland Holidays Kerala



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# Greater connectivity eases travel

► Contd. from page 68



What makes India a top destination is the emotional connect, Atithi Devo Bhava culture and one of the world's oldest yet diverse cultured civilization. One country where many religion live and all are preached with equal importance makes India the world corridor to look back at the glorious past and a great future.

**Kunal Katoch,**  
General Manager, Effotel Indore



India's diversity has always been its biggest strength. As a country we cater to the requirements of all segments of tourists. One can travel the expanse of the country at a bare minimum cost on one hand and experience luxury at its best at the finest hotels or luxury trains on the other hand. River cruises are gaining prominence

and is set to grow exponentially over the years thus attracting a large number of tourists.

**Suresh Periwai**  
Managing Director, Clubside Tours and Travels



The fact that one country offers multiple tourism products is a major key to attract tourists. It offers beaches, backwaters, wildlife, heritage, hill stations, mountains, water sports, nature etc. Added to this is spiritual, medical tourism which stands out in comparison to any other nation. India is a year round destination,

making it a favourable destination.

**Shaleen Mathur**  
Associate Vice President - Sales, Citrus Hotels and Resorts

India is ranked 20 in the world as per price competitiveness, which means India has quite good and adequate air transportation and ground infrastructure to travel. One can explore culture, cuisine, traditional cuisine that varies from state to state. One must visit India to explore the Himalayas, massive rivers, untouched beaches, sand dunes, snow capped mountains, tropical jungles, densely populated plains, rich wild life and much more.



India represents a colourful mosaic of people with diverse cultures, traditions, customs, religious beliefs and cuisines. It is a melting pot of different cultures and the concoction produced henceforth is more beautiful than the individual cultural ingredients. From forts, to the finest paintings, dances, art, India has a heritage which has been treasured since decades. The variety to choose from makes India a favourable destination and it is a destination which is still undiscovered!



**Atul Khanna**  
Director, Vivaana Culture Hotel

India is a favourable tourist destination owing to its abundant natural beauty, rich culture and historic importance. The government is working hard to improve infrastructure across India, improving air, rail and road connectivity to the remote corners of the country. New low cost flights are being introduced and emphasis is given on cleanliness and hygiene. Recently, wellness and medical tourism has picked up on a large scale.



**Ratan Taldar**  
Managing Director, Ramada Udaipur Resort and Spa

**Nihit Srivastava**  
Director Operations and Business Development (India), Ramee Group of Hotels, Resorts and Apartments



From the beaches of Goa to the mountains of the Himalayas, backwaters of Kerala and spiritual hubs like Haridwar, Golden Temple etc, India offers everything. Indian culture and festivals also play an important role contributing to tourism. As tourism is a top priority of the government, more services are being added for inbound tourists.

**Mohit Mewani**  
Exhibition Director, India International Travel and Tourism



The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key growth drivers among the service sector in India. Supported by the rising purchasing power of domestic traveller, increase in commercial development and FTAs, growing airline industry and impetus from government-led initiatives has facilitated growth in tourism. eTV will go a long way in making India a more favourable tourist destination.

**Deepika Arora**  
Regional Vice President - Eurasia, Wyndham Hotel Group



and art, and diverse customs and celebrations.

The young and new India is on the verge of becoming one of the fastest growing economies of the world. We have seen a steep increase in the budget allocation to attract tourists from India, which clearly says that India is more to offer than just cultural. India is one of the richest and oldest cultures, a melting pot of languages, land of spices, marvel in architecture

**Sandeep Bhatt**  
Managing Partner, Eximius Business

India has to be seen as a set of many different destinations. India offers variety for all kinds of tourism. The beaches, hill stations among others offer everything to a tourist. With government's intensified focus on tourism, infrastructure and ease in visa restrictions I believe it is going to get better.

**Syed A. Asim**  
Executive Director, Bonton Holidays



There are a multitude of reasons making India a preferred holiday destination. The diversity of the country is foremost. The range of experiences in one country, especially holds true to foreign travellers who need to apply for only a single visa to experience variety. Though India is expansive, it is fairly easy to travel within and is relatively inexpensive as well.



**Soumodeep Bhattacharya**  
Director of Sales and Marketing, Hyatt Place Goa Candolim

From ancient ruins, religious structures, exotic cities to diverse landscape, there is an endless collection of tourist attractions in India. Kerala backwaters, Lake Palace Udaipur, Goa, Kanha National Park, Jaisalmer, Golden Temple, Ajanta Caves, Varanasi, Taj Mahal, Jama Masjid are some of the aspects that make India a favorable destination.



