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Maya reigns in the West



The third edition of West India Travel Awards felicitated achievers in the travel and tourism industry of the region during a glittering ceremony held at Novotel Pune Nagar Road on August 5, 2016. The opening ceremony was graced by the presence of **Taware Pandurang**, Founder/President, Agri Tourism Development Company, **Dattaram Sawant**, General Manager-Finance, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, and **Saudamini Naik**, Gladrags Mrs. India. The who's who of the travel industry from West India attended at the event. **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, Managing Director, Jagsons Travels, and Co-founder of GPS, was declared the Face of Innovative Tourism. **Rajiv Duggal**, CEO, Lavasa, won big at the awards. Besides being declared the Best Marketing Professional of the year, Duggal also picked up the awards for Lavasa International Convention Centre which won the Best Convention Centre; and Lavasa Tourism which was named the Best All Seasons Destination. The award for the Most Trending Personality of the year went to **Ajay Chhabria**, Managing Director, In-Time Travels, while **Anuj Bang** of roomsXML was declared the Entrepreneur of the Year.

P.P. Khanna is new ADTOI President

The biennial election for the new executive council of Association of Domestic Tour Operators (ADTOI) for the term 2016-18 was held on August 10 at the Metropolitan Hotel, New Delhi. **P.P. Khanna** was elected president besides the 12 members for the association's executive council.



NISHA VERMA

Following a neck-and-neck contest, **P.P. Khanna** of Diplomatic Travel Point, emerged winner and took over as the President of ADTOI, trouncing his main rival **Subhash Verma** of Travel Plus – Unit of Ibis Travels. **Rajat Sawhney** of Rave Tours & Travels is the new

named the new Joint Secretary and **Kamal Gandhi** of Transglobal Tours & Travels is the Treasurer.

An ecstatic Khanna said, "I would like to congratulate the team which has been elected for the term 2016-18. I am thankful to each and every member who has voted for putting this team together.



We have a number of issues ahead of us with a single priority — our members' benefit. We want to concentrate on saving our members from the circumstances which exist in the travel trade today and help them survive.

P.P. Khanna
President, ADTOI

Vice President, while **Chetan Gupta** of R. G. Destinations was elected as General Secretary. **Debashis Dey** of Asra Tours & Travels has been

We have a number of issues ahead of us with a single priority — our members' benefit. We want to concentrate on saving our members from the

circumstances which exist in the travel trade today and help them survive.

"Secondly, we have to improve communication and connectivity with each other, for which we have to design a dynamic website. It would not only connect the members with each other, but also with the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and state tourism bodies.

Apart from that we want to focus on ethical tourism practices, as agents are enraged with how OTAs are making the travel agents' business suffer. We want to run ADTOI smoothly while rectifying and resolving issues of our members across the country," Khanna said.

The Executive Members for the new term are:

Jatinder Singh Bhatia of Travel Experts, **Reena Chopra** of Magical Holidays, **Arvind Khanna** of Jyoti Travel, **Ankit Miglani** of Welcome Trips, **Anil K. Rajput** of Promark Travels, **Sanjay Saxena** of Cordial India Tours and Events, **Ashish Sehgal** of Hora Tourism & Hospitality Consultancy, and **Manoj Varshney** of Tulsi Travels.

The elected executive council turned out to be a mix from both the contesting teams. Khanna said, "Everybody contesting for the elections were ADTOI members.

There were two teams — Dream Team and Team Positive, and now with the final team in place, we have to fulfil the dreams positively."

Wi-Fi connectivity for monuments

With an aim to improve infrastructure and provide state-of-the-art facilities, the Ministry of Tourism has identified 100 monuments that will soon become Wi-Fi zones and will also offer welcome kits with SIM cards to travellers on e-Tourist Visa.



AHANA GURUNG

The Ministry of Tourism is focusing on several initiatives that will not only boost tourism, but also create an environment to accommodate the exponential growth attributed mainly to the introduction of the e-Tourist Visa (eTV). The first six months of 2016 have seen a growth of about nine per cent in tourists availing eTV services, informed **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. "About 4.6 lakh tourists have availed the facility in the past six

months and we expect more growth after amendments for eTV come to play," he said.

He added that several meetings have been held with the Ministry of Home Affairs and other relevant bodies on reforms in eTV with regard to its validity, entry, and application duration, along with the introduction of e-medical visa and business e-visa, which are expected to be launched soon. He revealed, "Shortly, eTV holders will be given welcome kits with SIM cards, an initiative that will be implemented for the first time."

Digital India

The Secretary also revealed plans to enhance amenities at tourist hubs and set new standards for cleanliness. Along with the Ministry of Culture, 100 monuments which are popular heritage sites have been identified to receive world class infrastructure. "These 100 destinations will also have Wi-Fi for which we are in talks with Telcom and BSNL. We are financing a major part of the Wi-Fi projects while some are being financed by BSNL including several state governments."

"About 4.6 lakh tourists have availed the facility in the past six months and we expect more growth after amendments for eTV come to play. Shortly, eTV holders will be given welcome kits with SIM cards, an initiative that will be implemented for the first time."

Vinod Zutshi

Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
Government of India



While road-side amenities are being amped up through the Swadesh Darshan scheme, cleanliness issues will be addressed by the Ministry of Sanitation and Drinking Water in tandem with state governments, he mentioned. "They will begin with 10 monuments initially, and cover the rest step by step."

tee. We have also appointed a media agency to promote tourism all over the world."

Through the media plan, MOT will promote tourism via print, electronic, social media and various other internet means. "We have even included the regional print and broadcast networks in this. When it comes to international markets, the plan will be country specific. We have also identified certain countries like China, where we have channels for which promotions will also be carried out in regional language publications." Zutshi stated

that they plan to involve state governments in the plan in attempt of a synergised effort. "We want this to be a joint effort; after all, we are all working for a common cause."

Media convergence

To ramp up its promotional activity, MOT has devised a global media plan that will come into effect in a few days. He elaborated, "The media plan has been approved by the Minister and a special commit-

Power Points

- MOT has hired a media agency to promote India all over the world
- Talks are on with BSNL and Telcom to make Wi-Fi available at 100 monuments
- MOT has devised a global media plan that will come into effect in a few days

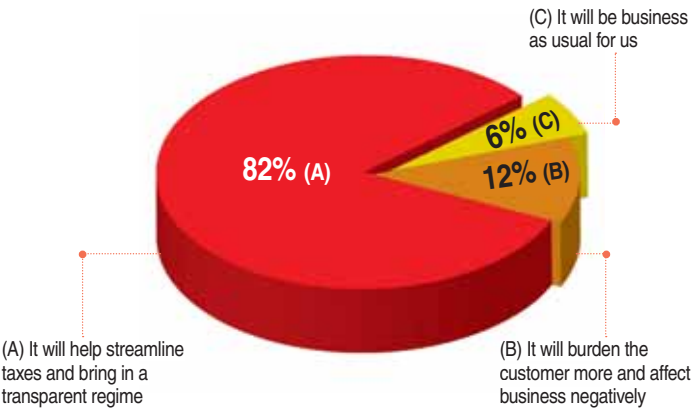
Reduce threshold for hotels to `50 cr: MOT

One of the major challenges for investment in the tourism sector in India is the classification of investment into hospitality sector as commercial real estate, highlights **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India.

Overcoming that hurdle, MOT has now classified the hospitality sector under the infrastructure segment for investment, but a few roadblocks still pertain. In order to meet the deficit in hotel rooms and allow mid level players to enter the market, Billa revealed that MOT is in talks with the Ministry of Finance and RBI to bring about a solution. He said, "The current proposal we are going with is to bring down the threshold to `50 crore which will allow hotels of about 40-50 rooms to fall under the same space, thus bringing about more room for development."



Streamline taxes with GST, says trade



The Goods and Services Tax (GST) may be halfway through in India, but the trade appears largely divided on the issue. **TRAVTALK** reached out to the industry to gauge the overall mood. A whopping 82 per cent voted for GST as a tool to streamline taxes, about 12 per cent said it'll burden the customer more and might affect business and 6 per cent expect the business to run as usual. As they wait with bated breath to see what GST will bring in its wake, it's heartening to see the trade seeing the bright side of this much-debated but little-understood tax system.



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Convention from Sept 18-21

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) will hold its 32nd Convention from September 18-21, 2016, at ITC Grand Chola, Chennai.

 NISHA VERMA

IATO has finally announced the date of its 32nd convention, after much deliberation to avoid a clash with the Incredible India Tourism Investors Summit organised by the Ministry of Tourism. Apprising about the upcoming convention, **Lally Matthews**, Honorary Secretary, IATO, revealed, "We will be doing our convention at ITC Grand Chola, Chennai. We have received the final approval from the government of Tamil Nadu on the same."

Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO, said, "The stupendous success of the previous convention has raised the expectations of the members and sponsors. More than 1,200 delegates are expected for the three day event and the IATO convention is eagerly

awaited by all. Members look for an enchanting destination, and Chennai fits in very well."

IATO held its luncheon meeting on August 1, 2016, and had all the senior of-

officials addressed the IATO members, shared the various plans of the government and discussed their issues.

Matthews said, "The Secretary, Tourism, had

He further revealed, "The dates for BRICS Convention to be held in Khajuraho have also been changed to September 1-2, 2016. It's because of the flights to Khajuraho. We were given the opportunity to select 25 tour operators to participate in the BRICS Convention. The response was overwhelming. We were thinking of selecting the tour operators on first-come, first-serve basis, but then we got an overwhelming response with 94 entries, and then we had to do a draw of lots to select 25 people."

