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Trade's CSR initiatives

With big companies and MNCs being involved in a number of initiatives under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), it is time to look within the travel industry. TRAVTALK finds out what the different associations are doing to give back to the community. While many associations are very active, it's time that the others wake up too.



TT BUREAU



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President
OTOAI

Since inception, OTOAI has been actively involved in CSR activity. Initially, the Ladies Wing helmed by Vasudha Sondhi and Punam Singh had adopted an old-age home in Shahdara for a year and provided food, provisions, medicines, recreational goods and building materials to the residents. This was followed by contributions in cash and kind to an orphanage in Sarita Vihar. OTOAI has also contributed in both cash and kind to the Uttarakhand and recently the Chennai flood victims. The association also supports some children of the economically-weaker sections in the trade for their education.

TAFI has time and again participated in CSR activities. We have in the past donated wheelchairs at Chennai and Bengaluru airports. During calamities, we send appeal letters to our members and contribute jointly to recognised associations like Rotary Clubs. Further, we also through our Secretariat in Mumbai send social and important updates on health cleanliness and other tourism improvement policies of the Central and state governments. We even promoted the government's 'Swachh Bharat' campaigns at our various chapters and got our members to clean streets at a designated time and venue.



Pradip Lulla
National General
Secretary, TAFI

We are supporting two girl children in Bengaluru through Rohini Ghadiok Foundation for their education, till they graduate. We also offered support at the time of Nepal earthquake through Skål Nepal, which also rebuilt a school there. We invited Mark Tuli and raised around `6-7 lakh, which were given for the Nepal earthquake victims through various means. We had also given aid to the Uttarakhand flood victims with Goonj. In addition, we help children who need support and financial aid after our committee's approval on the same. We raised around `2-3 lakh through the Skål ball for this purpose and will be putting the money to good use very soon.



Sanjay Datta
President
Skål Delhi

It is very important for us to give back to the industry. The biggest initiative that we've taken is training of students in all our hotels under skill development. We are working with the Ministry of Tourism on this under the *Hunar se Rozgar Tak* scheme. These training courses range from 6-8 weeks and the only qualification for the same is to pass 10th or 12th grade. Such children, who do not have the means for professional courses, can have employment as well as a bright future after the trainings as they are absorbed in the hotel industry. We need professional skills and such activities result in talent generation. Other than that we are also involved in a number of environmental activities.



Bharat Malkani
President
FHRAI

CSR is on our agenda. Now that all large organisations have been advised by the government to devote a part of their profits to CSR so within the industry partners there are a number of partners that TAAI is aware of or want to work with who are qualified for CSR activity and collectively with TAAI it could be a good beginning for us to get on some charitable cause as well. Something that comes to mind straight away is there a provision under CSR funding and that is training. So if some corporate who are ready to devote some funds towards training is interested in working with TAAI then I think we can go in this direction because education is required for strengthening this industry.



Sunil Kumar
President, TAAI

NE agents register free

Boosting membership and its upcoming convention, are few of the things that IATO is focusing on, reveals **Lally Matthews**, Honorary Secretary, IATO.



NISHA VERMA

It's only been a month after the elections and IATO is already in action. "There has only been one Executive Committee meeting after the elections, and we have already started work on a few things," says Matthews. Elaborating further he says, "The enquiries that come on the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) website have been connected to the IATO system for the last two years. All these enquiries are supposed to be distributed on rotation to every five IATO members. However, before elections we have had members coming to us saying that either they have not got any enquiries or have only got requests from domestic market. Hence, a committee has been constituted under me that will look into it and see where the problem is and get it rectified."

The next thing on IATO's agenda is to increase the



Lally Matthews
Honorary Secretary
IATO

For the North East, and Andaman & Nicobar, we will waive off the registration fee of `5000 till March 31, 2017

number of members. Matthews says, "Being there for more than 25 years, IATO only has 344 active members. There are a huge number of allied members as well. How-

ever, now we are on a drive to increase membership of IATO all over India and in the last EC meeting we had decided that for the North East states, and Andaman & Nicobar, we will waive off the registration fee of `5000 till March 31, 2017. In addition, we have written to our chapter chairmen to focus on increasing the membership. However, we have to be careful since many operators can default as well."

He also said that one of the priorities for them is to work on the convention. "There hasn't been a date and venue for this year's convention because of the elections. While the team was contemplating to do it in Chennai, nothing has been decided as yet. Our first priority is to block the dates and then we will decide on the venue." He also added, "We are also looking at making an all women committee, apart from reshuffling the earlier committees."

ADTOI in Chhattisgarh

After a successful convention, Association of Domestic Tour Operators, is gearing up towards expansion, says **Jyoti Kapur**, President, ADTOI.



TT BUREAU

The recently held ADTOI convention was a huge success, claims Kapur, and now he says that the next step is to spread their wings. "We are in the process of launching a new chapter in Chhattisgarh. We have done the homework and spadework for that and it will be launched within a few weeks. We are also looking at launching a chapter in Rajasthan."

While expansion is on the cards, the election too is a huge concern, especially after the legal problems that erupted after last elections. Kapur clarifies, "We did have some legal issues and we are trying to look into that. Modalities are being worked out, and if need be, we will have a relook at the MoA or the constitution to have a foolproof election process in the next few months. However, the elections will be



Jyoti Kapur
President
Association of Domestic Tour Operators

We are in the process of launching a new chapter in Chhattisgarh. It will be launched within a few weeks

held in the next few months, and we would love to have a new team."

Kapur also talked about the meeting they had with

Kapil Misra, Minister, Delhi Tourism, on the roadmap to promote Delhi as a destination. He also mentioned a few suggestions for the government to make Delhi more than a transit hub. "Delhi, till date, has been promoted as a political hub, or for medical treatments, or for transit or come and meet relatives. The first step towards attracting tourists to Delhi is by promoting it as a standalone destination. The government needs to protect and promote Lutyens Delhi, which is culturally and historically very rich. This, along with monuments in and around the capital should be promoted to domestic tourists along with international tourists. Delhi also should have information offices in other states, especially neighbouring states, so that international tourists as well as domestic tourists visit the destination," he said.

Focus on promotion abroad

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) opts for a joint effort with the state governments and the private sector for various projects, targeting rapid growth in the industry.

AHANA GURUNG

With the base for development in tourism strengthened by MOT the previous year, it is safe to say that their efforts have gradually begun to reap benefits. The first four months of 2016 have witnessed a 10.1 per cent growth with 31.08 lakh foreign tourists who visited India as compared to the FTAs of 28.23 lakh with a growth of 3 per cent in January-April 2015.

Joint Secretary **Suman Billa** expresses that while the progress is encouraging, there still are some aspects

world to address the issue of overseas promotion. "The work they do is mainly create awareness about India, engage with the local media, participate in roadshows, etc., – things that cannot be done from here," he says.

However, with the way things are fast changing all over the world, a simple bureaucratic approach to handling tourism promotion overseas may not be as effective. Billa comments, "One of the ideas is to make the overseas offices a nucleus for vendor management which will have specialised PR agencies and marketing representatives who

“One of the ideas is to make the overseas offices a nucleus for vendor management which will have specialised PR agencies and marketing representatives who act on your behalf. Since we are not a private organisation, the bureaucracy has certain hindrances.”

Suman Billa
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India



He further adds that consultants, who will be knowledge partners to the states, will be appointed to help pick up the best practices in India. "They will examine the present policies, incentives and subsidies offered by states for investment so that the states can make the correct pitch at the Summit. They need to take the advocacy role and figure out how to effectively improve the attraction quotient. We're covering a lot more ground rather than it being just another summit, more importantly we will be getting the states to make the right pitch and driving the private sector to fuel growth to tourism."

We have already appointed three PR agencies in China, the UK and Germany who have knowledge about how things function in the respective countries and will target the right crowd for events like roadshows

US & Canada roadshows

PATA India and the Ministry of Tourism's (MOT) five-city US roadshow began in San Francisco and went on to cover the West Coast. Imparting more details on the roadshow, **Vikram Madhok**, Hony. Treasurer, PATA India, said, "One of our mandates for PATA membership is to add value so we embark on roadshows across the world, primarily in the main

feeder markets. The roadshow in the U.S had over 20 people from every segment participating. It commenced on May 24 in San Francisco, May 25 in Los Angeles (Orange County), May 26 in Los Angeles (Beverly Hills), May 31 in Vancouver and finally concluded on June 1 in Seattle. Another roadshow in Europe is currently in the pipeline."

It is evident from the developments that the involvement of the private sector as well as the state government is crucial in achieving a fast-paced growth. Understanding this need, MOT and CII will be organising a Tourism Investment Summit from Sept 21-23, 2016, in New Delhi to encourage the participation of the private sector for tourism's growth. Billa reveals, "For the summit, we will be reaching out to the Indian private players and foreign investors. But most of the investments will have to come from the states – there's very little that we can do here except for high-level clearances."

Monthly Highlights

- 5.99 lakh foreign tourist arrivals in April 2016
- 10.7% growth in FTAs over April 2015
- Bangladesh, USA and the UK top three source markets in April
- 31.08 lakh FTAs in Jan-Apr 2016
- 10.1% growth recorded in FTAs in first four months of 2016

that need to be reworked. MOT appointed India Tourism offices in various parts of the

act on your behalf. Since we are not a private organisation, the bureaucracy has certain

Industry buoyant about Cruise Tourism

Taking a cue from the Ministry's recent initiatives to boost coastal tourism and develop ports/marinas, travel & tourism industry is feeling optimistic about this segment. In a recent poll conducted by TRAVTALK, all the responders

came back saying the only way for cruise tourism to go is up. Some even predicted a growth rate of 8-9% per cent

per annum for South East Asia. According to the Ministry, up to 91,000 Indians took cruise trips in 2014 and in the wake of aggressive campaigning and increased focus, this number is only going to rise.



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32 foreign buyers at 1st GMTM

The maiden edition of the Global MICE Travel Mart hosted 32 buyers from 12 countries and witnessed around 800 pre-scheduled meetings.

TT BUREAU

The Global Mice Travel Mart (GMTM) was held from May 19-21, 2016, at The Lalit, New Delhi, where close to 32 buyers from 12 countries participated. Organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in association with the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB), the conference is a step towards promoting India as a MICE destination, expressed **Dr. Jyotsna Suri**, Immediate Past President, FICCI, and Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee at the inaugural session of the mart.

She revealed that around 800 pre-scheduled meetings were held over the three days, adding that, "MICE tourism has shown the maximum potential across the globe and a deep impact in developing



a destination and its economy." In all, 42 buyers and 27 sellers were in attendance. The next edition of GMTM will be held in July 2017, Dr. Suri said.

According to **Chander Mansharamani**, Vice Chairman, ICPB, the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) recorded more than 12,000 events all over the world in 2015 where India's share was very nominal. "But this year, India's global ranking for the number of meetings hosted in 2015 has improved from 35th to 31st position," he revealed. "The

major concern here is how we market the destination. Roadshows are quite effective for this purpose."

Not only does tourism offer a direct person-to-person connection but is also extremely good for business, opined **Dr. A Didar Singh**, Secretary General, FICCI. "India is the only large economy which is growing at more than 7 per cent – 7.6 per cent is the rate we aim to grow this year and is an indicator that business is growing in India. This means that tourism is continuously growing with the MICE segment comprising over 50

per cent of business travel; this is a tremendously strong business that is enhancing personal interaction," he shared.

Suman Billa, Joint Secretary, Tourism, identified some obstacles in the area and remarked, "The challenge is really to be able to drive growth on a multipronged area where the communication strategy works across different segments and platforms. If we have to make these numbers grow with the quality we want, I think that the growth has to come from MICE."

The FICCI-MRSS report on 'India Inbound MICE Tourism – Trends and Opportunities' was released during the inauguration which also saw a panel discussion on 'Furthering MICE Tourism into India – Rejuvenating the Roadmap' take place with several well-known industry professionals. ↴

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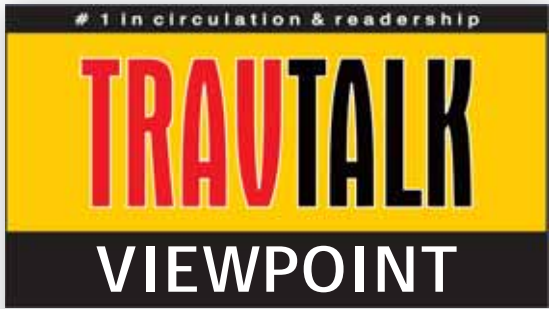
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Price will follow quality

Are you plagued by demanding customers who insist on negotiating rates every time they buy a service? That means you are in India! Indians (and we have all been guilty of this at one time or another) suffer from a unique trait of trying to extract the most amount of service at the least possible price. In such times, it is good to believe that price will, after a point, follow quality. If the quality of service provided is satisfactory or, let us hope, exceeds expectations, the need to drive down the price will lessen, and hopefully die a natural death.

This is especially true with mature travellers who understand the value of such services and are in all probabilities coming to you because: a) they couldn't do it themselves; b) they didn't have the time or the patience to do it themselves. These are the customers you want to reach out to and keep. Good service doesn't go unnoticed, specially when cutting corners has become a norm these days. Improve the quality of your service and it will force your customers to think twice before haggling on the price.

Coast to cost

Much has been said about developing coastal tourism in India. States like Karnataka have been trying to get Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms relaxed and develop tourism infrastructure and facilities at the coast. Goa, on the other hand, remains one of the only destinations that attracts tourism for its beaches. Tamil Nadu and Kerala are still getting projects cleared. Most beaches are far from being world class. Yachts and marinas are even far-fetched thoughts. Add to it the immigration processes at ports as well as high taxes for both big and small vessels. The MOT's decision to identify a Coastal Circuit under Swadesh Darshan and forming a task force to address the issues might be the first step to reap the potential of the 7,500-km coastline that India boasts. Also, the decision to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cruise terminal operations might just be the game changer.

Now & Then



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



Then
Krishan Kumar Amla (K. K. Amla)
Secretary, PATA (1991)

From the archives

Krishan Kumar Amla (K. K. Amla) was Secretary, PATA in 1991 and today he is the Chairman and Managing Director of Broadway Hotel, Srinagar, Kashmir. From then to now he is going strong in the travel industry.



Now
Krishan Kumar Amla
Chairman-cum-Managing Director
Broadway Hotel, Srinagar-Kashmir

Bolghaty Leased to Oberois

The Kerala government has decided to lease out the Bolghaty Palace at Ernakulam to the Oberois, reports B&PO. The hotel presently run by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), will be leased out for 99 years.

Though it has been decided to operate the hotel in the joint sector, differences have cropped up between the Oberois and the state government. While the Oberois want complete control of the hotel, the government fears that such a move might provoke the KTDC workers to launch an agitation. Earlier too, the workers had thwarted a move by the previous UDF government to hand over the Bolghaty and Mascot hotels

to private parties leading to a 40 per cent limit on the shares held by the private agencies.

A subsidiary had been formed by the LDF government called Tourism Resorts Kerala, to run the joint sector hotels with the Taj group. Though the LDF government decided to encourage the private sector, it was not in favour of handing over the existing KTDC hotels to the joint sector.

It is learnt that the government also plans to hand over the KTDC run Mascot hotel at Thiruvananthapuram, Samdura at Kovalam and Aranya Nivas at Thekkady to either Oberois or the Taj group.

India tops luxury travel growth

In India, higher-yield premium and luxury trips are outpacing other travel markets. India's luxury CAGR is highest among any other BRIC nation.

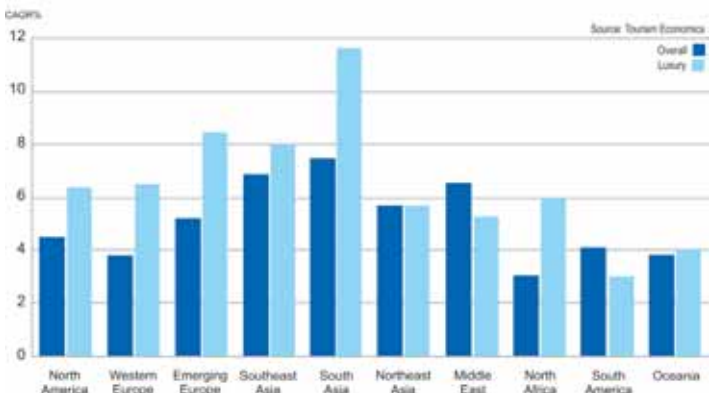
	2011-2015	2015-2025	2011-2025
Europe	3.6%	6.7%	5.8%
Asia Pacific	7.1%	5.9%	6.3%

From now until 2025, the number of luxury trips from Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) will increase. China's luxury travel market will continue to experience double-digit growth at 12.2%, albeit at a slower pace than in the past. Russia's luxury market will recover from its dip from 2013-2015, and experience a growth rate of 9%, despite the nation's economic reliance on global oil prices and the fact that Western sanctions are set to remain in place until 2017. Brazil's lack of an established middle class and the weakness of the Brazilian Real against other global currencies means the growth of its luxury market is slow at 4.2%. India's luxury market's CAGR of 12.8% is higher than any of the other BRIC nations, and the highest of the 25 countries explored in this report. India's booming middle class presents great potential for luxury travel investment over the coming decade.

