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Delhi to address trade

Delhi Tourism is all set to promote Brand Delhi worldwide and is planning a number of events including Delhi Festival in November and a joint event with the travel trade to address their problems.



NISHA VERMA

Being the country's capital, Delhi gets maximum footfall and acts as a gateway to north for foreign as well as domestic tourists. However, there are challenges, and they are being addressed, claims **Kapil Mishra**, Minister of Tourism, Delhi Government.

Upbeat about the recent budget, which waived off luxury tax on hotels having per night room rate of ₹ 1500, Mishra said, "The budget was positive and for hoteliers it was like a festival. We have received great response for the budget from within the industry as well as outside." He further added that for the government the keyword is 'growth'. "We want to facilitate an environment where people can come and stay for longer duration in Delhi. Currently, it has become more of a transit



"We want to facilitate an environment where people can come and stay for longer duration in Delhi. Currently, it has become more of a transit point. People come and leave for Agra or Jaipur. We are trying to change that and hence we are bringing events in the city."

Kapil Mishra

Minister of Tourism, Delhi Government

point. People come and leave for Agra or Jaipur. We are trying to change that and hence we are bringing events in the city. We introduced the single window clearance for events four months back, and since then we've had AR Rahman, Farhan Akhtar as well as Disney's Beauty and the Beast staged in the city. Also, Madame Tussauds Museum will be coming in Delhi soon, and will help

everyone who is part of the tourism industry, including hotels. And that's what the plan is."

He added, "We are working with Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) for revival of our monuments. We are also engaging with tour operators as well as entrepreneurs who have creative ideas to offer

new experiences to tourists coming in to the city."

With many Indian states already having established tourism brands for themselves, Delhi still has a long way to go. But, Mishra denies, saying, "We are going to launch a very aggressive campaign in August this year. It will be a global campaign and would boost tourism in Delhi. Brand

Delhi is going to be very big and the Delhi festival that we are going to organise in November will also be huge. It is going to be a very big global international festival on the lines of the Dubai and Singapore festivals. In fact, we are in touch with people who have organised Singapore and Edinburgh festival for working on it. The Delhi festival is going to be an annual property."

However, there are challenges as well. Mishra reveals, "One area we really faced the problem was in getting the heritage tag for the city. It was almost done, the nomination was decided, but at the last moment it wasn't cleared."

Delhi Tourism is also working closely with the travel trade. "We are in touch with the tour operators and somewhere in the middle of this year we are going

to plan a joint event and FICCI is helping us in the same. There we will be discussing the problems and policy solutions that the government can provide. This particular year is going to be a turning point in the tourism of Delhi, both for the people who are service providers and also in terms of the experience of the tourists who will be visiting the city," he insisted.

Tourism Facelift

- ↳ The Delhi Festival in November is going to be a very big global international festival on the lines of the Dubai and Singapore festivals
- ↳ Delhi Government introduced single window clearance for events four months back, and since then the city had shows by musician AR Rahman, actor Farhan Akhtar as well as Disney's Beauty and the Beast

Uphold ethical practices

In the light of some recent cases where travel agents and tour operators were reprimanded for unfair practices, **TRAVTALK** asks associations how agents should be regulated to curb fraudulent activities.



ANKITA SAXENA



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President
Outbound Tour Operators
Association of India

We have taken up this issue very seriously and are debating on how we can make our members adhere to the standards and ethical practices. We have invited our members to come forward to give their valuable suggestions and implement them. OTOAI has a very strict criteria, which one has to complete to become its active member and we are contemplating to make it stricter while debating the issue with our members and other stakeholders. We are dedicated to develop and promote the highest ethical and professional standards in the travel and tourism industry and aim to foster an environment of collaboration with various stakeholders through our ideology of collective ambition.

We want that stringent laws and strict enforcements be made against such tour operators by the government as they bring bad name to our industry and also to our country's image. I can talk about our IATO members only. All our members are approved only after strict scrutiny and reference of two known existing members while applying for the membership. They have to follow a Code of Conduct which sanctifies integrity and honesty in business operations. If the fraudulent operations are reported in the media, then these are not about IATO members.



Pronab Sarkar
President
Indian Association of
Tour Operators

As per the bylaws of TAFI, we have strict procedures to tackle any travel agency which may be involved in fraudulent activities. We suspend the membership and give a show-cause notice further to which if the association is convinced of the innocence then the membership continues otherwise terminated. We have not experienced any such incident in the past as TAFI has strict regulations when empanelling members into the association. However, many a times agents are charged of dodging taxes but we know, as travel agents, that the issue arises out of failure to follow proper procedure when submitting documents, resulting in an assumption that a fraud has been committed. In such situations, as an association we defend and support our members if they are harassed by the government but at the same time pull up the members who are proven to be involved in unfair practices of the trade.



Praveen Chugh
Vice President, Travel Agents
Federation of India

There have been fraudulent activities by travel agents and service providers and many a times, we have seen foreign tourists being subjected to a lot of harassment, which gives a bad name to the country as a tourism destination, especially in a social media age. It is not limited to travel agents, but several hotels, resorts, transport companies and adventure operators, commit and promise a lot more, but deliver quite less. There is an urgent need to bring all service providers in tourism and hospitality sector under regulation and accountability. No one, who is not recognised by Ministry of Tourism or licensed by appropriate authorities should be allowed to indulge in tourism activities. It is very important for service providers to be upright and ethical as short delivery by them may cost the destination dearly.



Sarab Jit Singh
Vice Chairman
Federation of Associations in
Indian Tourism and Hospitality

In India the travel agents and tour operators are not an organised sector. It is high time that steps should be taken by the authorities concerned to lay out certain rules and regulations to be complied with. Fraudulent activities have an adverse effect on the tourism industry. Both centre and state governments should take steps like enforcing Tourism Act, setting up tourism police force etc., so that, some regulatory and enforcement measures are in place to monitor the working of the agents, making them accountable to the tourists.



Jyoti Kapur
President
Association of Domestic Tour
Operators of India

eTV for medical & MICE

The Ministry of Tourism is optimistic about the year ahead with several amendments and additions to e-Tourist Visa (eTV) in play, along with a significant tourism budget allocated in isolation to them.



AHANA GURUNG

The first quarter of 2016 has seen a significant growth in visitor arrivals registering about 10 per cent increase in foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) over 2015, and a phenomenal rise in tourists availing eTV facilities. Buoyed by the results, **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary-Tourism, Government of India, elaborates, "Almost 3 lakh tourists have used the eTV services during the first three months of the year, as compared to a total of 4.45 lakh tourists in 2015. At this rate, we feel that an average of one lakh arrivals on eTV per month can be achieved."

The initial announcement of eTV's validity of 30

"Reforms in the eTV's validity from 30 days to 60 days has been approved and will be put into action soon. While the eTV currently allows single-entry, double-entry on eTV is also on the cards. We are also contemplating on creating an eTV for medical tourism and MICE, as well as a business tourist visa for visitors travelling to India on work purposes."

Vinod Zutshi
Secretary-Tourism
Government of India



days resulted in a strong outcry from the industry who urged the government to extend the duration to 60 days. Zutshi affirms that most

revisions have been taken into consideration and principally approved. "Reforms in the eTV's validity from 30 days to 60 days has been approved

and will be put into action soon," he states. "While the eTV currently allows single-entry, double-entry on eTV is also on the cards. We are also

contemplating on creating an eTV for medical tourism and MICE, as well as a business tourist visa for visitors travelling to India on work purposes."

Zutshi reveals that for the first time in the history of tourism in India, a significant budget had been passed in isolation under the Demand for Grants. "By large, the infrastructure is the beginning of everything. We have sanctioned 20 projects (circuits) all over the country with more in the pipeline. Projects worth ₹1,600 crore have been signed for improving infrastructure under Swadesh Darshan while ₹284 crore have been allotted for the development of the PRASAD scheme circuits."

He adds that the idea is that world class facilities will attract tourists from the world over. "This should trigger a chain reaction among the private sector to fuel investments," Zutshi asserts.

Inbound Milestones

- Almost 3 lakh tourists used eTV during the first 3 months of 2016
- Reforms in 30 days to 60 days validity of eTV has been approved and will be put into action soon
- MOT is contemplating eTV for MICE, medical tourism, business tourism
- Double-entry on eTV on the cards

Amphibious buses in Punjab

Punjab is developing a variety of activities to facilitate longer stays. Amphibious buses, eco-tourism, rural tourism, wildlife, freedom trails, historical and cultural tours are some of the products on offer.



ANKITA SAXENA

By mid 2016 Punjab Tourism will introduce amphibious buses on a trial basis, from Amritsar into the wetlands where the tourists can also enjoy watching migratory birds, informs **Basanta Rajkumar**, Executive Director, Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board (PHTPB). "We are developing innovative tourism products on the axis of traditional and modern. We are in the process of refurbishing and restoring our forts and palaces, an aspect that Punjab has not been associated with. Gobindgarh Fort and a building inside where

the Kohinoor was kept are one of them," he says.

Rajkumar points out that the state is focusing on Amritsar as a destination and developing tourism products in and around the city. "We are offering rural tourism and farm tourism for visitors to enjoy the rustic stay at farm houses with five star facilities and experience farming activities. There are 14 protected areas in Punjab which are being developed for eco-tourism.

At Abohar, tourists can see the black buck and enjoy wildlife tourism. The religious and cultural circuit in Punjab is being enhanced by adding



Basanta Rajkumar
Executive Director, Punjab Heritage
and Tourism Promotion Board

places like Ram Tirath, Virasat-e-Khalsa in Anandpur Sahib apart from the Golden Temple," says Rajkumar.

The state is also developing 'freedom trails' which showcases the historical importance of Punjab, the various wars fought in the state and the struggle for independence in India. For this, monuments, memorials and museums are being restored.

Talking about the promotions and marketing plans, Rajkumar says, "In 2008 we engaged with UNWTO to chart out a Tourism Development Master Plan to guide our activities in tourism. We are following a focused market strategy with a threefold aim i.e. to increase footfalls, make them stay longer and allow them to spend more which benefits the state. Even

though the volume of business has not been huge but we have grown nearly 14-15 per cent annually for the last 5 years."

Rajkumar also informs PHTPB has been created for all promotional and marketing activities. The board works with travel trade partners from tourism and hospitality sectors in Punjab and provides them with a platform to engage with larger industry players. "Tourism has an industry status in Punjab and the private stakeholders are given fiscal and subsidy benefits to facilitate them," explains Rajkumar.

Punjab Tourism is also focusing on various

international and domestic travel marts and exhibitions to showcase their products and engage with industry players for avenues to develop tourism better. ➤

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India's own Global Travel Mart

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TT BUREAU

The Ministry of Tourism is whipping up support for the India Global Travel Mart scheduled for January 2017. **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary-Tourism, Government of India, revealed the plans they have for what is perceived as India's biggest B2B travel exhibition. "We plan to take the delegates taking part in the India Global Travel Mart for a Fam around the country and will follow the same format in the Tourism Investment Summit that we are going to organise this year," he revealed.

The scale and format of the mart will be like that of ITB and WTM, Zutshi said. "While it would support inbound tourism, we would like to have the presence of outbound as well, and that's how it will be global. This plan has emerged from various rounds of discussions we've had with the travel trade as well

"We plan to take the delegates at the India Global Travel Mart for a familiarisation trip around the country and will follow the same format in the Tourism Investment Summit this year."

Vinod Zutshi
Secretary-Tourism
Government of India



as Federation of Associations of Indian Travel and Hospitality (FAITH). On the other hand, at the Investors Summit, which we are doing with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), we'd invite all the state governments, and it will be organised at a very large scale."

The Ministry of Tourism working tirelessly to put India

on the global tourism map, he claimed. For this reason, the ministry is also organising a Tourism Investors Summit with CII from September 21-23, 2016, at Vigyan Bhawan New Delhi. "The agenda is to have discussions at every level with state governments, CII, knowledge partners etc, where we are also expecting a lot of MoUs to be signed," Zutshi

said, adding that the Investors Summit will assist in driving private investments for tourism's development.

The following month, the Buddhist Conclave will be held from October 3-5 in Sarnath, Varanasi and Bodhi Gaya, he informed. "As many as 500 monks from ASEAN countries will be attending the three-day event," he shared. Zutshi added that the International Tourism Mart (ITM) 2016 will also be held the same month in Imphal, Manipur to boost visitors to the Northeastern states.

Speaking about India's participation in WTM London from November 7-9, he shared, "We are going to partner with WTM London in November 2016. Also, we are planning to be the partner country for ITB Berlin in 2018."

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Now, lighthouse tourism

The Ministry of Tourism will develop 78 lighthouses for tourism as part of its plan to develop infrastructure as well as bring favourable policy interventions to encourage tourism.



TT BUREAU

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) has identified 78 lighthouses (44 land-based and 34 island-based) which will be further developed to attract domestic and international tourists. This was announced by **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Union Minister of State for Tourism, Government of India, during the recently-held Maritime India Summit 2016 in Mumbai.

With an extensive coastline and inland waterways, India has significant opportunities for maritime tourism. The Ministry of Shipping is working with the concerned ministries (Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Environment, etc.), state governments and other relevant agencies towards capitalising on this opportunity. Consequently, many new initiatives are being taken for development of various coastal



Dr. Mahesh Sharma
Union Minister of State for Tourism
Government of India

The Ministry of Shipping has drawn up a programme for developing tourism in the land adjacent to 78 lighthouses

and marine-based tourism projects such as development of lighthouses, cruise shipping and riverine tourism.

The Indian coastline is dotted with as many as 189 lighthouses, including the Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea. Steeped in rich maritime heritage, each lighthouse has a tremendous tourism potential. Dr. Sharma said, "The Ministry of Shipping through the Directorate General of Lighthouses & Lightships (DGLL) has drawn up an ambitious programme for developing tourism in the land adjacent to 78 lighthouses – in the first phase, under Public Private Partnership (PPP). The key objective of this initiative is to develop the existing lighthouses and their surrounding areas into a unique tourism destination and as a maritime landmark. Development of hotels, resorts, viewing galleries, adventure sports, thematic restaurants and allied tourism facilities will convert these into tourism destina-

tions." To accelerate growth, the government has undertaken many initiatives such as providing financial assistance to various agencies, including to the ports and lighthouses.

Throw some light

DGLL has already invited Request for Qualifications from potential developers for eight lighthouses at:

- ↳ Aguada (Goa)
- ↳ Chandrabhaga (Odisha)
- ↳ Mahabalipuram, Kanyakumari and Muttom (Tamil Nadu)
- ↳ Kadalur Point (Kerala)
- ↳ Kanhoji Angre, Sunk Rock (Maharashtra)
- ↳ Minicoy (Lakshadweep)
- ↳ Expression of Interest has also been issued by the DGLL for another 70 lighthouses.

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The Netherlands - 02 nts
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Dam Square - the heart of Amsterdam,
Amsterdam Canal Cruise.

Germany - 01 nt
Cologne - Cathedral, Scenic Rhine River Cruise,
Heidelberg Altstadt, Visit Black Forest,
Demonstration of Cuckoo Clock.

Switzerland - 03 nts
Rhine Falls, Mt. Titlis, Orientation tour of Lucerne,
Lake Lucerne Cruise, Jungfrau-Joch,
Orientation tour of Interlaken.

Liechtenstein
Vaduz : Mini-train ride.

Austria - 01 nt
Orientation tour of Innsbruck, Swarovski Museum.

Italy - 03 nts
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Leaning Tower of Pisa, St. Mark's - Venice with Private Boat,
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Now & Then Trav Talk

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

The first line of defence

Few travel companies realise that the frontline staff is their most important and crucial level that potential customers pass through. They are the first people that clients talk to and interact with and a basis for first impressions of the company. Based on the experience customers have with the frontline staff, operators can either clinch the deal or forever lose a client.