**Trishal Rao**  
Director, Sales and Marketing, Oakwood Premier Pune and Oakwood Residence Naylor Road Pune



India is one of the most heterogeneous cultures in the world; a kaleidoscope of unique culture, ancient systems Ayurveda and alternative lifestyles with yoga and meditation. Forts, palaces, medieval cities, temples, architectural marvels, lakes, wilderness, mountains and the desert have contributed in shaping the tourism products

**Nitin Sambhi**  
Managing Director, Terra Ignota Tours



Unity in diversity' is the single most advantage for India. Diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, religion, colour makes us a sought after destination. India is a young but spiritual country which binds it together. Above all, 'Atithi Devo Bhava', our inherent hospitality, becomes heady concoction for making India the destination

**C.P Shashidharan**  
Senior Vice President- Visit India, Meandering Vacations



People, festivals and places are the watchwords for India to be the most favoured destination. The warm hospitality extended is unparalleled. The country offers a variety of cultures, fashion and colours. Good travel and tourist infrastructure, places of heritage, architecture and culture and value for money are important aspects of India.

**Saurabh J Bamane**  
General Manager, Upper Deck resort, Lonavala

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Come spring and **Alirajpur** in **Madhya Pradesh**, is 150 kms from Indore turns into a riot of colours with Bhagoria. Vibrantly attired crowds of marriageable boys and girls turn up to perform their years old tradition of seeking love of their life in this fair. As the name of the festival indicates (**Bhaag, to run**), after choosing their partners the young couples elope and are subsequently accepted as husband and wife by society through predetermine customs. Those who already have found their love, too come here, the festival providing the institutionalised framework for announcing the alliance publically.

Witness this unique festival of Madhya Pradesh, celebrated a **week ahead of Holi** which falls on 23rd March, 2016.



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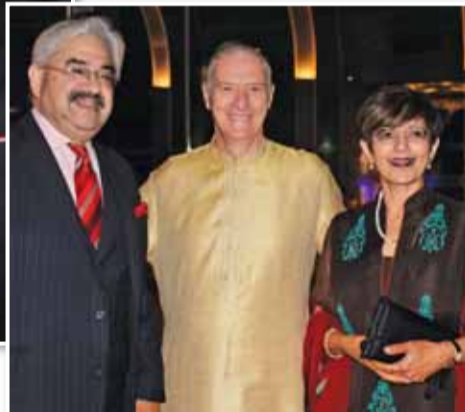
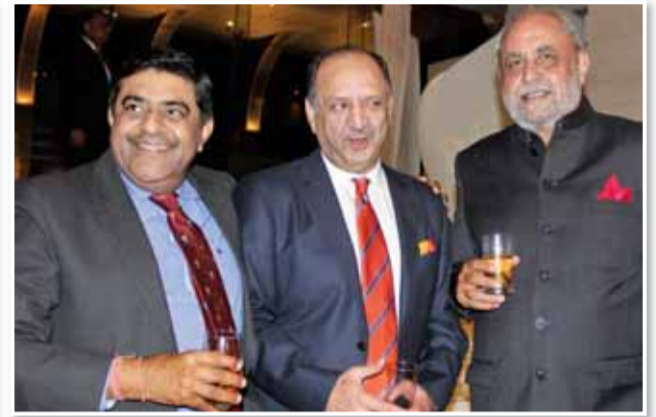
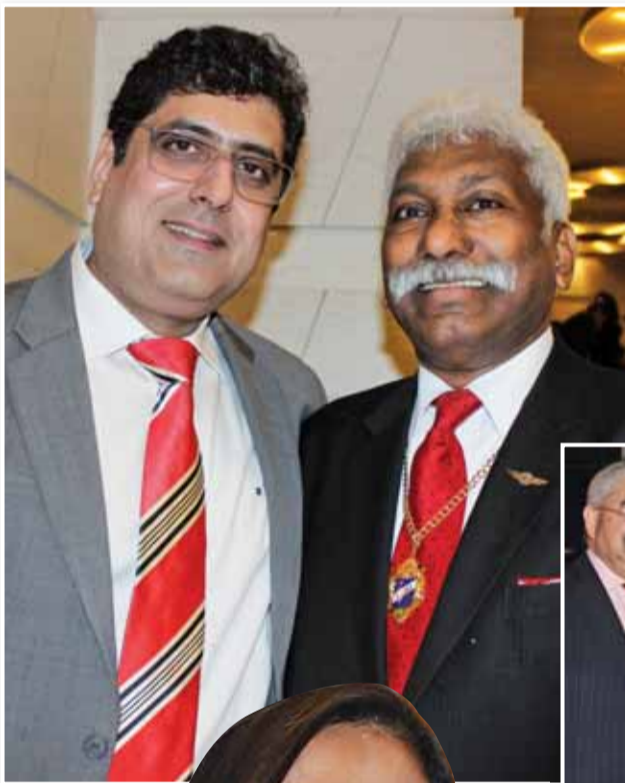