Apart from events, "We are organising a Fam tour to Orchha in August for our members. We have made the sub committees, which will be meeting and giving their inputs to the executive committee and we will be acting on that," added **Matthews**.



“More than 1,200 delegates are expected for the three day event and the IATO convention is eagerly awaited by all.”

Pronab Sarkar
President, IATO

officials from Ministry of Tourism in attendance — **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary; **Udai Pratap Singh**, Additional Secretary; **Meenakshi Sharma**, Additional Director General, and **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary. The

promised that he would attend our member's meet for an interactive session to discuss things with the members directly. Also we wanted to welcome the two new officers in the Ministry."

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Inevitable tax reform?

Tax has always been a dreaded word, and now with the inclusion of a new terminology — GST (Good and Services Tax) has made the situation sombre. GST, which is expected to be implemented from April 1, 2017, aims to replace multiple state and central levies with a single tax. The country is inching closer to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, as the Lok Sabha unanimously passed the amendments to the GST Bill recommended by the Rajya Sabha.

GST will affect various sectors differently. The travel and hospitality industry has a plethora of taxes, both on the central and state level, GST may simplify compliance procedures and reduce multiple taxes. However, it is unclear whether various benefits available under the existing Foreign Trade Policy will continue under GST. Ultimately, GST should have a positive impact on the industry and should not affect agents adversely. We hope that the conventions and meets that are coming up in the next few months will discuss this issue in detail.

Workathon begins...

The next two months are going to be gruelling for the travel industry - September and October will be flooded with conventions, summits and travel marts. However, as busy as we may be, we need to make sure that we don't just mark our attendances at these events. These gatherings should provide the ideal platform for members to discuss problems plaguing the travel and hospitality industry and find out ways to counter the same. Many a time we come together, discuss problems and then forget all about it, until the next meeting where we repeat the same routine. Let's try and make these conventions and summits different. Can we follow up on our discussions and try to bring about a fruitful result? The industry is at an important juncture at this moment and this is the time to discuss our problems and decide in unison. Only if we start thinking together as an industry can we get on to the next level. So, time to get, set, go...

HR Rhapsody @ SOTC

In a people intensive business like travel and tourism coupled with competition from other services industries and war for talent, Human Resources is playing a major role in determining the success of the organisation and the industry.

The travel industry is a people intensive industry and is very inclusive in nature since it employs people across all strata of society. In countries where tourism has become a flourishing service industry, it has a far reaching economic and social impact on national development. Tourism directly generates services, products, foreign currency, employment and investments and thus has become a string economic activity. In several countries it acts as an engine for development through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of direct and indirect employment. Tourism contributes 9.1 per cent of the world's GDP and 8.7 per cent of jobs worldwide.

However the travel and tourism industry is becoming more and more competitive. The industry is challenged by a growing demand for customer orientation, increasing international competition, volatile markets in an insecure environment, changing demogra-

phy and customer preferences and choices. Technological advances are changing the way modern businesses operate, and both leisure and business travel are no exception. Rather than deteriorating the offline travel industry, new technologies are pushing it forward. Over the years there has been a change in the demand and supply of human resources for the travel industry, with the demand now being for more specialised personnel.

Since SOTC has different products and services offerings, the workforce comprises of diverse skills sets. Together with leaders and business managers, HR strives to foster an environment that empowers all employees as it is believed that such approach helps in creating a springboard for all employees to reach their full potential. Throughout the year the HR team along with employees implements various practices addressing some of the following dimensions:

❖ **Strategic HR alignment:** Strategic HR activities include managing change, people and business transformation.

❖ **Workforce planning, Comp and Benefit and Analytics:** The workforce planning team is involved in activities pertaining to supply and demand of talent, forecasting & budgeting, compensation, benefit benchmarking, preparing HR MIS and using HRMS Technology to develop necessary analytics.

❖ **Talent Acquisition:** The talent acquisition uses best practices in selecting talent. In addition talent acquisition runs special programmes like S.P.A.R.K (campus hires and interns), Springboard (Mid management hiring from other industry).

❖ **Learning and Development:** At SOTC, there is enormous emphasis and thrust for L&D. The L&D team focusses on employee train-

ing, coaching and mentoring of Employees.

❖ **Ingenium-Talent management:** The talent management programme called Ingenium helps in identifying talented employees and high performers through potential development centers to develop future talent and leadership pipeline.

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

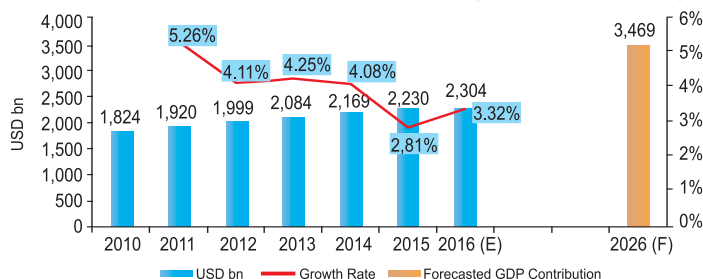


Nishant Kolgaonkar
Head-Human Resources
SOTC Travel

Tourism's share in global GDP is 9.8%

The tourism industry has been recognised as a significant revenue generator and contributed \$7,170.3 billion to the world GDP in 2015.

Direct Contribution of Tourism to GDP (Real 2015 prices)

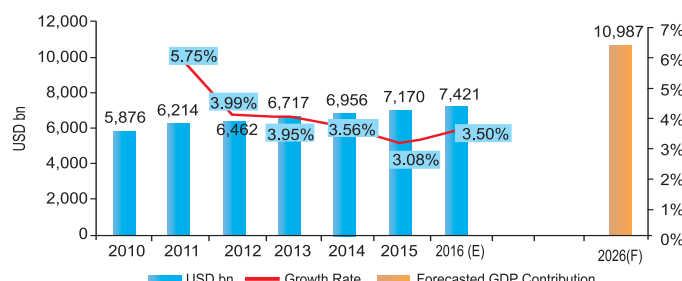


Source: Travel & Tourism Economic Impact, 2016, WTTC (E-Estimated & F-Future Projection)

❖ Travel and tourism also contributes 9.8% of Global GDP, higher than other sectors such as chemicals manufacturing (8.6%), agriculture (8.5%), education (8.4%), automotive manufacturing (7%) and anking (5.9%).

❖ It has been projected by 2026, the direct contribution of tourism to GDP will be \$3,469 billion and the total tourism contribution would be \$10,987 billion.

Total Contribution of Tourism to GDP



Source: Travel & Tourism Economic Impact, 2016, WTTC (E-Estimated & F-Future Projection)

New Incentive Policy on the anvil

Dr. Sanjay Singh, General Manager, Chhattisgarh Tourism, gives details about the state's initiatives to enhance infrastructure through a new Incentive Policy that is slated to be released next month.



AHANA GURUNG

The relatively young state of Chhattisgarh is aggressively on the go to up its tourist arrivals numbers and boost tourism in the state. In 2014, the state received 244.88 lakh domestic tourists and 7,777 foreign tourist arrivals with a growth of 19.37 per cent and 24.81 per cent respectively.

Singh said that the state has several tourism products to offer but



Dr. Sanjay Singh
General Manager
Chhattisgarh Tourism

The new policy will cover broader areas in Chhattisgarh with equal emphasis throughout the whole state, as opposed to the previous version which concentrated more on the tribal regions

infrastructure is often a roadblock for growth. In an attempt to foster infrastructure development, Chhattisgarh is also coming up with a fresh Incentive Policy which will be released soon.

"Since the previous Incentive Policy expired two months ago, we are working on another new and improved policy which is currently being reviewed and will be released next month. The new policy will cover broader areas in Chhattisgarh with equal emphasis throughout the whole state, as opposed to the previous version which concentrated more on the tribal regions. This will help balance out developments. In addition, the new scheme will offer a validity of 10 years, with tax

exemption on luxury, entertainment and electricity, among other concessions," he elaborated.

Adding further, Singh said that the state's single window system has been administered to enhance interactions and simplify the process for clearances and incentives and a special committee has

been formed to fast-track tourism projects.

Chhattisgarh is currently focusing on developing niche tourism products such as eco tourism, mainly its water bodies.

"We have a total of three national parks and 11 wildlife sanctuaries. Apart from this, the state

is rich in water dams, the largest one being Hasdeo Bango dam, and about 40-50 fresh backwaters that range from 10-50 kms with green forests all around. There are adventure tourism opportunities surrounding these areas, so the idea is to turn these water bodies into tourist hubs with state-of-the-art amenities. ↓

57 countries to attend KTM 2016 from Sept 27

■ The upcoming ninth edition of Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) is set to be the biggest and farthest-reaching yet. The biennial event will witness 57 countries besides 20 Indian states during the three-day Mart, which is being organised by the KTM Society in association with the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala on September 27, World Tourism Day, in Kochi.

Ten countries will be represented at the Mart for the first time, with Mexico, Georgia,

Japan, China, Chile, Greece, Iran, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Botswana – markets as diverse as they are distant – all confirmed to participate. The 560 total international delegates registered for KTM 2016 features the biggest-ever contingents from 10 highly-prized traditional markets, including the US, Canada and Australia. Domestic participation too has seen an uptick, buoyed by aggressive marketing campaigns. Some 1,304 Indian buyers will participate this year.