Such is the power of your first line of defence. Yet, not many owners and managers pay enough attention to them. That is possibly why we see a marked drop in the quality of people who front travel offices. One can espay lack of qualification, training and a definite absence of passion for their industry, which is the most disconcerting fact.

Training and academic qualifications can be provided, with some effort on part of the company and the employee. But a deficiency in love and enthusiasm for what they do and their industry can be a definite turn-off for customers who can, most often than not, spot this deficiency easily. To develop expertise, be it any field, requires passion, without which it is just another job. Owners and managers should identify this gap and invest a little time and money in their soldiers who are first in line for battle.

Leveraging growth by easing visa norms

The industry has waited with bated breath for the true outcome of eTV, touted as a revolution for inbound tourism in India ever since it was announced. Almost two years later, we're witnessing about 3.2 lakh tourists availing the eTV facilities in the first quarter of 2016 alone while last year, a total of 4.45 lakh tourists availed of this service. Foreign tourist arrivals during the first quarter have grown by 10 per cent over the same period in 2015, with a total of 25.08 lakh visitors. Liberalising visa norms and easing the procedures have always been an absolute necessity for growth in tourism which is why the initiation of eTV is a progress in itself. But is the growth fast enough?

The technology leap



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Tourism Ministers Conference

A conference of the tourism ministers from all the states is scheduled to be held on November 15, 1991. It is a measure of the growing importance of tourism in the eastern region that Calcutta has been chosen as the venue.

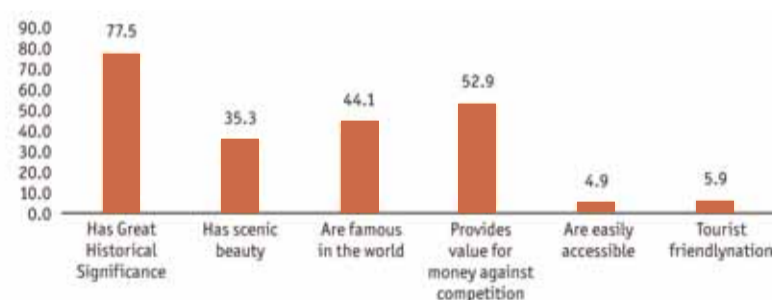
Among the matters proposed to be discussed in the conference are:

1. Identification of special tourism areas.
2. Declaration of tourism as an industry by all states.
3. Review of luxury taxes.
4. Reduction of passenger and other taxes for tourist coaches
5. Earmarking sites for hotels.

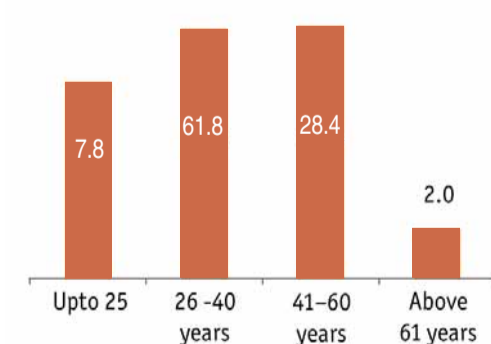
India's history biggest crowd-puller

India is considered a historically resourceful and a value for money destination. A survey conducted with 400 inbound travellers gauges what attracts them to India.

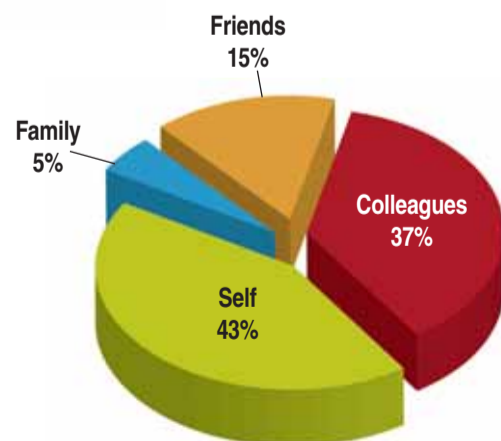
Reasons for Visiting India



Profile of the Inbound Tourist



It is discernible from the profiling that majority of the respondents were male aged between 26-60 years with Europe as their region of origin and were either travelling alone or with colleagues.



Source: FICCI-MRSS India Inbound Report



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Tourism: Today & tomorrow

The PATA's 4th Update & Outlook Meeting with MOT highlighted the ministry's effort to boost tourism and saw a beneficial exchange of feedback from the crowd.



Attempting to keep the travel trade abreast with developments by the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), PATA India Chapter recently initiated an Update and Outlook meeting with senior officials from MOT. **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary-Tourism, along with **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary-Tourism were present at the meeting and answered several queries brought forward by PATA members.

Runoop Sangha, Executive Director, PATA India Chapter commented,

“We wanted MOT to share their progress over the last 12 months or so and discuss their outlook for the future, particularly given that the tourism policy is on the anvil and the budget has just been announced.

“We work very closely with MOT and this is an outcome of our good relationship.”

Zutshi addressed the gathering on reforms in the e-Tourist Visa, a possible introduction of an eTV for MICE and another one for medical tourism purposes, and informed that they contemplating on celebrating next year as ‘Visit India Year 2017’ after the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) proposed the same. Additionally, he informed that MOT is also looking at relaxing Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms as well as home stay guidelines.

Some additional upcoming events are PATA's Annual Summit from May 18-21 in Guam, USA, while the PATA Travel Mart will be held from September 7-9 in Greater Jakarta, Indonesia.

From August, MOT & IGNOU's B.Sc. (Culinary Arts)

■ A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on May 5, 2016, by and between **Dr. Preeti Srivastava**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Ex-Officio Director, Indian Culinary Institute Society (ICI) and, **Sudhir Budakoti**, Registrar, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in the presence of **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary-Tourism, Government of India, and **Prof. Ravindra Kumar**, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, for launching the collaborative degree programme of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Culinary Arts from the August 2016 academic session at ICI, Tirupati. The admissions to this collaborative programme between ICI and IGNOU will be through a National level Entrance Test.

The B.Sc. (Culinary Arts) programme, designed and developed by the country's leading chefs and academicians, will be a unique programme and will go a long way in meeting the demand of top-of-the-line culinary specialists in the hospitality industry both in the country and abroad, across various levels and will create global ambassadors of Indian gastronomy. In the near future, ICI will also offer more specialised short term programmes in the culinary field.

Speaking on the occasion, Zutshi said that the Ministry of Tourism has plans of offering more diverse academic programmes in the area of hospitality in the near future, in collaboration with IGNOU.

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E-visas make or break outbound travel?

Neither air connectivity nor the cost of the destination but visa is the ultimate deciding factor for short-haul travellers, say Mumbai operators who expect a huge surge in outbound numbers to Malaysia with its e-visa for Indians.

HAZEL JAIN

The introduction of e-visa service will definitely give a big boost to India's outbound travel to Malaysia. This service will provide convenience to Indians tourists who are looking at last minute travel. The new e-visa policy will definitely encourage impulse travellers, and repeat visitors to consider Malaysia as a short-haul destination. However, this will not affect the movement of Indian travellers to South East or Far East Asian countries as Indians love to travel and explore different destinations.



Neelu Singh
CEO & Director
Ezeego1

With the e-visa facility the numbers will certainly multiply as it would now be convenient to process the visas by simply going online. This will certainly affect Indian tourist movement to other Far East/South East Asian countries. Currently, it takes around five working days to process the visas and passports need to be submitted. Last-minute travellers will be at ease and consider Malaysia as one of their preferred destinations for small trips and long weekend getaways.



Jay Bhatia
Director
Tulsidas Khimji Holidays

Malaysia is a very important destination for Akquasun Group and with the introduction of e-visas we are sure MICE and leisure numbers will go up. Some new attractions are being developed in Malaysia and with this development the destination will definitely have a good increase in numbers from India. As per our assumption, this will not have any effect on other destinations in the region but will create more numbers for leisure and back-to-back series groups.



B. A. Rahim
Group Director & CEO,
Akquasun Group

The Indian market is a significant contributor and has proven to be a strong and sustainable venture for tourist traffic into Malaysia. E-visas and biometrics on arrival will cut turnaround time for the issuing of travel documentation. Destinations with ease of visa issuance instantly become popular as the choice of a holiday destination is most often decided on visa approval. This will surely impact the number of tourists from India to Malaysia.



Daniel D'souza
Head Sales (India and NRI
Markets), SOTC Travel

Thomas Cook India applauds the Malaysian government's initiative of introducing e-visa for Indian tourists. It is a short-haul favourite with easy access of an under five-hour flight, serving to inspire a diversity of customer segments from value to luxury, family, FIT, ad hoc, young professionals, women travellers, Gen Y to Gen X. It also has strong potential for viable last-minute Indian travellers given the opportunity of extended weekend breaks and public holidays.



Rajeev D. Kale
President and Country
Head (Leisure Travel, MICE),
Thomas Cook India

E-visa is the new mantra for effective tourism. It will surely give a big push to Malaysia's tourism industry. An ideal example is Sri Lanka where tourism prospered tremendously post e-visa scheme. This move surely enhances the tourism industry and will result in better numbers of arrivals from India not only to Malaysia but to all other neighbouring countries in South East or Far East Asian countries as well. In addition, it will improve the relationship between the two countries. We may see more countries offering the same to Indians.



Tasneem Udaipurwala
Director
Wingspan

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21 Indians attend Germany Travel Mart

The 42nd Germany Travel Mart (GTM), organised by German National Tourist Board (GNTB) from April 17-19 in Magdeburg, saw more than 500 delegates from across the world including 21 Indian participants during the workshop.



ARIT GANDHI FROM MAGDEBURG

This year we had 21 participants from India in GTM including 15 tour operators and six journalists. The platform gives an opportunity to network with over 400 German suppliers and understand the products with regards to the Indian market. We are targeting the leisure market this year as even though the business travellers have 65 per cent share of the overall travellers, with the leisure market, the average spend is higher as compared to the business travellers.



Romit Theophilus
Director of Marketing & Sales Office India, German National Tourist Office

In 2015, Berlin witnessed 21,000 Indian visitors and 56,000 overnights corresponding to a 20 per cent increase in Indian arrivals over 2014 and 15.2 per cent increase in overnights stays from India. To promote the city we take part in several travel marts and fairs in collaboration with GNTB. We also collaborated with studios in Bollywood to shoot in the city. For the travel trade we suggest that even if they cannot visit Berlin, they can do online training and learn about the city.



Christian Tanzler
Spokesperson and Media Relations Manager, visitBerlin

We work closely with the representative office of Saxony Tourism in India and are the supplier of information related to the marketing services. In 2015, 5,258 Indian overnights were recorded in the city of Dresden, corresponding to 11 per cent decrease over 2014, ranking India at the 29th position in the international market for us. The main problem is that Dresden is often considered as a stopover destination between Prague and Berlin and tourists are not aware about the activities in the city to make them stay at least for over two nights.



Christoph Munch
Marketing Manager-International Markets, Dresden Marketing Board

Germany has great potential as a tourist destination. From wide landscapes to mountains and lakes, Germany has every kind of flavour for the Indian market. The workshop at GTM gives us a platform to understand the country and its destinations in detail and then with in depth knowledge about its products, sell it better to our clients in India.



Anshul Shah
Managing Partner
All 4 Season Holidays

GTM offers a common platform to the buyers and sellers where in product knowledge is enhanced and new destinations are also highlighted which we can go back and sell to the clients in India. We have seen a year-on-year growth in numbers from India to Germany. However, Indian food, vegetarian and Jain meals pose a challenge. In addition, the duration of Schengen visa and the biometric system are aspects that need to be considered to grow the numbers.



Vijay Nair
Assistant Vice President,
Sales and Marketing
TUI India

Germany has many products to offer to the youngsters and families from the Indian market. There are a number of theme parks and site seeing opportunities which fit well with the families. As Indians travel in groups and with families, our focus is on FIT and small family tours; we handle about 75-100 travellers in a year for Germany. There is lack of knowledge about the products in Northern Germany and also agents are unaware about the connectivity between cities in Germany which deters the overnight stays.



Edwin Alphanso
Operations & Product Head,
WOV Travel Company

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EQT is Kuoni's new owner

After confirming talks with Swedish private equity group EQT and announcing the offer within a month, Kuoni will finally close the investment deal with its new owner this May.

HAZEL JAIN

Zubin Karkaria, CEO, Kuoni Group and CEO, VFS Global, has revealed to **TRAVEL** that the change of ownership through Swedish private equity firm EQT will happen soon and expects the transaction to be completed in May 2016. Based on the offer made by EQT in February, Kuoni Group is valued at around ₹ 9,800 crore (on present currency rates, based on 1.4 billion Swiss Francs).

The company's Board feels that taking Kuoni private and handing over the responsibility for the Group to an internationally-renowned new owner would be ideal. Karkaria together with the current management team will continue to lead the company. Kuoni Group focuses on three core activities: Global Travel Distribution (GTD), Global Travel Services (GTS) and VFS Global.

He said in an email interview, "We expect the transaction to be completed in May 2016. We welcome EQT's investment in the Kuoni Group, which underlines the attractiveness of our global business



Zubin Karkaria
CEO, Kuoni Group and CEO, VFS Global

activities. With the new owners we will be able to accelerate the implementation of our strategy. Investments in technology and supporting acquisition opportunities give the Kuoni Group an excellent platform to build further on its leadership positions in travel indus-

try services. EQT has an impressive track record of growing companies. With access to their experience and network in both the travel and tech industries, we will be able to accelerate the implementation of Kuoni's strategy."

Karkaria has been with Kuoni for the past 25 years and as an executive board member of Kuoni Group for the past three years. Once this deal is completed in May, Kuoni Group will possibly undergo one of the most important transformations in its 110-year history.

Kuoni Group's Board of Directors had confirmed in January this year that it had indeed received preliminary approaches from third parties regarding a potential offer for the Kuoni Group and its businesses. In February 2016, the Swedish private equity group EQT had announced its plans to launch public tender offer for Kuoni Group.

New face in Malaysia Tourism



The recently-appointed Director of Tourism Malaysia, Mumbai, **Mohd Hafiz**, met with officials from the travel industry at a private function held in Mumbai. The evening saw an eclectic flow of conversation and ideas to promote Malaysia in India in order to reach the one million mark this year.

Udaan India takes delegates on Fam trip to Croatia



Udaan India organised a Fam to Croatia to showcase the new destination to its delegates and to offer support and synergy for visa, travel and tour package to their businesses. The guests included an extensive list of premium travel agents, IAS officers, and senior members from the government sector. The event was supported by their Croatian travel partner Unilne where the host took care of the boarding, lodging and local sightseeing in and around the beautiful landscapes of the country.



Is a travel agent digging his own grave?

By opting to work with Affiliate Programme Owners (let's call them OTAs), the travel agents are actually heading to a dead end.

While the travel agent is doing the hard work, the OTAs are controlling the destiny.

By working on fixed commissions, travel agents lose the ability to earn as per market dynamics. Worst, they expose their customers to OTAs. Moving forward, what would stop the big boys to gobble up the pie?

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Cox & Kings inks deal to promote Ras Al Khaimah

Ras Al Khaimah and Cox & Kings have signed an agreement to increase Indian tourist arrivals into the emirate. It will focus on promoting and popularising different aspects of the emirate in the India market.

India has become one of the largest source markets for Ras Al Khaimah with 80 per

The association will lead to Cox & Kings being a gateway to Ras Al Khaimah with unique itineraries at affordable prices thus making their packages attractive for Indian tourists. A series of campaigns, advertisements, creation of standalone tourism products, and special training programmes for Cox & Kings



cent increase in Indian visitors year-on-year (2014-2015). "The strategic partnership is to draw more Indian tourists to Ras Al Khaimah. Indian outbound has grown immensely and India has already cemented its position as one of the emirate's leading source markets. The partnership will establish the presence and expansion of the emirate in the Indian market and also make the most of the growing outbound trend," says **Karan Anand**, Head-Relationships, Cox & Kings.

staff are some of the strategies that will help present the emirate to Indians, he informs.