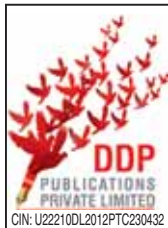
Luxury travel trends 2011-2015

North America and Europe currently account for 64% of the world's outbound luxury trip but represent only 18% of global population and this dominance will continue

Comparing 2015-2025 growth in overall travel and luxury travel across regions



Source: 'Shaping the Future of Luxury Travel' report by Amadeus



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Inclusive tourism

The role of tourism in fighting poverty and building peace were the key focus of the First World Conference on Tourism for Development.

TT BUREAU

Opening the conference, **Li Keqiang**, Premier of the People's Republic of China, underlined the role of tourism in lifting people out of poverty and the importance of stepping up international cooperation in tourism. The event, organised by UNWTO and the Government of the People's Republic of China, gathered in Beijing 1000 participants from over 100 countries.

Premier Li emphasised tourism's capacity to stimulate economic growth, create jobs and foster inclusive development. "The global economy is lacking in growing momentum and needs a new driving force. As one of the fastest-growing and most resilient industrial sectors, tourism plays an important role in boosting world economic recovery" he said. During the occasion, China announced the launch of an international tourism cooperation plan.

Addressing the conference the President of Mozambique, **Filipe Jacinto Nyussi**, emphasised that inclusion through tourism requires investment in education and capacity building.

The links between development and peace were stressed by UNWTO Secretary-General, **Taleb Rifai**, who said, "There can be no development without peace and no peace without development."

In a message delivered to the conference by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, **Wu Hongbo**, United Nations Secretary-General **Ban Ki-moon** said, "When tourism is well-managed, it has tremendous capacity to create decent jobs, provide opportunities for inclusion and education, and contribute to preserving cultural heritage and the environment."

The conference included three main panel sessions dedicated to the contribution of tourism to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to poverty alleviation and to peace.

Participants in the session on tourism and poverty underlined that there is a lack of understanding and research on the impact of



the sector on poverty levels. They called for better monitoring, measuring and communication through both solid indicators and people-centered stories.

New PATA Executive Board Chairman

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has announced the election of **Andrew Jones**, Guardian - Sanctuary Resorts, Hong Kong SAR, as Chairman of the Association's Executive Board. He replaces **Kevin B Murphy** who was elected Chairman in April 2015 and who remains a member of the Executive Board as Immediate Past Chairman.

Over the past 45 years he has worked in numerous senior management and corporate positions for prestigious hotels, resorts and

management companies in London, Bermuda, Canada, Hong Kong SAR and across Asia. In 1996 he founded and became the Guardian of Sanctuary Resorts, a resort management company creating responsible and sustainable tourism experiences.

A Certified Hotel Administrator of the American Hotel and Lodging Association, and a Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality, Jones was previously a member of the Board of the Indian Ocean Tourism Organisation and Director, Asia Pacific Affairs for the



Andrew Jones
Chairman, PATA Executive Board

International Hotel and Restaurant Association. The new Executive Board members were confirmed at the PATA Board Meeting on May 21, 2016, during the PATA Annual Summit 2016 in Guam, USA.

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Trade lays emphasis on training

TRAVTALK asks travel industry players about their opinion of the talent and skills that is available in the sector at the moment and what needs to be done to improve on it. A lot, it would appear.



HAZEL JAIN

Need for practical courses

The quality of human resource is failing due to shortage of qualified manpower, lack of professionalism and lack of practical education. There is also a shortage of training institutes with qualified trainers for this industry as well as lack of proper policies for human resource development. The quality of courses for tourism needs to be made more practical and the curriculum should be designed as per the current scenario with frequently revisions to be at par with the industry scenario. Part of the responsibility also lies with us. We need to ensure that there is strategic planning in the way we employ people.



Praveen Nair
Chief Operating Officer
Cozmo Travel

Work with the government

Historically, our industry has treated human assets with least priority, which has had snowball effect and we find ourselves in a situation where good resource is hard to come by and whatever limited is available comes at a high cost. The skill development program of the government has been announced just in time. We should work with the Ministry of Skill Development and ensure that we develop consistent flow of skilled force into our industry. Associations should get the universities to incorporate travel/tourism courses as part of their programmes. The top agenda should be to attract the right talent into the industry by showcasing its positives and employees should be upskilled through regular training.



Shivadatta Wagle
Director
Meandering Vacations

Timely training

A huge gap between supply and demand, retention of competent employees and high salary offerings from other service industries have resulted in manpower crunch in this industry. Though HR is increasingly playing a key role in the quality of supply of talented manpower, we still have a long way to go to fill the demand-supply gap. There is a need to develop human resources strategies aimed at the tourism industry personnel. Regular and timely training will improve skills and abilities as per the changing needs of the industry.



Neelu Singh
CEO & Director
Ezeego1

Travel specialist schools

The intrinsic nature of the travel industry is still largely human-dependent. But the passion, dedication and the in-depth knowledge needed is becoming difficult to source by the day. Moreover, the top talent from our industry is being drawn away by the new-age industries adding to the void. What we need is more awareness and education about our industry in the early stages of the learning process to create zeal and enthusiasm about the trade amongst the youth. More travel specialist schools will also help churn out high quality resource.



Darshan Maheshwari
Country Manager – India,
The Travel Corporation

Product knowledge is key

We have been unable to get the right kind of people who have good product knowledge, etc. In fact, some tour operators who are creating itineraries actually do not have complete knowledge about their products. The problem can be improved by having effective backend services which is important. Also, we need to educate the industry to have the correct knowledge about their products right from the person answering calls at the call centre to the person selling the products.



Sushil Bhatt
CEO
Forvol International Services

Hone interpersonal skills

Often the demand for staff exceeds the supply and at times, organisations are forced to employ fresh graduates and untrained resources. Since superior staff yields discernible product excellence, investing time and money into the recruitment, training and retention of valued employees is evolving into a central component of the cultural fabric of organisations. Since the hotel and travel industry is a 'people's business,' training should encompass honing interpersonal skills as much as learning the 'mechanics' of a job. A core component of training is to ensure the staff is fully educated about the products.



Mona Cheriyan
President & Group Head
- Human Resources
Thomas Cook (India)

ASSOCIATION SPEAK

Train with TAAI

Despite being one of the largest employment generators, the travel and tourism industry is facing a challenge of skilled employment. A lack of training centers, qualified trainers, lack of proper strategies and policies for HRD for the tourism industry is affecting the quality of personnel in the trade. Further, the salaries paid are much less as compared to the other sectors when compared with the working hours. Most organisations in this industry fall under the SME segment and hence HR practices are not standardised.

At TAAI, we have embarked upon various training programmes for members, their frontlines as well as other un-skilled employees on topics such as taxation along with airlines, tourism boards, GDS companies. Regular training and updates on visa matters along with consulates/VFS and other visa facilitators was held across the 20 regions and chapters of TAAI. We also presented a white paper to the ministry to standardise various norms in HR practices, training, etc., so as to sustain and grow the operational practices. We have partnered with various educational institutions in the country from where the students enjoy internship with TAAI members during their summer breaks as well as with companies during their course.



Jay Bhatia
Hon. National Treasurer
& Chairman (Tourism
Council), Travel Agents
Association of India

Focus on front-line staff

I wouldn't say that the travel industry lacks talent. But yes, it is a challenge to find good quality people here, like it is in any other industry. It takes time. The travel industry today runs more on technology and that makes it easier for companies to deal with the scarcity of good labour. I would say that it is difficult but not impossible to find qualified and sincere people. Training, not just at the managerial level but also down the line for front line staff, is necessary.



Zakir Ahmed
President
TAFI

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FORESEE
AVIATION

Indians big spenders abroad

According to a WTTC report, the total expenditure on outbound travel in India was ` 1020 billion in 2015, and is projected to be ` 2,038 billion in 2026.



ANKITA SAXENA

Indian travellers visiting New Zealand have started opting for off-beat travel experiences such as self-drive tours, hard and soft adventure activities and much more. One of our most important travel segments from India is the independent professional (including honeymooners). This is the category that does not just want to sight-see in New Zealand but also experience all its offerings first hand. Another key focus for us is the MICE segment, which continues to be a high contributor to the economy through travel, as they spend three times as much as the leisure visitor.

Average length of stay: 13.4 days (year ending March 2016)

Total length of stay: 48.2 days as compared to 48.1 in 2015 (year ending March 2016)



Steven Dixon
Regional Manager – South and South East Asia, Tourism New Zealand

Indians in general are known to be high spenders when travelling abroad, with a focus on branded goods, souvenirs and luxury items. Catering to this segment, Germany has several Outlet Cities such as Ingolstadt Shopping village near Munich, Metzingen near Stuttgart and Wertheim Village near Frankfurt, all offering year round discounts where travellers can shop to their heart's content.

Total Indian overnights: 692,612 visitor overnights in 2015 corresponding to a 6.6 per cent growth as compared to 2014 and 0.6 per cent of total visitor overnights to Germany.

Average per day spend: €2741 in 2014 accounting for 0.8 per cent of the total spend by international travellers visiting Germany.



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

India is the 10th largest market for spend in Australia. We believe that India's overnight visitor spend has the potential to reach up to A\$ 1.9 billion by 2020. With each Indian spending A\$ 5,185 per trip, the spend is in line with the average global tourist spend per person. While Indian tourists are extremely value-conscious, they do not mind splurging on travel experiences that are unique and of top quality.

Total visitors: 233,100 contributed to 3 per cent of total tourists during 2015 contributing over A\$ 1.1 billion to the Australian economy; an increase of 38 per cent over 2014.

Total overnights: 14 million nights in 2015, an increase of 38 per cent over 2014.

Average length of stay: 65 nights, with 46 per cent repeat visitation.



Nishant Kashikar
Country Manager India and Gulf Tourism Australia

In 2015 the total visitor arrivals were 8,903,773 out of which 78,385 arrivals were from India. According to our arrivals statistics of December 2015, India is the eighth long-haul tourism source market for South Africa. Indian tourists are considered to be big spenders who love to shop. They invest a lot of time and money in shopping and related spoils during their trip. In the last quarter of 2014, 58 per cent Indians spent their time shopping in South Africa while others indulge in exploring the nightlife, marine world and scenic beauty of the country.

Total spend: 51 per cent increase in total foreign direct spend from India excluding capital expenditure

Average spend: Increased from 10,400 Rand in 2014 to 15,700 Rand in 2015.

Average overnights: 18 nights in 2015.



Hanneli Slabber
Country Manager, South African Tourism, India.

India became the 8th strongest market overtaking the Netherlands and Belgium. We see all sorts of consumer behaviour from our Indian guests. Some are extremely big spenders and others are looking for value for money. India ranks in the top of our list when it comes to spending but our guest from GCC for example spend on average double of Indian clients, around CHF 500.

Average spend: CHF 250 per day in Switzerland

Overnights: Nearly 600,000 overnights from hotels and an additional 150,000 overnights expected from apartment and holiday homes corresponding to 3 per cent of total overnights and an overall increase of 225 over 2014.



Claudio Zemp
Director India Switzerland Tourism



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Delhi-Vancouver on Air Canada

Duncan Bureau, Vice President, Global Sales, Air Canada, in an exclusive with TRAVTALK shares details about the upcoming Delhi-Vancouver only non-stop flight and what it entails for the Indian traveller.



NISHA VERMA

QTell us about the new non-stop flight from Vancouver to Delhi.

Recently, we announced the only non-stop flights between Delhi and Vancouver starting October 20, 2016. The non-stop service is seasonal, and will operate three times weekly on Monday, Thursday and Saturday from Delhi. The new service nicely complements Air Canada's Delhi-Toronto non-stop service launched last fall. The flight will be operated by Air Canada's state-of-the-art Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft featuring 30 international Business Class lie-flat pod suites, 21 Premium Economy and 247 Economy Class seats with upgraded in-flight entertainment at every seat throughout the aircraft.

QHow would the new flight benefit travellers as well as Air Canada?

We have seen positive customer response to our Delhi-Toronto service and this new seasonal Vancouver



“The local team is driving a number of initiatives with our partners with a focus on Corporate, VFR and MICE business. The team is also working with Destination Canada to focus on Vancouver as a destination in upcoming roadshows and training for the frontline agencies.”

Duncan Bureau
Vice President, Global Sales
Air Canada

QHow did the past year fare for you in terms of business?

The numbers tell the story and it is really a great story. I would like to quote our President and Chief Executive Officer, **Calin Rovinescu**, “In 2015, we achieved the best financial results in Air Canada's history for a second year in a row, by a substantial margin, underscoring the effectiveness of our business strategy and enhanced competitive position. Our results reflect the significant progress

being achieved through our various value-enhancing initiatives, including fleet modernisation, international expansion, roll-out of rouge and our network diversification.”

QWhat are the plans for this year?

At this time we are focused on launching a number of new routes that we had announced last fall. This summer we are getting ready to launch non-stop service from Canada to Prague, Budapest, Warsaw, Lyon, Bris-

bane, Glasgow and Casablanca to name just a few.

QElaborate on your association with travel agents?

The sales team based in Delhi has been very active with the local trade and from the reports, our local agency partners are thrilled about the new non-stop service into Vancouver. The local team is driving a number of initiatives with our partners with a focus on Corporate, VFR and MICE business. The team is also working with Destination Canada to focus on Vancouver as a destination in upcoming roadshows and training for the frontline agencies. Travel agents are incredibly important partners to our business. Not only do they drive a significant portion of the revenues we generate but also drive higher yielding revenue. We count on them as an extension of our sales team that can of course help sell our product and our unique selling points to our customers. I thank the trade for their support. 🇮🇳

Vikram Madhok is new Chairman of PATA Industry Council



Vikram Madhok
Chairman
PATA Industry Council

■ **Vikram Madhok** has been elected as the next Chairman of the PATA Industry Council for the term May 2016-17. In addition to assuming this global responsibility, Madhok will also sit on the PATA Executive Board. This development is expected to give India Chapter prominence in the PATA world and strong voice in Tourism Forums. Madhok has specialised in luxury tourism and hospitality. He has served on PATA India Chapter for over 20 years and was also the Chairman of World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) India initiative. He has also held important positions like President of Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (NI), EC Member – IATO & several other positions.

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Diversification: key for growth

Riding high on a profitable past year, Amadeus continues to enhance travel solutions through its travel intelligence platform and caters not just to hotels and airlines, but to other connected areas of travel as well.



AHANA GURUNG

Amadeus enjoyed a fruitful year in 2015 and witnessed a growth of 10.4 per cent in adjusted profit supported by a revenue increase of 14.5 per cent and EBITDA growth of 12.2 per cent in 2015. Giving an insight into their developments and innovations, **Subramanian Ganeshan**, General Manager, Amadeus Labs Bengaluru, & R&D Head – APAC, says, “We are constantly building innovative solu-

hotels, rail, airports, payment solutions, mobile and travel intelligence. This strategic direction has been taken by Amadeus to ensure that the touch points for a traveller can be solved easily by our cutting-edge solutions,” he elaborates.

With mobile being the biggest ongoing trend in the industry, Ganeshan feels that the evolution of the

traveller, as well as easy accessibility of technology has lead it to become the biggest technology driver in India. “Sensing the mobile wave in India and APAC, we started a mobile competency centre in Bengaluru around four-five years ago where the team covers numerous solutions from the branch. Travellers are getting more demanding and expect the travel providers

to live up to their expectations with more personalised and efficient services,” says Ganeshan.

Commenting on India’s travel industry, he states, “The travel industry here is booming, with a lot of ongoing activity especially in the domestic travel sector. With the way things are moving forward, the situation can only get better.”

Boosting travel start-ups

Amadeus Next has been created specifically to build a connection with the start-up ecosystem in APAC. We mentor, nurture and partner with travel start-ups on their journey to scale into booming companies. The industry in India is relatively quick to adopt new technologies and in some ways are less hindered by the legacy systems.

Simon Akeroyd

VP - Corporate Strategy and Business Development
Amadeus Asia Pacific



Subramanian Ganeshan
General Manager
Amadeus Labs Bengaluru, & R&D Head – APAC

Although our primary customer base has been airlines and travel agencies, Amadeus has diversified into other connected areas of travel like hotels, rail, airports, payment solutions, mobile and travel intelligence

tions for the Amadeus Travel Intelligence platform by leveraging key resources like the vast data accumulated from billions of travellers that are on our platform. The next generation travel Intelligence builds solutions so that airports and airlines can efficiently serve customers in ground handling, airport operations etc. All these solutions are in the market and are getting actively used by our clients,” he comments.

One of the chief strategies for growth is diversification of services, informs Ganeshan. “Although our primary customer base has been airlines and travel agencies, Amadeus has diversified into other connected areas of travel like



Lazy travel agents are generous.
They give away their customers to OTA.

By opting to work with Affiliate Programme Owners (let’s call them OTAs), the travel agents are actually hitting a road block.

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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Nashik Express Inn to focus on MICE, pilgrims

A business luxury hotel in Nashik, Express Inn Hotels & Resorts is tapping the MICE and pilgrim segments while promoting the local culture. **Narayan Shelar**, CMD, Express Inn Hotels & Resorts, reveals more.



TT BUREAU

QHow is the hospitality industry in Nashik?

It has good MICE potential. It is now also developing as a major wedding destination with a number of weddings from various cities. Express Inn has also proudly hosted international weddings in Nashik. It is now becoming a good market for hotels, especially with regards to religious and wine tourism as we have many famous temples as well as vineyards with many more coming up.

QNational hotel chains are now opening up in Nashik. What are your views on competition?

The fact that a lot of national hotel chains are coming up here is a positive growth sign for the industry in Nashik and is a good sign. We always take competition as a healthy aspect and it will be good for all hotels coming up.

QHow important is MICE for you?