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# SKÅL raises a toast at the Annual Ball

SKÅL Delhi recently hosted the Annual SKÅL Ball at Le Meridien New Delhi where SKÅL International's Executive Committee graced the networking event with their presence. **Sanjay Dutta**, President, SKÅL Delhi welcomed the visiting team among of which SKÅL International World President **Nigel Pilkington** and Vice President **David Fisher** were a part of. The exclusive red-tie event incorporated SKÅL's principle of friendship and togetherness, and was attended by the crème de la crème of the travel and hospitality industry.







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# Madhya Pradesh

## Exploring the 'Heart of India'

Madhya Pradesh offers a variety of tourism products ranging from pilgrim tourism, wildlife tourism, heritage tourism, to Buddhist circuit, adventure sports, and cultural tourism. The state boasts of a wide variety of attractions to suit all tourists.

Nestled between the Vindhya and the Satpura mountain ranges, Madhya Pradesh is home to the plains in the east, meandering rivers, rocky hills and ravines, to lush green forests.

Ancient temples, national parks and sanctuaries, stupas, forts, palaces, a host

of cultural and tourist festivals and venues for international conference and conventions of global standards attract large number of domestic and international tourists from all segments.

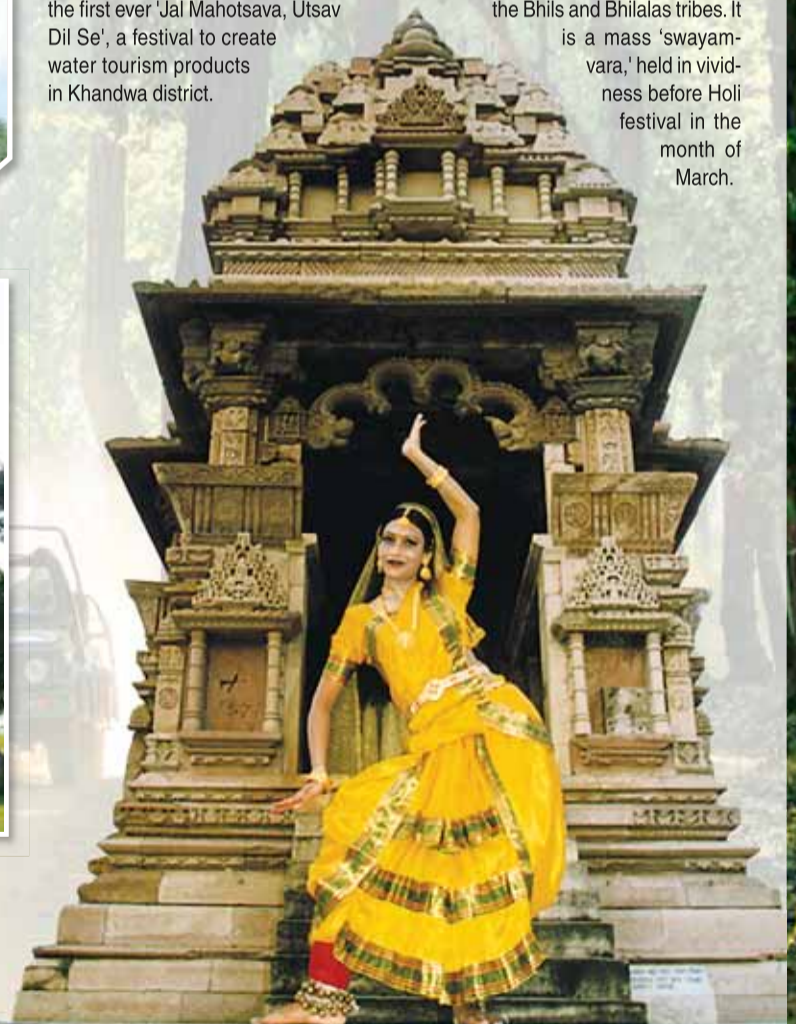
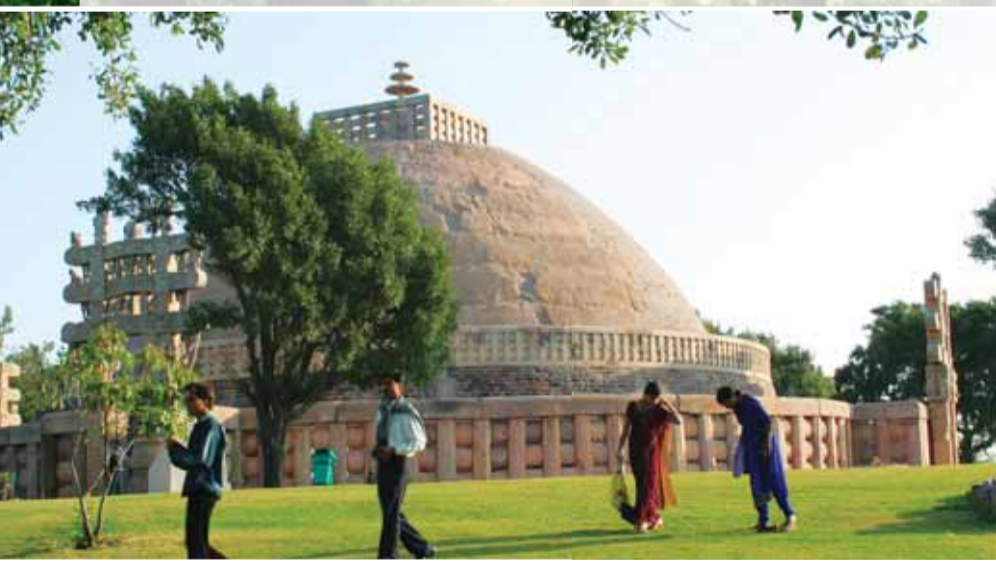
The principal destinations are Khajuraho, Kanha, Sanchi, Mandu, Gwalior – Shivpuri, Pachmarhi,