"This partnership will benefit us by making us an exclusive medium for Indians to explore Ras Al Khaimah. It is an interesting destination to visit as it offers varied landscapes," Anand adds. Water sports, the falcon show, camel race, heritage walks, mountain sports, helicopter tours and experiencing desert camping etc, are some of the many reasons to visit Ras Al Khaimah.

Norwegian docks in India

With the launch of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) in India at Mumbai's Ballard Pier and two new sales offices in Mumbai and Delhi, it is clear that the cruise company now considers India to be a force to reckon with. **Steve Odell**, Senior VP & MD (Asia Pacific), NCLH, confirms this.



HAZEL JAIN

Q How do you perceive the India market for cruising?

Asia Pacific is the fastest growing region in the cruise industry today. Between 2012 and 2014, passenger volume grew from 775,000 to nearly 1.4 million passengers, almost doubling up. Among all potential markets, India will be one of the key drivers of Asia's booming development with 36 per cent increase since 2012.

Q What kind of numbers are you expecting from India?

The total cruise market in India is 90,000 passengers annually, of which we have 10 per cent market share. In 2015, NCLH hosted 6,000 passengers from India and we are aiming to treble this to about 20,000 within two years – by the end of 2018.

Q Have you increased your focus on India?

Yes, we have strengthened our presence in Asia with offices in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo and now India. This has coincided with

Country Head – India, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises, who was with Singapore Tourism Board earlier.

with its maiden call in November 2016 and offer two sailings till March 2017. Indians mostly prefer the Miami, Alaska and Mediterranean cruises. We are also planning to add Singapore and Hong Kong as boarding points.

NCLH's fleet across all three brands will sail 45 itineraries throughout Asia from March 2016 to April 2017. Ports of call include Mumbai, Goa, Mangalore, Cochin, Hong Kong, Singapore, Xiamen, Shanghai, Tianjin (Beijing), Jeju, Incheon, Kyoto (Kobe), Nagasaki, Okinawa, Tokyo, Yangon and Colombo among others.

It will also promote the 10-day Copenhagen to Stockholm package onboard Seven Seas Voyager which will touch Denmark, Berlin, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland, Russia, Estonia and Sweden from July 23 priced from \$5,299 (Cat. F) that includes up to 73 free shore excursions.



"In 2015, NCLH hosted 6,000 passengers from India and we are aiming to treble this to about 20,000 within two years – by the end of 2018."

Steve Odell
Senior VP & MD (Asia Pacific)
NCLH

NCL returning to Asia for the first time since 2002. The new offices in New Delhi and Mumbai will conduct key sales and marketing functions along with a dedicated contact centre to serve travel agents across India. It will be headed by **Manoj Singh**, Country Head – India, Norwegian Cruise Line, who comes from Star Cruises India and **Puneet Kumar**,

Opening offices will help us strengthen our reach in the cruise market and also connect to the agents. Being face to face is critical when working with agents as it helps them understand the product better.

Q What packages can the agents in India sell?

Norwegian Star will make Mumbai a seasonal home port



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Chhattisgarh's exotic wildlife



Chhattisgarh has been blessed with rugged mountain views, dense forests comparable to the Amazon and seasonal wildflowers that make the state an ideal one for wildlife tourism.



Home to some of the most endangered and rare animal species, the state gives an opportunity to observe wildlife in its natural habitat and is a popular destination for nature enthusiasts.

Wildlife hub

◆ Boramdeo Sanctuary

Boramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Kabirdham district at a distance of 140 km from Raipur and is named after the famous Boramdeo temples. The best time to visit the Boramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary is between November and March and the town nearest to the sanctuary is Kawardha.

◆ Achanakmar Tiger & Biosphere Reserve

Achanakmar in Chhattisgarh is a tropical moist deciduous and tropical dry deciduous forest. The reserve is also a part of the much larger Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve

where sal, bija, saja, haldu, teak, tinsa, dhawara, lendia, khamar and bamboo flourish along with over 600 species of medicinal plants. Wild fauna found here includes the tiger, leopard, bison, flying squirrel, Indian giant squirrel, etc., and over 150 species of birds.

◆ Barnawapara Sanctuary

Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary, a land mass of undulating terrain dotted with numerous low and high hillocks, is a well-forested area of North-eastern corner of Raipur district. This sanctuary is famous for the frequent sighting of the Indian bison (Gaur) cheetal, sambhar, nilgai, and wild boar. Barnawapara also boasts over 150 species of birds.

◆ Kanger Valley National Park

Kanger Valley National Park is one of the most beautiful and picturesque national parks of India. The beautiful park is located about 27 km from Jagdalpur. Spread over an area of approximately 200 sq km comprising mainly of hilly terrain, the Park derives its name from the Kanger River, which flows throughout its length.

◆ Indravati National Park

Indravati National Park is the finest and most famous wildlife parks of Chhattisgarh. Indravati National Park is located in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh. The Park derives its name from the Indravati River, which flows from east to west and forms the northern boundary of the reserve with the Indian state of Maharashtra. With a total area of approximately 2799.08 sq km, Indravati attained the status of a National Park in 1981 and a Tiger Reserve in 1983 under the famous Project Tiger of India to become one of the most famous tiger reserves of India.

Accommodation options

◆ Amadob Tourist Resort

Amadob is situated 45 km from Bilaspur on Bilaspur-Amarkantak road and lies close to tourist attractions like Achanakmar Wildlife Sanctuary, Khudia Dam, Kabir Chabutra and Sonmuda. The resort comprises of 12 double bed cottages and is fully equipped with modern amenities.

◆ Barnawapara Hareli Eco Resort

Hareli Eco Resort is situated 9 km from Barnawapara Sanctuary and comprises of 12 double bed cottages with complete amenities. The normal season spans from November to June and low season from July to October.

◆ Dandami Luxury Resort, Chitakot

With 16 double bed cottages and 13 luxury tents, the luxury resort is in close proximity to tourist spots such as Kanger Valley National Park, Chitrakot Waterfall, Tirathgarh, Kailash Cave, among a few. It is situated 30 kms from Jagdalpur City on Barsoor road and makes for the ideal relaxing stay.



National parks and Wildlife sanctuaries

- National parks and Wildlife sanctuaries
- Indravati national park
- Guru Ghasidas national park
- Udanti-Sitanadi tiger reserve
- Badalkhol-Semarsot-Tamor Pingla elephant reserve
- Gomarda Wildlife sanctuary
- Pamed Wildlife sanctuary

Zoos

- Nanadanvan Zoo, Raipur
- Kanan Pindari Zoo, Bilaspur

Safari

- Tiger safari, Naya Raipur



Bridging values, personal & organisational

Juhi Mishra, Vice President-HR, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, reveals that bridging the gap between personal and organisational values is the key to keep attrition at bay.



How can efficiency be achieved by the successful utilisation of human resources?

Contribution of 'Human Resource' in the success of any business is inevitable. Human Resource – the workforce – is changing and is becoming more aware about self and the environment. To bring the best out



Juhi Mishra
Vice President-HR
InterGlobe Technology Quotient

of them we need frameworks, processes along with best of industry elements to pump up their respective discretionary efforts.

Does ITQ prefer hiring employees with certain specialisations or would you rather conduct your own training programmes?

Our hiring strategy is a blend of freshers and trained resource. We focus on hiring post a rigorous functional and competency assessment. InterGlobe competency framework helps us to create a pool of knowledge, skills and right behavior.

With a very high attrition rate in the industry, what do you feel is needed to keep an employee motivated?

The art of bridging the gap between personal and organisational values is the key to keep attrition at bay. Segmentation of employees and the customised response helps in keeping attrition in check.

In light of cost optimisation, cost reduction and cost management, how do Human Resource functions generate value in the wider business?

Every business environment goes through its own evolution and each function needs to bring value. Human Resource as a function is no exception. It has got immense learning and grown leaps and bounds to not

only sustain but also contribute in the 'cost efficient' era. HR strategies have gone through changes by not operating as a backend/support function, but is today at ways to contribute to the top line of the organisation. What the industry needs is strat-

egy to simultaneously maximise women employee potential, retain committed older members in the workforce, prepare the youth for present challenges and maintain an effective balance in a cross-generational and cross-cultural team.

Foundation stone laid for 144-room My Fortune, Guntur

■ Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister **N. Chandrababu Naidu** has laid the foundation stone of the 144-keys ITC's My Fortune, Guntur. **YC Deveshwar**, Chairman ITC, one of India's largest multi-



business enterprises was also present on the occasion. With a prime location on Ring Road, the hotel covering an expanse of over 1.44 acres will cater to the diverse needs of discerning travellers to the city

with its services and facilities that include a 5000 sq. ft. pillar-less ballroom that can accommodate up to 500 guests, an all-day dining restaurant, a specialty restaurant showcasing ITC's culinary excellence, a bar and a deli. In

addition, the Wellness Zone will be equipped with a state-of-the-art gymnasium and a world-class spa. The hotel is expected to commence operations in 2019 and is aimed at attracting high-end business travellers and

provide Guntur a top-end hospitality destination.

The hotel will be part of the 'My Fortune' exclusive brand which is positioned in the upscale segment, at the top end of the brand pyramid of Fortune.

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Testing the water on tourism in Europe

The geo-political situation in parts of Europe is discouraging quite a few travellers but will it affect the Indian psyche? TRAVTALK speaks to a few tour operators to get their perspective.

HAZEL JAIN



Karan Anand
Head (Relationships)
Cox & Kings

Europe is a very popular destination for Indians and will always remain so. The geopolitical situation this year is a bit challenging; there is concern in the minds of the people towards travel to Europe. Fortunately, the market has matured to visiting only one or two countries at a time and exploring the destination thoroughly rather than doing a roller-coaster tour.



Mahendra Vakharia
Chairman – Western
Chapter OTOAI

Europe has been and still remains a hot favourite among Indians. With the airlines introducing newer connections and cheaper fares, Europe stays as the most aspired destination for us. Rupee has clawed back against the USD which has also helped. Indian tourists are now packing their bags to head for places like the Eastern Europe, Spain or Italy or some countryside in Scandinavia.



Sanjay Temkar
Director of Sales (India)
Trafalgar

Europe continues to be a hot destination for Indians to explore. However the new trends show that travellers are targeting one country or at the most prefer to combine two destinations during one trip. Exotic locations like Sardinia, Sicily, Ibiza, Crete, Malta, Hvar, Baden-Baden and Corfu are emerging as destinations people want to explore. Europe still remains a popular destination for Indians to explore especially during summer.



Monish Shah
Director, Travelbro

European destinations are the flavour during summer and destinations such as UK, France, Germany and Switzerland are on the bucket list of Indians who plan an overseas vacation. We have also observed that for this summer there is a healthy demand for Russia and Eastern European countries such as Poland, Croatia and the Czech Republic.



Amita Nair
Director
Meandering Vacations

Recent trends suggest inclination of Indian travellers combining business meetings with their personal trips. Europe is also seamlessly connected with all Indian cities with multiple flight options and competitive airfare, making it score over Australia and New Zealand. However, recent acts of terrorism in Brussels and Paris have cast some doubts in the minds of travellers.



Hareesh Koyande
Founder & MD
World Travel Studio

It's still going strong and this year, apart from Western Europe, there is surge in demand for Central and Eastern European countries. Also, thanks to *Dilwale*, Iceland is in demand, which was earlier popular only among very well-travelled clients. In spite of terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, there is no impact.



Subhash Motwani
Founder & Director
Namaste Tourism

Europe will do exceptionally well this year as the airfares to Europe are very attractive and we expect certain destinations to do better than others. There is great interest in Iceland this year and a lot of clients are keen on experiencing one of the least populous countries of Europe and combine it with Greenland.

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 renovated 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.

Located in the prestigious Cantonement area, adjoining the Agra Golf Course, Clarks Shiraz offers views of open spaces, greenery and dense trees all around, looking like the greenest part of India to many visitors. A unique campus of serenity, only 2 km from The Taj Mahal.

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Build your own brand

Innovation is the key differentiator at roomsXML.com through which the technology company will help the GSAs and travel agents to build and manage their own brand.



TT BUREAU

roomsXML has strengthened its alliances with many travel technology companies and together they are offering solutions that are cost-effective and quick to 'go to market'. This is a boon for GSAs and travel agents who want to have their own B2B and B2C front without investing heavily in technology. Moreover, with roomsXML the hotel inventory comes de-duplicated and at net rates. The same can be combined with other travel product like airlines, transfers, sight-seeing or car hire.

Over 400 travel agents who visited the roomsXML.com booth at Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2016 were fascinated with the innovative features introduced by roomsXML. Apart from giving the visitors the product demo, special emphasis was laid out by the management team to make GSAs and travel agents aware about the importance of developing and



Prakash Bang
Managing Director
roomsXML Solutions

The GSA and the travel agents can be with us as long as we are competitive and have a service that keeps them happy

working under one's own brand rather than depending on the whims and fancies of somebody else.

Prakash Bang, Managing Director, roomsXML Solutions, says, "When tied with a third party brand, a GSA and a travel agent do have limitations since they lack the flexibility to work as per changing market dynamics. They have no options but to depend on the inventory, mark-ups, vendors, etc. that are offered by the principals. When the relationship comes to an end, the GSA or the travel agent needs to go back to the drawing board! The option is to have one's own brand."

He adds, "The GSA and the travel agents do have the option of not choosing to work with our feed. There's no binding. They can be with us as long as we are competitive and have a service that keeps them happy. At roomsXML.com, innovation is the key differentiator. That's what keeps us leading the pack. Till date we have introduced 11 specific features that are the industry's first – and many of them are yet to be emulated by others in the line!"

Virgin Atlantic's Red Hot Fridays are here!



Virgin Atlantic recently conducted a trade blitz called the Red Hot Friday and visited some travel agencies in Delhi with sweet savories and fun goodies. The agents dressed in red were awarded cool giveaways like selfie sticks, movie vouchers and much more. Virgin Atlantic will be visiting travel agents every alternate Friday until September and will be awarding agents dressed in red. So get ready to become their Red Hot agents.

40-room Fern Residency opens in Pune

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of The Fern Residency, MIDC, Pune a Mid-scale business hotel in the state of Maharashtra. The hotel has 40 rooms, a multi-cuisine cafe, a rooftop global cuisine restaurant, and state of the art banquet hall. The unit is owned and promoted by Mhaske Leisure.

The Fern Residency is a smart business hotel strategically located in the hub of the Industrial area of Pune with all eminent features for business travellers, catering to mid and budget segment. The hotel

has 40 rooms with state of the art coffee shop 'Ten Café' and a signature speciality restaurant "AZU". The hotel provides all facilities keeping in mind today's business traveller's needs like Wi-Fi free zone and conference facilities.

Located in the north of Pune city on NH-20 (connecting Pune-Nasik) passing through Bhosari, Airport is at a distance of 20 kms and the nearest railway station is 2.2 kms away. (Chinchwad Railway Station) The hotel is managed by Concept Hospitality, part of CG Hotels and Resorts portfolio.

Summer offer on Dubai visa

Emirates Airline partners with Dubai Visa Processing Centre (DVPC) to offer a 30-day single-entry visa for Dubai at `4,999 this summer.



TT BUREAU

Dubai Visa Processing Centre (DVPC) has introduced a new summer offer of `4,999 only for a 30-day single entry visa to Dubai. Emirates Airline passengers travelling from India can avail this new offer and enjoy the shopping, sightseeing and adventure the United Arab Emirates (UAE) offers. Over the last decade, Dubai has seen tremendous growth of travellers from India. **Essa Sulaiman Ahmad**, Vice



Essa Sulaiman Ahmad
Vice President - India and Nepal,
Emirates Airline

President - India and Nepal, Emirates Airline, said, "With DVPC's offer, we aim to make

the travel process even more cost effective for our passengers in India. We are very happy to partner with DVPC to offer yet another unique service that I am optimistic will assist our many Indian customers to visit Dubai with increased ease."