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Bridging the air space with agents

A lot has been said about the relationship between travel agents and airlines getting sour over rate parity, commissions, acceptance of credit cards, and other issues. TRAVTALK catches up with some senior airlines officials to gauge how the two sectors can work together to bridge this gap.



NISHA VERMA

“What we want from the travel agents is to stimulate the demand. At Air India we have an occupancy of 80 per cent in the domestic sector. There are 20 seats going vacant in every flight. We need travel agents to fill those 20 seats. We have made a lot of changes in our incentive schemes. We offer web parity and also accept agent credit cards. We have even simplified the Productivity Linked Bonus because both airlines and agents have to survive, make money and help each other.”



Ashwani Lohani
Chairman & Managing
Director, Air India

“It is important for both airlines and agents to focus on the areas of mutual benefit. We saw this collaborative approach in the re-introduction of the Joint Bank Guarantee scheme in India, as well as the implementation of different forms of electronic methods of remittance. In order to achieve a win-win outcome, both airlines and agents will need to continue to build trust and transparency so as to bring the airline-agent relationship to a higher level and maximise the opportunities in India.”



Rustom Cavina
Manager-India Branch
IATA

“At present we accept American Express credit cards in India. As Hahn Air covers commissions charged for using these cards, we have not experienced complaints from the travel agent fraternity. In addition, we do cover a wide range of other payment modalities which can be found on our website. We have initiated talks to explore further possibilities of the acceptance of other credit cards in India and we hope to share some news soon.”



Sanjay Shrivastava
Director Global Account
Management Northern
and Eastern India
Hahn Air Lines



Harvinder Singh
Country Manager
India & Director, United
Airlines Business
Services

“We value the feedback we receive from all of our customers and take account of that, with a view to improve our products and services. There is always potential to build on the good relationships we have with the travel community around India. Together we can enhance our partnership through exchanging ideas, sharing best practices and by United Team India providing regular product updates. Going forward, we plan more workshops with our agency partners.”



Arun Pandeya
Country Head
Air Canada

“Travel agents have many topics to discuss with the airlines, and the recently held meet with TAAI was a good forum to engage and exchange views and ideas. I believe the best way to move forward is to continue this healthy engagement. Secondly, both sides should find good workable ideas to strengthen the relationships. There needs to be a healthy engagement on a bilateral basis as well as at the industry level. Agencies also have become more technology driven and work with best practices.”



Wolfgang Will
Director- South Asia
Lufthansa German
Airlines

“It's not getting easier to get business. We need people in the industry who have ideas to develop something new. Agents need to adapt and try forming partnerships, exactly the same way as the airlines are doing. And it is very important to reach out to many more customers and develop a network. For travel agents as well, it is about consolidation, partnering and innovation. Those who understand will move into it. We should continue discussions and talk about how we can benefit each other.

We have to break this misleading perception that it's agencies v/s airlines or vice versa.”

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150 cr for Mumbai port

The Mumbai Port Trust will be floating a `150 crore tender for upgrading the cruise terminal to help foster cruise tourism and make Mumbai viable as a possible home port for liners.



HAZEL JAIN

Talks about the Mumbai Port Trust being upgraded has been on for a while a now. That's the reason why **Sanjay Bhatia**, Chairman, Mumbai Port Trust (MPT), found almost nine reports about it on his table when he took over office two months ago. He says, “Only thing left is implementation. The new terminal will be exclusively for cruise liners. We have invited tenders for `150 crore for the upgradation that will convert it to a two-acre terminal from the current half acre. We have received a clear mandate from the PM and Minister of Shipping, Nitin Gadkari, to develop Mumbai Port as the gateway for international cruise. Within this year, we will get 59 ships to Mumbai and are targeting more than 100 ships for next year. This year we should have around 70,000-80,000 passengers coming in this season which lasts from October to May.”



Sanjay Bhatia
Chairman
Mumbai Port Trust (MPT)

MPT is now preparing a masterplan for the eastern front of Mumbai's coast. “Within two years, there will be a 10-km walkway here, an eco-park, a huge garden, and a marina. We have appointed an advisor and a PMIC (Project Monitoring & Implementation Committee) to help us with this. Our ultimate aim is to have a full home port where ships return after the cruise. We will also focus on the coastal passenger traffic,” Bhatia adds.

The new terminal is slated to look like the old airport and have facilities that are available at the airport. The upgrade will be done in phases. “The first phase will start by March 2017. The delay is because our land on the north side is currently given on lease, which we will not be renewing. They are also under litigation. So the development will start only after things are sorted. The marina and the walkway will be the first to come up,” Bhatia reveals.

MPT will also look into improving immigration and security measures with better technology. It has prepared new SOPs for these processes which are getting refined with help from the Ministry of Tourism. **Valsa Nair Singh**, Principal Secretary, Tourism and Culture, Govt. of Maharashtra, added, “The Ministry of Tourism created a joint task force last December with the Ministry of Shipping for cruise tourism.”

What is GST?

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been in the news recently but do we really understand how it is going to impact our daily business? TRAVTALK simplifies GST for you to know your taxes better.



Salient Features:

- ❖ Defined as any tax on supply of goods and services other than on alcohol for human consumption
- ❖ The power to make laws in respect of supplies in the course of inter-state trade or commerce will be vested only in the Union Government
- ❖ Centre will levy IGST on inter-state supply of goods and services
- ❖ Administration of GST will be the responsibility of the GST Council, which will be the apex policy making body for GST

Status: The Constitution Amendment Bill for Goods and Services Tax (GST) gets cleared in Rajya Sabha on August 3, 2016 and by the Lok Sabha on August 8, 2016

Purpose: To replace all the indirect taxes levied on goods and services by the Centre and States

To be implemented: April 2017

What it entails: Replace all indirect taxes levied on goods and services by the Centre and States and bring in a single tax regime

Benefits:



- ❖ Wider tax base, necessary for lowering the tax rates and eliminating classification disputes of multiplicity of taxes and their cascading effects
- ❖ Rationalisation of tax structure and simplification of compliance procedures
- ❖ Harmonisation of Centre and State tax administrations, which would reduce duplication and compliance costs
- ❖ Automation of compliance procedures to reduce errors and increase efficiency

Impact on travel:

- ❖ Flying to become expensive, as service tax will be replaced by GST. Current service tax, which ranges between 6% and 9%, will surpass 15%, if not 18%, with GST, effectively doubling the tax rate
- ❖ R&D cess, payable on franchise fees and technical know-how, is likely to be subsumed under GST, thus simplifying compliance procedures and reducing multiple taxes for construction and renovation of hotels

Exhibitions v/s Roadshows

Exhibitions and roadshows are becoming key for companies to attract potential clients and apprise the existing ones about their products and services. TRAVTALK finds out what the participants think of the two in terms of brand exposure and yielding business.

	Exhibitor	Buyer
Participants	 Kerry Healy Vice President Sales AccorHotels Asia Pacific	 Homa Mistry Chief Executive Officer Trail Blazer Tours India
Exhibitions v/s Roadshows-Which is more beneficial?	It is important to participate in both depending on the size of each and the particular focus.	Exhibitions are better for sure as we are well planned and our expectations are defined.
Pre-fixed meetings or walk-ins?	Pre-fixed meetings are better. One can prepare and plan for the needs of the clients and focus on what needs to be showcased. It is important to organise planned meetings for most of your day at any exhibition but allow for some flexibility and free time for drop-ins.	Pre-fixed meetings are better as value for money is important. However if one has the chance and time then walk-in meetings are only a bonus.

INPUTS BY ANKITA SAXENA

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Investment fillip to infrastructure

Tourism Investors Meet (TIM) 2016, organised by FICCI from July 28-29, brought together 72 buyers and seven state tourism boards to present investible projects and attract investments for infrastructural development in tourism.

ANKITA SAXENA

At the second edition of Tourism Investors Meet (TIM), 72 buyers as against 55 buyers in 2015 and seven states namely Rajasthan, Karnataka, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana, came together at one platform to discuss investments to develop projects in the states for better tourism facilities. Investors from different tourism sectors such as amusement parks, sound and light, real estate and mega convention centre, air services, cruises, adventure



tourism, car rentals, hospital-ity, wellness, etc., interacted in 623 pre-fixed meetings

over two days as against 352 meetings last year.

Dr. Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee, said, "FICCI has been playing a catalyst to bring in infrastructure development in tourism for the last four years. We wish to work with the government to make India a world-class destination not only through our contribution with our flagship event, 'The Great Indian Travel Bazaar' but several other initiatives like the Tourism Investors

Meet." The states presented their investible projects to the investors seeking support in various ways.

The FICCI-YES Bank Knowledge Paper on 'Investment in Tourism Infrastructure: Unleashing the growth Potential' was released at the event. **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; **Ramesh Abhishek**, Secretary, DIPP, Government

of India; **Dr. A. Didar Singh**, Secretary General, FICCI; and **Rahul Chakravarty**, Director and Head-Tourism, FICCI, were also present at the event.

According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Report 2015, the sector's contribution to GDP was estimated at `8,304 billion corresponding to 6.3 per cent of national GDP and it is forecasted to grow at a growth rate of 7.3 per cent in 2016. The

sector supported 37.3 million jobs in 2015 which is estimated to increase to 38.4 million jobs by 2016 and reach approximately 46 million by 2026.