Bandhavgarh, Satpura National Park, Pench, Amarkantak, Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Bhedaghat, Orchha and Chitrakoot and the dynamic business centres of Bhopal and Indore. Madhya Pradesh has also explored the potential of Water Tourism in the state. Hanumanthiya, on the banks of Indira Sagar Dam, one of the biggest man made water reservoirs in Asia, hosted the first ever 'Jal Mahotsava, Utsav Dil Se', a festival to create water tourism products in Khandwa district.

### Festivals of Madhya Pradesh

'Kalidas Samaroh', 'Tansen Samaroh' and a dance fete in Khajuraho are celebrated, in great fiesta, with vast number of avid participants. Religious festivals too are observed with veneration. In West Nimar and Jabua regions of Mandhyanchal, a colorful festival called Bhagoria Haat is feted by the Bhihs and Bhilalas tribes. It is a mass 'swayam-vara,' held in vividness before Holi festival in the month of March.





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# Need for strong regional connectivity

The PHD Aviation Summit 2016, organised recently in Delhi, saw the who's who of the aviation industry coming under one roof, and discussing how regional and remote connectivity can be bolstered. **Ashok Gajapathi Raju Pusapati**, Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of India, inaugurated the summit in the presence of other industry bigwigs.



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# European experience in Vienna

The Austrian National Tourist Office recently conducted roadshows in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Delhi to acquaint the trade with their new travel products in Vienna, Salzburg and Innsbruck.



TT BUREAU

A record number of 40,355 Indians visited Vienna in 2015, accounting for 89,628 overnight stays. While the number of Indians visiting Vienna increased by 49.5 per cent last year, the number of overnight stays grew by 38.7 per cent, according to Vienna Tourist Board. "We have had a brilliant year in 2015. By 2017, we hope to welcome 100,000 overnight stays in Vienna. We are focussing on families, honeymooners and young travellers and are offering package tours through our travel trade partners," says **Isabella Rauter**, Head Public Relations, Vienna Tourist Board. With the theme of 'Imperial Heritage and Contemporary, Vienna is offering a mix of both the past and the present in the city.

The Austrian city of Salzburg witnessed 25,672 overnights from the Indian market in 2015. "We have witnessed 52.47 per cent growth in Indian overnights to Salzburg. The average duration

of stay is 1.9 days," reveals **Christine Mukharji**, Market Manager India, Austrian National Tourist Office. "We witnessed 2.7 million overnights totally in 2015 which is a new record. Apart from that, we also welcomed 6.5 million day visitors," adds Mukharji. Salzburg is targeting the Indian market to promote the city as a wedding destination.