Vinay Malhotra, COO – South Asia and DVPC, VFS Global, said, "DVPC, in partnership with Emirates Airline, always seeks to bring its customers utmost convenience,

ease and unparalleled service quality when planning their trips to Dubai. This new offering of `4,999 for a 30 days single-entry visa will be beneficial to all our Indian travellers."

All Emirates Airline passengers can avail this offer by either booking their visa through a registered travel agent or by visiting a DVPC visa application centre of their choice, located in 12 major cities across India.

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Eyeing MICE from Tier-II, III cities

With India leading as the biggest MICE market for the island nation, the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau now wants to tap into the Tier-II and Tier-III cities to boost its MICE traffic from the country.

NISHA VERMA

For Sri Lanka, Indian remains the biggest market for conferences, says **Prema Cooray**, Chairman, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB). That's why SLCB held joint promotions with AMCHAM Sri Lanka and SriLankan Airlines for two days in Gurugram and in New Delhi last month.

Speaking about the Indian market, Cooray said, "India is the

“SriLankan Airlines has a very good base of MICE travel agents as well as corporates, which was actually beneficial. Sri Lanka agents too can get in touch with tour operators and MICE agents and corporates in India at their end. I believe that there are more possibilities to develop MICE travel between the two countries.”

Prema Cooray
Chairman, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB)



biggest market for meetings and conferences. However, for incentives we get the maximum numbers from Europe. However, we are trying to increase incentive business from India as well. Many big companies also come for their events and meetings, and I believe it is because Sri Lanka is very close to India. In fact, the major share of tourists coming from India to Sri Lanka is MICE driven.”

Contd. on page 25 ▶



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New Aitken property in Sri Lanka

Aitken Spence Hotel Managements has recently launched Heritance Negombo, a 139-room property in Sri Lanka and is planning to launch a targeted destination marketing campaign in the Indian source market.



TT BUREAU

Althaf Mohamad Ali, Vice President – Sales and Marketing, Aitken Spence Hotel Managements, says, “The Indian market has performed exceptionally well at our resorts. We have estab-

lished strategic partnerships with certain key players which has helped us see a year on year increase.”

The company recently launched Heritance Negombo, the fifth property to join the premier brand of

hotels. The 139-room property features rooms with views of the Indian Ocean and modern amenities including mini-bars, iPod docks and complimentary Wi-Fi among others. “The property is the perfect location for events offering sophisticated conference venues, ideal

for a wide range of corporate, business and social events,” says Ali. He also points out that the company has seen an increase in inquiries and bookings in the destination wedding segment from the Indian market.

The resort properties of the company have performed very well and maintained good ADRs and RevPAR in the tour segment in 2015 whilst the ADRs in the Beach Resort segment is a challenge, informed Ali. The properties see a good mix of European and Asian travellers predominantly from the FIT and experiential holiday seeker segments. “Our hotels command a very high market share of the Indian guest arrivals to Sri Lanka,” he adds.

The company has been working closely with operators

and agents in India to showcase to the travellers the many experiences on offer in Sri Lanka and at the resorts of the company. Ali informs that offers are floated strategically via the company’s partners in the various source markets on digital platforms.

When asked about the current trends in the hospitality sector, Ali explains, “Online reputation is fast becoming the single biggest influencing factor for the choice of a hotel. In order to stay competitive the management has had to actively seek new technology to monitor and review feedback on a resort available on the Internet at any given time. The ability to monitor and act in real time to a review online will definitely set hotels apart from the rest. Service differentiation will be the way forward.”



Althaf Mohamad Ali
Vice President – Sales and Marketing,
Aitken Spence Hotel Managements

Heritance Negombo is the perfect location for events offering sophisticated conference venues, ideal for a wide range of corporate, business and social events



‘Meet in Sri Lanka’ creates stir in Delhi

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB), in association with AMCHAM Sri Lanka and SriLankan Airlines in Gurugram New Delhi to showcase the MICE potential of the destination in India. The two day event saw over 100 corporates meeting travel planners and tour operators for MICE.





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MICE boom in subcontinent Personalise packages online

► Contd. from page 21

The recent roadshow saw the Sri Lankan delegation led by Cooray interact with MICE operators, corporates as well as media from India. The two-day event had over 100 corporates meeting with the travel planners and tour operators mainly for MICE related travel. Cooray said, "I had a very good discussion with the corporates as well as MICE agents. SriLankan Airlines has a very good base of MICE travel agents as well as corporates, which was actually beneficial for us. For approaching the corporate sector, we deal with the various chambers in India. Sri Lanka agents too can get in touch with tour operators and MICE agents and corporates in India at their end. I believe that there are more possibilities to develop MICE travel between the two countries."

He added that there are many factors that can actually act as catalysts in boosting the MICE business from India to Sri Lanka. And they are leaving no stone unturned to ensure good MICE numbers

into Sri Lanka not only from India but other countries as well. "We do many big events. We are hosting the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for almost 500 French travel agents. We have a big TATA Conference planned in the near future. We have the resources to do big corporate as well as medical conferences. Even travel trade associations in Sri Lanka do conferences with our assistance. In Sri Lanka we have an association of MICE agents called SLAPCEO, and its president is on our board as well, aiding us to work in tandem with each other," he said.

However, Cooray claims that they are planning to extend their reach to the Tier-II and Tier-III cities of India as well. "We have plans to travel the whole of India. In Delhi, we had a tremendous response, which has instilled confidence in us that we can look at India in a comprehensive manner. But we have many advantages, including great connectivity. We have almost 100 flights to India, and thus it makes economic sense to

concentrate on India. If demand increases, there will be more flights."

He revealed that there are many developments happening in Sri Lanka for boosting MICE tourism. "In the last budget, the government has sanctioned a big amount for a convention centre. We are currently identifying the location. Also, the skyline of Sri Lanka has changed in the last few years. There are many new hotels coming up from brands like ITC, Hyatt, Shangri-La, which have huge convention facilities. Cinnamon Hotels also has a huge convention facility of a capacity of 1900 pax," he said.

When asked about the incentives for big MICE groups coming into Sri Lanka, Cooray said, "According to the size of the group, we offer transfers as well as provide hosted dinners. Colombo hotels have a minimum rate policy as well. Also, companies can choose hotels in other locations like Bentota. One can negotiate the rates depending on the size of the group." ↴

Pointers from the locals are the best way to discover Sri Lanka, says **Manish Fitkariwala**, Director, Catapultt, which is coming up with an online portal.

TT BUREAU

Sri Lanka's beautiful beaches and numerous cultural sites have drawn several tourists to the island nation. However, Indians are yet to discover the non-commercial and lesser-known destinations in Sri Lanka, shares Fitkariwala.



Manish Fitkariwala
Director
Catapultt

"Most of the packages Indians are offered include Colombo, Kandy or Bentota. At Catapultt, we promote the country based on the potential of the destination. Not a lot of tourists are aware that the best western coast beach with frequent dolphin sightings is Kalpitiya, or that Hikkaduwa is one of the popular beach hotspots down south. We position these locations in our packages so that tourists come back with a new and fresh experience," he elaborates.

He states that a visit to Sri Lanka should include a minimum of six nights with enough time in hand to visit the beaches, enjoy a jungle safari, discover quaint hill stations like Nuwara Eliya and finally try your luck at the casinos in the city.

Fitkariwala mentions that the locations in the packages have been curated with the help of their local team to

ensure visitors witness the original side of Sri Lanka. "Our presence in Sri Lanka is what makes our trips unique and memorable. We are further enhancing customer experience with our Hindi speaking guides and dedicated escorted for groups," he comments.

In a bid to expand their presence in the industry, Catapultt will soon be launching an online portal for clients to personalise their packages, informs Fitkariwala. He adds, "The online portal is not just for bookings, it will also act as a guide for tourists to discover Sri Lanka online, virtually commute through the island, and ultimately develop their own package. The whole idea is to create a completely personal experience and allow the clients to discover exceptional activities and locations they would enjoy the most." ↴



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Stylish and colonial

Lakmini Raymond, Director (Business Development & Corporate Communications), Mount Lavinia Hotel, reveals how the hotels is tapping the market.

TT BUREAU

QHow big is the India market for your hotel?

The Indian market has remained dominant in terms of geographical origin of business since 2013 and is the second-largest source market for us. That is one of the reasons why we have an in-house Indian chef. North and South India regions are important for us along with Mumbai in the west. Our main focus segments are leisure, MICE, corporate and weddings.

QHow are you promoting your hotel here?

We participate in various trade shows organised by the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Department in India. We also work with local travel agents specialising in the Indian market specially in the leisure,



Lakmini Raymond
Director (Business Development & Corporate Communications)
Mount Lavinia Hotel

MICE and SMERF sectors. Meanwhile, we continue to make sales visits and promoting the hotel to all Indian companies – corporates as well as diplomatic – who have a local presence in Sri Lanka like Airtel, ICICI, IOC, etc., as well as Indian Business Councils that operate under the various chambers like the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce

and National Chamber of Commerce.

QHow do you engage the trade in India?

We are strengthening our promotional campaign to showcase Sri Lanka's rich diversity such as its heritage, cuisines, pristine beaches, organising hawker street, 3D interactive portals, cookery demonstrations, etc.

QWhat kind of synergies are you looking to create with the Sri Lankan Tourism Board in India?

We are creating a web portal exclusively for the Indian market that will give easy access to customised information. For this, we are working with the Sri Lanka Tourism Board to tie up with TV channels to feature Sri Lanka's geographical and cultural diversities.

Game for MICE & weddings

Set to open in July 2016, Anantara Kalutara is poised to offer the best in hospitality, claims **Edoardo Giuntoli**, General Manager, Anantara Kalutara Resort.

TT BUREAU

Offering unmatched service and memorable views, Anantara Kalutara, Sri Lanka is a property that offers luxury and fun in equal measure.

"Having the ocean on one side and lagoon on the other is our biggest USP. Apart from that Anantara spa has yoga and meditation pavilion as well as ayurvedic treatments. We have three restaurants with exceptional quality and variety of food. Guests can relax in the two swimming pools at the property or enjoy the privacy in one of the completely secluded nine villas with private pool," says Giuntoli.

Anantara Kalutara is adjacent to AVANI Kalutara. Together they have a combined inventory of



Edoardo Giuntoli
General Manager
Anantara Kalutara Resort

250 rooms and occupy a world class location at the mouth of the Kalu Ganga River, he informs.

Currently, reveals Giuntoli, the biggest markets for them are GCC, India and Europe. Talking of the India market in particular, he says, "India is the key market for us, both for MICE and individuals guests. We are building

a banquet hall with ocean view, which will be the perfect venue for small – medium (320 pax) Indian weddings." Talking further about the emerging China market, he says, "China is still at its early stage in Sri Lanka, with the demand being more price than quality driven."

In order to create visibility for the brand, they are adopting a number of strategies. "We are promoting the property by making frequent visits to our key partners in India and initiate co-marketing initiatives. We are also participating in international trade fairs."

He adds, "We also engage with the travel trade through the fairs and make frequent sales visits to build-up relationships with the trade and do product training as well."

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NEWS from the Island nation

❖ SLTDA restarts mobile service

Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) has re-launched its flagship mobile service after a long absence. The mobile service delivers various SLTDA services such as hotel inspections, issuance of business licenses, tourism training etc. and was launched in Arugmbay. SLTDA conducted the mobile service with assistance of International Finance Corporation (IFC). The concept behind the mobile service is to provide licensing and other related services to the tourism industry in regions.

❖ KLM resumes direct flights to Sri Lanka

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) will be resuming direct services to Sri Lanka after almost 20 years. The airline announced that it will commence twice-weekly flights on October 31, departing from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol aboard a Boeing 787 Dreamliner with 30 seats in World Business Class, 48 seats in Economy Comfort and 216 seats in Economy Class. KLM had pulled out of the country in 1997 due to the escalating conflict on the island. It only had services to Sri Lanka via Abu Dhabi after that. The news has the travel trade in Sri Lanka cheering as this will boost tourism in the European and American markets.

❖ Sri Lanka to host Annual Congress of French travel agents

Sri Lanka is all set to host the Annual Congress of the National Union of Travel Agents in France (SNAV) that represents about 1,300 travel related entrepreneurs of France in Colombo from October 31 to November 2, 2016. The annual congress usually gets 600 delegates and majority of them are outbound travel agents in France. The meeting will also contribute in promoting Sri Lanka as an attractive destination for French tourists. France is one of the top five countries in tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka and in the first four months of this year tourist arrivals from France rose 12.8 per cent with 43,173 tourists visiting the island.

COLOMBO

❖ **Getting there:** Major airlines including Sri Lankan Airlines, Emirates, Cathay Pacific, Jet Airways, Qatar, Singapore Airlines, Malaysian Airlines, Thai Airways, and Air India offer services to Colombo from Europe, the Far East, and South Asia

❖ **Airport:** Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in Katunayake. (32km from Colombo city)

❖ **Places to visit:** Viharamahadevi Park, Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara, Independence Square, Galle Face Green, Independence Memorial Hall, Colombo Fort

❖ **Time:** GMT +5.30 hours.

❖ **Electricity:** Electrical current is 230 volts, 50Hz. Round, three-pin plugs are used

❖ **Language:** Sinhala, Tamil and English

❖ **Getting Around:** Rail- Trains connect Colombo with all tourist towns, but first-class carriages, air conditioning and dining cars are available on only a few

❖ **Road:** Bus, taxis and tuktuks are ideal for short journeys within the city

❖ **Visa:** From Jan. 1st, 2012, all holiday travelers to Sri Lanka need apply for an electronic visa to Sri Lanka, namely Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) before travelling to Sri Lanka

❖ **Shopping:** House of Fashions, Odel, Avirate, Barefoot, Cotton Collection, Liberty Plaza, Majestic City, Dutch Hospital Shopping Precinct



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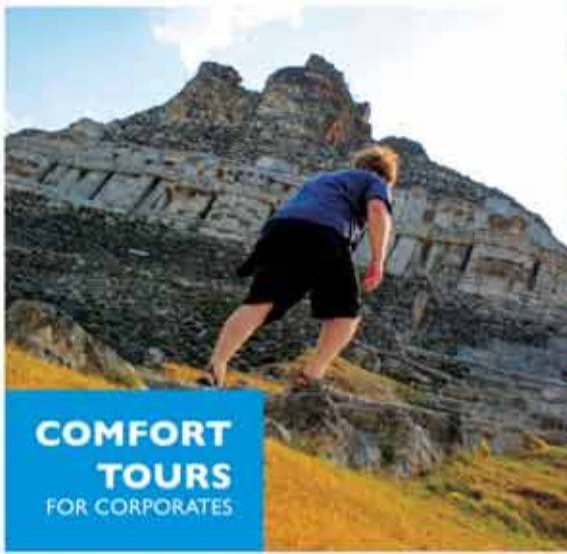


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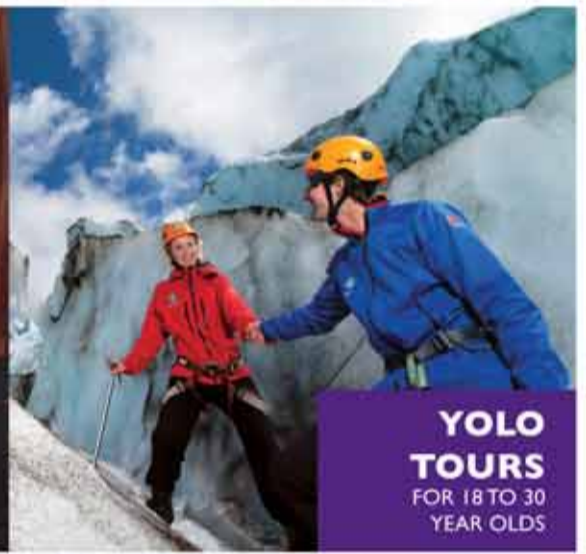
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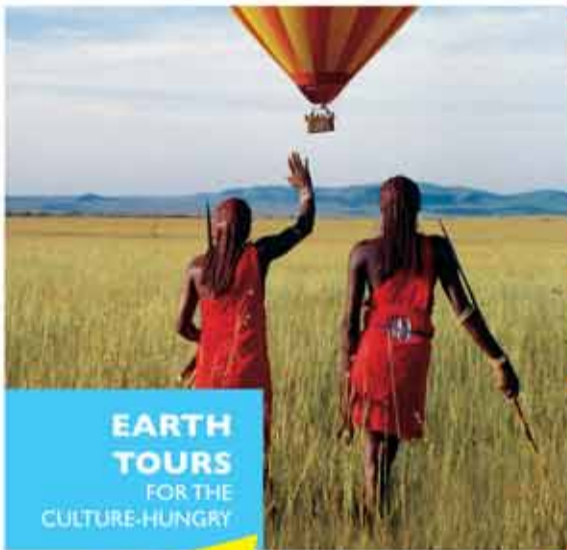
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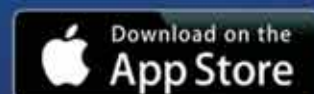
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Stunning Scotland



Eilean Donan Castle, Highlands

There are hundreds of ways to spend a holiday in Scotland. Tourist attractions range from charming castles and fascinating museums to whisky distilleries and royal palaces. But that's not all - the country has a stunning variety of coasts, mountains and lochs just waiting to be discovered.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh is regularly voted amongst the world's top destinations. Scotland's capital city is a true heritage hub, boasting staggering architectural and natural beauty, as well as some of the most inspirational attractions in Scotland.