We have used every part



Narayan Shelar
CMD
Express Inn Hotels & Resorts

of the hotel for banquets and have extensive venues available for all types of events be it a private party, small celebrations, large weddings, conventions, corporate launches and events. We can accommodate anything from 20 persons to 1,000+ persons.

QDoes Express Inn have any expansion plans?

Yes, we will soon be starting our newest project in Aurangabad followed by units in other cities in Maharashtra. We are also in the process of opening regional offices in other major metros in north and south India.

QWhat kind of government support would you like to see?

The hotel industry is given a step-motherly treatment and there is practically no assistance from the government. Taxes are extremely high in Maharashtra. Moreover being Nashik is a wine capital, tourism in Nashik is not being promoted. We need to highlight pilgrimage tourism, since we have many religious places close to Nashik like Trimbakeshwar, and Shirdi.

QWhat is the hotel's USP?

Staff at Express Inn have played a major role in its success. Our attrition rate has been minimal in these last six years since we opened on 1 May, 2010. Our Presidential Enclave consisting of Presidential Suite, Chairman's Suites and our Exclusive Suites also stands apart. The hotel is also well connected to Mumbai, Pune and Gujarat (by road and rail). If the airport operations do start, it will become the most well-connected city in northern Maharashtra. ↴

Selling great stays

In the increasingly competitive market of budget hotel aggregators, Qik Stay wants to create a niche for itself.



TT BUREAU

While many players have already established themselves in the budget hotel aggregation segment, **Tubby Kapur**, Co-founder, Qik Stay, says that they don't want the customers to look for everything between zero star to four star with them. "With Qik Stay we want to create Standard of Operations (SOPs), and we want to be the drivers of that. We want to be the brand of the premium budget segment, where customers know what they are getting into and there is no trust deficit, which is currently prevalent in the market. Our name reflects what we want to offer. We are selling good stays and not just hotel rooms."

The strategy is to co-partner and co-brand hotels to offer an experience which is synonymous with Qik Stay, says Kapur. "There are a number of individually owned

hotels, which are well laid out and run by second party. The first thing we did was to audit all the hotels which did not fall under a particular brand and did our enquiries. After that we went ahead and partnered with the hotels to either



Tubby Kapur
Co-founder
Qik Stay

co-brand with us or took over properties to manage it entirely under Qik Hotels. We have photographed each and every hotel of ours and have made sure that the location of the hotel is decent. Customers' trust and security is

of prime importance for us. We are actually upgrading the partner hotels by putting technology, improving facilities and reservation platforms. We have worked very hard on the partnership front. We co-partner and have an agreement with the hotel, and retain the name of the hotel alongside."

It was only after a year and a half of homework and planning that they launched Qik Stay in the market in January. Explaining about Qik Hotels, he says, "At the properties we are fully taking over, we are upgrading the food management, technology, as well as the structure. Those will be operated fully by us and not co-branded, and will become Qik Hotels. We are already in discussion with 5-6 hotels and in the next one year we will have over 1000 properties across India, out of which we are hoping to fully run 300-400 hotels in the next three years." ↴

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WelcomHeritage Mani Mansion, Ahmedabad reopens

■ The latest addition to WelcomHeritage portfolio – WelcomHeritage Mani Mansion – is a 94-year-old heritage property that was once home to the Dalal family. The property reopened on May 9 after it had shut for renovation last year. Built by the legendary social worker and acclaimed businessman, **Manibhai Dalal** in 1923, the property was formerly known as 'Corporate Suites – The Heritage Home Stay.' The property aims to preserve the rich cultural heritage associated to the ancestral home.

WH Mani Mansion is a boutique heritage hotel with 21 suites providing an experience of ancient era in Ahmedabad. WH Mani Mansion has also received heritage property stature from the Government of Gujarat. While staying at WelcomHeritage Mani Mansion, one can explore the attractions of Ahmedabad like Kalupur Temple, Calico Museum of Textiles, Gandhi Ashram, Adalaj, Hatheesing Jain Temple, Sarkhej Roza, and Vishala Vessel Museum.

Privatised marketing way forward?

In the wake of less-than-expected growth in Foreign Tourist Arrivals, it is probably time for Ministry of Tourism to take private stakeholders into the fold and resort to privatisation of overseas promotion marketing, which will in turn yield better inbound traffic.

Shri Narendra Modi, our Prime Minister, has been marketing India Tourism dynamically during his foreign tours and earned for himself the title of 'Brand Ambassador' for Tourism. It appears that the 14 overseas India Tourism offices lack the PM's enthusiasm in view of the 4.4 per cent increase in Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), of 8.16 million in 2015 from the 7.67 million FTAs in 2014. The concerned officials are undoubtedly aware of India's tremendous tourism potential but are unable to translate that into increasing the number of tourists to India.

The current overseas promotional marketing and investment are unlikely to increase the planned share of India's ranking in FTAs from the present meagre 0.68 per cent to 1 per cent by 2020 and take it to 2 per cent by 2025. Fund allocations are going unutilised instead of being used to create result-oriented and pro-active mar-

keting campaigns of India's 5,000-year-old history, wealth of cultures, exotic destinations, range of adventure activities, sun, sea, sand, and a variety of natural attractions.

I suggest privatisation of overseas promotion marketing which the Ministry of Tourism would oversee as a regulator. Private marketing companies in India and abroad should be selected to promote specific circuits. They should be made accountable, with their appointment based on novel marketing strategies, experience and fulfillment of the committed target. The Ministry could pay these companies a minimum fee and an incentive fee if they exceed their set targets.

The one-size-fits-all approach in a country the size of India and its varied products is impractical. Therefore, the selected companies could be assigned to promote the diverse tourism products in different regions. The Buddhist circuit in the South-East

market, the Sufi circuit in the West Asian region, the Christian circuit in Europe and the USA and the Hindu circuit could be highlighted for NRIs.

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture along with Air India and ITDC should organise Festivals of India on a grand scale, with wide-ranging displays of food, culture, yoga, wellness, heritage, etc. The present Festivals of India that the Ministry of Culture organises are a poor imitation. There are the standard classical, folk dances and music, theatre, puppetry and an occasional food festival. There is no noticeable rush of people from those countries to India.

The Ministry of Culture along with the Ministry of Tourism and Air India should raise the level of inter-action by opening a window of modern India's rich and lively tourism products for the potential tourist, showcase novel experiences and new destinations,

prioritising reasons to visit such places. The portfolios of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation have been combined so that the framework of their synergy is utilized beneficially.

How some of neighbouring countries attain impressive figures in foreign tourist arrivals every year is because of their offerings to the tourists. Compare India's 8.16 million FTAs with the 30 million of Thailand, 29.57 million of Malaysia and 15.2 million of Singapore in 2015. Their GDP contribution from tourism is equally impressive. India's tourism industry contributed 6.3 per cent of GDP, Thailand's 20.8 per cent, Malaysia's 13.1 per cent and Singapore's 10 per cent in 2015.

These three neighbours are among the many countries where tourism is the major revenue earner. Their tourism products, both business and leisure related, are of such high standards. It is important to create awareness

among the Indian public and stakeholders concerning their role in the country's economic well-being, educating them of the importance of displaying our culture by greeting visitors with a *Namaste* or the form of greeting in their mother tongue by all stakeholders and staff such as taxi and scooter driver, railway officials, airport staff, etc.

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



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Industry's responsible side

When it comes to giving back to the society by humane practices, the travel industry is not far behind. TRAVTALK asked some of the key players of the industry about the CSR initiatives they are involved in and the answers might just give many others some goals.



NISHA VERMA

The many travel and tourism related organisations in the ATE group offer various social responsibility services. KIMS Healthcare is pioneering medical value travel on a large scale. It offers schemes like *Hridayaspadanam* (Heartbeat) which extends free heart surgeries to poor heart patients. We started *Guruvandhanam* (honouring the teachers) in 2011, which offers better quality of life, and free knee replacement surgery to retired teachers. A total of ₹150 lakhs each was earmarked under these two schemes.



EM Najeeb
Chairman & Managing Director, Air Travel Enterprises Group of Companies (ATE)

In a bid to play its role as a responsible corporate, Nijhawan Group manages CKRDT foundation from its New Delhi office. The foundation works for uplifting the underprivileged, and is involved in the betterment of down-trodden women and children in different parts of the country. In addition, Nijhawan Group runs a home for orphan girls and provides shelter to 79 girls. CKRDT foundation also helps to perform marriages of many poor girls, annually.



Ankush Nijhawan
Managing Director
Nijhawan Group of Companies

At present, we have a class of about 300 students in five different locations in India who are being trained by professionals to join the travel industry. Besides this, we have sponsored many programs for the existing employees who are working in travel agencies and need further skill development. We are also looking at a post-graduate program specifically for girls to instil managerial and leadership skills. I think CSR is a must for every organisation as it should be our duty to repay the trade for what we have gained.



Anil Parashar
President & CEO
InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ)

I've helped out with cash donations and a computer for the village school near my farm in Raigad district. Similarly, when I used to organise international kite festivals until 2015, I would support traditional kite makers. For two years I organised an event called Kites for Peace at the Priyadarshini Park in Mumbai where we would teach street children to make white kites, which they would paint with their own images or slogans for peace and we would all fly together.



Ajay Prakash
Chief Executive
Nomad Travels

Bird Group's social initiatives touch every level of society that needs help. Through *Parvarish*, the down-trodden and underprivileged children of the society are taken care of. Sukarya aims at making modest steps towards assisting women of marginalised communities in generating additional income.



Radha Bhatia
Chairperson
Bird Group

The Bird Foundation also organises the 'We' conference to bring eminent female achievers together on a common platform to discuss how their achievements can guide and influence the women of today.

Sita is the first Indian Destination Management Company to have received a CSR Tourism certification from a private German, not-for-profit organisation. Sita is a signatory to The Code for Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. Sita works with Literacy India, to empower underprivileged children and women by making them self-sufficient. The company also supports *Swati*, a project that aims to reach out to children and women in two slums of New Delhi and offers them education, self-help & motivation.



Dipak Deva
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Fly Scoot to Amritsar

Bharath Mahadevan, Country Head – India, Scoot, says the airline aims to double the number of cities it operates in by 2017.



HAZEL JAIN

QWhat are your plans for India?

We are looking at doubling the operations by 2017 in terms of the number of cities we operate in.

QWill Scoot take over high-load, low-yield routes of SQ?

Our strategy is to develop a new destination city by launching flights with SilkAir or Tigerair that operate narrow body planes. As the destina-

tion matures, the Group then deploys wide-body planes of SIA or Scoot. For instance, SIA used to operate on the Amritsar-Singapore route until 2008 as the full service model was not suited for this route. The A320s of Tigerair did not have the range for this route, which is why we are restarting this route on Scoot with Dreamliners. Scoot will take over Tigerair's Chennai-Singapore services as the destination has grown enough to fill wide-body planes.

QWhat stand will Scoot take as far as the travel agents are concerned?

Scoot's focus is on the leisure market, specially groups, which is why we want to work closely with the travel agents here. With Chennai, Amritsar and Jaipur, India will become the number two market for SIA after China. For Scoot, India will become the third market after China and Australia. ↓



Bharath Mahadevan
Country Head – India
Scoot

tion matures, the Group then deploys wide-body planes of SIA or Scoot. For instance, SIA used to operate on the Amritsar-Singapore route until 2008 as the full service model was not suited for this route. The A320s of Tigerair did not have the range for this route, which is why we are restarting this route on Scoot with Dreamliners. Scoot will take over Tigerair's Chennai-Singapore services as the destination has grown enough to fill wide-body planes.

QHow will it manage to remain profitable while offering cheap fares?

Filling our capacity is important. So we unbundle everything so that guests can customise as they choose. Since we only stock what sells, we need less storage space, smaller galleys and can fit in more seats – this gives us efficiency.

QWill Tigerair and Scoot compete with each other?

Tigerair is a natural partner for Scoot as our networks are almost entirely complementary. They operate principally within four hours' radius of Singapore and we operate mainly beyond four hours. On the few routes we overlap, we have anti-trust immunity (ATI) to operate as joint venture. Together we can offer more itineraries than either could do alone, and ensure greater

LATAM brand premiers with new aircraft, uniform and airport designs

■ LATAM Airlines Group has revealed its new aircraft design at simultaneous launch events in South America, ahead of the Oceania launch in Sydney on May 3. In addition to the new image of LATAM aircraft, the company presented a number of other changes that will be visible from May onwards, including new uniforms, airport signage and counter design as well as a consolidated website: www.latam.com.

Enrique Cueto, CEO, LATAM Airlines Group, said, "In the coming weeks, our passengers will start to experience LATAM with the ability to book tickets via the LATAM website, accumulate kilometers using LATAM's frequent flyer program, check-in at LATAM counters, relax in LATAM VIP lounges and most significantly, fly on LATAM-branded aircraft."

The first flight of a LATAM-branded aircraft, a

Boeing 767-300ER, departed from Rio de Janeiro on May 1 on a one-off journey to Geneva to collect the Olympic torch. The specially prepared aircraft then returned on May 3 to Brasilia, the starting place of the Rio 2016 Olympic Torch Relay between more than 300 Brazilian cities. Also the official airline supporter of Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, LATAM Airlines is additionally the official supporter of Rio 2016 Olympic Torch Relay.

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SpiceJet is Hahn Air's 50th H1-Air partner

■ Hahn Air Systems, the global consolidation service connecting small, medium and low-cost airlines to all major GDSs worldwide, has reached 50 H1-Air partners with the latest addition being low-cost carrier SpiceJet.

With this new entrant, Hahn Air has nearly doubled its network of regional, low-cost airlines and tour operators since the beginning of 2015. Established in 2012, Hahn Air Systems, the sister company of airline and distribution specialist Hahn Air, offers its H1-Air product to non-GDS airlines enabling them to be booked through over 95,000 travel agencies in 190 markets. These non-GDS airlines can benefit from Hahn Air's economies of scale and have the potential to increase their revenue streams by being able to penetrate new markets and expand their reach to even more travel agencies. The H1-Air network is an innovative distribution solution with the potential to accelerate SpiceJet's sales by linking it to global markets. As a

result, SpiceJet's domestic and international services will be available in all GDSs and will be issuable on the Hahn Air HR-169 document.

Alexander Proschka, Head, Hahn Air Systems, said, "We are proud to welcome SpiceJet as the latest airline to join the H1-Air network. This is especially momentous as they are Hahn Air System's 50th partner and we are happy to share the occasion with them. Going forward, we will redouble our efforts to grow our portfolio of H1-Air partners and to globally connect our travel agent partners greater possibilities."

"We are looking forward to a great association with Hahn Air Systems. We are hoping that this association will help us reach out to many more untapped markets which will ultimately result in our business growth," stated **Amit Srivastava**, SpiceJet's Vice President, Business Development.

LH engages with start-ups

Wolfgang Will, Director, South Asia, Lufthansa Passenger Airlines, speaks with TRAVTALK on being part of the Startup Expo, and why airlines need to innovate to sustain themselves in today's market.



TT BUREAU

Lufthansa co-created the Startup Expo in Gurugram recently to offer a platform for rising entrepreneurs. Speaking at the event, Will said, "We are delighted to be the co-creator of the Startup Expo from the conceptual phase to the implementation and execution. It is part of our philosophy of 'nonstop you' where we engage with people, communities and with our target groups. We believe that at such a forum, we really can enable Indian entrepreneurship and contribute our part to the success and growth of the Indian economy."

However, the Indian market is highly competitive. Wolfgang agrees, "Competition is there in aviation all the time and I think it's very important because it makes you think about new ideas and new ways to promote your products and services. India is a very competitive



"India is a very competitive place and we are very happy to have reached a high level of customer satisfaction and a huge customer base here."

Wolfgang Will
Director
South Asia Lufthansa
Passenger Airlines

place and we are very happy to have reached a high level of customer satisfaction and a huge customer base here."

Lufthansa has had a reputation of being one of the first airlines to cut agent commissions in India. When asked about the same, Will said, "The aviation and the travel industry at large have changed completely. If you look back 20 years ago, most of the airlines were state-owned, and there was a lot

of regulation everywhere. Today the reality is very different. Our customers look for best deal and we cannot keep formulas, which in the past have functioned very well. Yes, Lufthansa is famous for being disruptive and this is what most start-ups are also doing — being disruptive. We have to look for new formulas. I know that's a really painful way and there is a lot of struggle in the aviation sector. But we are happy that with our brave moves we have reached a financial

base which at the end is not only good for the company but for our employees and ones who are giving us their trust and money because we can offer them reliable service of very high standards."

On the upcoming civil aviation policy, he said, "I welcome every move of the authorities to ease up the aviation sector. I know there are issues about safety and security and one can't compromise it all. However, on the commercial front, there should be liberty and freedom."

The Flying Genius

Headquartered in Germany, Lufthansa Group employs around 120,000 staff worldwide. The airlines operate through the Frankfurt, Munich, Vienna, Brussels and Zurich hubs.

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IRCTC on a fast track

Buoyed by a good Railway Budget which includes new trains and services for the common man, Indian Railways is certainly moving in high speed.



NISHA VERMA

Riding high on the newly announced trains and offers, **Dr. A.K. Manocha**, CMD, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), claims, "The Railway Minister is focused on capacity growth, which means more rooms, trains, and more length of trains, which doesn't necessarily mean increased number of coaches, but also the haulage capacity that needs to be maintained. It also includes platform length, shelter, and the maintenance capacity. However, these are huge capacity investments."