Speaking about the city of Innsbruck, **Peter UNSINN**, Manager International Marketing and Media (Asia, USA, UK), Innsbruck Tourismus says, "We witnessed a 10 per cent increase

in the number of tourist arrivals and nearly 50,000 overnight stays. An Indian traveller looks for a European experience when coming to the city. Thus, Innsbruck can be defined as the Alps like Switzerland, quality wise like the Germans, and easy lifestyle of the Italians, making it a complete destination. Also, since the city is at the crossroads of Europe, Innsbruck should be the hub where travellers can stay longer and still enjoy Europe."

On their involvement with travel agents, **Thomas Bachinger**, Market Management, Vienna Tourist Board

says, "We work very closely with the travel agents. As the national tourist board we provide all the relevant information about the city like new hotels, attractions, museums etc, and connect the travel agents in India to the local tourist businesses. We also offer FAM trips and host agents in Vienna.

The Vienna Experts Club International provides agents with several benefits like reduced hotel rates and allows them to explore the city at their own pace to understand and sell it better to the Indian client base."



**Isabella Rauter**  
Head Public Relations  
Vienna Tourist Board



**Christine Mukharji**  
Market Manager India  
Austrian National Tourist Office



**Peter UNSINN**  
Manager International Marketing  
and Media (Asia, USA, UK),  
Innsbruck Tourismus

# TCEB eyes a slice of Indian MICE

In a move to promote Thailand's Exhibition and MICE industry, Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has introduced Thailand Extra Exhibition and Connect Businesses schemes to boost participation from the sector in India.



VAISHALI DAR & AHANA GURUNG

Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), in association with the PHD

Department, TCEB, says, "Thailand Extra Exhibition is a new communication campaign

port scheme 'Connect Businesses' which is aimed at offering extra benefits to Indian businesses." Connect Businesses is TCEB's exclusive

a year-on-year growth of over 24 per cent who were mainly from New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru. A sizeable number were also from the Tier-II cities." In tandem with their corporate branding, TCEB has launched Thailand Connect-Beyond Capitol where places such as Phuket, Krabi, Chiang Mai, etc, are being encouraged for MICE events, other than Bangkok. She informs, "We will be offering subsidies on air fare through this campaign since these places don't have direct connectivity."



**Jaruwan Suwannasat**  
Director, Exhibitions and Events  
Department, TCEB



**Nooch Homrossukhon**  
Director, Meetings and Incentives  
Department, TCEB



**Nitin Sachdeva**  
Marketing Manager, India  
Representative Office, TCEB

Chamber of Commerce, recently launched the campaign, 'Thailand Extra Exhibition-Expand Your Business Opportunities in ASEAN in 2016,' in New Delhi.

Throwing light on the new campaign, **Jaruwan Suwannasat**, Director, Exhibitions and Events

through which we want to promote Thailand's exhibition industry which offers Indian professionals a platform to the ASEAN region. With the Thailand Extra Exhibition Programme, we hope the number will grow another 15 per cent in the next year, and will draw the interest of business parties in India." TCEB also launched the government sup-

promotion for matchmaking at exhibitions in Thailand, and offers \$100 for each trade visitor achieving three business-matching meetings during their visit," Suwannasat says.

**Nooch Homrossukhon**, Director, Meetings and Incentives Department, TCEB, says, "From India, we received

**Nitin Sachdeva**, Marketing Manager, India Representative Office, TCEB, informs that they are working on a three-pronged strategy for growth. "We are engaging with corporate clients who are the end decision makers through networking events such as these," he shares. TCEB is also organising educational and training seminars in Tier-I and Tier-II cities. Roadshows are also in the pipeline to allow the private sector to engage with Indian tourism professionals."

# Life comes full circle

**Dipak Deva**, who started his career as the Branch Manager of Travel Corporation of India in 1989, is now the Managing Director of its new avatar and looks after 3 brands- TCI, SITA and Distant Frontiers.

TT BUREAU

Armed with a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Punjabi University, Patiala, **Dipak Deva** started his career in the travel and tourism industry in 1989 as the Branch Manager of Travel Corporation of India (TCI) in Jaipur. Deva served at TCI for a decade as the General Manager

nor the visas, it's the awareness. The government needs to implement a plan and roll out Incredible India 2.0. All India needs is more publicity, better marketing, and a huge presence on social media. We have immense potential," he says.

Deva is actively involved in various tourism trade bodies. At present he is the Co-

Chairman Tourism Committee of FICCI Nominee Director for Tourism & Hospitality Sector Skill Council of National Skill Development Council (NSDC is a not-for-profit company set up by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, to promote skill development in the country) and is on the Governing Body -Eco-Tourism Society of India (ESI).