Nikhil Sahni, Senior President — Government Banking and Strategic Government Advisory, YES Bank, said, "Indian tourism industry is growing at 13.73 per cent decadal CAGR and during 2013-15 tourist visits in India witnessed a growth rate of nearly 25 per cent. Domestic tourists accounted for 98.4 per cent and remaining 1.61 per cent were international tourists.

"While we argue how to increase the number of foreign tourist arrivals to India, I think that the domestic tourism front is significant and offers the biggest growth opportunity from any sectoral perspective. The infrastructural base needs to grow which will be a game changer for the industry," he said.

FICCI has been playing a catalyst to bring in infrastructure development in tourism for the last four years. We wish to work with the government to make India a world-class destination with several initiatives like the Tourism Investors Meet

Dr. Jyotsna Suri
Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee

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The East market is promising: Trade

The travel industry is slowly but steadily looking east with a number of roadshows and conventions being held in the region. TRAVTALK finds out from travel experts how this will open the doors for potential business for both inbound and outbound travel in East India.



SAMAPTI DAS FROM KOLKATA

“East India market is geared up for the new season and I am really looking forward to it. I think East India still rocks as far as outbound is concerned. Eastern India has always been a traditional market and they are very keen to explore traditional markets; like this year East Europe has done extremely well. Spain and Portugal have always been there. Most of the products from eastern region have consistent flow, so, Kenya and South Africa have had their share from this region too.”



Aparna Basumallik
Country Head
Europamundo Vacations

“Though East India is not a very big market for us but we see potential in it. It is definitely a big holiday market and people from this region love to travel and explore. We have a good domestic destination and I am sure with times to come we will be welcoming a lot of travellers from the East. It is a good time for us to tap this market.”



Rajeev Duggal
Chief Executive
Officer, Lavasa

“East India market is booming. As far as our products are concerned, we have seen huge potential in this market. We keep coming to Kolkata and get good business from this region. Every time we come here, we meet new agents who are generally keen on selling products that we sell. The products that I take care for the India market are all luxury and East India is a good market for us.”



Anjum Lokhandwala
Founder & Director
Outbound Konnections



Pranav Kapadia
Founder, Global
Destinations

“East India is a market we generally don't get to tap or look at. But I think this market is booming with the cash rich. Everyone here is looking for newer destinations and experiential travel. It is brilliant for us though it's still small. You can't compare it with West or South but East India is definitely growing by leaps and bounds.”



Vani Singh
Branch Head — Delhi
Heavens Portfolio

“East India now by itself has become a growing market. Today the potential of travellers from this region is huge. During the puja season people mostly travel from this region and we see a big traffic this year to our hotels. We represent hotels in Bhutan, Thailand, London and Maldives under the Como brand. But Bhutan and Thailand being the closest right now, we see a lot of potential. These are two most travelled destinations out from Kolkata and around.”



Khalid Gori
Chief Operating Officer
Ark Travels

“East India is a growing region and we now see that unlike in the past, a lot of events have started coming to this region. We are quite hopeful of this market. It is a market where we can easily showcase our products and adequate our partners as well.”

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Telangana pushes tribal tourism

One of the youngest states in the country, Telangana is set to revamp the tourism scenario with a tribal ecotourism circuit along with a new tourism policy in the pipeline.



TT BUREAU

Telangana has proved to be a popular destination among domestic tourists with a contribution of 6.6 per cent share in total domestic tourist visits in India in 2015. Registering a growth of 5.7 per cent in 2015 over the previous year, the state ranks currently sixth in the country for domestic tourist visits.

Dr. Christina Z Chongthu, Managing Director, Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation, says that the state is working on a number of initiatives to further infrastructure and boost tourism.

"We are very confident that the state will be able to get a good footfall of tourists this year," she stated. "We are working on the draft tourism



Dr. Christina Z Chongthu
Managing Director, Telangana State Tourism
Development Corporation

We are working on the draft tourism policy which is on the verge of being finalised and are looking forward to a modern one that will boost private investment in the state

policy which is on the verge of being finalised and are looking forward to a modern one that will boost private investment in the state. Telangana has a confluence of cultures which we want to showcase through tribal and heritage circuits."

Along with assistance from the central government, the state has planned to develop a Tribal Eco-tourism Circuit connecting seven locations. The sites of Mulu-gu-Gattamma Temple area, Laknavaram Lake, Medaram Gaddelu, Tadvai forest area, Damaravai Megalithic struc-

tures and Mallur Temple in Warangal district will be linked to give tourists a comprehensive tour of the state's tourism products. The Bogatha waterfalls situated near Cheekupally village of Wazedu mandal of Khammam district is also a part of the circuit.

The proposed ecotourism project is expected to

give a massive push to more domestic as well as international tourists, comments Chongthu. According to information from the Ministry of Tourism, funds to the tune of ₹91.62 crore under Swadesh Darshan scheme have been sanctioned out of which ₹18.32 crore has already been released.

Commenting about infrastructure developments, Chongthu mentions, "Hyderabad has been a much sought-after destination for MICE events as a result of the state-of-the-art infrastructure. After Hyderabad, Warangal is the next biggest city and is expected to undergo a revamp."

SriLankan adds star power



SriLankan Airlines has signed Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez as their brand ambassador. This collaboration makes her the face of SriLankan Airlines and the brand continues to strengthen its presence in India.

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40,000 meetings at GPS

GPS 2016 hosted over 300 attendees each in Kolkata and Coimbatore, presenting multiple interaction opportunities.



TT BUREAU

After its successful stints at Ahmedabad and Chandigarh, the last two legs of Global Panorama Showcase 2016 'On the Move' were held at Kolkata (July 27-29) and Coimbatore (Aug 3-5). The Kolkata edition alone hosted a total of 750 attendees among which 250 were agents and culminated in 9000+ meetings over the two days. **Harmandeep Singh Anand**,

Co-founder, GPS, said, "We received an overwhelming response from all states. We had agents from Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, West Bengal and Odisha. This region has a huge potential and through GPS our exhibitors were able to meet agents from this region whom they don't get to meet."

Singh also announced that GPS's flagship show in Nagpur will be held from January 19-21, 2017.

"We were expecting 200-250 agents to attend [GPS Coimbatore] but the numbers have gone over 300. The sessions saw an attendance of around 130 buyers over six sessions and were a huge hit. The crowd was a good mixture of agents from Bangalore, Kochi, Salem, etc.," Anand said. **Raju Akolkar**, CEO, GPS, added, "We are happy to say that over 40,000 meetings were registered in the four cities, including the Nagpur edition."

TravelShop plans charters

TravelShop Turkey, in collaboration with Turkish Airlines, will soon launch charters and aim for 200 flights by 2017.



TT BUREAU

TravelShop Turkey recently embarked on a six-city roadshow in India starting in New Delhi on August 1 followed by Ahmedabad on August 2, Mumbai on August 3, Kolkata on August 4, Chennai on August 5 and Bangalore on August 6.

Shedding light on their upcoming initiatives, **Murtaza Kalender**, General

Manager, TravelShop Turkey, revealed their plans to launch charters in association with Turkish Airlines in a bid to increase their portfolio of offerings. "In cooperation with Turkish Airlines, we plan to start charter flights and aim for at least 200 charters by 2017," he said.

The group brought representatives from 12 different Turkish companies including airlines, hotels, and restaur-

rants together to inform the Indian travel trade about the different packages on offer. He said, "Between October 2016 to April 2017, we are expecting at least 10,000 clients to visit Turkey, especially with the new arrangements



Murtaza Kalender
General Manager
TravelShop Turkey

Between October 2016 to April 2017, we are expecting at least 10,000 clients to visit Turkey, especially with the new arrangements we have provided such as Indian chefs, provisions for special meal requests to name a few

we have provided such as Indian chefs, provisions for special meal requests to name a few. Weddings are also being heavily promoted since Turkey is a favourable choice for destination weddings in the Indian market." Antalya and Cappadocia, in particular, are extremely popular destinations, he added.

Kalender mentioned that while inbound traffic has been slightly slow the past couple of months owing to the terror attacks, he is optimistic that Turkey will bounce back quicker than ever. As part of their safety measures, TravelShop also provides their clients with mobile phones inclusive of data, talk-time, etc.

The roadshow featured representatives from the Turkish Embassy, Turkish Airlines, TURSAB, Dossi Dossi Hotels, Gamirasu Cave Hotel, Ramada Hotel & Suites Istanbul Golden Horn, Spice Hotel & Spa, Mustafir Indian restaurant, Elite World Hotels, Sura Hotels & Tourism group, Pullman Hotels & Resorts, naz City Hotel Taksim, Kaya Balloons and Four Seasons Travel.

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Awards push you to excel further

The Ministry of Tourism felicitated 74 achievers who have contributed in shaping the tourism industry to what it is today at the National Tourism Awards 2014-15. TRAVTALK asks the award winners how this encourages them to contribute in their own right for the betterment of the industry and also their vision for the future of tourism in India.



TT BUREAU

Best Inbound Tour Operator/ Travel agent Cat-III, 1st prize

“We are overjoyed to win the prestigious National Tourism Award for the third time. It is not only a real testament to how hard the team at Trans India Holidays has worked throughout the last few years, but also to the record year-on-year growth we've managed to achieve. Getting this coveted recognition inspires and motivates us to work harder towards not only bringing more visitors to our incredible country, but also towards doing our bit to improve the overall experience of travellers to India.”