In Edinburgh, a walk along the iconic 'Royal Mile' is a must. Edinburgh Castle can be found at the top of the street and the Queen's official residence, Palace of Holyroodhouse, at the bottom. Located in between is the framed crown spire of St Giles' Cathedral, one of the most recognisable features of Edinburgh skyline.

For luxury clothes and accessories, Multrees Walk in central Edinburgh provides some of the best designer brands including Louis Vuitton, Hugo Boss, Mulberry, Michael Kors and Kurt Geiger.

Glasgow

Glasgow is one of the most exciting cities you'll ever come across. It's a lively, bustling place, distinctive and full of character, where you are bound to get a very warm welcome.

The city is a shoppers' paradise due to the number of designer retailers and quirky vintage stores. Glasgow also has its own 'Style Mile' - one mile of incredible stores just waiting to be discovered. Uniquely Scottish products to look out for include Harris or Border tweeds, designer knitwear, cashmere and tartan.

Visitors can learn about Glasgow's architecture in a city walking tour or enjoy free entry to incredible museums, galleries, science centres and exhibitions. The city is famous



Edinburgh, Scotland's capital city

for its nightlife and it's never short of entertainment and events to enjoy.

Whisky and Eating Out

Whisky is Scotland's national drink and biggest export. There are five whisky regions in Scotland each with its own unique flavours and character. Paying a visit to one (or many!) distilleries allows visitors to discover how whisky is made and provides the opportunity to sample and pair flavours. Experience the sights, sounds and unmistakable aromas of a traditional Scottish distillery and gain a new-found appreciation for the craftsmanship, energy and patience that goes into every drop of this fragrant amber-hued spirit. If



The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo at Edinburgh Castle

whisky is a primary interest, May is Whisky Month; a packed calendar of events throughout Scotland, including the famous Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival.

Bollywood Scotland

Romantic Scotland and the romance of Bollywood: the perfect match. An enduring love affair that has produced some truly memorable movie moments. Scotland's magnificent castles, breathtaking scenery and elegant cities have long inspired India's greatest film-makers and stars - including Aishwarya Rai, Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan - and stolen the hearts of fans around the world. A host of Bollywood favourites, from *Main Solah Baras Ki* to *Mausam*, have featured iconic landmarks such as Edinburgh Castle, dramatic Glen Coe and world-famous Eilean Donan Castle. For itineraries, ideas and inspiration for a Bollywood Scotland trip go to VisitScotland.com/Bollywood.

Scotland's world-class food is delicious thanks to unspoiled natural habitats and pristine water found throughout the country. There is a fantastic range of restaurants and eateries serving all kinds of tasty

Scotland Travel Trade Resources

Sign up to SCOTSAgent, a free online education programme that teaches everything you need to create, develop and sell Scotland holidays. You'll also find itinerary ideas, marketing toolkits, and links to Scottish businesses who actively work with the trade.

For more information, go to VisitScotlandTravelTrade.com or email traveltrade@visitscotland.com.



RVC's call for trade: Ambitious Together

The 40th Annual Rendez-vous Canada (RVC), Canada's premier tourism marketplace, took place from April 24-27, 2016, in Montreal, Québec. During the conference, international tourism buyers met with Canadian sellers at a record-breaking 26,000 face-to-face business appointments.



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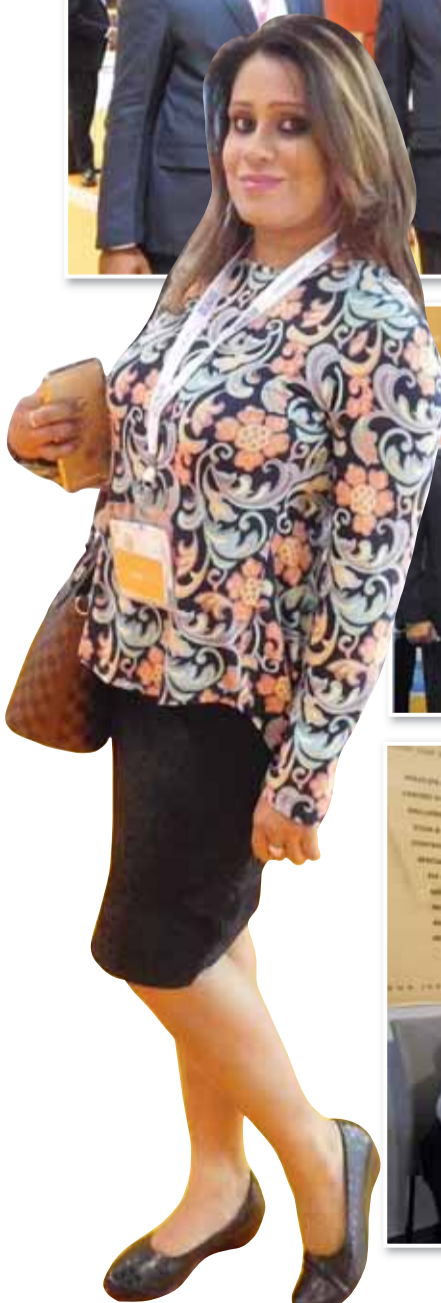


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Arabian Travel Market 2016

Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2016 posted a 7 per cent year-on-year rise in visitor numbers with more than 28,000 trade visitors attending the show, which took place from April 25-28 at Dubai World Trade Centre.



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ATM: Mid-market theme a success





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India Travel Awards: A thrust

The 3rd edition of South India Travel Awards, travelled to Hyderabad, marking the beginning of India Travel Awards in 2016. The award ceremony was attended by the who's who of the travel and tourism fraternity, who came together to appreciate and applaud the efforts of the key players of the industry. TRAVTALK speaks to the awardees on how they help them in their respective businesses.

 ANKITA SAXENA



Rajen Habib Khwaja: Legend in Public Service

Honouring the pioneer

The Gold Maya for Legend in Public Service was awarded to **Rajen Habib Khwaja**, Former Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Mines, Government of India. As Tourism Secretary, he was instrumental in starting many initiatives. Under his leadership, an Inter-Ministerial Council for Tourism Promotion under the chairmanship of the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of India was established. He pioneered the visa-on-arrival scheme whose success changed it to e-visa. He initiated the famous *Hunar Se Rozgar Tak* scheme which witnessed quantum expansion and also launched the Clean India Campaign. "I am grateful to the organisers for recognising my sincere and humble efforts to promote safe, honourable and sustainable tourism during my tenure as Union Tourism Secretary," says Khwaja.

According to him, awards are a source of great motivation as all humans strive for appreciation and recognition. "They help in raising the bar for greater achievements and generate positive energy which leads to higher standards in all areas of activities. Awards help the industry and business in a healthy competition and lead to greater efforts in the quest for excellence," adds Khwaja.

**Best Airport & Best Airport Aviation Marketing Team:
Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru**

An airport of choice

The Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru (KIAB), won the Best Airport Award and the Best Airport Aviation Marketing Team, consecutively for the second time. **Raj Andrade**,

Vice President, Business Development-Marketing and Strategy, Bangalore International Airport, says, "We are delighted to be recognised as the best airport in south India and the best aviation marketing team at the 2016 India Travel Award.

This is the second consecutive year we've been recognised in both

categories and is a testimony that KIAB is an airport of choice for both domestic and international travellers. Since the start of airport operations, we have made every effort to offer our passengers a seamless travel experience while maintaining the highest standards of quality and service excellence. Our vision and commitment is to make a positive difference to the aviation ecosystem." Andrade also applauds the awards and adds that the India Travel Awards is a prestigious forum that rewards excellence within the travel fraternity.



Travelpoint Galileo: Best Global Distribution System (GDS)

Hat-trick for smarter innovations

Travelpoint Galileo received the Best Global Distribution System (GDS) for the third time in a row. **Sandeep Dwivedi**, Chief Commercial Officer, Travelpoint Galileo, feels that the Award has positioned the company well in the travel and tourism industry, reinstating their place as the best technological service provider of the year and has encouraged the company to continue introducing matchless products and services in this domain.

"It has also strengthened our customers' belief in us and given them the satisfaction of being associated with the best in the industry," he says. In an era of continuous evolution, Travelpoint Galileo has dynamically redefined their services and solutions, making them more user-friendly, manageable and profitable for the travel partners. "We have always put clientele's requirements at the forefront while introducing 'smarter' innovations, and



continue to develop on the same principle. This is recognition to our support and proficient services that we provide to our customers," says Dwivedi. Lauding the Awards, Dwivedi points out that the awards have provided the travel and tourism domain with a unique platform where the best performing members of the industry get recognized and thoroughly appreciated. "Supported by the Ministry of Tourism, it has become one of the most prestigious awards ceremony in the Indian travel industry," he says. Dwivedi also adds a special mention of the online voting system whose results are further evaluated by the jury-consisting of the most prominent people of the industry, establishing a transparent system of conferring awards. "Only the most deserving organization is presented with this prestigious accolade," he adds.

An enthralling show

- ↳ The black tie, silver service was brought to life by a charismatic anchor and singer and a live band which got the guests tapping-their feet.
- ↳ The invitees were also mesmerised by the spell-binding, brilliant globe balancing act showcased by a performance artist, as she flipped fire-lit bottles in a tricky juggling act.



for better industry standards

Travel Boutique Online: Best B2B Travel Portal

Seamless technology

Travel Boutique Online received the Maya for the Best B2B Travel Portal. **Ankush Nijhawan**, Managing Director, Travel Boutique Online, says, "We believe that we run the finest B2B travel portal in India. With our seamless technology we empower our travel agents with variety of products in one click with the right pricing and inventory.



Our system has transparency with great and efficient back-up support." Nijhawan feels that everyone in the world

who performs, likes to be applauded and makes one feel that one stands apart from the crowd and is noticed for all the good work that has been done. "The India Travel Awards are good recognition and a combination of class, elegance and poise. The trophy Maya is awesome and the industry welcomes such awards as everyone tries to over perform to be seen at such awards," he adds.

Ramee Guestline Bangalore: Best Green Resort

Reducing carbon footprints

Ramee Guestline Bangalore was awarded the Maya for the Best Green Resort. "We got nominated and we made sure to keep up to this award for our property in all aspects of hospitality," says **Nihit Srivastava**, Director Operations and Business Development (India), Ramee Group of Hotels, Resorts and Apartments. As recommendations are a necessary aspect for the business in the competitive hospitality industry in today's scenario, Srivastava is of the opinion that India Travel Awards are of unique significance as they help the traveller's knowledge to select to indulge with the uniqueness and strength of the property while staying or recommending around. It also provides inspiration to the entire task force at all levels, involved for the upkeep of their property.



"It is an excellent platform where in properties which are unique in some or the other aspects are getting recognition and mileage from their deliverables and contribution towards travel and tourism Industry," adds Srivastava.

Best Turnaround Hotel: Radisson Blu Plaza Hyderabad Banjara Hills

Synergised team increases revenue

Radisson Blu Plaza Hyderabad Banjara Hills won the Maya for the Best Turnaround Hotel. **Rohan Cholkar**, Director of Sales and Marketing, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills, feels that the hotel improved on all measurable parameters including financials in the last one year. "The results are there for everyone to see and that is why the hotel won the Best Turnaround Award," says Cholkar.



The synergized team at the hotel has been able to increase revenues, reduce costs thereby resulting in highly improved profitability. Praising the awards, Cholkar adds that the India Travel Awards doubles-up as a platform where individuals and companies are recognised for their contribution to the travel industry and networking. "It is always a great feeling to be recognised and the India Travel Award is well known industry wide. The team is proud of the award and it helps bolster the guest confidence in us," he says.

Ramoji Film City: Best Luxury Wedding & MICE Resort

A unique MICE destination

Ramoji Film City won the Best Luxury Wedding and MICE Resort. **Rajeev Jalnapurkar**, Chief Executive Officer, Ramoji Film City, feels that the Awards helps in their business as it is instrumental in creating a brand image and recall value; establishing the company in the market; invoking brand engagement and opening gates to the new avenues of the market interests and segments.



"In the industry, the Awards help in attracting talent, networking, and referrals, thereby contributing to our marketing efforts, creating positive competition among the players to excel. It is a popular platform to recognise the various service providers in the hospitality and tourism Industry. With the kind of its reach among travel trade, it also creates awareness for the new offerings, properties and services," says Jalnapurkar. Ramoji Film City has evolved into a unique theme based destination catering to various segments like leisure travellers, holiday makers, MICE destination for corporate conferences, destination weddings and school and college excursions. Being a destination for all kinds of occasions and celebrations, the company has become unique and the most preferred.

"The Award has recognized our achievements to make every event a successful one. There is no other destination in India, as unique as ours, which can offer so many varieties under a single umbrella," adds Jalnapurkar.

Air Costa: Most Promising Airline

A happy flying experience

Kavi Chaurasia, Vice President-Marketing, Air Costa, feels the award is truly motivating for the entire team of Air Costa. "This 'Most Promising Airline' status is a booster to perform better day by day in order to deliver the highest quality of flight operations and customer service. Our promise of giving the flyers a 'Happy Flying' experience has taken us this far. Our services and product features keep as at a unique position in domestic airline category," he says.



Air Costa has set a benchmark in the industry by taking highly sustainable progressive steps regarding the destinations as well as the fleet selection. The airline is on a growth path with young, dynamic and consistent attitude, adapting to change with the objective of fulfilling customer needs. Commending the Awards, Chaurasia says, "India Travel Awards is a great platform to recognise the players in the travel industry, which deserves a higher weightage than what it is being given presently.

I appreciate the efforts of DDP for opening the avenues for the companies to perform better year on year." He added that recognitions help the category to grow collectively and encourage healthy competition.



14 mn tourists & counting...

H.E. Amir Muharemi, mr.sc. Ambassador of Croatia, is optimistic about tourist traffic between Croatia and India and how it can become a spring-board for bilateral ties.

INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA

QWhat has been the highlight of your India posting as Croatian Ambassador?

India is such an interesting country and so big. In fact, India is a sub-continent with such a huge variety of cultures, colours and very interesting people. So wherever I went and whoever I met was an experience in itself. As the slogan says, it is really 'Incredible India'. So every day spent here has been a small discovery or adventure. For the rest of my life I will carry with me this unique experience.

QHow important is tourism for Croatia?

Tourism is very important for Croatia. The country has 1, 247 islands, and a very long coast that goes deep into the European continent. This makes the coast easily accessible to European tourists. This is why in 2015 Croatia had 14 million tourists. Beautiful coasts; preserved nature; and



H.E. Amir Muharemi, mr.sc.
Ambassador
Croatia

the hospitality of the local people create an environment that welcomes tourists. Tourism leads to consumption of locally produced goods, and people worldwide get to know the country. So if one looks at the broader picture, one can estimate exactly how important tourism is for the country.

QIs Croatia keen on getting Indian tourists and conventions?

India's outbound tourism is growing yearly, as is the number of middle-class Indians. Croatia has good facilities that are ideal for conven-

tions, and I'm confident that in the near future Indian convention tourism will find Croatia to be an excellent destination.

QHow would tourism boost other businesses and lead to further bilateral ties between Croatia and India?

Yes. Tourists are usually people who are successful in their businesses and endeavours, so I'm confident that once Indians see the level of development, beauty, and friendliness in Croatia, many of them will be interested in expanding their contacts, interests, or businesses with the country and this part of Europe. As Croatia is part of the European Union, doing business with the country means doing business with a market of 500 million European consumers.

India and Croatia have had good relations historically. And now that Bollywood has reached us, Indian interest in Croatia will grow.

10 years of C&K-Chamonix

The fruitful association between Cox & Kings and Chamonix Mont-Blanc has resulted in progressive developments for this vibrant destination.

HARSHAL ASHAR FROM FRANCE

Chamonix, which is home to Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe at 4,810 metres celebrated the 10th anniversary of its partnership with Cox & Kings at the Cap Horn—Cap Blanc restaurant

Mont Blanc. This was a chance as the Swiss Mountains had a big monopoly in India. Cox & Kings with the support of Atout France and Chamonix Tourism offered Chamonix as an add-on product on our itinerary and



in Chamonix, France. The partnership was inked in 2006, when this region was formally introduced to the Indian market by Cox & Kings with the support of Atout France-France Tourism Development Agency in India.

Karan Anand—Head, Relationships, Cox & Kings, said, "We decided to take a gamble and started offering

currently it is a matter of pride that from a one-night destination, it has become a two-night destination in our group itineraries and is often featured as a standalone destination without offering any other Swiss mountains alongside. The Indian market has been made well aware of this destination and it has been enthralled and enthused by it with a huge help from the India team of Atout

France to successfully simplify and organize the visa process."

The Deputy Mayor of Chamonix, **Jacqueline Fattier** presented Anand a memento for putting Chamonix on the tourism map of Indians. According to **Sheetal Munshaw**, Director, Atout France-France Tourism Development Agency, "I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Cox & Kings family. Chamonix started as a destination for groups and continues to delight the first-time traveler with its unparalleled and coveted position as Roof of Europe. It also appeals to the very discerning Indian tourist who is looking for authentic and engaging experiential travel sojourns. I have no doubt that it will also become a corporate hub for Indians to come on incentive stays in Chamonix. Here's to celebrating our ten year association but also looking forward to achieving many more milestones together in India."

A German B2B platform

The 42nd Germany Travel Mart (GTM) was hosted by the German National Tourism Board in conjunction with Magdeburg Marketing Kongress und Tourismus GmbH from April 17-19, 2016, in Magdeburg. As part of GTM, 21 Indian delegates were taken around Magdeburg for a one day Fam trip.



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EVENT TALK

MAY 2016

Australian Tourism Exchange	Queensland	May 15-19
WTM Connect Asia	Penang	May 18-20
PATA Annual Summit	Guam	May 18-21
UNWTO World Conference on Tourism for Development	Beijing	May 18-21
Bangladesh International Tourism Fair	Dhaka	May 19-21
World Travel Fair	Shanghai	May 19-22
BITE	Beijing	May 20-22
WTM Connect China	Hainan Island	May 23-25
PATA & MOT roadshow	San Francisco	May 24
PATA & MOT roadshow	Los Angeles	May 25
PATA & MOT roadshow	Seattle	May 26
ILTM Asia	Shanghai	May 30-2
PATA & MOT roadshow	Vancouver	May 31

JUNE 2016

Digital Travel Summit	London	Jun 7-8
Thailand Travel Mart Plus	Chiang Mai	Jun 8-10
KOFTA 2016	Seoul	Jun 11-14
ITE & MICE	Hong Kong	Jun 16-19
Connections Luxury Thailand	Phuket	Jun 19-22
UNWTO Conference on Branding in Tourism	Kiev	Jun 20-21
CITE	Cebu	Jun 30-Jul 2

JULY 2016

Travel and Tourism Fair (TTF)	Kolkata	July 8 -10
Travel Wedding Show	Gurgaon	July 9-10
India Travel Awards East	Kolkata	July 15
Travel and Tourism Fair (TTF)	Hyderabad	July 15-17
Tourism Investors Meet	New Delhi	July 28-29
PATA – WWF Bagh Mittra Awards	New Delhi	July 29
India International Travel Mart	Chennai	July 29-31

AUGUST 2016

India Hospitality Awards West & South	Pune	Aug 3
Hospitality Expo	New Delhi	Aug 4-6
India Travel Awards West	Pune	Aug 5
India International Travel Mart	Bengaluru	Aug 5-7
Tourism Australia-India Travel Mission	Chennai	Aug 18-21
SATTE	Mumbai	Aug 19-20

For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com

Lords' second hotel in Bengaluru opens

Lords Hotels & Resorts has launched Lords Eco Inn, its second property in Bengaluru, in Jayanagar. The company has aggressive expansion plans with five other properties in India.



TT BUREAU

Lords Eco Inn, a boutique property with 28 keys is designed to cater to the needs of those on long business visits and accordingly the property has a mini



Rishi Puri
Vice President
Lords Hotels and Resorts

kitchen for extended stays. "Being in the budget category segment, we aim to target those looking for long stay options. For the MICE segment, we have a banquet hall and conference rooms which can accommodate 250 pax," says **Rishi Puri**, Vice

President, Lords Hotels and Resorts. Bengaluru being an IT hub, the corporate segment is the major target for the property along with tourists and leisure travellers.

The rack rate for Lords Eco Inn is ₹3,700. Puri explains, "Since it is a new property, we have kept the pricing at a very affordable range. We are currently running many launch offers. Special introductory prices have been introduced and we are also giving cash incentives to the travel agents to push this property at an early stage." Lords Hotels and Resort is soon going to open properties in Agra, Delhi-NCR, Goa, Lucknow and Mumbai. "We are also planning to open another property in Nepal. Lords Eco Inn is our second property in Bengaluru and we are looking to open more properties in South India. We plan to take our numbers to 45 by the end of 2017," adds Puri.

Close to 100 delegates at 1st Himachal Travel Mart

The first edition of Himachal Travel Mart 2016, organised from April 22-24 in Shimla, saw 30 exhibitors from Himachal Pradesh interacting with 65 Indian and international hosted buyers from across the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. The international buyers were hosted from countries including Australia, Dubai, France, Germany, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the US. The

chief guest, **Virbhada Singh**, Chief Minister, Government of Himachal Pradesh, inaugurated the show with **Mohan Chauhan**, Director, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Himachal Pradesh, and **Major Vijay Singh Mankotia**, Vice-Chairman, Tourism Development Board, Himachal Pradesh. A post event Fam was also organised for the hosted buyers and the media.

OPPORTUNITY

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Macao's new offerings



The Macao Government Tourism Office conducted a four-night familiarisation trip for 11 top travel agents from India. The idea was to showcase the uncommon aspects of Macao like its new properties, variety of entertainment and nightlife, family activities and cuisines.

OPPORTUNITY



atm Opportunity

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Etihad Airways

Abu Dhabi

James Hogan, who has served as Etihad Airways President and Chief Executive Officer since September 2006, has been appointed Etihad Aviation Group President and Chief Executive Officer. Hogan brings with him more than 30 years of travel industry expertise to the Abu Dhabi-based airline. He has overseen rapid growth of the UAE's national airline, which now serves a fast-expanding network of passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas, operating an ever-growing fleet of modern environmentally friendly aircraft.



The Alcon Victor Group

Goa

John Crizzle has been appointed as the Corporate Director Sales & Marketing by The Alcon Victor Group. With a vast experience of 28 years, Crizzle has spent most of his career in airlines and some time in hotels. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Calcutta University. Previously Crizzle has been associated with brands like The Jetair Group of Companies, Royal Jordanian Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Kuwait Airways, Gulf Air, Jet Airways. In his new role, Crizzle will oversee sales and marketing for four properties; Radisson Blu, Radisson Goa Candolim, Doan Sylvia Beach Resort & Devaaya.



Hotel Grand Mercure, Mysuru

Mysuru

Grand Mercure Mysuru has appointed **Sachin Malhotra** as General Manager of its recently launched property in the city. Malhotra brings with him 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry with specialisation in hotel operations. Prior to this, Malhotra worked with Mercure Lavasa and Lavasa International Convention Centre as Hotel Manager. He holds a diploma in Business Administration & Marketing and holds the India Leadership Development Program (ILDP) certificate by Accor Hotels.



Shraddha Sarovar Portico, Shirdi

Shirdi

Manoj Dev has been appointed as General Manager at Shraddha Sarovar Portico, Shirdi. Dev brings with him an experience of about 20 years in the hospitality industry. Some of his previous assignments include roles as Managing Partner of Chakla Belan, Dubai; Managing Partner of The Palace Belvedere, Nainital; General Manager at Vikram Vantage Inn, Nainital; General Manager at Pine Retreat, Mussoorie and Quality Inn Presidency, Kochi. He holds a Diploma in Hotel Management from IHM Chennai and has completed his Bachelors' Degree in Arts from Chandigarh, Punjab University.



JW Marriott Chandigarh

Chandigarh

JW Marriott Chandigarh has appointed **Ranjana Pal** as the new Director of Human Resource. Pal brings along more than 12 years of experience in HR and has worked with varied industries like IT, telecom and hospitality. Prior to this, she was with JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa as the HR Manager and has also worked with Starwoods Hotel and Resorts and St Laurn Hotels, in the hospitality industry and brings the extensive knowledge she has gained over the years in HR and customer service to her new role. She is a Master of Labour Welfare from Gujarat University and has also done B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Chemistry from the university.



Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Dwarka

New Delhi

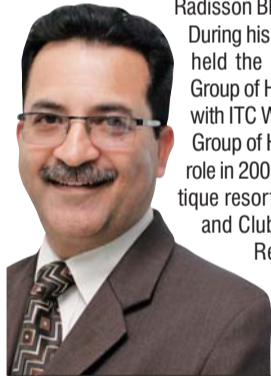
Mohammed Shoeb has been appointed as the General Manager at Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Dwarka. A post graduate diploma holder in Tourism & Hotel Management, Shoeb brings to Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Dwarka over 25 years of hospitality experience having held senior management positions in premium hotel brands across the country in the past. In the last 10 years, Shoeb has been involved in successful pre-opening projects for at least four hotels in southern part of India including the hotels within Accor Group, ITC WelcomGroup and InterContinental Hotels chain.



Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi, Paschim Vihar

New Delhi

Arun Arora has been appointed as the new General Manager at Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi, Paschim Vihar. During his 27 years of experience, Arora has held the position of F&B Manager at Taj Group of Hotels after having successful stints with ITC WelcomGroup Sheraton and Clarks Group of Hotels. He got the General Manager role in 2005 and opened the first five star boutique resort in Pune, The Corinthians Resort and Club. He has returned to the Carlson Rezidor folds after successfully opening the Royal Tulip, Louvre Group eco resort in Bangladesh.



The Westin Pune Koregaon Park

Pune

The Westin Pune Koregaon Park has appointed **Nishant Agarwal** as its new General Manager. Agarwal has a Diploma in Hotel Management from IHM, Pusa in Delhi. His 16-year career began at The Imperial, New Delhi; this was followed by his association with a series of brands including The Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, InterContinental Hotels, and Marriott Hotels. He has spent a large part of his career with The Oberoi Group of Hotels & Resorts, and was Assistant Manager, F&B at Trident Hotels - Nariman Point, Mumbai for seven years. In his last assignment, he served as Hotel Manager at The Westin Mumbai Garden City.



Namale Resort and Spa, Fiji

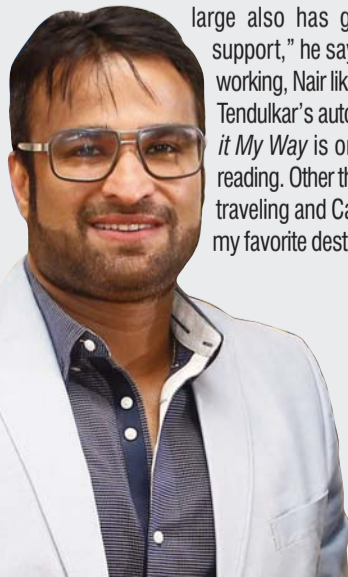
Mumbai

Kajal Somaiya has joined the Namale Team as its India representative for the region and will promote it among the Indian travel fraternity. Somaiya has over 10 years of experience in the travel and tourism industry, having worked as Tourism Fiji's India Representative, as Media Manager for the Italian Tourism Board in India, and as Assistant Marketing Manager for the French Tourism Board in India. She has extensive travel marketing and PR experience, and is multilingual, speaking fluent French, Spanish, and English along with basic Italian and four Indian languages.



TALKING People

Sujit Nair, Founder and Group MD, AkquaSun, draws inspiration from his team members. "They have made my vision successful and it's their passion combined with my inner strength that drives the organisation towards fulfilling its goals each year. The travel fraternity at large also has given us a lot of support," he says. When he is not working, Nair likes to read. "Sachin Tendulkar's autobiography *Playing it My Way* is one book I enjoyed reading. Other than reading, I enjoy traveling and Cape Town is one of my favorite destinations," he adds.



Paul John Maliyekkal, Deputy CEO (Visa Services), VFS Global, believes in always giving more importance to one's failures than one's successes because "you learn more from your failures than your successes." He draws his inspiration from his wife. His favourite book is 'Pillars of the Earth' by Ken Follett. Maliyekkal enjoys travelling too, and his favourite holiday memory so far is cage-diving to watch sharks in South Africa's Cape Town.



Syed A Asim, Executive Director, Bonton Holidays, is an adventure lover and a passionate cyclist. He loves to explore different parts of the Himalayas by pedaling or trekking. "I started a cyclist group in South Delhi which has grown to more than 100 cyclists now. On weekends and holidays we cycle to new destinations and historical monuments in and around Delhi," says Asim. Queenstown, South Island in New Zealand and Madagascar are destinations that he would like to visit. He does not travel without his smartphone which is full of travel Apps to explore new places, camera, and a travel kit. He is a foodie and enjoys Indian street food and cherishes sweets.



Race with the beautiful Neelgai, the Indian Wolf, Pelicans,
the Desert Fox, Greater Flamingos, larks,
the Indian Vulture and **Wild Ass at Little Rann of Kutch.**



Facebook: Trade's marketing tool

Lee McCabe, Global Head of Travel, Facebook, talks about the FB Messenger's evolution into what could be a crucial facet of the travel industry, and reveals how the social platform can be used for more than just networking.

 AHANA GURUNG

Q What is Facebook's role in the travel industry?