## Odisha Tourism, IITTM Bhubaneswar organise orientation program



Over 150 pink auto drivers in Bhubaneswar were a part of an orientation program to create awareness on how they can be more tourist friendly. The day-long program was organised by the Indian Institute of Travel and Tourism Management, Bhubaneswar, and sponsored by Odisha Tourism. IITTM has been in the past holding such programmes to empower the different segments of the tourism industry, such as guides, drivers, and porters.



**Dipak Deva**  
Managing Director  
TCI

I started out with one brand, owned another, and then turned around a third brand in SITA. Now I look after inbound for all these three brands

(Inbound) in Mumbai after which he went on to become one of the partners of Distant Frontiers until Kuoni India acquired the company in 2006.

Now, as the MD of Travel Corporation (India) in its new avatar since January 27, 2016, Deva's professional life seems to have come full circle. "It has been a very interesting journey indeed. I started out with one brand, owned another, and then turned around a third brand in SITA. Now I look after inbound for all these three brands," Deva says, adding that he finds it amusing that he has never had to create a professional resume even after all these years.

Deva uses his expertise, new ideas and his knowledge to position India as a viable destination for all markets and budgets. He has strong view about what India needs to do to figure among the top destinations to visit. "For many inbound travellers, it's not even on the radar and they have not even thought of visiting India. It's neither because of the price

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# EVENT TALK

## MARCH 2016

International Confex	London	Mar 2-3
BTL	Lisbon	Mar 2-6
IAAPI Amusement Expo	Mumbai	Mar 3-5
UNWTO World Congress on Snow & mountain tourism	Andorra	Mar 3-5
IITM	Kolkata	Mar 4-6
Routes Asia	Manila	Mar 6-8
ITB Berlin	Berlin	Mar 9-13
IITE	Raipur	Mar 11-13
Best of Australia roadshow	Pune	Mar 15
Ace of MICE Exhibition	Istanbul	Mar 16-18
Best of Australia roadshow	Ahmedabad	Mar 17
FICCI Travel & Hospitality Tech Conclave	Delhi	Mar 17-18
OTOAI Convention	Bali	Mar 17-21
ICPB roadshow	Kolkata	Mar 18
ITM	Ahmedabad	Mar 18-20
MITT	Moscow	Mar 23
Best of Australia roadshow	Bengaluru	Mar 29
WTM Latin America	Sao Paulo	Mar 29-31
UITT	Kiev	Mar 30-Apr 1
Best of Australia roadshow	Hyderabad	Mar 31
Buddhist Conclave	Both Gaya	Mar 29-31

## APRIL 2016

Connections Luxury	Italy	Apr 3-6
Africa International Luxury Travel Mart	Cape Town	Apr 4-6
PATA Seminar: Global Opportunities and Challenges	Delhi	Apr 5
Best of Australia roadshow	Kochi	Apr 6
WTTC Summit 2016	Dallas	Apr 6-7
WTM Africa	Cape Town	Apr 6-8
AITF	Azerbaijan	Apr 7-9
Best of Australia roadshow	Coimbatore	Apr 8
ADTOI Convention	Kolkata	Apr 8-11
South India Travel Awards	Hyderabad	Apr 12
Digital Travel APAC	Singapore	Apr 12-14
China Outbound Travel & Tourism Mart	Beijing	Apr 12-14
SITT Russia	Novosibirsk	Apr 14-16
Great Indian Travel Bazaar	Jaipur	Apr 17-19
KITF Kazakhstan	Almaty	Apr 20-22
PATA Asia Pacific Travel Technology Conference	Delhi	Apr 21-22
Routes Europe	Krakow	Apr 24-26
Arabian Travel Mart	Dubai	Apr 25-28
Ecotourism & Sustainable Tourism Conference	Botswana	Apr 25-28
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**Tourism Authority of Thailand**

**New Delhi**

**Isra Stapanaseth** takes over as the Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi office where his jurisdiction will cover North and East India as well as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. He was previously TAT Director of Chiang Rai office and has been associated with the organisation since the past 20 years. Excited about his stint with the Indian market, he considers India to be one of the most important tourism markets for Thailand. He will be focusing on promoting all sectors of tourism including golf, Indian weddings, women travellers, adventure tourism with focus on the luxury segment.



**AccorHotels**

**New Delhi**

**Arif Patel** joins AccorHotels as Vice President Sales, Marketing and Distribution for the India region. An industry Sales and Marketing veteran, Patel brings to AccorHotels, over two decades of experience with leading brands that include ITC hotels and Oberoi hotels. Patel was most recently the Regional Director of Sales & Marketing, South Asia for Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide. A proven leader, he brings with him a wealth of experience in Sales, Revenue, Digital and Social Media Marketing, Loyalty and Distribution Management, Branding and Strategic partnerships.