Kapil Goswamy
Managing Director
Trans India Holidays

Best State: Comprehensive Development of Tourism (Rest of India) Cat-IV, 3rd prize

“We are elated to be a recipient of the National Tourism Awards 2014-2015. Madhya Pradesh has bagged five awards in different categories which is a great honour for the people of the state and the entire team of Madhya Pradesh Tourism. We continue to strive for success with many more of our initiatives such as water tourism for which we have started Jal Mahotsav, and are also looking to develop wayside amenities through PPP model.”



Hari Ranjan Rao
Managing Director
Madhya Pradesh State
Tourism Department Corp

Best Inbound Tour Operator/Travel agent Cat-IV, 3rd prize

“Winning a National Tourism Award is of course an extremely high recognition for the company and definitely, it motivates us to do even better in future. In our effort to our bid, we keep on exploring new markets as we have done ever since Travelite (India) came into being. Now, we will be going to the international market including the new markets with tourism products based on new concepts, which will definitely help in the growth, not only for the business of Travelite (India), but will be an addition to Indian tourism business.”



Sarabjit Singh
Managing Director
Travelite (India)

Best Inbound Tour Operator/Travel agent, Cat-V, 2nd prize



Surpal Singh Deora
Director
Maxxfun Holidays

“Our sincere efforts to serve the guests with personalised services have been rewarded well. We aim to maintain the uniqueness of India. We have many end suppliers from lower strata who earn their livelihood through this industry. We look forward to opening tours which take tourists into lesser known destinations and help them establish a deeper connect with India. The other areas where we plan to increase our presence in are spiritual retreats.”

Best Domestic Tour Operator for promoting J&K



Kesari Patil
Founder and Chairman
Kesari Tours

“We are extremely happy that government is recognising good travel companies and encouraging them to serve better. We are honoured to be one of them. Kesari has been operating family group tours, individual tours, tailor-made tours and corporate MICE segments for the past 32 years. We continue our best efforts, sending more and more tourists to Kashmir and rest of India as well. Our teams are super-charged once again to roll out more innovative tours.”

Tourist Transport Operator, Cat-I, 1st Prize



Rajesh Loomba
MD
ECO Rent a Car

“This is not just a momentous milestone for our business but in fact a matter of great pride for all of us at ECO Rent a Car. This win has played an instrumental role in motivating our team, partners and service delivery associates beyond measures. We are committed to provide our customers with the best-in-class services.”



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Cruising with celebrities

Monarch Cruise's offerings are themed around Bollywood and cricket. What's interesting is that agents too can partake in this. **Somesh Jagga**, CEO, Monarch Cruise, tells more.



RUCHI J SINGH

QHow popular is cruising among Indians?

Cruising is of course now being liked by Indians a lot and it's picking up fast, especially with the Bollywood movies influencing Indians and social media fueling the demand. Indians are now going to Mediterranean, Alaska, and Asia is their all-time favourite.

QWhat is the USP of Monarch Cruise?

Monarch is all about experiences. It gives one experiences they have never imagined before. What we have done is put together best of cricket, Bollywood, cruise and entertainment and sort of combined it with a luxury cruise ship.

QTell us about the new offerings at Monarch?

Monarch is bringing a few celebrities together and the line-up will continue to swell. We have recently signed some cricketers who



Somesh Jagga
CEO
Monarch Cruise

are from the playing XI of the current team. We have Bhuvaneshwar Kumar and K.L. Rahul among others, whose names will be revealed later. We have also signed up some Pakistani cricketers. From Bollywood, we have recently added singers Sukhwinder Singh and Wadali Brothers.

QDo you have any special offerings to engage the travel trade?

In our case, it goes beyond commission. Of course there is a commission structure in place, but our product

is all about the experience. We take special care of our travel agents and PSAs and hold events where they can meet the celebrities we have onboard, which is something they cherish for life. We also give them exclusive signed merchandise and certificates that they can exhibit in their offices. Special lunch and dinner opportunities with celebrities are provided to high performing agents. Monarch is all about experience, not only for its customers, but for its travel agents as well.

QWhat kind of support do you expect from the government in the light of recent developments?

We have been very fortunate so far. We have both the ministries of Tourism and Shipping supporting us. We are now looking at deeper involvement from them; making the embarkation and disembarkation in India as soon as possible which in turn will help the cruising industry as a whole.

Dubai sails at 26% growth

Stressing on the contribution of cruises to increasing its tourist numbers, Dubai Tourism is pushing its cruise offerings across India through its six-city roadshow.



TT BUREAU

Buoyed by the success of its three-city roadshow in India last year, Dubai Cruise Tourism returned to the country this time with a six-city roadshow plan. Witnessing a huge demand from the country for its cruise packages, the delegation led by **Jamal Humaid Al Falasi**, Director, Dubai Cruise Tourism, met with cruise companies including MSC Cruises; Costa Cruises and Royal Caribbean Cruises represented by Tirun Travel Marketing in India.

"This is our second roadshow in India. This would allow us to have more passengers opting for cruises from Dubai. We recorded 463,055 cruise tourists in 2015 and are aiming to 1 million by 2020. India's ranking as a cruise source market for Dubai was 21 in 2013 and it came to 14 in 2015," Al Falasi said.

Carl Vaz, Director – India, Dubai Tourism, said, "This time we are travelling to six cit-



Jamal Humaid Al Falasi
Director
Dubai Cruise Tourism

ies for the Dubai Cruise Tourism roadshow — Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Mumbai. We've been very fortunate in 2015 to have 1.6 million Indian overnight visitors in Dubai, these include hotel and hotel apartments guests as well."

Talking of promotions for cruises in Dubai, Falasi, said, "We are inviting Indians to get a taste of cruising in our region and visit Dubai at the same time. We also have specialised visa for the UAE only for cruise passengers. The multi



Carl Vaz
Director – India
Dubai Tourism

entry visa is valid for a month, which allows them to cruise for seven nights and use the rest of the days in Dubai. We see 26 per cent increase in Indian arrivals every year and we are targeting to take it to 50 per cent by 2020, helped by the cruise business."

Vaz added that the travel agent community has been really supportive in India. "We are very grateful to the Indian travel trade community, which has been supporting us vigorously, whether it's TAAI, TAFI, OTOAI, IAAI or ETA or SKAL."

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Trans India Holidays called upon its travel partners and associates to thank them and join in the celebrations of their victory at National Tourism Awards 2014-15. The company was awarded the first prize in Category III for Best Inbound Tour Operator/Travel Agent.



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Visa Lounge to launch this August

A new entrant in the field of online visas, Visa Lounge will offer visa services for Dubai and Bahrain to both B2B and B2C markets in India.



TT BUREAU

A division of 16-year-old travel company Siddhivinayak Travel, Visa Lounge is the latest entrant in the field of online visas for Dubai and Bahrain. It will launch in August 2016 pan India for both B2B and B2C markets. The company also has a branch in Dubai under the brand name of Broadway Travels.

Speaking about the new division, **Clevio Monteiro**, CEO, Visa Lounge, says, "The new division will cater to the growing demand for Dubai and Bahrain tourist visas in India and the international markets."

It will reach out to the trade through its website. "We also plan to use social media platforms and print media as well as airlines. We also have a strong B2B team headed by Rashid Kutty to cater to the



Clevio Monteiro
CEO
Visa Lounge

The new division will cater to the growing demand for Dubai and Bahrain tourist visas in India

travel fraternity. Currently, the potential is 100,000 plus per month and growing. We are in the process of appointing a sales and marketing team for this as well."

Russia's educational tour

Keen on developing the India market further, Russia has planned a number of activities to engage the travel trade. Advising it in this venture is Namaste Tourism that has now partnered with Russian Information Centre.



HAZEL JAIN

The Russian Information Centre (RIC), a non-commercial entity that works with support from Russian Consulate in Mumbai, recently tied up with Mumbai-based Namaste Tourism to re-activate the slowing India market for Russia. It has chalked out a lot of activities for the travel trade. One of them is conducting Fam trips for agents. It recently took 20 agents from Delhi, Varanasi, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Cochin, Chennai, Imphal and NCR on one and are planning another one this September.

Paresh Navani, Co-Principal, RIC, says, "The growth in numbers from India makes a strong point for creating programmes specific for this market. We are therefore working on an India-friendly policy which should be rolled out by Q3 end or early Q4 of 2016. As per this, we will train hotels and service providers in Russia about expectations of the Indian visitor. We will also educate them on what they can

expect from Indian tourists. RIC will create a framework for this, and organise compliance training and certification."

Russia. For instance, there is an ongoing discussion between Kerala Tourism and St Petersburg Tourism for bilater-

sia in April 2017. This will be partly sponsored by the Hotel Owners Association in Russia and the government of Russia



Paresh Navani
Co-Principal
RIC



Katerina Belyakova
Co-Principal
RIC in India



Subhash Motwani
Founder Director of
Namaste Tourism

As per RIC, 2014 recorded 15,000 tourists from India, which jumped to 33,000 in 2015 indicating a 100 per cent growth YOY. Explaining the role of RIC, **Katerina Belyakova**, Co-Principal, RIC in India, says, "We are a cultural bridge between the tourism board in Russia and India. We are also promoting MoUs between different state tourism departments in India and

al promotions of tourism which has been approved from India side. That should fall in place by 2017." RIC had organised a Fam trip in March 2016 for Russian agents in Kerala.