With over 1.59 billion users, Facebook is the perfect channel to efficiently reach out to the consumer. Facebook's Ad-Tech capabilities can be used to improve key metrics for brand marketers — increase awareness, inspire a trip, improve customer acquisition, cross-sell, and accelerate mobile adoption in a

the product and bookings. So, our strategy works across borders. Businesses can reach travellers based on both on intent and in-market status by efficiently driving conversion across devices. Our retargeting products (DPA) work exceptionally well in travel.

Q Tell us about some of your upcoming products.

We're very bullish about Facebook Messenger that we are developing as a

Q Which do you think is the fastest growing region for travel technology and where does India stand?

APAC and LATAM are definitely the fastest growing markets in the world. I think the Indian travel technology industry is growing very fast and is innovative. People usually think the Silicon Valley is the hub but the progress here in India is really exciting. There is so much innovation here - newer business models etc.

Q What is the current biggest wave in travel tech?

The biggest trend by far the industry is witnessing is mobile. It can absolutely change the whole course of your business. We adopted this mobile-first strategy about four and a half years ago when we didn't really have a mobile presence. We decided we couldn't ignore mobile anymore since it is the future. It had a huge impact on our business performance and now, whatever we do, it has been mobile first. We've evolved from a desktop platform and have become a big family of Apps and services.

Q In your opinion, what aspect of travel never changes?

The three things that don't change in travel are the most crucial things consumers demand; connection, context and convenience. Consumers will always want an easy way to connect on devices or platforms they are using on a day-to-day basis. They want context or personalisation; they don't want the usual vanilla services, they want something that suits their preferences and they want convenience. Convenience is working out through technology and mobile - you can see that through on-demand economy that's taking the friction out of booking and transactions.

“I think the Indian travel technology industry is growing very fast and is innovative. People usually think the Silicon Valley is the hub but the progress here in India is really exciting. There is so much innovation here.”

Lee McCabe

Global Head of Travel, Facebook



mobile-first world. It also provides a platform to reengage and keep your best customers loyal, season after season. In India, we work with most of the big hotels, online travel agents (OTAs), start-ups, airlines etc., with the likes of Yatra.com, MakeMyTrip, OYO Rooms, to name a few.

Q How do you set yourself apart from your competitors?

We have a huge network — Facebook gives access to reach and identity, and we don't just have a lot of users; we know a lot about the people on it. OTAs come to us and ask for branding campaigns — they want to drive awareness campaigns which we effectively handle and most importantly, we also measure brand awareness metrics. If the company's objective is to drive bookings, we can also do that pretty effectively through the acquisitions team.

Q Do you adopt particular strategies for different regions?

For travel, we don't really have a region-specific strategy because the objectives of the client companies are the same — they want brand awareness of

platform on its own and think it will be really helpful in the travel platform. The vision is one platform, one place - it's going to provide better service to the consumer and for the business. In my opinion, the communication was very fragmented especially in airlines & hotels. For example, through Messenger, an airline will be able to chat with the clients and thanks to its versatility, they can also issue and send the ticket, address problems all in one thread. KLM Airlines was our launch partner for this venture and is leveraging messenger as a communication platform.

Q What is the biggest challenge that Facebook has faced so far?

One major challenge we've encountered is the social tag. Once a company gets past that hurdle and understands that the possibilities are more than likes or fans or sharing, and realises that this is an effective advertising platform, there are really not many challenges. We've got the solutions to drive their business. This comes from actual instances with hotels and airlines - once they understand the potential Facebook offers, there really is no hesitation.

Star Messenger

- ✦ An airline will be able to chat with the clients and thanks to its versatility, they can also issue and send the ticket and address problems all in one thread.
- ✦ OTAs can drive awareness campaigns which Facebook effectively handles and also measures brand awareness metrics.



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Luxury talk

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OF FINE THINGS IN LIFE

Private jets, chartered boats, Michelin star chefs, boutique properties, high street fashion, you name it and travellers are making sure that they experience it. Today, luxury travel is not just a tour, or a series of trips. It is more than what meets the eye. It could be that Tiramisu cake that you learnt making on that exclusive one room apartment in Italy or just a hot stone massage amidst the Himalayas. Luxury is changing its shape, or may be today's travel designers have learnt the art of curating these experiences to the specific interests and needs of discerning travellers. And Indians are not far behind in welcoming these specially selected experiences. In fact, they are going that extra mile, and are ready to shell out the money needed as well.

According to a report, the luxury market in India will grow nearly tenfold in the next 10 years. In fact, it has the potential to grow from \$18.5 billion currently to \$50 billion by 2020 and to \$180 billion by 2025. And it's the youth of India, the growing middle class, as well as massive urbanisation, which is driving this growth. A faster GDP growth means more money in the hands of the people. It would result into more millionaires and billionaires in the country, which would aid the growth of the luxury market and in turn luxury travel.

In the inaugural issue of luxury talk we are looking at addressing what luxury means for today's travellers and give you a glimpse of the products that are available within India and outside.

Experience The Residence on board the Etihad A380; stay at a luxurious boutique property in the Swiss Alps; take a luxury train journey in India; relish quintessential Arabian hospitality in Ras Al Khaimah and learn a new skill in your next holiday.

Live it up in luxury!

NISHA VERMA

NEWS IN BRIEF



CARLSON HOTELS TO BE ACQUIRED BY HNA TOURISM

HNA Tourism Group, a division of HNA Group, has signed an agreement with Carlson Hospitality Group for the acquisition of Carlson Hotels. However, the transaction is subject to receipt of regulatory approvals and other customary closing conditions. It is believed that the deal would close in the second half of 2016. Under terms of the agreement, which were unanimously approved by the Carlson Board of Directors, HNA Tourism Group will acquire all of Carlson Hotels, including its approximately 51.3 per cent majority stake in Rezidor Hotel Group.



Le Meridien to open in Fort Lauderdale

Starwood Hotels & Resorts has announced that Le Méridien will open in Dania Beach, Fort Lauderdale, in partnership with owner and US real estate developer Charles S. Cohen. Le Méridien Fort Lauderdale Airport is set to open in 2017, following a comprehensive \$30 million renovation and conversion of the hotel.



Presidential comfort at Grand Hyatt Goa

Grand Hyatt Goa has recently unveiled its Presidential Suite. The latest 300 square-metre-addition to the 28-acre resort allows you to immerse yourself in five-star elegance. The suite opens into a grand entertainment area with a large open living space, indoor and outdoor dining areas, a separate office space, and a lounge area.

Lux Hotels set to offer hospitality solutions

Get ready to create global awareness for your property with The Lux Hotels, not only at international travel marts, but also among the travel agents in India. Bid adieu to hours of cold calling and resources, as The Lux Hotels offers huge opportunities worldwide. Sign up and get individual presence and listing at The Lux Hotels booth at the world's top four international tourism fairs — ATM Dubai, WTM London, ITB Berlin and FITUR Spain; individual publication space; marketing advise; website promotion; Facebook promotion; online blast of personalised newsletters and mailers on a database of 90,000 agents.



Get ready for The Oberoi Al Zorah

The Oberoi Al Zorah is set to open in 2016, offering the quintessential hospitality, synonymous with The Oberoi Group. The property is one of the three new luxury properties for the group this year with two others including The Oberoi Marrakech, Morocco and The Oberoi Sukhvilas, Chandigarh. The Oberoi Al Zorah, a luxury eco-destination resort, only 30 minutes from Dubai International Airport, will be nestled in the natural surroundings of Al Zorah which boasts a beautiful long beachfront, azure lagoons, lush mangroves and 247 acres of natural forest with exceptional biodiversity. The Oberoi Al Zorah is nestled alongside a beautiful untouched coastline, perfectly framed by natural mangroves and boasts an ultra-modern layout that harmonises with the natural environment. Each of the 113 villas, suites and penthouse are elegant and modern with an abundance of natural light and breathtaking sea views.



Luxury talk

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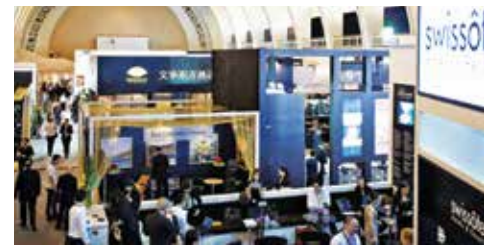
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30 **ILTM ASIA**
Shanghai, China

JULY

9 **TRAVEL WEDDING SHOW**
Gurugram, Delhi-NCR



SEPTEMBER

30 **ILTM AMERICAS**
Mexico

OCTOBER

15 **TRAVEL EXPERIENTIAL SHOW**
Gurugram, Delhi-NCR



NOVEMBER

19 **REISESALON**
Austria



DECEMBER

5 **ILTM CANNES**
Cannes (France)



5 **LOVE MEXICO**
Mexico

8 **MASTERS OF LXRY**
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Holland.



For more information, please contact:

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Waldorf Astoria
Amsterdam





“

Luxury means different things to different people. However, India has been offering luxury more traditionally, with a lot of it being offered through its palaces. People still want to live the royal life. However, now luxury in India is also available at par with all the best hotels in the world.”

NIKHIL VAHI
Senior Vice President
Hospitality Operations & Development
D. S. Group Hospitality

“

At ITC, we believe that luxury should not come with guilt of any kind. Thus, we've built this interesting proposition for the guests — Responsible Luxury, which actually encourages the guests to enjoy the finest things that the world has to offer, guilt free. Fifty per cent of our energy needs come from renewable sources of energy. Thus, every time a guest makes a choice to enjoy luxury with us; he or she knows that he is leaving a positive imprint. We define luxury in terms of sustainability and responsibility built into it.”

TEJINDER SINGH
General Manager
ITC Rajputana Jaipur



FACETS OF

LUXURY

What does luxury mean in today's times? The definition seems to vary widely from one person to another. We asked some trade professionals what luxury means for them, and their responses offer an exciting insight into the industry's perceptions on what the end consumer wants.



Photo courtesy: Leading Hotels of the World

“

According to me, luxury market is not changing, but has always been very good. It's the budget market which has seen a see-saw because of the inflation and economic conditions. Luxury market has always been very good. Five-star luxury hotels sail through all the time. Luxury is same, whether it is at a heritage hotel, or a chain hotel.”

RITA SHAH
 Chief Operating Officer
 Hans Hotels, New Delhi



Rumpus Room at Mondrian London

Hotel Splendide Royal
Lugano, Switzerland



Waldorf Astoria
Ras Al Khaimah

“

The biggest misconception of luxury in India is to associate it with a stay in an expensive hotel. This is not luxury. Today, luxury is about experiences, soft adventure tours or tours with activities. This part of business is definitely growing. An increasing number of companies that focus on this type of luxury market are finding good growth. To book a room for \$1000 is not luxury in my opinion.

”

DIPAK DEVA
Managing Director
TCI



“

Luxury is a different segment, and is very important. It's only moving upwards currently. At IHG, we have a great InterContinental property in Chennai, with only 109 rooms, which offers luxury. With hotels like that and many other properties in the country, I think we are moving towards it. However, as a country, we need far more effort in marketing. I think we need the Government of India to help and give a push to the market. As far as I think, there's no stopping.

”

GREESH BINDRA
Area General Manager
North & West India, IHG



“

Luxury market in India is growing and this is because of the products which are available in the market. Earlier the infrastructure was not there. However, today with properties like that of Taj Hotels and The Oberoi and many other brands, as well as transport, and the overall infrastructure which is there in our country, luxury travel is picking up. We get a lot of luxury clients, who take charters as well, so since the infrastructure has increased, luxury clients are coming more and more every year to India.

”

HOMA MISTRY
Chief Executive Officer
Trail Blazer Tours India



All aboard for a ROYAL Sojourn

Step into the new-age regal coach with Deccan Odyssey, which takes you into cities that tell age-old stories of opulence and extravagance of the palaces, traditions and culinary delights that still reside in the streets and corners of India.

Unwind in the comforts of Deccan Odyssey as it snakes through various cities of India and unravel its various facets — visit a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a superlative vineyard, tigers and lions lazing in the sun-baked stretches of wild brush, a palace residence, warm dazzling beaches and cool tranquil backwaters. The Deccan Odyssey covers the enchanting landscape of India, while reminding one of the journeys that the royals of the country used to savour in yesteryears.

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) appointed Cox & Kings as its outsource partner to operate Deccan Odyssey in October 2014. This partnership covers full management of on-board and off-board services, sales, marketing and operational activities for a period of five years.

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Waavar Restaurant



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JEWELS OF THE DECCAN

- Mumbai, Bijapur, Aihole and Pattadakal, Hampi, Hyderabad, Ellora Caves, Ajanta Caves, Mumbai

HIDDEN TREASURES OF GUJARAT

- Mumbai, Vadodara, Palitana, Sasan Gir and Somnath, Little Rann of Kutch, Modhera and Patan, Nashik, Mumbai

INDIAN ODYSSEY

- Delhi, Ranthambore, Agra, Jaipur, Udaipur, Vadodara, Ellora Caves, Mumbai

MAHARASHTRA WILD TRAIL

- Mumbai, Ellora Caves, Aurangabad, Ramtek-Pench, Tadoba, Ajanta Caves, Nashik, Mumbai



Twin Room

cabins and are named after significant regions of Maharashtra. All the cabins boast state-of-the-art amenities and adorn decor that narrates the stories of Deccan dynasties. Each coach has four cabins and a common lounge. The train has four resplendent Presidential Suites, having the most exquisite decor and all modern amenities. In fact, Deccan Odyssey offers a specially equipped cabin for the comfort of differently-abled guests.

Savour the most delectable cuisines of every state you visit, whipped up by the chefs on board and dine in style at the two gourmet restaurants — Peshwa 1 and Peshwa 2 — allowing you to experience every location with all your senses, including your tastebuds. Follow it up with an

equally good time with your fellow passengers at the well-stocked bar, called the Mumbai-Hi.

For rejuvenation head to Plumeria — the spa on board the Deccan Odyssey, and surrender yourself to ultimate relaxation. Corporate guests can make use of the well-equipped conference car — Samvad — for holding any meetings and discussions. Apart from all this, the well-trained staff make sure that all the needs of the guests are taken care of round-the-clock. There is one 24-hour attendant each for every coach and one each for every Presidential Suite.

Go on, live through the journey like royalty on board the special train.



Ras Al Khaimah



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FANCY A DESIGNER

Travelling today has gone beyond pre-curated itineraries as a growing number of tour operators are putting together one-of-its-kinds adventures for their discerning clients.



Cinnamon Coast,
Vivanta by Taj-Malabar, Cochin



Boracay,
The Philippines

NISHA VERMA

People who invest in their vacations are not just ticking off attractions from their checklists when they visit a destination. Today, they are more than willing to pay for a 'made-to-measure' experience. It's all about one-upmanship, which is why this sector of the tourism industry is getting popular.

Agrees **Kiran Joti**, Joint Managing Director, Le Passage To India (LPTI), "We've really moved away from brochure group travel to FIT tailor-made travel. I think that is one of the growing trends in India. India is growing to be known as not only a cultural destination, but also a luxury destination. People like to come here to discover the destination with more time on their hand."

There are companies that put together special-interest programmes even outside India, and allow their clients to unpick and reassemble itineraries to suit individual tastes. The people behind creating such once-in-a-lifetime trips are known as travel designers. **Amit Kalsi**, Private Travel Designer, Founder & CEO, Experiential Travel Journeys, says, "I start from scratch, and offer suggestions and inspirations from my end, followed by designing a customised trip which suits client preferences."

The travel designers are chosen for their area-specific expertise, passion for the outdoors and a flexible but diligent approach to holiday planning. But the kind of experiences on offer differ from one travel designer to another.



KIRAN JOTI
Joint Managing Director
Le Passage To India (LPTI)

HOLIDAY?



There are companies that put together special-interest programmes even outside India, and allow their clients to unpick and reassemble itineraries to suit individual tastes.