**ANTA Holidays**

**UAE**

**Gaurav Khandelwal** joins ANTA Holidays (Destination Management Company – UAE ) as its Global Head – Tours. In his new assignment, Khandelwal will head the tours division encompassing product development, contracting, operations and sales. With almost 20 years of vast experience in travel industry, Khandelwal possesses great leadership skills, a passion for excellence and a talent for developing high performing teams that drive excellent business results. Having in depth knowledge of B2B market PAN India, he now takes on the role of promoting UAE across the globe.



**Four Points by Sheraton Bengaluru**

**Whitefield, Bengaluru**

Four Points by Sheraton Bengaluru appoints **Jitesh Patta** as the General Manager. Patta has been involved with the hospitality industry for the past 18 years and his previous association with Four Points by Sheraton saw him in the role of General Manager at Four Points by Sheraton, Dehradun. Prior to his association with the Starwood Hotels and Resorts, Patta has worked with brands like Carlor Rezidor group, Country Club India Limited, Tivoli garden, Royal Goan Beach Club, Fortune Jodhpur, The Clarks and The Surya New Delhi.



**Swosti Group of Hotels**

**Odisha**

**Priyanath Behera**, after years of service with the Swosti Group as General Manager, has now taken over as Vice President-cum-Chief Financial Officer at Swosti Group (Hotel Division). Behera says with confidence that future of Swosti Group is looking bright and promising, for our valuable guests as well as for our dedicated staff with more upgrading of an array of facilities and expansion plans. Very soon Swosti Group is coming up with a World Class Luxury Resort at Chilika Lake, Dist. Ganjam, Odisha which is scheduled to open in end 2016.



**Novotel Pune Nagar Road**

**Pune**

**Rohit Chopra** has been promoted to Executive Assistant Manager – Rooms, Sales and Marketing by Novotel Pune Nagar Road. He comes with 19 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He joined Novotel Pune as Director of Sales and Marketing as a part of its pre-opening team in August 2013. Previously, Chopra held the positions of DOSM at Hyatt Regency Pune, Regional Director of Sales South India for Hyatt Hotels and Associate Director of Sales North India for Hyatt Hotels within a span of 10 years. Before Hyatt, Chopra was a part of Regional Sales Team of Marriott International North India.



**Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Paschim Vihar**

**New Delhi**

**Firuza Sharma** has been appointed as Director of Sales & Marketing at Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Paschim Vihar. Sharma has a rich and versatile experience of over 20 years in the hospitality industry. She has been previously associated with hotels such as Lalit Hotels, Ascott group, Ananda Spa (IHHR Hospitality), The Leela Hotels and now with the Carlson group. She holds a Diploma in Hotel Management from National Council of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Mumbai.



**The Westin Gurgaon**

**New Delhi**

The Westin Gurgaon has appointed **Anoop Pandey** as its Director of Rooms. Pandey graduated from WelcomeGroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal. He was a part of The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi since its pre-opening in 2010, as Front Office Manager. He was associated with Starwood Hotels and Resorts previously as Duty Manager at The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace. Pandey has over 16 years worth of experience in the hospitality world.



**Sarovar Hotels**

**Delhi**

**Daisy Basumatari** has joined Sarovar Hotels & Resorts as Manager - Public Relations. She brings with her an experience of over 7 years working with PR agencies of repute where she had worked on top hospitality brands such as The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts, ITC Hotels & Resorts, The Ritz Carlton Bangalore and tourism boards including Chhattisgarh Tourism Board and UP Tourism. At Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, she will be responsible for handling all the PR and communications activities of the brand and its properties.



**TALKING People**

**Steve Harrop**, CEO, Travel Bullz, says, "I am a family man and love nothing more than spending time with my wife and 2 adorable children." Harrop has always been a very active person which stems from his time as an amateur athlete and spends his time working out in the gym. Never one to shy away from a challenge, my latest past time is learning to read Thai with an aim to be fluent within the next year. He has a great passion for travel and always tries to visit at least one new country each year. "I have now visited 78 countries and looking forward to the next," he says.



**Stephen Peppard**, International Sales & Marketing Representative, Phillip Island Nature Parks, Australia, tries not to let stress take over his life but time with his wife and two sons keep him active and happy. "I also enjoy fishing and am lucky that I live on an Island that has some fantastic fishing spots. I also love watching cricket test matches," he says. His most memorable holiday moment in India was driving an auto-rickshaw for a short distance, after agreeing to give the driver a tip! His travels in India have been only for work. He hopes to visit the Taj Mahal on his next visit to India this year.