The completion of the ₹2400 crore worth dedicated freight corridor is one of the biggest developments for IRCTC in 2016, says Manocha. He asserts that Internet ticketing as well as cancellation facility on 139 from home (even after the chart is prepared), will be improved. Besides, a multi-lingual software for reservation would also be launched, he adds.

Foreign tourists are important for the Railways, but business from them has not been as great, Manocha points out. "The numbers have slightly declined this year, because there was a lot



Dr. A.K. Manocha
CMD, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)

of competition from airlines, which have become cheaper and are an option for many in emergencies as well. The same is true for short distances, as metro has come in at a lot of places," he notes.

"Foreign tourists love to come to India. The biggest chunk is NRIs. The British are also fond of India, and there are Dutch, Portuguese, and

Russians who also come in good numbers. Our tourist trains are 100 per cent safe. We will be launching ticketing through IRCTC website for foreign card holders as well," Manocha says.

Out of the new rail projects launched this year, Manocha is very upbeat about the Gatiman Express. "Gatiman Express is still to pick up. It's a small train with only 12 coaches now. In time it would be double the length, and soon there will be high demand. In fact, looking at the interest in Agra, we have launched an Executive Lounge in Agra, which we would initially run ourselves and later give it to private players. It would have Wi-Fi, television, and other business facilities," adds Manocha.

In another first, Manocha says the Railways will soon be launching glass top coaches in Srinagar in the next season, which will be very similar to the Swiss coaches. "Starting with two AC luxury coaches, we will offer a different ex-

perience. We will also improve the Gatiman experience and will launch the super luxury Tejas," he adds.

However, IRCTC is not just a railway ticket booking platform. One can book airline tickets as well as tour packages for both domestic and international visits. "We had launched 67 foreign packages last year and prior to that we had only one third of that number. Many people don't know that we book around 2500-3000 air tickets every day. We are tying up with Air India and have joined hands with Pawan Hans and signed a MoU for a mutual share of services for passengers," reveals Manocha.

When asked about the recent cancellation of the Palace on Wheels train for the first time in history, he says, "It is a luxury train and we are making strides. This year, however, the growth was slightly less in the tourism segment and it is not possible to run the train with occupancy less than 20-25 per cent." 🐦

Reposition Mumbai as MICE hub

The Maharashtra Government is keen on repositioning Mumbai as the events capital of the state.



HAZEL JAIN

At a round-table organised by the Indian Merchants' Chamber's Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Committee in Mumbai, **Valsa Nair Singh**, Principal Secretary, Tourism & Culture, Government of Maharashtra, spoke about Maharashtra's intention to reposition and promote Mumbai as a MICE hub and a destination for niche tourism.

Singh said, "We have recognised niche areas in tourism in which we want to promote Mumbai. We want to make the city the event capital of Maharashtra. Asia's biggest convention centre is coming in Mumbai next year followed by two more convention centres. We are also working on a single-window license for hospitality sector. Other areas that we are focusing on in the city are adventure tourism, Bollywood tourism and medical tourism. We will be



Valsa Nair Singh
Principal Secretary, Tourism & Culture, Government of Maharashtra

offering incentives and looking at tax exemptions for 20 years." According to her, 2.5 lakh tourists enter Mumbai for medical tourism. The government is therefore working on e-medical visa and medical reimbursement.

Paraag Jain Nainuttia, IAS, MD, MTDC, said, "We are now working on facilitating commercialisation of yacht tourism on Mumbai's coast through a possible tie-up with private companies. As of now we have 93 yachts in the Mumbai harbour." 🐦

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ANA Dreamliner from BOM

Tsuneya Katagiri, GM, All Nippon Airways (ANA) Mumbai, informs they are engaging agents to promote their latest Boeing 787 Dreamliner flying ex-Mumbai.



Q What are the new developments at ANA?

We are currently busy promoting our state-of-the-art aircraft the Boeing 787 Dreamliner that started flying ex-Mumbai from March 27, 2016. The new aircraft has four times more capacity than the aircraft which we used to operate, so passengers can have a comfortable flight. We have been the only daily non-stop, direct service from Mumbai to Tokyo (Narita) since September 2007.

Q How are you promoting this among the trade?

To promote awareness about this in the Indian market, we successfully concluded our promotional fare campaign that was initially offered only till March 31 but was later extended till April 30 because of exceptional demand. We observed good sales on the promotional fare in both business and economy class. A lot of agents have also uti-



Tsuneya Katagiri
General Manager
All Nippon Airways (ANA) Mumbai

We have been discussing MICE and tour packages with some agents. The market has huge potential and we are working closely with travel agents

lised our promotional fares. We hope this shall help to build contact with local counterparts (DMC) in Japan and tap into the huge potential that Japan holds for tourism.

Q What are your plans for the rest of the year?

With 46 fully flat beds in Business, 21 seats in Premium Economy and 102 seats in Economy, along with corporate travel we are now also tapping the MICE segment as well as the seaman and leisure markets.

With the awareness on Japan as a tourist destination increasing steadily, we hope Japan shall be the preferred destination for Indians, and look forward to flying them on ANA.

Q How are you tapping into the MICE market?

We have been discussing MICE and even tour packages with some travel agents. The market has huge potential and we are working closely with more and more travel agents. Currently, we operate two flights from India to Japan, one from Mumbai and one from Delhi. We would like to expand our business in India but currently we shall continue to focus on Mumbai and New Delhi.

KTM-HYD from September

As the only airline to offer direct flights between India and Nepal, its national carrier is looking at adding another city to its network – Hyderabad – from September 2016.



The city of Pearls – Hyderabad – may be the next destination on Nepal Airlines' radar, making it the fourth touch point in India to be directly connected to Kathmandu. The other three cities are Mumbai, New Delhi and Bengaluru. **CA Janak Raj Kalakheti**, Director, Commercial Department, Nepal Airlines, who led a big delegation from Nepal to India, revealed, "We are looking at adding another city to our India network, possibly Hyderabad by September-October but it is yet to be confirmed and we are still working on it." He added that even Kolkata shows a lot of traffic to Nepal and Nepal Airlines is conducting a feasibility report on it.

The airline is also keen on increasing current frequencies. "We are looking to up the current 10 flights per week from New Delhi to 14 flights per week probably by July end. We are also planning to increase Mumbai and



Bengaluru frequencies during the upcoming summer holidays," Kalakheti added. At the moment, Mumbai and Bengaluru have three flights a week. Summers are the peak season and the airline expects huge traffic from leisure and adventure tourists from India.

The delegation visited the three cities to organise a thanksgiving ceremony for its travel agent partners which was the first such event since it started these flights in India six months ago. Each city saw 100-plus agents attend the event.

Bird Group is the GSA for Nepal Airlines for all India. **Praful Khosla**, Executive Vice President, Bird Group, said, "Nepal is a popular destination for Indians mostly because of its proximity. It is also the only destination in the world where Indians don't require a passport; an election ID is also valid. We have been promoting Nepal Airlines and Nepal as a destination aggressively in India. It is the only airlines right now to connect three cities in India directly to Kathmandu and has a lot of expansion plans for India."

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 deluxe 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 Cantonment 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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TAFI national elections by June-end

The association is currently busy with its elections as well as rolling out its Joint Bank Guarantee by July 1.



HAZEL JAIN

The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) has been busy with its ongoing chapter elections and will soon be conducting its national team election along with its Annual General Meeting (AGM) by June end. Revealing this information is **Zakkir Ahmed**, President, TAFI, who said, "A lot of our chapters like Tamil Nadu have completed their elections and the rest will be done by the end of May or early June. We will now be sending out notification for our AGM to all our members that will be combined with our national committee elections around June end. We are still deciding on the city and venue."

Speaking about the Joint Bank Guarantee Scheme, he added, "By July, we will be able to finally roll out our Joint Bank Guarantee Scheme. A lot of members were finding it



Zakkir Ahmed
President
TAFI

difficult to deal with insurance and its premium charges, and there is only one insurance company. Agents also have problems getting tickets stock under insurance. This scheme has a lot of benefits for agents. Ticket stock availability will be better with this with minimum cost involved. We have received about 150 applications right now." TAFI had earlier deferred the Joint Bank Guarantee scheme last June citing unsuitable legal terms for its members. ➔

130 agents apply for JBG

Once TAAI's auditors review these applications, they will go through another round of scrutiny at IATA before the final number is known.



TT BUREAU

Four members of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) Managing Committee met in Mumbai in the middle of May to review the applications the association received from its members for its Joint Bank Guarantee (JBG) Scheme.

Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI, said, "We received over 130 applications from members who are keen to join the guarantee. We have started slowly but our past experience has shown that the numbers keep growing year-on-year, depending on how well we perform as a team. We are working under the timelines defined by IATA for this. Our members will soon know whether they will be joining the guarantee or not once IATA completes its verification process. After that, they will have three options: one is to be a part of the JBG, second is to get onboard with the insurance cover, and third is to give an individual guarantee



Lokesh Bettaiah
Secretary General
TAAI

We do multi-level checks and follow stringent procedures, which take a lot of time. It's a huge responsibility on us to pick the right members

to IATA. The options are with the members."

Among the Office Bearers present were **Marzban Antia**, TAAI's Vice President;

Lokesh Bettaiah, TAAI's Secretary General; and **Imtiaz Qureshi**, TAAI's MC member who looks after Legal.

Bettaiah added, "We scrutinised each and every application received from 20 regions and chapters across India and the TAAI auditors released the final list by May end. That list was sent to IATA which is now conducting its own verifications. We do multi-level checks and follow stringent procedures, which takes a lot of time. It's a huge responsibility on us to pick the right members. There has been a good response for it this year.

"TAAI has been successful in managing this scheme earlier as well and lot of members have benefitted from it monetarily as well as for smoother day-to-day business as far as capping issues are concerned. If anyone else is interested to join, they can do so the following year." ➔

Air India's self check-in kiosks at 26 airports



■ National carrier, Air India has become the first airline to launch self check-in kiosks for its domestic flyers that aims to make the check-in process expeditious.

The exclusive service presently covers 26 domestic centers at Aurangabad, Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Calicut, Coimbatore, Cochin, Chennai, Goa, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Jamnagar, Jodhpur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Nagpur, New Delhi, Mumbai, Mangalore, Raipur, Rajkot, Trivandrum, Udaipur, Visakhapatnam and Varanasi. Under this initiative, started on May 1, 2016, customers can procure the boarding pass by using the self-check-in kiosks also known as CUSS (Common Use Self Service) near the check-in area at the airport.

Indian touch to luxury

For **Ramesh Arora**, Managing Director and VP of Marketing, Montcalm Luxury Hotels, the brand is perfect for the connoisseurs of magnificence and luxury.



TT BUREAU

QWhat is the USP of Montcalm Hotels vis-a-vis other luxury hotel brands in the UK?

Our USP is our personalised and excellent customer care. Each one of the Montcalm Luxury Hotel offers guests, height of indulgence and relaxation combined with outstanding facilities and exceptional service.

QHow important is the Indian market for you?

India is a very important market for us as Indian outbound is a rising force with a huge potential for them to travel abroad. Now Indians are moving beyond budget accommodations to experience luxury and we have a range of products to cater to the Indian market.

QHow are you trying to promote the brand in India and other countries?

We promote our brands by aggressive online marketing and attending



Ramesh Arora
Managing Director and VP of Marketing
Montcalm Luxury Hotels

We offer a range of customised services specifically for our Indian guests from Indian cuisine to Indian TV channels. We also have staff of Indian origin

various travel trade shows and exhibitions.

QWhich are the biggest markets for you apart from India?

Other than India, our

biggest markets include Europe, USA and the Middle East. We get a lot of business from these countries.

QAre you planning to open any new properties?

Currently we have six Montcalm properties in great locations in London. We are planning one more Montcalm property to start from September this year in Central London. In addition, we are also exploring various other markets for new properties.

QAre there any new packages you are launching for Indians for the upcoming season?

As India is a very important market for us, we offer a range of customised services specifically for our Indian guests from Indian cuisine to Indian TV channels. We also have staff of Indian origin well-versed with various Indian languages to take care of our guests. ➔

1st luxury hotel in Jaffna

For Jetwing Hotels, India and China remain the top performing markets when it comes to visits at their properties in Sri Lanka.



TT BUREAU

With their motto of being home of Sri Lankan hospitality, Jetwing Hotels is poised to offer quintessential experience of the destination. "We believe in providing our guests the experience of staying with a local family, and to do so in an atmosphere of open space and comfort. Our properties are novel in ambience and design, and we are firmly committed to preserving the environment through green technology and the development of local communities," says **Ishanth Gunewardene**, Head of Marketing, Jetwing Hotels.

He revealed that on average the highest arrivals come to them from Europe, China, and India. "China and India, for example, are fast-growing markets with extremely high potential, in a variety of areas – families, MICE, weddings and honeymoons," he added.

Speaking further on the Indian market, he said, "We have a lot of faith in the Indian market, due to the high potential in terms of visitor arrivals and revenue. Over the past few years for example, Jetwing Blue in



Ishanth Gunewardene
Head of Marketing
Jetwing Hotels

Negombo has become the number one venue for Indian weddings in the region, as the property features a variety of areas for different functions – a 600 pax ballroom, an expansive garden and beach stretch, and the pool area. We look forward to attracting individual travellers, couples, and MICE travel."

He agreed that relationship with travel agents is advantageous for them, both in India and Sri Lanka.

"We take part in regular travel fairs in major Indian cities, and have appointed a dedicated sales representative in the country as well. In Sri Lanka, we focus on key travel agents and operators, along with a commitment to online sales and e-commerce," he added.

Elaborating on the new additions in the group, he said. "We've just launched the first luxury hotel in the North of Sri Lanka, Jetwing Jaffna, along with Sunrise by Jetwing in Passikudah. Over the next few months, we will unveil Jetwing Colombo Seven, our very first hotel in the capital of the country with 70 rooms and 28 serviced apartments; Jetwing Lake, a 94 room property in Dambulla overlooking a lake and Jie Jie by Jetwing, the first Chinese service hotel in Sri Lanka." ➔

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Will India cruise smoothly?

In order to reap the economic opportunities available in cruise tourism, the ministry has proposed to develop existing ports to match global standards. Whether its implementation will go unanchored is anybody's guess.

HAZEL JAIN

According to the studies conducted by Ernst and Young India for the Ministry of Shipping, over 91,000 Indians took a cruise vacation in 2014. This number has been growing at 36 per cent annually since then. As a response to this, 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.

Many initiatives are being taken for development of various coastal and marine-based tourism projects and this includes cruise shipping. In fact, representatives of Carnival UK, Royal Caribbean International and Royal Museums Greenwich had

met with government officials at the Maritime India Summit 2016. The summit was held in Mumbai this April where **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State (IC) for Tourism & Culture, and Minister of State for Civil Aviation, had announced intentions to develop necessary infrastructure of global standards as well as bring favourable policy interventions for foreign as well as domestic tourist.

4 major terminals

In order to support this sunrise segment, Ministry of Shipping has also devised a vision plan. It has identified four major ports for development of cruise terminals: Goa, Cochin, Mumbai and Chennai. A Task Force has been formed under co-chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Shipping, to facilitate promotion of cruise tourism in India. The Task Force is

working towards development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cruise terminal operations and has identified Cochin port for implementation of these SOPs on pilot basis.

Green channel

The Central Board of Excise and Custom Department of Revenue (Ministry of Finance) has permitted green channel facility to all

international passengers arriving on-shore for tourism purposes. Indian nationals have been permitted to travel from one Indian port to another, in foreign cruise ships/ vessels during its domestic leg. Additionally, foreign flag vessels carrying passengers have been allowed to call at Indian ports for a period

Contd. on page 29 ►

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Cruises for ultra-luxury seekers

Nishith Saxena, Director, Cruise Professionals, speaks on the three cruise brands they represent and how B2B engagements are the core of their business.



Q Tell us about your three brands and how are they different from each other?

Our broad product offering is geared to suit every conceivable taste, price preference and target market, including contemporary, premium and ultra-luxury. Princess Cruises is a 50-year-old premium cruise brand while Cunard and P&O Cruises-UK are the British brands catering to the luxury segment with legacy of over 175 years. Awarded as the Best Cruise Line itineraries since nine consecutive years, Princess Cruises boasts of a fleet of 18 magnificent ships. When it comes to elegance and poise, Cunard is the name to be trusted upon. Its three luxury liners — Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mary 2 and Queen Victoria make you

explore the world with grace. Cunard is famous worldwide for the very sophisticated 'white star service', which sets standard by which all others are judged. The P&O Cruises-UK line consists of eight ships in all, with the newest ship, Britannia, joining the fleet in March 2015. The ships are divided into 2 categories — exclusively for adults and family friendly.

Q What makes you different from others?

Cruise Professionals enjoys impeccable support and loyal association of the prestigious travel companies because of friendly and focused B2B approach. We provide same attention to all business queries — be it for a single cabin or for 20 cabins. Cruise Professionals is the only cruise representative company which introduced a toll-free line almost six years ago so that we could interact

“To boost sales, periodically, we come up with lucrative incentive schemes and sale windows for our channel partners.”

Nishith Saxena
Director
Cruise Professionals



with our distributors and passengers on a zero cost basis and could provide consistent service with a central reservation office. To provide local support we have our business development managers located in various regions of the country.

We work on a model where the costs are manageable, our services and responses are swift and our approach friendly. We follow strict financial discipline and are aggressive in promotion-

al activities across the spectrum. We are the only cruise representative company which does not promote any other travel product or service hence we're not competing with any travel agent. We have total transparency in our business.