Meanwhile, Namaste Tourism has undertaken marketing and sales on behalf of RIC. The centre is now planning a convention for more than 100 travel agents in Rus-

and will be given to agents at a subsidised cost. According to **Subhash Motwani**, Founder Director of Namaste Tourism, "Selling Russia is a good bet for agents specially in today's scenario where people are going online and booking holidays. In case of Russia, they will have to book through an agent. So there is no online threat that will kill their market."

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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2 new Hilton hotels in 2017

Hilton has 15 properties in the pipeline for India, with two hotels planned for 2017, reveals **Kaushik Vardharajan**, Vice President, Development – India, Hilton Worldwide.



With a portfolio of 4,700 hotels under 13 brands around the world, Hilton is one of the most popular international hospitality brands. In India, Hilton has 15 hotels with a total of 240 rooms, and the hospitality giant has an equal number of hotels on the anvil. “We have 15 hotels, with a total of 2500 rooms in the pipeline. Everybody is looking at Tier-I cities, but Tier-II and Tier-III cities are very exciting right now and there is huge growth in this market, and we are looking across the country,” claims Vardharajan.

The latest property to open under the Hilton umbrella was the Conrad in Pune, which is a Tier-II city. He says, “Pune has seen a huge growth in the market, and has a huge number of companies. There is growing disposable income in the city and in terms of luxury spend, it ranks among the top five. If you look at the



Kaushik Vardharajan
Vice President, Development – India
Hilton Worldwide

Everybody is looking at Tier-I cities, but Tier-II and Tier-III cities are very exciting right now and we are looking across the country

Pune hotel market, there has been 15-20 per cent increase in demand year on year over the last 8-10 years. The Conrad brand offers modern sophisticated

luxury. Located in the city centre, Conrad Pune has six F&B outlets, 20,000 sq ft of meeting space, and offers a variety of experiences for both leisure and business travellers. Right from the only outdoor heated pool in the city to an automobile lift for car launches, the property caters to everybody.”

Vardharajan adds, “The next property to open will be Conrad Bengaluru, and a Hilton Resort in Goa, both of which will open next year. We also have a Hilton Garden Inn coming up in Lucknow and one is planned for Jaipur as well. However, these would come in over a period of time. Apart from that we are also looking at bringing the Waldorf Astoria brand to India as well. We also have Curio by Hilton, under which we look for independent luxury heritage properties, and manage the commercial aspects for them. We believe that India has a lot of potential for this brand as well.”

RARE adds two lodges

RARE is all set to add more wildlife lodges to its portfolio, revealed **Shoba Mohan**, Founder Partner, RARE India, at the event to commemorate Jim Corbett’s birthday.



RARE India celebrated July as its wildlife month and had eight of its wildlife lodges showcase their products alongside a nature walk and bird talk organised for attendees on the occasion of Jim Corbett’s birthday on July 25, 2016.

Speaking at the occasion, Mohan said, “Wildlife is very close to our heart, since the first property we had on board was a wildlife lodge. However, the idea behind the wildlife event was to bring people and introduce them to the wildlife philosophy, conservation and start promoting a new kind of travel. We are about to have two more lodges on board very soon, one of which is in Kumaon hills and another is in Rajasthan in a place called Jawai, Rajasthan, where there are lots of leopards. There are a couple of more properties in the pipeline.”

Belinda Wright, Co-proprietor, Kipling Camp, one of the lodges under the RARE



Shoba Mohan
Founder Partner
RARE India

We are about to have two more lodges on board very soon, one of which is in Kumaon hills and another is in Rajasthan in a place called Jawai, Rajasthan, where there are lots of leopards

umbrella, said, “RARE is different from other organisations. They have handpicked a number of resorts, which

are privately owned and are very personal and they represent us for marketing and events. I believe this a lovely way to work together with like-minded people in different parks around the country.”

Claiming that the idea behind the event was to promote wildlife tourism beyond just the tigers, Mohan said, “When we talk about the jungles, it’s not really about the tiger. Most of the RARE lodges promote wildlife, which is not just about the tiger, but everything that supports the forest including the tiger. The idea behind it is that the endeavour, the conservation ideology has to go on, and we need to find more and more takers for this idea.”

A RARE Portfolio

- Raas Devigarh, Udaipur
- Khaas Bagh, Jaipur
- Rajakkad Estate, Palani Hills (Tamil Nadu)
- Reni Pani Jungle Lodges, Satpura (MP)

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Film Tourism is a growing phenomenon worldwide, fueled by both the growth of the entertainment industry and the increase in international travel. Sometimes called movie-induced or film-induced tourism, film tourism is defined here as tourist visits to a destination or attraction as a result of the destination's being featured on television, video, or the cinema screen. The benefits of film tourism are becoming increasingly apparent. Appealing to wide and diverse markets, film tourism offers something for everyone, just like the films themselves.

India offers a much decorated platter to the international film fraternity with its rich archaic structure, exotic palaces, dense centuries, aesthetic nature, vibrant cities, beautiful beaches, snowy mountains and many more matching the diverse requirements of different lines of film interest. Recently, Indian cities have been gaining popularity among various foreign directors who have selected the sub urban and rural sites and locations for their film artworks.

Film Tourism in India: Film Tourism in India is still in nascent stage. In a bid to give a fillip to the 'Incredible India' campaign and cinema as a sub-brand of Incredible India at various international film festivals and markets abroad to develop synergy between tourism and the film industry and to provide a platform for enabling partnerships between the Indian and global film industry. Furthermore, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India through its platform 'India Pavilion' at Film Festivals such as Cannes and other film festivals aims to utilize the forum with a motive of promoting Film Tourism and India as filming destination.

India as an upcoming international filming destination: Bollywood has become an integral part of Indian culture and touches the life of every Indian. Tourism industry has reaped benefits from movies showcasing the beauty of the lesser known tourist destinations of the country. The influence of Bollywood in tourism industry is prominent and will surely increase in the coming years.

This Opens Wide Avenues Of Exploring And Developing The Regional Diversities Of India To Present A Decorated Set Of Locations To Not Only Indian Film Fraternity But Also To International Experts Of The Segment.

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- MLAs
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- Film Artists
- Film Agencies (Government & Private)
- Corporate Groups with investments in infrastructure
- Indian and Foreign Tour Operators
- Vacation Planners
- Archeological Survey of India (ASI)
- Institutes imparting Film Tourism related Education
- Line Producers
- Airlines
- TV Producers
- State Government Representatives
- Embassies
- Custom Department officials
- Ministry of Defence / Home Affairs / Environment / Railways
- Association of Film Commissioner International (AFCI)
- All other relevant stakeholders.

Take Aways

- Latest thinking from senior industry and policies from government leaders
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Melia Pro for agents

Spanish hotel chain Melia Hotels International conducted a three city roadshow in Mumbai, Bengaluru and New Delhi from July 11-15, 2016 to meet their travel trade partners.



Speaking at the event, **Ruben Casas**, Senior Director, Sales & Marketing, Asia Pacific, Melia Hotels International said, “We are a family-owned company which was founded about 60 years ago, with 370 hotels in 40 countries under seven brands, namely — Gran Melia, Me, Paradisus, Melia, Ininside, Tryp, and Sol.”

Amongst all the brands, Casas revealed, “Tryp, which is our mid-segment brand, is most popular in India, because it’s price sensitive and can be found in any city. Apart from that the luxury market in India is also big and the ‘Me’ brand is very popular in this segment. In fact, the feedback we’ve got from the Indian market is that they are looking for unique experiences, and our hotels fit in perfectly with the requirements. We get a huge volume of Indians, in all segments like MICE, FIT or Leisure. We have seen a huge interest from Indian as well as international companies based in India to



Ruben Casas
Senior Director, Sales & Marketing
Asia Pacific, Melia Hotels International

There is a huge demand in the wedding segment, and we are putting a lot of effort to adapt our hotels for Indian weddings

do outbound business from India. There is also a huge demand in the wedding segment, and we are putting a lot of effort to adapt our hotels for Indian wedding requirements.”

Speaking on market efforts in India, he said, “The brand is quite popular

amongst professionals, and all we need to do is set ourselves apart from our competitors with a different offer. What we are trying to transmit is that we have strong brands in beautiful locations, where many others are not present. We call ourselves the experts of the Mediterranean. However, we know that we don’t have that brand awareness for the end users since we don’t have a property in India. But we are trying to bridge that gap with having a sales representative in India and by doing social media promotions as well as other activities.”

He added, “Roadshows like these help us connect with our travel agent partners. We are offering Melia Pro, which is our B2B platform, where agents can book rooms and get special commission. Sometimes, they get instant commission. They also connect points which can be redeemed for stays. We also give 25 per cent discount for personal bookings for them as well.”

TCEB pushes riverside products

Keen to diversify its offerings to the Indian market, the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) is bringing out newer products like riverside properties, a vineyard in Pattaya and even categorised CSR activities.



The Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) successfully concluded its two-city roadshow in Bengaluru and Mumbai with a delegation of 30 sellers that included hotels and resorts, special event venues, convention centres, attractions, DMCs, and airlines. It was led by **Nooch Homrossukhon**, Director (Meetings and Incentive), TCEB, with the top management of the Meetings and Incentive department. "The agenda for this roadshow was to promote newer destinations catering to the premium segment such as



Nooch Homrossukhon
Director (Meetings and Incentive)
TCEB

riverside properties, the Silverlake vineyard in Pattaya and even CSR activities for the corporate," she said.

Riverside products

According to TCEB, riverside locations are new for the Indian market. Homrossukhon says, "Riverside options make sense for India market because here the companies can keep the delegation within the venue and have a focused audience as it's a little away from the main city. Riverside hotels and attractions are also not very well known here. Indians are used to staying in main areas of Bangkok. But now they can explore newer options to get a different experience in the same city. The riverside now has a lot of shopping options too. There's a night market called Asiatic and new hotels." One of the major hotels there is the Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort.

Mobile App

The bureau recently launched its own location-based mobile application for corporates called 'Biz Thailand' that helps them find restaurants, attractions, entertainment, hotels, meeting spaces and convention centres near them. It will show visitors the events happening in Thailand and what the delegates can do in the surrounding area.

TCEB is also promoting other products like the Silverlake vineyard in Pattaya which can do an outdoor event with 10,000 people. It has a lake and a hill which has the largest laser-carved Buddha. There's also the premium Ocean Marina Yacht Club in Pattaya where corporate can do cruising, island hopping, sunset sea cruise in Pattaya, paragliding, as well

as a yacht party. Homrossukhon adds, "We are also actively promoting destinations like Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai in the north, Krabi and Samui in the south, and a new beach destinations Hua Hin which is a two-hour drive from Bangkok."

TCEB recently held educational seminars in Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad,

Chandigarh, and Kolkata and the new year will see other Tier-II cities being added to the list. **Nitin Sachdeva**, India representative, TCEB, says, "The problem is that Tier-II cities don't understand the MICE segment well. So our aim is to first educate them about MICE and talk to them about the difference in meetings, incentives, conventions and events."

Khalid Khan re-elected as RATO President

Khalid Khan has been re-elected as President of Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO) while **Mahender Singh** will continue to hold the post of General Secretary of RATO for the next two years. The members were re-elected unopposed at the annual general meeting of the association. The new Executive Committee (EC) will be selected soon. Thanking the members, Khan assured all members of continuous ef-



Khalid Khan
President, Rajasthan
Association of Tour Operators

orts for betterment of RATO members, their rights and interests and for the promotion of tourism in Rajasthan.

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Rationalise & simplify taxes with GST

There is an air of suspense surrounding the Goods and Services Tax, scheduled for a roll-out early next year. TRAVTALK tries to find out from travel industry professionals how this new tax regime will affect business and whether it will really come about as the biggest tax reform in India.

TT BUREAU

“GST is the best thing to happen in the country. In fact, it should have been in place a couple of years back. However, it is about time and with the GST being rolled out, a lot of taxes would be rationalised. Some may increase, but there would be rationalisation across the country. I am very positive about the way India would move forward with GST.”



Harmandeep Singh Anand
Managing Director
Jagsons Travels
and Co-founder, GPS

“The GST Bill is not very clear yet. Everybody says it's a good thing, but I believe different industries would be affected differently. Currently, there isn't much clarity on what GST would really bring in, especially for the accommodation wholesale business. We still have to see whether it'd be good or bad. Currently we are under the bracket of Service Tax. We need to get more clarity on how that would change.”



Anuj Bang
Director-Product
Development
roomsXML.com

“I think there has to be standardisation across the country, and hence GST is a must. However, I hope that the travel industry is exempted from it. It could be wishful thinking on my part, but in the interest of the economy, it is a great move.”



Ajay Chhabria
Managing Director
In-Time Travels



Vishal Suri
Managing Director
SOTC Travel

“The GST aims to replace multiple state and central levies with a single tax. All countries that have adapted GST have grown in their GDP. In case of travel and tourism, GST is likely to eliminate multiplicity of taxes. Implementation of GST will rationalise and simplify tax regime. It will lead to ease and transparency in compliances.”




Saurabh S. Sanghvi
Director
Next Tourism

“GST will be healthy for every industry, but could be a bit of a burden on the travel industry, since it might increase the effective tax by about 1.5 per cent. This could in turn hurt the international market as well. However, we have to wait and see what happens when it is rolled out. Hopefully, when applied, it will have a positive impact on the country.”



Mahesh Iyer
Chief Operating Officer
Thomas Cook (India)

“We are delighted that GST Bill has been passed — a truly crucial development towards a unified tax regime. From the perspective of travel services sector, currently saddled with multiple taxes, levied by both the centre and the states, optimisation of taxes and ease of doing business has been the key ask of our industry and hence the GST bill passage even more welcome! It is still a wait and watch on how the abatement/presumptive tax based provisions available currently to the tour operators, money changers and air travel agents are transitioned in the GST regime. As an industry, the need now is to engage extensively in a discussion with the lawmakers to ensure a smooth transition into GST.”


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GPS creates new opportunities

Held for the first time in four cities, Global Panorama Showcase ‘On the Move’ took place in Kolkata from July 27-29 with the concluding leg in Coimbatore on August 3-5. The two cities received a phenomenal response with over 350 buyers at both editions. The new concept allowed exhibitors to connect with agents from regions that were generally out of their reach.



Kolkata



Coimbatore



Tourism forerunners shine through

The Ministry of Tourism's annual National Tourism Awards 2014-2015 recognised the efforts of 74 industry achievers during a ceremony held on July 30 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The event was graced by the presence of **Sumitra Mahajan**, Hon'ble Speaker of the Lok Sabha, while **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary, MOT, highlighted the importance and growth of tourism in his welcome address. Additionally, the Vote of Thanks was proposed by **Udai Pratap Singh**, Additional Secretary, MOT.



at National Tourism Awards 2014-15



All fun and play at Dubai Parks

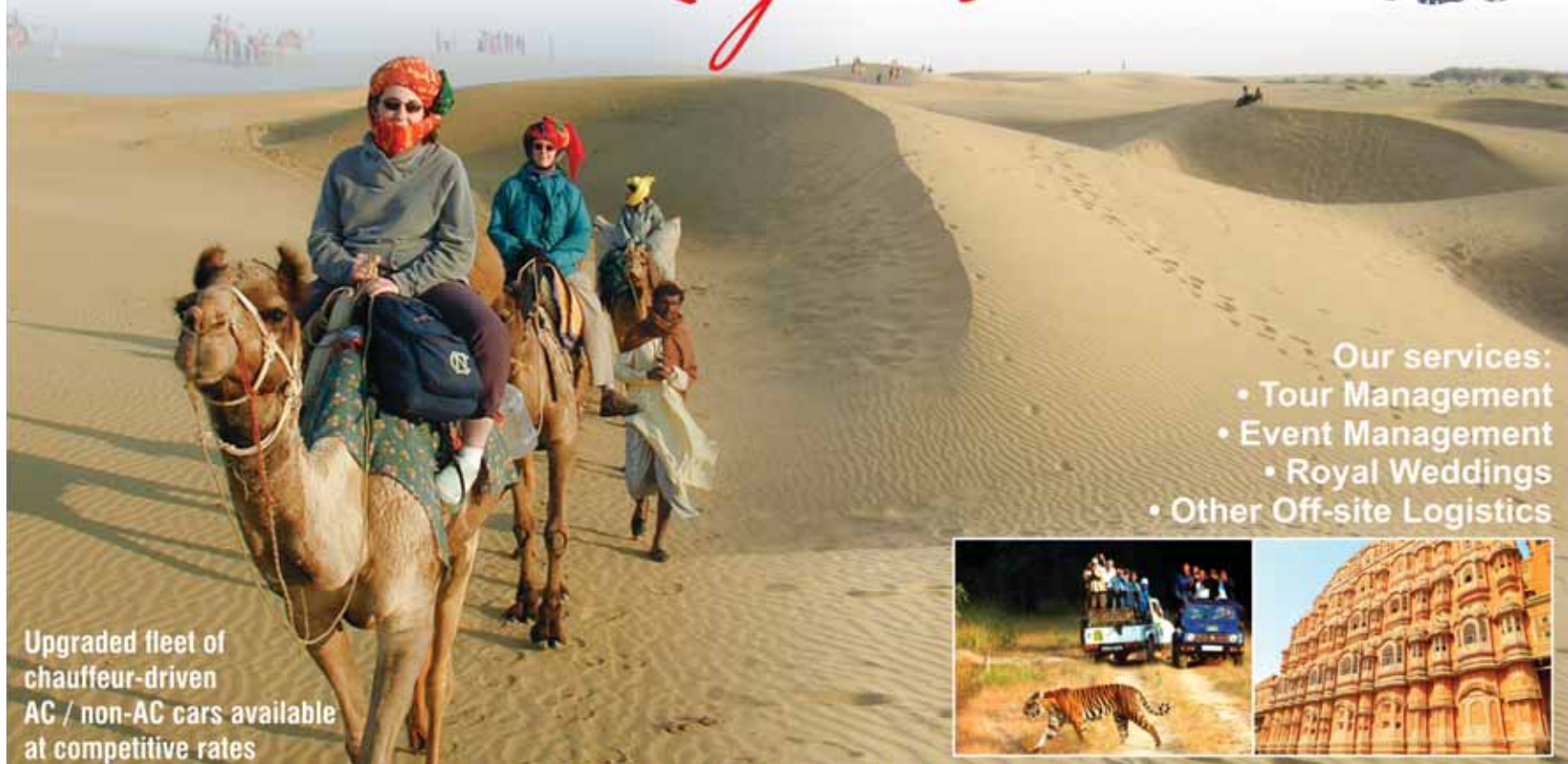
Dubai Parks and Resorts along with their partners, the Nijhawan Group, hosted a gala evening for travel agents in Delhi and Mumbai to apprise them of the opening of three theme parks, the first of its kind in Dubai, offering a new tourism product for discerning Indian travellers.