**Julie Jackson**, Director of Sales & Marketing – Complex, a Member of the Starwood Sales Organisation, has always had a passion for travelling. "I feel blessed to work in an industry that allows me to live and experience different cultures. What I do in my spare time really depends on where I am," she says. In a city like Hong Kong or Shanghai, Jackson loves to explore the local markets, searching for unique and interesting objet d'art, clothing and jewelry. "If I'm living in an island paradise (as I do now), then I use the time to relax and enjoy the local customs and cuisine. Living and working in various countries has been an incredibly rich and rewarding experience for me," she adds.



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# Delhi Festival in September 2016

2016 is the year of festivals for Delhi Tourism, with the national capital planning to organise the Delhi Festival in September 2016 and other events to attract tourists. **Saumya Gupta**, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Delhi Tourism and Transport Development Corporation, tells **TRAVTALK** about the 'Brand Delhi' campaign and other upcoming initiatives.



ANKITA SAXENA

## QWhat tourism products does Delhi offer?

Delhi Tourism has a lot to offer to every type of tourist. We have many tourism circuits like the architecture circle, heritage circuit, culinary circle, baoli tours, Old Delhi circuit, etc. Delhi is a shopper's paradise besides being home to various beautiful gardens, and offering music and night clubs for tourists. We have specifically designed products for every taste and every type of traveller.

## QWhat new products do you have on offer for tourists this year?

We have developed two more Dilli Haat in Janakpuri and Pitampura. We are organising a month-long 'Delhi Festival' in September under which we will host about 40-50 festivals. The aim is to douse the city in festivity. Also, while planning a trip to India, tourists can check out the Delhi Festival and add it to their itineraries, extend their stay in the city to enjoy the food, culture and fun and frolic during the festivities.



“A large number of travellers arrive in Delhi and we intend to market and develop our products better in order to make them stay longer in the national capital.”

**Saumya Gupta**

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer,  
Delhi Tourism and Transport Development Corporation

ucts popular, draw larger crowds to those areas and offer the people in Delhi and those visiting Delhi more avenues to explore.

## QWhat is Delhi Tourism doing to improve the facilities in the state?

Presently we are in the process of branding and registering all B2B functionar-ies. We are standardising the products and

TripAdvisor, India is the 6th most researched country for tourism. This means that there is existing interest and a lot of tourists come to India through Delhi. A large number of travellers arrive in Delhi and we intend to market and develop our products better in order to make them stay longer in the national capital.

## QHow are you working with the travel trade?

We are tying up with partners who can deliver a certain quality of services. We are working with a content aggregator called Delhipedia in order to offer more quality and product on our website and give a tourist an add on value through the Delhi Tourism website. We are also working with INTACH, to offer Delhi Heritage Walks and other private partners who operate and manage our properties. We have tied up with DPauls Travel and Tours as a travel trade partner and are widening our association with the travel trade fraternity.

## Over 100,000 attend 29<sup>th</sup> Garden Festival

The 29<sup>th</sup> edition of Garden Festival organised from February 19-21, 2016 was a success with nearly 1 lakh visitors over three days. The theme for this year's festival was 'Garden for Environment and Health' and showcased terrariums, potted plants, foliage, medicinal and herbal plants, hanging baskets, dahlia, roses, cacti, bonsai, bougainvillea etc. A non-stop musical extravaganza, workshops, lectures, plays, cultural programmes, food festival, nature walks and adventure activities accompanied the show.



## QWhat are the promotional activities planned by Delhi Tourism for the year?

We are planning to launch the 'Brand Delhi' campaign. Other states like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan have already launched their state campaigns and if we get the budgetary support we shall be able to launch our own campaign to inform travellers about the tourism products and offers in Delhi. We intend to market our properties more aggressively. Many of our properties require marketing and branding. Basically we want to make the prod-

services to offer better quality to the travellers. There is a niche market which prefers the bed and breakfast set up and we are trying to improve the facilities for this segment as well. We need to offer a wholesome package to the well-informed tourists. We intend to act as an aggregator and brand the products under the umbrella of Delhi Tourism so that when a tourist visits Delhi he or she is assured that the product being offered is of a standardised quality with respect to the branding. Delhi is already the second most popular destination in the country. According to a report by

## Events in Delhi

- **Qutub Festival:** March 3
- **Purabi Utsav:** March 10-21
- **Weekend Utsav:** Every Saturday and Sunday
- **Sindhi Film Festival:** March 26-27
- **Virat Sanskritik Karyakram:** March 27



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