Q Through what channels do you sell your products?

While none of the distribution channels could be ignored today, primarily we work with B2B distributors,

which means that we sell our cruise brands through travel agencies which are spread across India. To boost sales, periodically, we come up with lucrative incentive schemes and sale windows for our channel partners, which result in a win-win scenario for both the sides. We consider OTAs as part of B2B distribution only. Yes, corporate sale and direct consumer need to be educated a lot about various offerings and our communication to them is purely from product enrichment perspective.

Q How has the cruise industry in India evolved?

Cruise industry in India has had its ups and downs but when you look at different segments of the cruise industry, you would find only the outbound segment doing well on a sustainable basis. Cruise tourism in its complete sense

has huge potential when you look at the combined opportunities of inbound cruising, outbound cruising, coastal cruising and river cruising. India's geographical position is very strategic in terms of enticing world cruise vessels for a stopover, or running scheduled coastal and river cruises and also continue to support the outbound cruise segment, which is currently contributing a small volume to the international cruise industry. India has a long way to go to make good use of cruises as an industry.

Q Which cruise routes are popular among Indians?

While Alaska, Scandinavia, Russia, Mediterranean, Japan, and Southeast Asia sailings are popular every season, the upcoming new regions for cruising in the year 2017-18 would be Taiwan and Australia. ↴

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Getting 'em onboard

The concept of cruising has not really taken off in India despite our beautiful coastline. Even the ministries of shipping and tourism are now ready to invest in developing it. But are Indians ready for it?



TT BUREAU

With the evolving Indian traveller of today, fresh new experiences are now *de rigueur* and cruise vacations are hence finding strong interest. Round trips to South East Asia, European destinations like Scandinavia, France, Spain and Italy, the all-time favourite USA, the Caribbean Islands, Alaska and Mexico are top favourites.

We have witnessed high uptake for packages for European destinations from Amsterdam to Basel, Paris to Normandy and Croatia to Amsterdam, amongst others. Destination Greece too, which is best discovered by sea, has been emerging strongly. We see Mexico as a vibrant opportunity as well. Mumbai-Singapore and Cochin-Singapore cruises are getting popular due to unique itinerary and easy embarkation. We are witnessing an impressive growth rate of over 24 per cent for our cruise segment and this is across segments be it group, individual as also the HNI-UHNI luxury set. With options available from budget, value to premium, cruising fits every price point.



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



Karan Anand
Head, Relationships
Cox & Kings

The demand for cruise holidays has been growing year-on-year and this year it is in the range of 25 per cent. The most popular short-haul cruises are Star Cruises out of Asia. A significant number of cruise liners are stationed in Singapore, Hong Kong, Penang and Langkawi. This provides an excellent opportunity for Indian travellers to combine land and cruise package. Other cruises such as NCL are also very popular in the long-haul cruise market.

However, while we have a long coastline the country does not have a cruise policy. Our terminals are not equipped to handle cruise passengers. The current government has promised to give an impetus to cruise tourism and we remain confident that it can be achieved.

The Ministry has announced budgets for developing cruise terminal in major ports in India. Once this happens then I am sure more international cruise companies may look at weaving itineraries around Indian ports, thus increasing inbound tourism for India. Cruising as a vacation option is bound to open up for most Indians who want to experience the product but currently have no option within India.

The biggest challenge for most cruise companies however is to see that the ship is sold to its full capacity through the year, which can be quite a challenge even in a city like Mumbai.



Anju Tandon
CEO
Ark Travels



Jenaifer Daruwalla
GM, Maison de Voyage
(India PSA for Uniworld
Boutique River Cruise
Collection)

Uniworld did pretty well in 2015 with a growth of almost 30 per cent. The industry can be further developed by educating the trade and the masses about river and ocean cruising. Introducing special early booker fares is a good way of doing this. Fam trips for agents or special agent fares are another way of pushing the concept because as we all know 'seeing is believing'.

Fear of experimenting and preconceived notions associated with cruising like: it is very expensive, it is for the elite, etc, have led to the slow growth of cruising in India. Many Indians prefer a land package to a cruise as they want to pack in as much as possible in one trip. However, there has been a change in people's attitudes and they are gradually opening up to the idea of cruises. Another challenge is that of availability. Indians are usually last-minute travellers and cruises get booked well in advance (since Europeans etc tend to plan their travel early on). However the way to get around this is to constantly educate travel agents and push them to book in advance.

For us, Norwegian Cruises to the Bahamas are the highest selling cruises along with Star Cruises to Singapore. Our clientele for cruise tourism, which comprises mostly of business travellers to the US and Europe, prefers to take cruises for their business trips. The demand for cruises has definitely increased over last year as the market in all segments is expanding. Cruises are also looked at as popular MICE destinations and the demand is growing from both individual and group segments. Even though the knowledge about cruises is low in the market, but the interest is increasing, opening up avenues for more holidays on a cruise.



Sriram Rajmohan
CEO & MD
Club 7 Holidays



Neelu Singh
CEO & Director
Ezeego1

The cruise market is growing at approximately 30 per cent year-on-year. The potential of domestic cruises is very high which can be developed with the much-needed infrastructure, cruise ship investments, upgrade port facilities and simplified regulations. MSC Cruise that essentially circles Europe is one of our most popular cruises. They offer value to travellers across budget and super deluxe cruises with their range of price points. Mostly, these cruise vacations are an extension of land holidays for Europe. Apart from ensuring good infrastructure at passenger terminals, quick completion of immigration formalities and hassle-free custom clearance is important.

On these lines, the government is taking various steps to promote cruise and coastal tourism in the country that include financial assistance to ports for development of infrastructure for cruise and process simplification.

Cruising is growing rapidly in the region. Clients did not know earlier the differentiation between contemporary and luxury cruise lines. Today, the Internet allows customers to research independently, and they are demanding the best. This has translated into growing business for premium and luxury brands like Crystal Cruises, Disney Cruise Line and Oceania Cruises. While Alaska, Europe and Singapore remain mainstays for cruising, we have seen increasing popularity in the river cruise segment along the Rhine and Danube, and to regions like Galapagos, Tahiti and Bora Bora, and Antarctica.

What has also been interesting is to see the shift towards smaller ship experiences from the mega ship experiences. These ships are able to go to ports and destinations that larger ships are unable to visit. As an industry, we need to educate the travel trade to be able to differentiate between the various cruise offerings. Cruising is still quite nascent, and there is a huge opportunity to grow this exponentially.



Kiran Bhandari
Co-founder
CruiseClub Vacations





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A British cruise experience

As the India GSA for UK-based Cruise & Maritime Voyages (CMV), Griffon has launched promotional fares for the India market that will be valid for travel in 2016-2017.



TT BUREAU

CMV Cruises (Cruise and Maritime Voyages) UK that specialises in traditional British cruise experiences, has appointed Mumbai-based Griffon as its GSA in India. **Vivek Jain**, Managing Director, Griffon, says, "I am confident that CMV Cruises – UK has a very bright future in the India market. They have sailings from various ports in UK and mainly from London Tilbury. Business this year is good and going as per our projections. We have signed agreements with two new cruise companies and will be rolling out their itineraries shortly."

CMV Cruises-UK offers exceptional value cruising holiday aboard five stylish, medium size ships combining attentive and friendly service with stylish entertainment, delicious cuisine, daytime activities and guest speakers, and craft programmes on most sailings. These medium-size ocean liners are accessible to more ports of call than larger resort style ships, offering more varied and interesting itineraries.

Itineraries from the UK include the Norwegian Fiords, Baltic cities, British Isles, Iceland, Arctic exploration to Iceland and Greenland, World Cruise and from Perth for

three-four nights sailing during October to March each year. Promotional fares are being launched for India market by Griffon and will be valid for travel in 2016-2017. Griffon specialises in cruising world and has experience of over 15 years in cruise industry in India.

Speaking about the popular cruises among Indian travellers, Jain adds, "The cruises we represent are mainly in Europe and have different life-on-board such as Greek, Spanish, French, Russian, English, etc. We give a flavour

of the country to the passengers and they enjoy local hospitalities which is unique to other cruising companies. As all our sailings are in Europe, some of the popular ones are West Med, Greek islands, and Baltic and Fjords."



Vivek Jain
Managing Director
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Task force for SOPs

► Contd. from page 25

of 10 years without obtaining a licence from the Director General of Shipping.

Simultaneously, Ministry of Tourism under its scheme for assistance to central agencies (CFA) extends financial assistance to various agencies, including ports and lighthouses for development of cruise related tourism infrastructure. The assistance is extended for smooth operation of cruise liners that call on Indian ports and also for upgradation of existing cruise passenger terminals. Ministry of Tourism has also identified 'theme-based' circuits (such as 'Coastal Circuit') under the Swadesh Darshan scheme to encourage cruise tourism.



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- Soft drinks, beer and mineral water, complete glassware and your favorite wines or spirits are ready for your enjoyment or for entertaining

Services:

- Intuitive, gracious service provided by a staff passionate about pleasing our guests
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Ark Travels is excited to bring 'The Big Bang Nautical Fiesta' to the trade in alliance with Star Cruises that will have two sailings onboard SuperStar Gemini.



TT BUREAU

An entertainment cruise called 'The Big Bang Nautical Fiesta' is available for the trade to be sold to tourists who are looking to have a carnival at sea. Mumbai-based Ark Travels is excited to bring this special 'The Big Bang Nautical Fiesta' cruise to the travel agents as it will be the first entertainment cruise by Ark Travels in alliance with Star Cruises. **Kishan Biyani**, MD, Ark Travels, says, "We are introducing a new concept of entertainment cruises for which we have chartered two sailing of SuperStar Gemini ex Singapore on August 10, 2016 and August 14, 2016. These sailings will add more fun, entertainment and food in addition to the normal inclusions onboard Star Cruises."



Kishan Biyani
MD
Ark Travels

The 2016, sailing is a normal two night's cruise to Port Klang and August 14, 2016, is a three nights sailing to Penang and Port Klang. He added that Star Cruises has been over the years recognised as a brand among the masses and it understands the needs of the Indian customers. "They

are flexible in their approach, thus lending support to the corporate companies as well as the travel fraternity. Be it an Indian wedding or a product launch or a film shooting, Star Cruises has satisfied all segments and delivered on all counts," Biyani adds.

the long weekend or special occasions with family and friends. We are educating our trade partners and are looking for tremendous support from them as it is one of the first of its kind with loads of fun and games."

Speaking about the fun quotient onboard this exclusive cruise, **Anju Tandon**, CEO, Ark Travels, says, "There will be Bollywood/Tollywood celebrities onboard to perform and entertain the guests. A carnival onboard has been planned with party games and pool games all day long. The cruises promise all-night fun with 'War of the DJs' on the open deck. Guests can party till the wee hours of the morning. It will be an ideal place for people to celebrate

According to Biyani, cruise tourism has grown by 14 per cent last year and he is expecting a growth of 8 to 10 per cent in the year 2016. Dream Cruises is touching Mumbai port in October this year. Star Cruises is showcasing its newest ship, its offering an opportunity for Indians to sail ex-Mumbai to CMB and Singapore. Ark Travels expects the numbers to grow from India with Dream Cruises sailing ex-Nansha from November."

Choose the right cruise

This ready reckoner, from **Tarique Hussain**, Director, Cruise Club*, classifying cruises, will facilitate agents in choosing the right ships for their clients.



Contemporary Cruises

❖ These ships are floating resorts including fun-filled activities for guests of all ages, large entertainment spaces, kids programs, a range of dining options etc. Examples: **Carnival Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line, Star Cruises.**

Upscale (instead of Premium)

❖ Offering a more refined experience, these ships attract guests with better buying power and who are used to great entertainment, high quality dining, and larger accommodations. These ships also usually have more unique itineraries. Examples: **Disney Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises, Dream Cruises**

River Cruises

❖ Intimate and beautiful, river cruises offer a spectacular way to experience the destinations up close, especially since charming towns and cities are peppered along the world's best waterways. Popular itineraries include: Rhine, Danube, the French Rivers, and the Mekong Delta. Examples: **Ama Waterways, Avalon Waterways, Crystal Cruises, Emerald Waterways, Scenic Luxury Cruises and Tours, Tauck River Cruising, Viking Cruising.**

Niche Cruises

❖ Niche or specialty cruises are destination experts and provide guests with an opportunity to immerse themselves deep in the culture of the destinations that they are visiting. Examples: **Celestyal Cruises, Hurtigruten**

Ultra Luxury

❖ Catering to those who seek the finer things in life, guests on these all-inclusive ultra-luxury cruises enjoy exceptional personal service and attention to detail. Inclusions usually include gratuities, celebrity chef dining, liquor and beverages, and sometimes even shore excursions as part of the cruise cost. Examples: **Crystal Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Silversea, Paul Gauguin Cruises**

Expedition Cruises

❖ These cruises allow you to journey to some of the most remote regions. Here, it is about immersing yourself in the landscape and habitat of the region, with the help of experts who can illuminate all that you can use. Popular destinations include: Arctic, Antarctica, and Galapagos. Examples: **Lindblad Expeditions, Hurtigruten, Polar Latitudes, Quark Expeditions, Silverseas Expeditions.**

*Cruise Club Vacations is India's leading multi-brand cruise specialist, and represents an unprecedented range of more than 25 cruise brands in India, from luxury to mainstream cruises, and expedition to river cruises

S. America, Antarctica on bucket list

While Alaska, European and Caribbean sailings have usually been a hit, places like South America, Antarctica, Australia and New Zealand are gaining popularity among Indian travellers.



TT BUREAU

With decades of experience in the travel industry, Stic Travels also represents three cruise brands ranging from premium to luxury. **Richa Goyal Sikri**, Director – Group Business Development, says that all the cruise lines in their portfolio of offerings are award winning brands in their respective categories which sail to multiple destinations all over the world.

Stic currently promotes three world renowned cruise liners in India such as Holland America Line, Seabourn Cruise Line and Windstar cruises. "The Holland America Line's fleet of 14 modern classic ships offers more than 500 sailings a year to the Caribbean, Alaska, Europe, Mexico, South America, the Panama Canal, Australia, New Zealand and Asia — as well as unique voyages to the Amazon, Antarctica and our extended Grand Voyages. The Seabourn,



Richa Goyal Sikri
Director – Group Business Development
Stic Travels

and its three sailing yachts carry just 148 to 310 guests and cruise to 50 nations, calling at 150 ports throughout Europe, the South Pacific, the Caribbean, and Central America," she elaborates.

Sikri informs that of late, people are more eager to experience luxury on board and take premium cruise liners. "The younger generation, with ample disposable income, has shown increasing interest in opting for cruise holidays and explore exotic locations," she says. Worldwide, the cruise industry has an annual passenger compounded annual growth rate of 6.55 per cent from 1990-2019.

In terms of destinations, Indians are majorly opting for Alaska, European and Caribbean sailings but have gradually shown interest in South America, Antarctica, Australia



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and New Zealand where we see the numbers increasing, Sikri reveals.

in suggesting cruising as a viable travel option to their clients.

When asked about some of the major challenges, Sikri responds that awareness about cruises is still needed in the country. She comments, "Even though cruising is growing in India every year, there is still lack of awareness among the consumers and agents also seem to be hesitant

Therefore, we want to build more awareness and educate the target audience about the benefits of taking an all-inclusive and at the same time make the agents also understand that selling a cruise vacation is more hassle free and generates a higher value in terms of commissions."



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SuperStar Virgo's new sail

Star Cruises' SuperStar Virgo will take on a new route this winter giving its clients a choice of two different itineraries for winter deployment.

TT BUREAU

Star Cruises has announced its SuperStar Virgo sailing this season from Nansha, Guangzhou, China for six and seven nights to the beautiful ports of Naha and Miyakojima located in Okinawa district of Japan. **Naresh Rawal**, Vice President, Sales, Star Cruises (India), says, "This will be one enchanting journey not to be missed. There are many advantages and offers currently applicable for all our valued trade partners. SuperStar Virgo will take on a new path this winter and will call at Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City from November onwards. Later on, it will offer our guests ports-of-call at Danang and Halong Bay from Shekou in Shenzhen, China. This will give our guests choice of two different itineraries for winter deployment."



Naresh Rawal
Vice President, Sales
Star Cruises (India)

commence between 2019 and 2020 starting with one ship a year and eventually increasing to two ships a year. The first two ships ordered in the 'Global Class' series are designed with 'Chinese Characteristics' and they will be the first purpose-built cruise ships deployed for the contemporary Chinese market.

Speaking about how the cruise market is developing this year, Rawal adds, "The cruise market and the interest of guests deciding to take a cruise vacation is consistently increasing year-on-year with about 20 per cent growth and counting. We are extremely buoyed to see this response from the market and will work on gaining and gauging more

and more inclination from our consumers through trade interactions to ultimately see this continued upward graph moving."

Seeing this upward movement, the government has announced budgets for developing cruise terminal in major ports in India.

To this Rawal adds, "This is a definite step forward. A country like India with a vast coastline stretching well over 7,500 kms will mark its share in global cruise tourism. The newly-formed task force for developing cruise tourism will enhance and address infrastructure-related issues and will seek to simplify processes. This will in turn be a gain for millions who work along the dotted line of our coastlines."

New Route

- ➔ SuperStar Virgo will take on a new path this winter and will call at Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City from November onwards
- ➔ It will offer guests ports-of-call at Danang and Halong Bay from Shekou in Shenzhen, China.