Arctic Bay, Canada

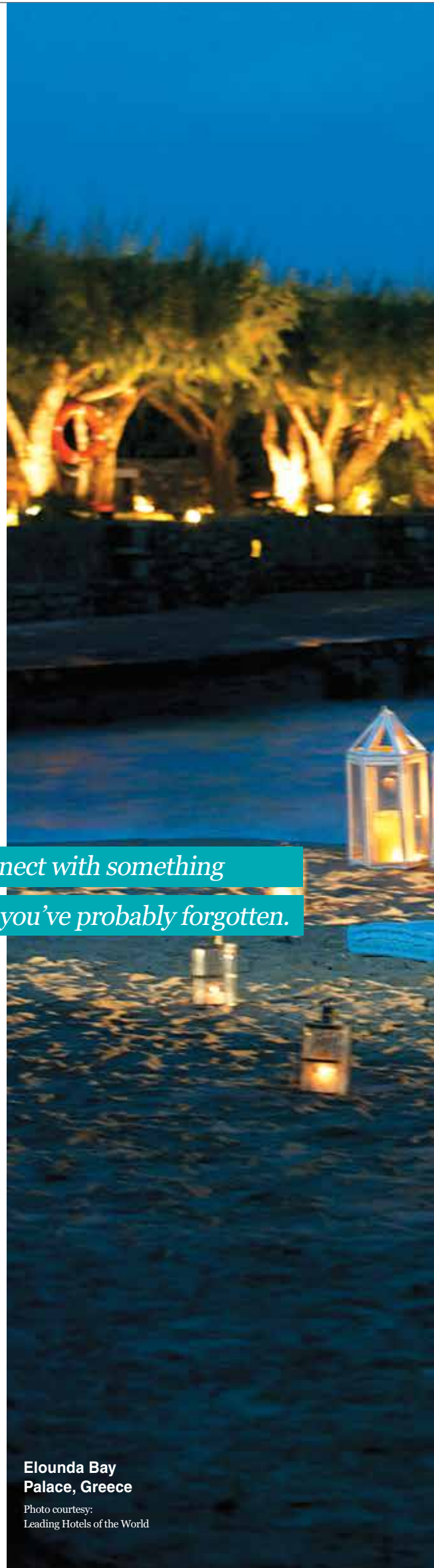
According to Kalsi, who specialises in creating international tours, “Discerning international travellers from India are seeking everything — diving; surfing; horse riding; yachting/sailing; skiing; cooking classes and similar hands-on local experiences; biking; hiking; trekking; safari and wildlife; camping; fly-fishing; wellness and healing holidays; self-drive; art and cultural insights; culinary experiences (food & wine); visit local tribes; cruising the great rivers; exploring polar regions; stay in villas and stately homes/castles; train journeys like Trans-Siberian; in search of natural wonders like northern lights; volcanoes; ice caves; cherry blossoms etc.”

On the other hand of the spectrum is **Shoba Mohan**, Founder Partner, RARE India. She says, “RARE endorses a different, deeper kind of luxury. It endorses a luxury that makes you feel good. If you stay at a RARE property, you come back feeling that the place I stayed in supported something. It helped preserve a particular property, helped provide economy to the community who worked there. What we offer is a mutual learning experience, both for the community and the guest.”



SHOBA MOHAN
 Founder Partner
 RARE India

It is a sense of passion that drives these individuals to go beyond the regular and offer their clients something different. Reveals Kalsi, “I am not an order taker. I am not simply selling what people want to buy. I do not handle all business coming my way. I have a client segmentation which seeks my services and they are the ones who get all my



Luxury travel is also about what it does to you. It helps you connect with something you've long given up. It helps you believe in things which you've probably forgotten.



The Ultimate
 Travelling Camp, Nubra

Elounda Bay
 Palace, Greece

Photo courtesy:
 Leading Hotels of the World



**Snowmobiling,
Alberta, Canada**



AMIT KALSI
Private Travel Designer, Founder & CEO
Experiential Travel Journeys

time and attention. I try to create and make orders by promoting ideas and inspirations, to test and catch my clients' attention and generate interest." The personal touch is the key, claims Mohan, "Tourism cannot function if it doesn't move you independently. One can't just go to a destination, tick a box and just walk away. Luxury travel is also about what it does to you. It helps you connect with something you've long given up. It helps you believe in things which you've probably forgotten. It helps you find time for yourself."

Today, luxury has a different meaning altogether. Joti agrees, "People just don't want five star deluxe stay when they come to India. They want to get a first-hand feel of the destination and look forward to the kind of experiences that they can get in India."

Banyan Tree
Al Wadi



Oasis of ARABIAN

With dramatic mountains, red sandy deserts and lush green plains, Ras Al Khaimah is rich in historical and archaeological sites dating back to the 13th century AD.



Experience royalty in the depths of the desert or just relax on your own private beach in Ras Al Khaimah — the next big thing in luxury travel.

OPULENCE

Waldorf Astoria
Ras Al Khaimah



If you yearn for good things in life, you just cannot miss this northernmost emirate of the UAE. The epitome of royal luxury, Ras Al Khaimah boasts year-round sunshine and a number of opulent hotels and resorts offering services that the region is known for. What works in its favour is the fact that it is neither too far nor too close to Dubai, allowing travellers to experience

solitude while not being too far from all the action. With dramatic mountains, red sandy deserts and lush green plains, Ras Al Khaimah is rich in historical and archaeological sites dating back to the 13th century AD. There is a plethora of once-in-a-lifetime excursions, with 4x4 vehicle safaris into the desert as well as the Iceland Water Park. Also enjoy the luxury of five-star resorts and relaxing spas which excel in offering quintessential Middle Eastern service and comfort at comparatively lesser price than other emirates and destinations.

The Cove Rotana
Resort Ras Al Khaimah



WALDORF ASTORIA RAS AL KHAIMAH

The beachfront super luxurious property houses palatial rooms, stylish dining and an 18-hole golf course. Set amidst desert, mountains and the sea, it offers everything for all kinds of guest. Housing a total of 346 guest rooms and suites with state-of-the-art interiors and amenities, Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah, is a one-stop destination for anyone. Relish wholesome meals at the property with intricate sushi plates, juicy steaks and an array of Middle Eastern dishes. As it gets dark, 17Squared is the go-to place for one of the best cocktails in the area. Relax at the much acclaimed spa, or enjoy the

Hilton Al Hamra
Beach & Golf ResortBanyan Tree
Ras Al Khaimah Beach

Properties in Ras Al Khaimah offer Bedouin-style stay options, Arabian villas and sprawling golf courses making it a complete destination catering to all kinds of travellers.

water sports on offer. There is also a kids club for those who come with family.

BANYAN TREE RAS AL KHAIMAH BEACH

Get ready for an Arabian adventure at the Banyan Tree Ras Al Khaimah Beach. The exclusive resort stretches along a private shore of white sand fringed with desert vegetation. The villas at the property offer a Bedouin-inspired stay complete with plunge pool, a beach cabana, high-tented ceilings and luxurious bathroom with bath furnishings. Relax in your Arabian villa or laze in the plunge pool while gazing at the azure sea. Golf lovers can tee off at the Al Hamra Golf Club, adjacent to the resort. Also try your hand at a wide range of desert experiences, like falconry shows, nature walks, archery and desert fishing. You can even set sail on the Abra to relish a romantic sunset with your beloved.

BANYAN TREE AL WADI

Enter a haven of peace and tranquil at Banyan Tree Al Wadi, UAE's first desert resort and

spa which offers an all-pool villa concept with state-of-the-art facilities comprising Asian-inspired hydrotherapy spa facilities and a dedicated nature reserve. Set against the magnificent Al Hajar Mountains, the resort offers a surreal aura of desert romance. Situated at Wadi Khadeja, the resort has traditional mud-brick Arab villas, which offer modern luxury with decor that can please any connoisseur. Enjoy views of the tranquil desert oasis on your personal terrace or just soak with your loved one in your private pool.

HILTON AL HAMRA BEACH & GOLF RESORT

Treat yourself to the best hospitality on offer at the luxurious Hilton Al Hamra Golf & Beach Resort, which boasts spacious accommodations and fabulous business and leisure amenities, including a world-class, 18-hole golf course, a private beach and a conference centre. Set in the exclusive commercial and residential complex of Al Hamra Village, the resort is just a stone's throw away from the various leisure

options, shopping malls and Ras Al Khaimah attractions, including Al Hamra Marina. Unwind at the resort as you savour incredible ocean, garden or golf course views from an elegant guest room or suite. Deluxe rooms are also available, located in the beautiful beachfront villas.

THE COVE ROTANA RESORT RAS AL KHAIMAH

Located on an idyllic water inlet on the Ras Al Khaimah beachfront overlooking the Arabian Gulf with 600 meters of pristine beach, The Cove Rotana Resort is the perfect luxury experience. Offering an amalgamation of traditional Arabian hospitality and modern amenities, the property has a number of villas that are ideally designed to accommodate families or a group of friends. With a Nubian touch in their design, the Villas are well-crafted and aesthetically designed to offer world-class comfort. The villas have spacious living rooms, private terraces, spectacular views of the Arabian Gulf to the lagoon or lush green hills.



Etihad A380



Lobby Lounge

Superlative Suites in the sky

If you think flying first-class is the ultimate luxury travel experience, get ready to be proved wrong when you step into The Residence on Etihad Airways' A380s — a super luxurious suite in the air.



Your personal butler in the sky



Bedroom



Living Room

Etihad Airways has finally brought its A380 aircraft to Mumbai, India, and it houses The Residence—a three-room suite that is undoubtedly the most luxurious space available on a commercial carrier. Comfortable enough to accommodate two guests, this luxury condominium offers a bedroom, a shower room, a relaxing lounge area and a personal butler!

THE STAY

Every Etihad Airways A380 has a boutique version of The Residence, offering exclusive colour palettes, table marquetry, and custom carpets. While the lounge area has a large 32" LCD monitor with Bose noise cancelling headphones, there is a 27" LCD monitor in the bedroom as well. The living room adorns a luxurious leather double-seat sofa, two dining tables and a chilled minibar allowing two guests to dine in style. The plush Poltrona Frau leather seats here have an electrically operated ottoman.

The comfort level goes a notch higher as you enter the bedroom that boasts a mighty 6' 10" double bed, with designer Italian bed linen. Elegant loungewear from the 'Voyage' collection by Christian Lacroix is also provided.

A private corridor leads to the bathroom, which is equipped with exclusive en-suite shower room with full-height shower, luxury amenities and bathrobes. Find an exclusive range of amenities packaged in a stylish gift box. One can freshen up in the exclusive bathroom before landing. A vanity unit with magnifying make-up mirror and hairdryer would be of great help to prepare for the arrival.

GASTRONOMIC DELIGHTS

The preparation to treat your tastebuds starts much in advance. Guests are contacted prior to travel to discuss in-flight dining, and menus are tailored around dietary requirements and preferences. Get a gourmet à la carte menu with the onboard chef ready to create special made-to-order dishes. Meals are served on bespoke 24 carat gold-plated porcelain

A first of its kind



Etihad is riding high on the exclusivity that The Residence offers.

Neerja Bhatia, Vice President, India and Indian Sub-continent (ISC), Etihad Airways, says, "The A380 is a fantastic product, and has The Residence — a three-bedroom apartment that you could have in the sky. This first-of-its-kind product is a unique proposition that we offer and no other airline has. I feel it's the perfect product for the Indian market, as Indians are rich and love to spend money. There are a lot of takers for this kind of product, like celebrities from Bollywood and sports; businessmen; corporate head-honchos. I think there is a huge opportunity and appetite to sell the residence. That's why we have brought it to Mumbai."

tableware from Bernardaud in France, with Royal Oak cutlery from British brand Studio William, also inlaid with 24 carat gold plating.

And the icing on the cake is having a personal butler at your disposal. Meticulously trained at the world-renowned Savoy Butler Academy in London, the onboard butler welcomes guests booked in The Residence and looks after their needs from take-off to touch down.

COMPLETE LUXURY

Booking in The Residence means that Etihad Airways' VIP Travel Concierge service will be there for you right from reservation until the end of the journey. This includes making hotel and restaurant reservations, theatre bookings and even purchasing a rare diamond. From a luxury chauffeur to private check-in and lounge, The Residence experience is seamless and discreet. Fares for one way trip from Abu Dhabi to Mumbai start at AED18000 (₹3.25 lakhs).

In order to be a member of the Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) a hotel property has to pass at 85 per cent of the 850 standards required for the membership.



Chromata Up
Style Hotel



PHILIP HO, Senior VP, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific, Leading Hotels of the World (LHW), shares what makes them a brand to reckon with and what makes India a quintessential luxury destination.

Leaders in exclusivity

Q. What is the portfolio size of LHW?

We are a membership organisation of 400 hotels in 300 destinations and all have different themes. LHW was created 88 years ago with only 39 hotels that wanted to come together. We are still owned by hotel members and will continue to be like that for many years to come. We've got 25 offices around the world and our goal is to deliver business to the hotels. Some of our resources are stacked against finding new member hotels as well. New hotels can join us based on recommendations from the media, travel agencies as well as from other member hotels.





We have a strong interest in India, since it offers a lot in terms of authentic experiences. It's

in India that luxury started, and thus we'd love to have member hotels here.

Clockwise:
Ashford Castle,
Ciragan Palace
Kempinski Istanbul,
The Beach Club at
Charleston Harbor
Resort & Marina

Q. LHW has a mix of both leisure hotels and business hotels. How do you try and maintain the same level of service in both?

Every leading hotel has to go through a test of 850 standards for getting the membership. The process of being admitted into the membership is via a mystery guest stay, wherein we send someone to the hotel incognito to experience the hotel for 2-3 nights. This allows us to test their services as well as products of the hotel. In order to be a member of the LHW the property has to pass at 85 per cent of the 850 standards. The standards that we have created are both for leisure and business clients. In order to get 85 per cent, one has to satisfy both the leisure and business travellers. The city hotels usually get a mixture of both leisure and business travellers and passing those standards would allow the hotel to serve both types of guests.

We, at our end, find customers, who are right for the hotel. For a leisure hotel or resort, we help get business that is leisure oriented. In case of city hotels, we make sure that both business and leisure business comes in equal measure.

Q. Why then, apart from The Taj and The Oberoi, no other hotel has come under LHW from India?

We are very proud and privileged to have The Oberoi and Taj Hotels to be part of LHW in the past. At this point we'd love to serve member hotels in India. We are looking for hotel owners with a long term investment approach to the business. Many of our hotels have been with the families for multiple generations. Ninety per cent of them are individually or family owned. We believe that

families take a long term approach to business and investment, and thus also put in their personality into the property and show their unique heritage through the property. We seek partners who can create individual authentic hotels and those who believe in collaboration. We have a strong interest in India, since it has a lot to offer in terms of consumers looking for authentic luxury experiences. It's in India that luxury started, and thus we would love to have member hotels here.

Q. What will be your focus for the Indian market this year?

Indians make for 15 per cent of total traffic in our hotels. We've been seeing good business out of India for the last five years, and our business has been growing at almost 25 per cent every year. We have been continuously expanding in the India market, and thus we want to take a step further up this year to boost the expansion. There are three things we are doing this year. Firstly, we want to cover markets beyond Delhi and Mumbai and focus on Tier II, III cities. We might do a brand launch as well. Travel trade is an important segment for us, since most of the individuals who can pay \$600 per room night usually use travel agencies. And thus, we have created the VITA (Very Important Travel Agents) program, which is our way of making the travel advisor the hero in the eyes of their customers. Under the VITA program, there will be benefits in service for customers and recognition for the travel agents. Travel agencies contribute 75 per cent of our business, and only a limited portion of business comes directly from consumers. We want to make people experience hotels which are located near big cities like Rome, Milan and Zurich.

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