Singapore: Top choice

▶ Contd. from page 28



Tasneem Udaipurwala
Director
Wingspan

We are glad to see more and more Indian families including cruising in their annual summer vacations. The most popular routes this year have been Europe Mediterranean sailing and the Baltic sailing with Scandinavia and Russia. Our popular Fly+Cruise packages with seven to 12 nights itineraries are fully booked.

There are many factors that influence Indian travellers, most important being accessibility, luxury, child-friendly, food, entertainment and undoubtedly novelty factor. Our Indian ports also have huge scope for upgrades to welcome international luxury cruises. However, for us, airline seats and pricing are our only challenge.

The cruise product is incredibly diversified with literally a cruise vacation for everyone. For us, the most popular region for cruises is Singapore. After boarding the ship in Singapore, travellers can enjoy voyages of a wide variety of lengths, from short three-night jaunts to massive 46 day excursions and in some cases, even longer.

There has also been an approximate 20 per cent increase in demand for cruises this year as compared to last year. However, this segment can be developed further in India by creating more awareness; reaching out to a larger target group; offering competitive prices and by offering proper variety of Indian food onboard.



Sanjay Kothari
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Asia Pacific
Cruise Trends

■ **Bigger and Better ships** – Cruise lines have recognised the need to bring their best ships and amenities to the region. Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas took the cruising experience to a whole new level.

■ **Experiences for Asian market** – With larger and newer ships, the onboard experiences are tailored for Asian guests.

■ **Shorter itineraries** – Asians prefer 2-3 nights followed by 4-6 nights and cruise lines are responding by adding shorter itineraries.

■ **All-inclusive leisure and MICE trips** – The all-inclusive aspect of ships make them an attractive alternative to land-based venues. Meals, entertainment, sports facilities, meetings space and AV equipment are all included in the price, making cruising an outstanding choice for Asia Pacific MICE.



Neeti Ayare
Global Sales Manager
Asia Pacific Landry & Kling
Events at Sea

150% growth from India

Varesh Chopra, Regional Director - South Asia & Middle East, Avalon Waterways-a Globus family brand, says that India has opened up to river cruising and that their product is niche and fits the bill perfectly.



Tracing its roots back to 1928, Avalon Waterways and its fleet of royal-blue river cruises was only launched in 2004. "Part of Globus family of brands, we are the first to introduce floor-to-ceiling windows and French balconies on two decks of every vessel. We are also the first to bring larger staterooms and deluxe hotel-style amenities to an entire fleet — and to introduce Suite Ships with open-air balconies. Each of Avalon's Suite Ships features two full decks of accommodations measuring between 200 square feet and 300 square feet, which is fairly large by river cruise standards," says Chopra.

He elaborates, "We call ourselves the youngest most innovative river cruise line offering a casual luxury experi-

"We would like to encourage the trade to publicise our currently ongoing Buy One - Get One free offers amongst their discerning clients."

Varesh Chopra
Regional Director -
South Asia & Middle East
Avalon Waterways



ence with a very high focus on quality. Avalon's staterooms feature beds that face the windows, unlike others. Instead of two dining rooms, which is the maximum on river cruisers, Avalon has been creative with timing to give guests seven dining options." However, he claims, "One of the differentiating factors is that Avalon Waterways boasts the backing of the

huge Globus family, because of which members of Globus' travellers club, for example, receive discounts and other perks for travelling within the family of brands."

Avalon currently offers sailings in Europe, South East Asia, China, South America and Egypt. One can enjoy an Avalon experience on rivers including the

Danube, Rhine, Main, Moselle, Seine, Rhône, Saône, Mekong, Irrawaddy, Yangtze, Amazon, the Galapagos Isles and the Nile. Speaking about Indian preferences, Chopra says, "Indians prefer sailings on the Danube, Rhine, Seine and also on the Mekong, Irrawaddy, Amazon and Galapagos Isles. There has been a very good response based on themes on special interest cruises ranging from Christmas, wellness, wine-appreciation, culinary specials, golf, art and impressionist cruises to music, Opera and Jazz."

He further adds, "India has shown 150 per cent growth this cruise year and we are still not through. The market is becoming mature and experiential. Travellers today understand the exclusivity and quality experience a river cruise offers. They

find it apt to mark special occasions on board an Avalon river cruise."

In terms of new offerings, Chopra reveals, "We've raised the bar of the culinary offerings on board with Avalon Fresh, for which we've teamed up with two of Europe's rising culinary stars to design an exciting collection of wholesome menu items so mouth-watering, you won't believe they're healthy."

He also revealed the offers for the trade, saying, "We would like to encourage the trade to publicise our currently ongoing Buy One - Get One free offers amongst their discerning clients. In fact, agents who have completed the Online Avalon specialist program can even apply for 70 per cent discount to get a first-hand Avalon Experience."

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Tapping Mumbai & Delhi

Introducing itself in a big way to the Indian trade with a debut two-city roadshow, Zambia is counting on its e-visa facility to rake in the numbers.



A 10-member delegation from the southern African country of Zambia, led by Zambia Tourism Agency, recently travelled to India to conduct roadshows in the cities of Mumbai and New Delhi – it's first in the country. **Felix Chaila**, CEO, Zambia Tourism Agency, said, "We met around 100 outbound tour operators in Mumbai and New Delhi. This is the first time that Zambia has created such a dedicated marketing platform to activate our destination in this market. We have been coming to India for about three years now but only through attending trade shows."

He revealed that Zambia is expecting to reach at least 3,00,000 to 500,000 Indians to visit Zambia within the next three to four years for leisure and incentive purposes. "India not only has a huge middle class but also more HNIs than most other countries. Our number one source



Felix Chaila
CEO
Zambia Tourism Agency

This is the first time that Zambia has created such a dedicated marketing platform to activate our destination in this market

market is the US followed by the UK and this shows that Zambia is an extremely safe country. This roadshow will not be the end of our relationship with India; we are

here for the long term. After this, we will invite some members of the Indian outbound trade to attend the Zambia Travel Expo in early June," Chaila said.

The Zambia Tourism Agency hopes to get a bigger supplier delegation next year and add more cities for the roadshow. **Lubaina Sheerazi**, COO, Blue Square Consultants (India representative for Zambia Tourism Agency), said, "Zambia has been participating in trade fairs and conducting sales calls in India since the last three years. Now, they want to get more aggressive since India is an emerging source market. We will continue to engage with the travel trade in India."

As of October 2015, all foreign nationals who require a visa for Zambia, including Indians, can apply online via the e-visa facility for a fee of \$50 for single entry and takes a processing time of three working days. 📌

Wooing travel trade

Zanzibar is looking at joint promotions and representation deals with Indian trade, says **Jilesh Himat Babla**, Director, Zanzibar Tourism Promotion Centre in India.



QHow has the growth been since Zanzibar got active in India?

With the efforts that we have made in the past one year, there is an increase in the knowledge about Zanzibar in the minds of the Indian travel trade. Moreover, we have seen a definite increase in the inquiries especially from honeymooners, destination wedding providers and agencies conducting diving tours. Although the numbers are low at the moment, we are confident of a steady increase in travellers from India to Zanzibar.

QWhat activities have you planned for the trade this year?

After regular communication with the travel fraternity in Mumbai, we have planned to conduct Zanzibar Specialist Workshops in the second half of 2016. Another proposal taking shape is the visit by some of tourism stakeholders from Zanzibar such as hoteliers and DMCs whose aim is to meet the Indian travel agents and ink deals for joint promotions and representations.



Jilesh Himat Babla
Director, Zanzibar Tourism Promotion Centre in India

zibar such as hoteliers and DMCs whose aim is to meet the Indian travel agents and ink deals for joint promotions and representations.

QWhat activities are you doing with TAAI and TAFI?

We have already conducted a study tour in association with the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAAI) Western Region Committee and are looking to conduct two more such tours during the course of this year. Simultaneously, we are making efforts to host the Travel Agents Association of

India (TAAI) Managing Committee meeting in Zanzibar and utilise the opportunity to showcase Zanzibar to them. We are also in advanced talks with TAAI to assist us in conducting roadshows and Zanzibar Specialist Workshops in various centres. Dates for these are not yet confirmed.

QIs there any increase in budget for India?

We are just about completing a year of operations in India and probably too early for a budget increase. The year has been utilised in reaching out to the various associations and through them to the large travel community as also associating with corporate, etc. The initial aim was to provide travel agents with information about Zanzibar which was lacking all these years. We have been fortunate that alongside, we have been able to realise some business in the form of honeymooners and scuba divers. 📌



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A strong pitch for night tourism

Theatre, music, illuminated buildings, shopping and food stalls...It's time to make a strong pitch for night tourism in India. The travel trade feels night tourism in India would not only generate extra revenue, but make the metro cities safer by attracting crowds and seeing improved infrastructure.



INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA

Night tourism needs immediate and substantial promotion. We can't afford to have our cities die after sunset. Especially since India has so much to offer in terms of culture and heritage. We also need more theatres, shopping malls, and restaurants to create more night activities. Today's tourist expects full value from their holidays and want to optimise their options. Creating night activities will boost tourism, generate revenue, and make city districts safer. It makes perfect business sense for everyone.



M.S. Chawla
Chairman
Siddharth Travels

This is actually long delayed and overdue, and should be given importance by the government. Once that happens, the private sector will join in and things will move in a manner that will present gains to all players in the industry. Given our wealth of heritage and traditions, Indian night tourism has the potential to become top-class in terms of offering music and cultural programmes, backed up by local cuisines. One can imagine how much good night tourism would bring to a city like Delhi, which while being a major tourist destination, offers literally nothing to visitors after dark.



Cdr. C.P. Sharma
Managing Director
Neptune Travco

Night tourism is a great niche segment that would attract and promote both inbound and domestic tourism. We should focus on promoting this segment, placing particular emphasis on providing proper safety and security to everyone, especially ladies. Since our culture is still not attuned to night tourism activities, some sections of society can be 'for' and 'against' this concept, which can create possible law and order problems, which in turn could lead to adverse publicity for the country. This aspect must be kept in mind while going ahead.



Jyoti Kapur
President
ADTOI

Night tourism is essential as it has several positive aspects. It introduces the country's brand and local culture from close quarters. Many international destinations like Istanbul, Paris, and Hong Kong are renowned for their nightlife. India can offer a rich night tourism experience, comprised of activities like fashion shows; cultural and food festivals; music concerts; city tours covering illuminated monuments; and sound & light shows that can enhance tourists' city experience. We need to change this image by introducing night activities and attractions. The new breed of tourists wants 'activity-oriented tourism' and 'experiential tourism'.



Subhash Goyal
Immediate Past President
IATO

This is a 'terrific' input to the Indian tourist industry. The government must take steps to encourage this segment. Indian night tourism can have several options. There can be 'night markets' with myriad stalls; food bazaars offering authentic cuisines, night theatre; and 'classical dance/music shows with dinner'. All these would be very popular with tourists. Currently, there isn't a single restaurant that features dance and dinner evenings. Cultural evenings should be organised by government. The evening Ganga Aarti in Varanasi is already very popular.



Lajpat Rai
President
Lotus Trans Travels

This is the need of the hour. If India has to realise its tourist potential and compete and be at par with South-East Asian countries, it has to create and promote night tourism. Overall revenues will increase; it will benefit people who work late hours and night shifts; and safety will be enhanced. The scope of night tourism is enormous, and can comprise everything from theatre, comedy shows, shopping, and food stalls. The Delhi Haat model with its mix of offerings would be a great asset at night.



Punam Singh
Executive Director
OTOAI



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JetSmart.in, a real-time e-commerce platform, has got investments from Travel Capitalist Ventures to make private air charter affordable in India.

TT BUREAU

JetSmart, the Bengaluru-based private air travel company, is looking at expanding their present charter and non-scheduled operations through innovations such as selling empty seats or ferry flights on a real-time basis. Speaking at the launch, **Abrar Ahmad**, Partner, Travel Capitalist Ventures, said, "The JetSmart offering allows corporate to service the needs of their key executives, provide discreet offerings to celebrities and HNW individuals to airports closer than legacy offerings all the while saving valuable time and money."

Ahmad claimed that with JetSmart, the ease of flying private has reached another level. "JetSmart is trying to become the easiest way to book private jet experiences. One only needs to go to the website, enter the details of the city they want to fly from, select a few other preferences and payment details."



Abrar Ahmad
Partner
Travel Capitalist Ventures



Erfan Haque
CEO
JetSmart.in

Erfan Haque, CEO, JetSmart.in, said, "If you look at a typical Delhi-Mumbai flight, the minimum price for business class could be around ₹33,000-45,000 during season. However, booking with JetSmart would come to around ₹55,000-60,000, which makes it affordable," Haque revealed.

Ahmad also shared future plans, saying, "We are trying to expand the number of suppliers, and the aircraft available. We will look at how the demand is and do traditional marketing. We have established relationships with

WAP clients, travel agents, corporates and are reaching out to the consumers directly. A huge part of the corporate sector has DMCs that they work with and we are reaching out to them as well, and try to integrate into the GDS that they use." One innovative sales strategy is the selling of empty legs. Haque explains, "We are looking at normal charters from point A to B, as well as selling return empty legs. We are trying to promote them and tie up with a few corporate agencies which handle HNIs to try and offer this kind of facility to them."

Indians buying luxury

▶ Contd. from page 9

India is one of the top 10 source markets for Indonesia. Indians spend quite a lot of money in Indonesia, especially on shopping and weddings and have emerged as one of the biggest spenders while travelling abroad which is why they are being targeted aggressively by countries around the world. The highest spending segments from India have been identified as families, MICE, honeymooners, golf and weddings.

Average Spend: Approx. \$1,000 to 1,200 per person.

Average overnights: 6 to 8 days



Shelly Chandhok
Country Manager
Visit Indonesia Tourism
Office, India

India ranks at the 14th position for Britain by value globally. 389,502 Indian visitors spent a total of £443.63 m in 2014.

Total overnights: 9.5 million

Average length of overnight stay: 24.76

Average spend per visit: £1,139.



Shivali Suri
Country Manager
Visit Britain

India #1 BRIC market in visitor volumes to UK

■ 2015 was a record year for Indian visits into Britain according to the International Passenger Survey from the Office of National Statistics UK. The latest figures show visits from India in 2015 are up 8 per cent, from 390,000 to 422,000, setting a new record. Indian visitors spent £433 million in Britain last year along with 9.2 million nights. These 2015 figures mean that India retains its position as Britain's No. 1 BRIC market in terms of visitor volume and among the 20 top source markets for Britain globally. Growing outbound travel trends fuelled by increased flight connectivity into regional Britain has helped India cement its position with growing visitor numbers over 2014. VisitBritain Director Asia Pacific, Mid East & Africa, **Sumathi Ramanathan**, said, "India is the top BRIC market for Britain in terms of volume and the year-on-year robust visit figures ensure our way to achieve our 2020 target of 500,000 visits. Our focussed strategy for the India market featuring the Bollywood Britain campaign, combined with our trade engagement, targeted consumer engagements and tactical offers with tourism partners will be crucial for us to deliver our tourism targets in 2016-2017."

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Inbound charters continue to soar

Deepak Bhatnagar, Managing Director, Aamantaran Travel Company, part of Caper Group of Companies headed by **Bharat Bhushan Atree**, says that the group caters to a huge market of charter travellers to India.



TT BUREAU

Speaking about how they are way ahead of many other charter companies in India, Bhatnagar says, "We don't do small private charters. Our charters cater to a large number of clients which are operated by our principle partners overseas and we provide the ground handling to all clients using these charter flights. Within the group we

in India is growing, according to Bhatnagar, "Future may not be as bright as we would like to have as far as international tourists are concerned."

ITQ inspires members to leap forward



InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ) organised an Annual Sales Conference last week in Lavasa, Maharashtra, from May 13th to 15th 2016, to celebrate the success and achievements of the team. Various interesting sessions were held to blend in the motivation and learning with enjoyment at leisure. Based on the 'The Leapfrog' theme, the entire team was encouraged to take the 'leap' from being hard workers to owners of their core functional areas, initiators of processes and thereby being innovators in their respective fields.



Deepak Bhatnagar
Managing Director
Aamantaran Travel Company

Our charters cater to a large number of clients which are operated by our principle partners overseas

have an aviation company with the name Jet Concept, which takes care of the licensing part for various charters operating to India and also provide the supervisory services to various airlines operating charter within India."

He elaborates "At times we do get requests for hiring small private jets within India by some of our VIP clients and there are service providers with whom we take costing and provide the same to the customer."

For luxury clients, Bhatnagar reveals, "We operate flights to areas where we do not have scheduled aircraft such as areas in Rajasthan, Himalayas etc." However, when it comes to costing, "it differs from type of private jet one would like to hire, and cost is normally on the basis of per hour flying and waiting times etc. In fact, we keep getting requests for cities where scheduled flights are not available or schedule doesn't suit the client," he says. While many claim that the charter industry



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Skål Delhi welcomes new members

A hot summer afternoon saw members from Skål Delhi assemble at The Claridges to welcome around 11 new entrants to the family. During the gathering, President **Sanjay Datta** briefed the audience on the latest benefits offered exclusively for Skålleagues after which the crowd made merry over lunch. Datta expressed that more and more people have become interested in joining the organisation thanks to variety of benefits that come along with a Skål membership.



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Networking workshop for Jaipur agents

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Travstarz Global Group recently conducted a workshop & networking cocktail & dinner for Jaipur agents in association with Constance Hotels & Resort. The event was held at The Fortune Metropolitan Hotel, Jaipur on May 6, 2016, with more than 60 travel agents in attendance. **Sara Juneja**, of Nijhawan Group which represents Constance Hotels in India, gave a detailed product presentation to the agents about the Constance properties while **Sucheta Nagpal**, Director & CEO, Travstarz Global Group, gave a presentation about the company and its latest offerings including its newly launched B2B Portal www.travelrezonline.com.

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Indian agents experience luxurious Ras Al Khaimah



Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAK TDA) organised an exclusive Fam trip from April 29-May 1, 2016, to Ras Al Khaimah for six travel trade partners from Mumbai. Representatives from Kesari Tours, Cox & Kings, Zest Tours and Travel, Bhatija Travels, Planet Holidays and Bella Corsa Destinations participated in the Fam trip. The three-day jaunt showcased some of Ras Al Khaimah's most luxurious experiences for high-end FIT travellers.

OTOAI delegation at VisitScotland Expo



OTOAI recently sent a delegation of 27 pan India agents led by Executive Director and Britain expert **Punam Singh**, to Scotland, for the VisitScotland Expo in Edinburgh and a pre with post fam trip to the Scottish Highlands over 5 nights / 6 days, in collaboration with Etihad Airways. Agents from Delhi, Punjab, Mumbai, Pune and Bengaluru participated as the gateway points were Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru only. EC members **Rajeev Sabharwal** (Head – Finance) and **Siddharth Khanna** (Head – IT), accompanied the delegation. The agents completed an incredible 1000 appointments over two days at the Expo.

Betting big on Mauritius & Dubai

The demand for domestic destinations has been on the positive side as well as for departures to Europe during this summer, reveals **Syed A Asim**, Executive Director, Bonton Holidays.



TT BUREAU

Recognising the potential of the domestic market, Bonton Holidays established a DMC in Kashmir in an effort to expand their reach to more travellers. Since then, their domestic traffic has seen a considerable growth, informs Asim. "Not just the domestic segment, but our series departures to Europe

for the upcoming summer vacations have witnessed a good demand this year and we are very happy with the numbers," he says. He adds that in terms of out-bound destinations, they are majorly betting on Mauritius and Dubai.

Asim informs that efforts to boost the domestic and inbound business are

being made through their on-line space where packages to different destinations are on offer. "Plans to increase the number of Indian hotel choices on the website are in the pipeline," he says. "Users will be able to book transfers, tours and sightseeing packages not just in India, but all the other places that are backed by our inventory and have established DMCs in."

2016 has started off on a positive note for Bonton. The India SME Forum recognised the group as one of the leading SMEs in the country, reveals Asim and says, "We are very proud and grateful for being given this accolade amongst thousands of other SMEs in the country."

Additionally, the Bonton Group also recently

celebrated its 8th anniversary with great fervour. Commenting on their journey in the travel industry, Asim shares, "The group started off with its first DMC in Dubai and now has steadily expanded across the vast geography of India, to Mauritius and now to Scandinavia too. Our journey has been nothing short of amazing."



Syed A Asim
Executive Director
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The One Point API platform from Mystifly has over 900 airlines with point-of-sale fares from over 70 countries, and allows hotels to choose the right set of airline partners that match with brand expectations.



Airlines offering 'flights + hotels' deals have become the norm in the current times. Unfortunately, hotels have not been able to capitalise fully on this opportunity, as the best air deals are always from the guests' departure point rather than the hotel's location which is the point of arrival.



Rajeev Kumar G
Founder, Managing Director & CEO
Mystifly

Mystifly's One Point API allows hotels access to up sell flights to guests, informs Rajeev Kumar G, Founder, Managing Director & CEO, Mystifly. The API platform covers over 900 airlines with a point of sale fares from over 70 countries thereby combining the strength of source and destination products.

"A globally consolidated airfare API allows hotels to either choose the right set of airline partners that match with the hotel brand expectations or leverage the entire gamut of airlines that is on offer," he says.

"This enables hotels to create private travel deals that translate into more loyal guests. With the ability to combine air, it's not about the hotels offering a discount but more it is the hotel's ability to take advantage of deep airline discounts to offer guests a package price that will help maintain healthy margins," he adds.

Hotels can further chose to offer coach or premium cabin class or just combine their product with whatever the airlines offer, Kumar comments.

"It's all about hotels choosing airline partners in the same way that airlines

chose their hotel partners combining product strengths to deliver better value including an attractive price," he says.

Boosting tourism in Nepal



Nepal Airlines, in association with KGH Group of hotels, successfully organised three Fams from Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi. These Fam trips were the opportunities to showcase the hotel properties and the tourist hotspots of Nepal.

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India Travel Awards: A much-

India Travel Awards aims to recognise and encourage the achievers of our industry from all the four regions, who play a key role in elevating the industry to a whole new level. TRAVTALK speaks to South India Travel Award winners on how this acclamation impacts them and the industry.

 ANKITA SAXENA



► Best Business Hotel: Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield

A sensory experience

Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield was awarded the Best Business Hotel. **Pankaj Gupta**, General Manager, Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield, feels that India Travel Awards recognises those behind the success of the travel and tourism industry and makes them feel like achievers. He says, "I am happy that we have been able to live up to our brand promise of providing flawless and



authentic hospitality services. Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield has reached yet another milestone with regards to facilities and service excellence. This prestigious Award helps us to recognise the success and also determine the finest hotels among the hospitality industry."

Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield features accessible technology, social atmosphere and a sensory experience for culture-conscious travellers. "Right from accommodation, we have facilities like conference rooms, business centers, specialty restaurant, 24 hour coffee shop and in house bakery amongst other services," Gupta adds.

A tribute to the legend

Making his way to the Gallery of Legends, **C. Nagendra Prasad**, Chairman, Travel Express, was honoured with the Gold Maya. A graduate from Madras University, Prasad started as Managing Director of Modern Ad Limited, an advertising consultancy firm but since his heart was set on travel, he entered the travel industry six decades ago, when the industry was in its infancy. He started Tradewings Limited, one of the first IATA approved agencies in Andhra Pradesh. He was the national President-SKAL and became the first Indian to hold the post of President, SKAL Asia. He was also TAAI President (1991-1993) and during his tenure he opened doors for the members that saw TAAI reach heights.

He is currently the Vice President of Andhra Chamber of Commerce Chennai, an 88-year-old organisation. According to Prasad, "It is a very unique Award as it recognises talent at the regional levels instead of just one all-India award where regional talents lose out. I value this Award as it gives the present generation an understanding of the challenges we faced in the early years with many constraints."

► Best Wedding and Leisure Hotel: Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Mysore

The perfect wedding venue

Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Mysore won the Best Wedding and Leisure Hotel Award. **Harikumar B**, General Manager, Radisson Blu Plaza Mysore, feels that India Travel Awards were very much needed for the industry. The hospitality sector in India is growing fast and catching up with the developed countries in terms of facilities and innovation and the Award is an impartial way to recognise the true and emerging leaders of the sector. "The Award is sure to bring us more customers. The world outside Mysore has started contemplating the potential of weddings in the city as today weddings are also about where it happens.

"The industry too is set to benefit from the Awards as it will push every stakeholder to be the best and stay there," says Harikumar. Expressing gratitude, Harikumar adds that the honour has justified the wholehearted efforts to create the best wedding facility in Mysore. The facility has a capacity of up to 1,200, and is one of the largest in the region. The space extends from indoors to the beautifully landscaped outdoors and can be split into two sizes to accommodate smaller gatherings.



"It's fairly important for business to be awarded for what we have contributed to the economy of India. It showcases recognition across the industry and builds the trust in our business partners," says Neoge. He also adds that India Travel Awards is the right platform for new investors to be showcased at the right time and to the right audience.

needed morale boost



► Best LCC International: Tigerair

The affordable airline

Tigerair received the Maya for Best LCC International. **Surya Kuchibotla**, Marketing Manager, Tigerair, feels that the complete value for money offered to travellers - along with the efforts of all the members to ensure the best travel experience - makes Tigerair a worthy winner of the award. "We constantly strive to stay true to our proposition of being an affordable airline without compromising on our offerings and safety standards. This is why we are increasingly becoming the preferred airline of choice for travellers," says Kuchibotla. Tigerair has rapidly grown its operations in India by foraying into North India with the addition of Lucknow to their network as well as increasing the frequency to Hyderabad and Tiruchirappalli due to the increasing demand.

Lauding the awards, he says that the India Travel Awards is a great platform where the best in the travel and tourism industry are recognised for their excellence and is also a great way to bring the entire industry together. "It's a fair system of selecting winners based on votes, jury decision as well as travellers sets a benchmark amongst all the other industry awards. This Award showcases our excellence to all our stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry, helps in strengthening their reliance on us and propels us to stand out amongst our peers for all the right reasons."

► Best City Hotel: Holiday Inn Cochin

Innovation is the key

Holiday Inn Cochin was awarded the Best City Hotel. The hotel has been operating since 2011 and in these few years has been able to position itself in the market with correct pricings and exemplary service. According to **Soma Mathew**, Director Sales, Holiday Inn Cochin, the hotel's food and beverage has always been the highlight and the hotel has continued to bring in innovation for its guest's delight. Lauding the Awards,



Mathew says, "It's an excellent and fair platform to reward and recognise the travel and hospitality partners. The categories and levels are great to nominate your hotel and deserving people makes it more exciting. The recognition motivates us to continue to put your best foot forward, the business too gets a boost and helps in building the trust of the guest and drive loyalty."

► Best Convention Centre: Hyderabad International Convention Centre

Tapping MICE tourism

Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) won the Award for Best Convention Centre. **Neil Paterson**, General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and Hyderabad International Convention Centre, feels that the Award is a nod to the excellence in service and product that the company yearns to provide to those who seek it and aids in adding to its credibility. The provision of the convention centre and hotel in one location has made it a hub for MICE and leisure travellers. Paterson says, "HICC and Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) were introduced to Hyderabad for tapping in the MICE tourist inflow from both the domestic and international market. We were one of the first to recognise the growth in the market and pre-empt demand, and then developed a facility that matches up to the standards of some of the most popular international convention centres." Applauding the process of declaring the winners, Paterson adds, "The award winners were chosen by a fair and unbiased selection process that comprised online voting and judging by a panel of jury consisting of the hospitality industry luminaries, and we are proud to have been recognised through such an impartial process."



► Best Luxury Suite Hotel: Park Hyatt Chennai

Elegant design; exemplary service

Park Hyatt Chennai won the Best Luxury Suite Hotel Award. "The awards are a hallmark of what we have on offer in terms of stellar services and world-class facilities. It is a veritable stamp of authenticity which we love to communicate to our guests and business partners as it helps to renew their faith in our offerings," says **Aashima Sharma**, General



Manager, Park Hyatt Chennai. Lauding the Awards, Sharma feels that the Awards are a recognition platform for exemplary hotels and also a benchmark for quality services and facilities available in the country now. Since India is making steady progress within the hospitality and travel industry, she says that it is interesting to watch who the big winners are. "We are delighted to have our suite facility recognised by the travel industry, as they are reflective of not only the brand's elegant design elements but of the exemplary service standards that come along," she adds. The 20 tastefully coordinated suites of the property take the hotel's luxury quotient a few notches higher.

► Best Leisure Hotel: Hyatt Place Hampi

A memorable getaway

Hyatt Place Hampi was awarded the Best Leisure Hotel. **Sameeth Guha**, General Manager, Hyatt Place Hampi, feels that India Travel Awards truly lives by its aim to give regional talents the recognition and encouragement they deserve. "The Award will surely benefit us in the hospitality industry as we will be able to reach out to a wider audience on various platforms. When we let our audiences know that we are the best in business through such Awards, it definitely brings us into the limelight and indeed increases our business," says Guha. The location of the hotel is in a destination that is thriving as a quick weekend getaway for travellers from Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune and Goa along with frequent business travellers from across the globe that are mainly on a business visit.

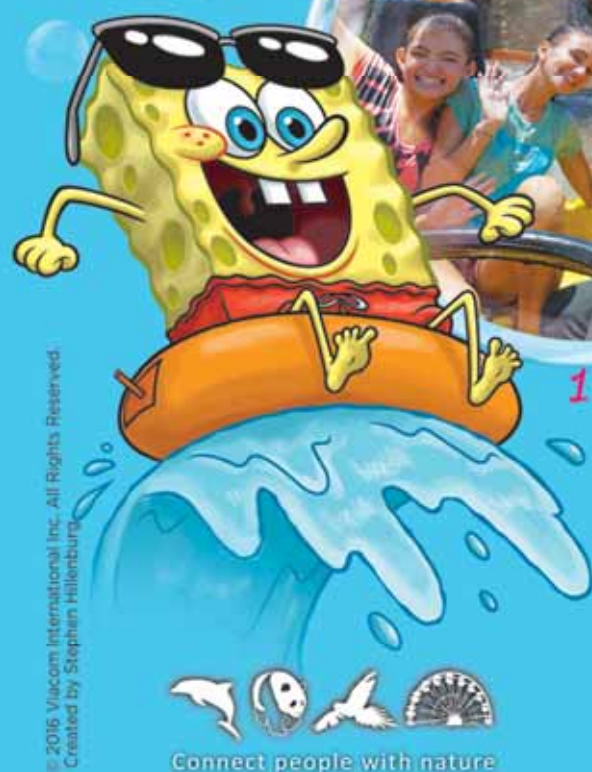
The hotel delivers a different experience while representing their core values of empathy, integrity, creativity, humility, fun and respect. Guha explains that offering services to different types of travellers is challenging but, at the same time, gives the hotel a chance to prove their capability of delivering the best of the services to the guests irrespective of their purpose of visit. "What sets us apart is that we deliver memorable getaway through our impeccable services," adds Guha.



Exploring the exotic side of Canada

Destination Canada-India took its Indian travel trade partners on a Fam to Alberta, Canada, from May 8-16, 2016. The itinerary included Calgary, Banff, Jasper, Edmonton and Lake Louise boasting magnificent landscapes.





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Schengen comes home for biometrics

■ VFS Global has introduced the On-Demand Mobile Visa Service for Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and Slovenia visas applicants across India. Travellers can give their biometrics data and visa application in the comfort of their home or office. A well-trained and professional team from VFS Global will visit the applicant at his/her chosen location anywhere in India to collect the details.



The service is ideal for corporate groups, incentive groups, on-campus students and cultural & sports groups. It is available on any day of the week, including weekends across India. VFS offers a dedicated Helpline numbers for appointment bookings and assistance.

The applicant can call the country specific Helpline number to book an appointment, pay the fee online and receive confirmed appointment details, following which a team will make a visit at a location convenient to the applicant on the appointed date and time to collect biometrics and accept the application.

Working smartly with tech

Is technology a bane or a boon for the travel industry? Here is an objective attempt at answering this eternal question from the trade fraternity's point of view.

Management is effective utilisation of limited resources and if we are able to utilise the limited resources, our work is done. The same goes for technology too. Technology, if utilised properly, is definitely a boon not only to the business world, but to each one of us. Gone are the days when to interact with a person or have meeting with an overseas client, we needed to be physically present. With the invention of video telephony, it's become possible to conduct meetings anywhere, anytime on the globe thus saving time and its associated costs.

One of the greatest innovations of technology today is our smartphone. Smartphone technology is so successful that businesses and their employees have trouble imagining a day without them. Not only can they call, text and IM, they give you access to email, video calling and video conferencing as well. You can also remain connected through so-

cial networking sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn as well as take pictures, use GPS facilities while traveling, keep track of appointments and your contacts. Through the installation of various ap-

plications, the list of possible smartphone uses multiplies by tens of thousands and grows longer every day. What's more, the latest smartphones can display nearly as much of the Internet as PCs, including games and streaming high-definition videos.

Our mobile App, Riya Connect, is the first B2B mobile application in the travel trade, thus allowing our clientele to conduct their businesses round-the-clock through us from the tip of their fingers

We have also moved to Google which has enabled us to take our emails wherever we go from whichever de-

vices we use. This makes the users machine-independent. A powerful tool like Google Drive helps us work, store and access any data like documents, sheets, powerpoints or a PDF from anywhere in

the globe. This makes us look at the workplace from a whole new perspective. As a growing enterprise, technology helps our company to organise and grow the work environment – everything from business operations to payroll to inventory which is managed more efficiently with well-designed software in place. We rely greatly on computers and

software to provide accurate information to effectively manage our business. One way that our organization has stayed in line with the new demands of the consumer is by adopting information technology on a large scale.

We have been aggressively working on Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems to accomplish our business transaction and data processing needs at all our branches both domestically and internationally. With our technology arm, we are able to reach masses of business community and consumers with our travel products and tools, Riya Connect, thus easing the process of our operation and increased revenue. One of the biggest changes that technology has helped us with is the introduction of our mobile app, Riya Connect, which is the first B2B mobile application in the travel trade, thus allowing our clientele to conduct their

businesses round-the-clock through us from the tip of their fingers.

Technology will continue to evolve, but successful enterprises will be the ones that evolve with it, instead of feeling forced out. Let us embrace technology and see our progression as individuals and as a company.

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



Manoj Samuel
Director
Riya Group

SZEGED: Statues & Soups

In our monthly column titled Destinations in the Making, TRAVTALK will bring to you some unknown, yet exotic destinations nestled in the far corners of the world, waiting to be explored.



DESTINATION

INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA

What can you really say about a city with an unusual name? That it's historically rich, and serves delicious, traditional cuisine.

Straddling the mouth of the Maros and both sides of the Tisza, Szeged is a town that would like to be taken seriously. It's South Eastern Hungary's third largest provincial town; economic, administrative and cultural centre; and the seat of Csongrad County. It also serves the tastiest soups money can buy.

They've got history here. In the 2nd century, Szeged was a Roman outpost; in the 5th century it was Attila the Hun's seat; in the 9th century the conquering Magyar chiefs held their first national assembly in present day Opusztaszer; and the 11th century saw the settlement become part of the royal estate. Today, the town thrives on tourism and commerce.

Start your sightseeing tour at the city's true icon, the 'Bridge of Sighs'. Walk along cobbled streets to the downtown area that's literally bursting with cultural and art treasures. Built as a park with

artistic statues, Szechenyiter must surely rank among Hungary's most beautiful squares. Close by stands the grand and artistic Town Hall.

Awaiting your leisure is the neo-classic style



Grunn Orban House that features Hungary's first printing house, and the famous balcony decorated with so-called 'Attila relief'. Art treasures greet you in the Palace of Culture, a museum strong on its

depiction of local history. From here, move on to the neo-classic Zsoter House, and end up at Votive Church, Hungary's fourth largest.

The city seems to have been overrun by statues. There are statues of Ferenc Rakoczi; Ferenc Deak; Lajos Kossuth; Pal Vasarhelyi; Istvan Szechenyi; and Lajos Tisza. And in the pool in front of the Town Hall, rest the symbolic brown 'Blessed and Destructive Tisza Statues'.

If ever succumbing to hunger was a

delight, it's here. Like most things Hungarian, cuisine too is traditional. A classic example is the Szeged Salami, also called 'winter salami' that has its own history. Since the heat destroyed it, its production was limited to winter, hence the name. And then, of course, there's the famous Hungarian paprika. The signature dish, however, is the celebrated Szeged Fish Head Soup, a local delicacy with near celebrity status.

Szeged surprises. It's bigger, livelier, and more culturally vibrant than you'd have imagined, which makes it an interesting stopover. 🍷



MELLOW IN MANDARMANI

From the balmy waves to the sun-kissed sands, everything in Mandarmani warms the spirit. The catch of the day, served fresh and sizzling with a zesty spice rub, delights the palate. It's a place you can bask in the generosity of the locals, long after the sun has set.

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EVENT TALK

JUNE 2016

PATA & MOT roadshow	Seattle	Jun 1
IATA AGM	Dublin	Jun 1-3
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
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Ahmedabad	July 15-16
Travel and Tourism Fair (TTF)	Hyderabad	July 15-17
GBTA Convention	Denver	July 16-20
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Chandigarh	July 21-22
Tourism Investors Meet	New Delhi	July 28-29
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kolkata	July 28-29
PATA – WWF Bagh Mittra Awards	New Dehli	July 29
India International Travel Mart	Chennai	July 29-31

AUGUST 2016

India Hospitality Awards West & South	Pune	Aug 4
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Coimbatore	Aug 4-5
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
Travel Technology Show	Gurgaon	Aug 20-21

SEPTEMBER 2016

TTF	Ahmedabad	Sept 2-4
Philippines Travel Mart	Pasay	Sept 2-4
PATA Travel Mart	Greater Jakarta	Sept 7-9
TTF	Surat	Sept 9-11
TTF	Mumbai	Sept 16-18
Tourism Investment Summit	New Delhi	Sept 21-23
JATA Tourism Expo	Tokyo	Sept 22-25
IITM	Mumbai	Sept 23-25
TTF	Pune	Sept 23-25

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

Kingdom for women

Ladies can avail a variety of special offers in Thailand throughout August such as discounts on select spas, malls, golf, among other activities as part of the exclusive campaign.



TT BUREAU

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has come up with a special campaign with benefits dedicated exclusively for women. August 2016 has been declared as the month for women travellers where the kingdom will offer a wide range of activities, discounts, special offers and privileges to women throughout the month.

Elaborating on the campaign, **Yuthasak Supasorn**, Governor, Tourism Authority of Thailand, said, “We’ve designated August 2016 as a ‘month for women travellers’, in a way of marking Her Maj-

esty Queen Sirikit’s 84th birthday, to encourage the growth of the global and domestic female traveller segment in conjunct with our strategy to promote Thailand to be a quality leisure destination. Increasingly women are coming to Thailand in groups or as solo travellers and expect to find activities and attractions geared to their needs. So, this campaign will broaden their recognition on how Thailand can cater for a great experience to female travellers like nowhere else.”

TAT is working hand-in-hand with airlines, hotels, resorts, spas and tour operators to arrange various



Yuthasak Supasorn
Governor
TAT

activities as well as offer special discounts and privileges throughout the month of August since women are more particular than men about privacy and safety.

Imparting more details

on the promotional concepts, **Srisuda Wanapinyosak**, Deputy Governor for International Marketing Asia and South Pacific, TAT, explained, “TAT has come up with five different promotional concepts: Beautiful Look, Beautiful Shape, Beautiful Mind, Beautiful Retreat, and Beautiful Experience, which are all designed to meet the varied needs of women travellers and to boost Thai tourism products and services that are geared towards female travellers.” Various other special arrangements like immigration lanes, parking and airfares only for ladies are being provided to female travellers during the month.

Win a trip for 2 to Europe

CentrumDirect’s ongoing contest for its travel trade partners was launched to motivate and incentivise them. **Guruprasad T C**, CEO & MD, CentrumDirect Limited, talks about the contest and other plans for the trade.



TT BUREAU

QCan you share some details of your contest?

Besides offering attractive commissions to the travel agents on the products and services, CentrumDirect also launches various incentives from time to time and one such program is **Jai Ho.3-** a contest for the travel agent and the tour operator community that has been running from April through June 2016. Among the many attractive rewards offered in this contest



Guruprasad T C
CEO & MD
CentrumDirect Limited

the most exciting one is the trip for two to Europe along with ₹1,00,000 given for shopping!

QAre there any new developments from the travel trade point of view?

CentrumDirect is committed to build a robust, alternate channel of travel agents across India. We already have more than 2,000 travel agents empanelled with us whose contribution is significant to our overall business objectives. We not only have revenue-sharing arrangements with them, but we also keep launching encouraging contest and promotion schemes for them, from time to time.

QDo you have any activities planned for the trade?

We are in the process of designing a scheme for the travel agents and tour operators for the forthcoming season of Diwali and Christmas. We are also working on a tech platform to connect better in order to drive mutually-beneficial objectives.

We are committed to building a mutually rewarding business association with each of them, and to serve clients better.

Management restructure at Etihad

All businesses of Etihad Airways will be run under the aegis of Etihad Aviation Group, which will now be the parent company of the brand.



TT BUREAU

The Etihad Aviation Group Board of Directors, under the Chairmanship of **H.E. Mohamed Mubarak Al Mazrouei**, have announced the new management structure for the Etihad Aviation Group PJSC, which was formally established by Abu Dhabi Law No. 6 of 2014. Al Mazrouei said: “Etihad Airways has been steadily evolving into the Etihad Aviation

Group for a number of years. This has been driven by the formation of new companies, including Etihad Airways Engineering, Etihad Global Cargo Management Company, the Global Loyalty Company, Hala Abu Dhabi, and Etihad Airport Services. The acquisition of minority equity stakes in Alitalia, airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Etihad Regional operated by Darwin Airline, Jet Airways, and Virgin Australia, has also

necessitated the need for a dedicated team to manage our shareholding, and the delivery of wide-ranging synergies that are beneficial to all parties.”

James Hogan, who was appointed Etihad Aviation Group President and CEO, will oversee the key Etihad Aviation Group functions led by **James Rigney** as Group Chief Financial Officer, **Kevin Knight** as Group Chief Strat-

egy and Planning Officer, **Ray Gammell** as Group Chief People and Performance Officer, and **Robert Webb** as Group Chief Information and Technology Officer. These areas will provide leadership, governance and strategic direction in their expert areas across all companies in the Etihad Aviation Group.



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India Convention Promotion Bureau

New Delhi

Madhu Dubey has taken over as Executive Director, India Convention Promotion Bureau. She brings with her 33 years of government experience, having served at India Tourism Development Corporation and the Ministry of Tourism in various capacities and handled diverse portfolios at head office and field postings in India and overseas. She has worked as GM (Publicity and Public Relations) ITDC. As Deputy Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India she handled Publicity, Planning and Niche Tourism Departments.



Hyatt Regency Pune

Pune

Vishal Singh has been appointed as the General Manager of Hyatt Regency Pune. Singh stepped into the hospitality industry in 1996 and has worked at premium hotels in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Goa, before moving to Pune. An MBA in Marketing and graduate of IHM, Pusa, New Delhi, he is passionate about Food & Beverage, and has rich experience in the field. He started his career with Hyatt in 2002. Singh's tryst with the Hyatt recurred in 2013 with a takeover Ista property in Pune where he joined as its first General Manager under Hyatt brand name.



ITDC

New Delhi

India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) has announced the appointment of **Vijay Dutt** as General Manager for its flagship hotel The Ashok, New Delhi. With 28 years of extensive experience, he brings a wealth of industry knowledge in the luxury hotel segment. In his previous role he held Senior Management positions as General Manager, Lalitha Mahal Palace, Mysore; Resident Manager of The Ashok, New Delhi and Corporate Marketing where he led the operation teams to drive sales and service to excellence.



Hotel Ambica Empire

Chennai

Hotel Ambica Empire, Chennai has appointed **G. Muralidharan** as the General Manager. Muralidharan has 19 years of experience in the hospitality sector in areas of business growth, business development, client satisfaction and overall operations. He has previously worked with Raj Park Chennai & Tirupathi and GRT Group of Hotels & Resorts, Tuticorin, as General Manager. Muralidharan played a key role in setting up the bar named Anchor. He can fluently speak English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and French Basic.



Four Points by Sheraton Agra

Agra

Four Points by Sheraton Agra has appointed **Paul Gomes** as its new General Manager. Gomes started his career with ITC and went on to work with InterContinental, Imperial Group of hotels Dubai, Sarovar Hotels and Country Inn and Suites. In his the new role, Gomes is looking at a growth in the domestic market which he thinks was not covered previously.



Anmol Zutshi has been appointed as Resident Manager, The Ashok, New Delhi. Zutshi, an MBA in Marketing has 28 years of experience in the hospitality space since he joined as a management trainee at ITDC. He has previously served as a General Manager, Hyderabad House, the official venue for hosting visiting Heads of Government and State by the Honourable Prime Minister of India. As Resident Manager, The Ashok, Zutshi's role will be of a chief coordinator for operational activities of the hotel.



Shangri-La Hotel

Bengaluru

Andreas Streiber has been appointed as the General Manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru. Streiber a native of Germany, brings with him over 32 years of hospitality, operational and management experience. A seasoned hotelier Streiber previously served as opening General Manager Shangri-La Hotel, Qinhuaodao from 2014 to 2016. He joined the Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts group as director of food and beverage at Shangri-La Hotel, Hangzhou in 2002 and ever since there has been no stopping him. He has worked with six Shangri-La group properties in Asia.



Swissôtel Kolkata

Kolkata

Subhrajit Bardhan has been appointed the General Manager of Swissôtel Kolkata. Bardhan has a career spanning more than 21 years in the hospitality industry in India, Europe and Hong Kong. He has been associated with renowned hotels of the world like The Oberoi Group, Hyatt Hotels and the award-winning Ananda in the Himalayas. Bardhan began his career with The Oberoi Hotels, after being selected for the prestigious Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development.



Rajiv Anand has been given responsibility to head Corporate Marketing and Sales; Public Relations; Advertising and Culture divisions at The Ashok, ITDC. He brings with him experience of over 25 years in which he has worked at various positions in different divisions of ITDC like Marketing and Hotel Sales, Hotels, Duty Free Trade, Corporate Services, Tours and Travels. Anand is working in Corporate Marketing and Sales for the past one year.

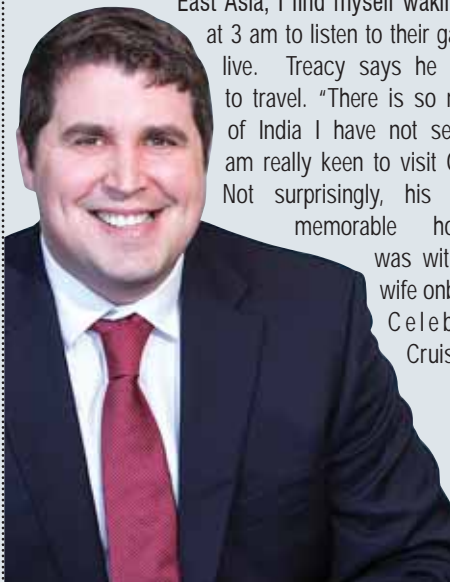


TALKing People

Michel Koopman, General Manager, The Leela Ambience Gurgaon Hotel & Residences, loves to play golf whenever he gets the time. "I love to watch my favourite series on Netflix *Suits* and *Narcos*. I have seen most of India, as I have already been here for three years and I would like to travel to Mussorie and Leh/Ladakh for domestic and international to Bhutan. Also, I love going to Thailand as I have my house there. I like Yunnan and Italian cuisine," he says.



Sean Treacy, Managing Director (Singapore & Southeast Asia), Royal Caribbean Cruises enjoys going for long walks, which helps him clear his head and relieves stress. One thing he is more passionate about is American football. "Now that I live in South East Asia, I find myself waking up at 3 am to listen to their games live. Treacy says he loves to travel. "There is so much of India I have not seen. I am really keen to visit Goa." Not surprisingly, his most memorable holiday was with his wife onboard Celebrity Cruises.



The Director for Tourism Malaysia in Mumbai, **Mohd Hafiz Hashim**, lives life by the motto that everyone deserves a second chance. "By second chance I mean we have to learn from our past experiences and make sure we head in the right direction. My mother has been my greatest inspiration from whom I have imbibed the right values," he says. Hashim reads a lot of fiction as well as topics of general interest to keep abreast of what is happening. "My favourite past time is playing golf and of course travelling. My most memorable holiday trip was when I visited the Mecca, Medina and Egypt. It was truly an amazing and unforgettable experience," he adds.



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Kiwis upweight trade training

New Zealand Tourism may be hosting smaller numbers of Indian travellers for now, but **Kevin Bowler**, Chief Executive, Tourism New Zealand, is optimistic about the numbers rising as the countries inch towards better air connectivity and aggressive trade engagement.



AMIT BHASIN FROM NEW ZEALAND

QHow has the year been for New Zealand Tourism and what are your key markets?

The year has been quite good. The international visitor spends were up by 31 per cent. It took 13 years for us to increase the visitors from two million to three million but we are pacing. In the year ending March 2016, over 3.25 million international visitors came to New Zealand. International tourism is one of New Zealand's largest earners of foreign exchange, adding around NZD 11.8 billion annually to the nation's economy. Our key markets are China, Germany, the US, Australia, the UK and Japan.

QHow would you describe the profile of Indians travelling to New Zealand?

We mostly receive honeymooners/holiday couples and MICE, mostly incentive travel. New Zealand sees a high level of interest from Indians as we have a lot of common connections — English, cricket; both are Commonwealth nations so politics is alike too. We remain extremely positive about Indian market. Although the base is very small from India, it looks very promising and positive. We know selling New Zealand is complicated but we are very keen to work with the trade.



“We remain extremely positive about Indian market. Although the base is very small from India, it looks very promising and positive. We know selling New Zealand is complicated but we are very keen to work with the trade.”

Kevin Bowler
Chief Executive
Tourism New Zealand

QWhat are the current numbers from India?

The current numbers are 46,500 with a growth of 14 per cent (YoY) in 2015. The growth has been four times in the last three years. These are the results of a robust campaign in trade and our strategy to have opinion leaders like cricketers and film actors as the flag-bearers of our campaign. Having Sidharth Malhotra as the brand ambassador is also helping us spread awareness.

QDo you think lack of direct air connectivity is hindering trade between the two countries?

Air connectivity is a barrier but we see it to be improving. Whenever we

have a direct flight, it would be Delhi or Mumbai as these are the two markets from where we get maximum Indians travelling to New Zealand.

QWhat is the USP of New Zealand and strategy deployed for Indian market?

New Zealand offers an incredible range of diverse activities. India offers us quite a substantial opportunity, even though the base is too small. Indian visitors almost doubled to New Zealand as compared to Australia during the last one year. Now, we are not promoting travel to New Zealand in peak season but rather in non-peak season. April-May-June is a shoulder season for us and for Indians it happens to be holiday time.

This gels well with our strategy of promoting New Zealand as a year-round destination. Hobbiton/ Middle Earth were useful starting points; momentum came from them and we are trying to encash the same. India is very much the focus for Tourism New Zealand.

QAnything you'd like to add for the trade?

We know that having a well-informed travel trade is critical to converting interest into bookings, and the additional funding will help us upweight the training of travel agents to support their ability to sell travel to New Zealand during the shoulder seasons.

Alongside this we will extend our investment in aviation partnerships to maximise sales in the key May-June travel period for Indian visitors.

13 Indians attend TRENZ 2016

New Zealand's biggest annual international tourism event, TRENZ hosted 13 participants from India this year. Last year's edition saw attendance from 11 participants, said **Steven Dixon**, Regional Manager- South and South East Asia, Tourism New Zealand. He noted that as once they get sustainable numbers from India, direct flight between the two nations would follow. An Air Service Agreement has been signed between the President of India and New Zealand Prime Minister who also holds the tourism portfolio. “The best part about Indians is they travel during the shoulder season viz., April-May-June. Indians are right now in the aspirational part — planning and buying.”

Steven Dixon

Regional Manager- South and South East Asia,
Tourism New Zealand



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