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Bollywood Park in Dubai

Dubai Parks and Resorts is set to become the Middle East's largest integrated theme park destination with the opening of its three unique theme parks on Oct 31, 2016.



TT BUREAU

Opening this year are three theme parks; Motiongate Dubai — a movie inspired theme park showcasing some of Hollywood's most beloved characters, Bollywood Park Dubai — the first theme park based on the sights and sounds of Bollywood, and Legoland Dubai — a unique, interactive theme park for families along with a water park, the region's first water park catering to families with children aged 2-12. The destination will feature over 100 rides and attractions, with future plans of expansion in place. The entire destination

both east and west. The average length of stay at present is 4-5 nights which we hope to increase to 5-7 nights in Dubai with the opening of the destination," he says.

The company has also tied up with the Nijhawan Group in India to tap into the wide network of travel agents available with Travel Boutique Online (TBO). "Travel agents

play a pivotal role in India when it comes to bookings and tailor made itineraries and with our association with Nijhawan Group, their expertise in the Indian market for over three decades, we will be able to tap into the largest network of agents and also later venture into Tier-II and Tier-III markets as well to educate the agents about the product and generate demand," adds D'souza.

Kiwi Link 2016 in Mumbai



Tourism New Zealand's Kiwi Link India was more focused this year with only Mumbai on the agenda. The Kiwi delegation included 35 operators, four airlines, and Immigration New Zealand who met 80 pre-registered Indian buyers.



Nevil D'souza
Head-Sales
Dubai Parks and Resorts

Travel agents play a pivotal role in India when it comes to bookings and through our association with Nijhawan Group we will be able to tap into the largest network of agents and later venture into Tier-II and Tier-III markets

will be connected by Riverland Dubai — a themed retail and dining destination with over 50 outlets at the heart of Dubai Parks and Resorts. Guests to the destination can stay at the Lapita Hotel, a 504-room Polynesian-themed family hotel, part of the Autograph Collection by Marriott.

"We are expecting in the first year of operations [2017], 6.7 million visits and 5.5 million unique visitors. The company's initiative is in line with 2020 Dubai Plan, to double the number of visitors and we feel we will play an important role in achieving the target of 20 million visitors to Dubai by 2020," says Nevil D'souza, Head-Sales, Dubai Parks and Resorts.

"Indians have an affinity towards theme parks and here they can get the best of

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EVENT TALK

AUGUST 2016

Tourism Australia India Travel Mission	Chennai	18-20
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Bhubaneshwar	19
SATTE	Mumbai	19-20
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Mumbai	22
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Hyderabad	22
Tourism Fiji roadshow	New Delhi	22
Visit Indonesia roadshow	Kolkata	22
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Ahmedabad	23
Visit Indonesia roadshow	Ahmedabad	24
Tourism Fiji roadshow	Mumbai	24
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Pune	24
ACTE Global Corporate Travel Conference	Beijing	24-25
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	New Delhi	25
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Chennai	26
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Bengaluru	27
Taipei Tourism Expo	Taipei	26-29
La Cita USA	Miami	Aug30-Sept 1

SEPTEMBER 2016

BRICS Tourism Convention	Khajuraho	1-2
Switzerland Tourism roadshow	New Delhi	1
Switzerland Tourism roadshow	Jaipur	2
TTF	Ahmedabad	2-4
Philippines Travel Mart	Pasay	2-4
International India Medical Tourism Congress	Hyderabad	3-4
PATA Travel Mart	Greater Jakarta	7-9
TTF	Surat	9-11
Busan International Travel Fair (BITF)	Busan	9-12
Atout France workshop	Mumbai	12
Atout France workshop	Kolkata	14
Australia workshop	Amritsar	14
Atout France workshop	New Delhi	15
Australia workshop	Bhopal	16
TTF	Mumbai	16-18
IATO Convention	Chennai	18-21
Incredible India Tourism Investors Summit	New Delhi	21-23
Astana Leisure	Kazakhstan	21-23
Manila International Travel Expo (MITE)	Philippines	22-24
JATA Tourism Expo	Tokyo	22-25
IITM	Mumbai	23-25
TTF	Pune	23-25
ILTM Americas	Mexico	26-29
Kerala Travel Mart	Kochi	27-30
Tourism Ireland roadshow	Mumbai	28
Tourism Ireland roadshow	New Delhi	29
European Quartet roadshow	Mumbai	30
India International Travel Mart	Gurugram	Sept 30 - Oct 02

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

ASSOCIATION TALK

TAFI to run IATA reporting procedure

IATA’s new enhanced reporting has prompted TAFI to undertake a pilot run with four of its members starting this October. This will be followed by workshops by IATA for its entire member base.



HAZEL JAIN

In anticipation of IATA's new standardised reporting procedures worldwide, the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) has agreed to participate in its pilot programme that will start from October this year. Four members (one each from Delhi and Ahmedabad and two from Mumbai) have agreed to be a part of it. Commenting on this, **Pradip Lulla**, Vice President, TAFI, said, “We are doing a pilot run on enhanced reporting for IATA and the participating agents



Pradip Lulla
Vice President
TAFI

will give their inputs once it is completed. IATA workshops will be held in different regions

when they are introducing it in India where agents can come and understand the new reporting procedures.” He said that the new system of reporting will be simplified and more graphic. Everything else will remain the same. “It will help agents to have a better report, that’s all,” he said.

In its recently held MC meet, TAFI worked out a vision for the next two years. “We have also chalked out various aspects where we can contribute and delegate. We have formed

various committees that will be headed by different chairmen. Committees and their chairmen are still being confirmed,” Lulla added. TAFI is looking to add more members, specially under the allied category such as hotels and tour operators who aren’t necessarily IATA members. The association is also looking to create a common platform for members that will allow them to interact and do business with each other. “We are meeting some companies who can do this for us,” Lulla revealed.

OTOAI educates members on GST

The Outbound Tour Operators of India (OTOAI) recently conducted a workshop on Goods and Services Tax (GST) for its members in Delhi to apprise them of how the tax will affect their businesses.



TT BUREAU

OTOAI had invited **Aseem Arora**, Senior Manager, Tax & Regulatory Services, Ernst & Young, to inform the members about GST.

Speaking at the event, **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI, said, “We wanted to introduce the GST system to members who are unaware. We knew it would be a very ugly situation for service providers, both inbound and outbound tour operators, as well as for the tourism industry. It is going to impact us in a big way. Right now we are suffering from 4.5 per cent tax and with 18 per

cent of GST, which the government is thinking of implementing, the industry is going to slide downhill. It will have a big impact on business. Thousands of tour operators in India, and lakhs of people in this industry are going to lose their jobs.”

As a pre-emptive measure, OTOAI wants to take the matter to the government. “We want to apprise the government with our issues, so that they consider it before implementing the GST. We are in touch with the Finance Ministry and we will make all efforts necessary to inform them about how difficult it is going to get for us



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President
OTOAI

once the GST system comes in place.”

Apart from GST, Sahni said that the members were also apprised about the work done in the past few months. “We are inviting members to

come up with issues, which we can take up in future. Also, we informed the members that this year we are going to work more with of our allied members, like the NTOs and DMCs,” he said.

Another concern discussed during the meeting was the Turkey educational trip for OTOAI members, scheduled for September, which looks a little uncertain in the light of the recent attacks in the country. “We are still thinking about the Turkey trip for our members. While some are saying we should go ahead with it, others want it to be postponed,” he added.

ETAA's adventure trip to Nagothane



The Enterprising Travel Agent's Association (ETAA) recently took 40 members from Mumbai team for a two-day adventure trip to Kamath Residency Nagothane where they indulged in rappelling, rock climbing, zipping and rifle shooting. Later, ETAA president Jagat Mehta briefed them about the upcoming events and spoke about the current market situation. The event was co-sponsored by Nisha Prime Travels and ATD Representation.




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Fairmont Jaipur

Jaipur
Fairmont Jaipur has appointed **Srijan Vadhera** as its General Manager. He brings with him more than 18 years of experience holding executive positions in the hospitality industry in various reputed hotel chains. Vadhera holds Master of Business Administration, and Hotel Management from Institute of Hotel Management Chandigarh. He has previously worked with Taj Mahal Hotel, Hyatt International Hotels & Resorts, Radisson Goa, Radisson Kumarakom & Country Inn and Suites, Zuri Hotels & Resorts, Sheraton Bangalore, Westin Chennai and Shangri-La Hotel Bengaluru.



Hyatt Pune

Pune
Hyatt Hotels Corporation has appointed **Sumit Kumar** as General Manager of Hyatt Pune. Kumar is responsible for the operational development of Hyatt Pune, including guest and employee engagement and financial performance. Over the last 13 years, Kumar has been an integral part of Hyatt Hotels. Having been chosen as the General Manager of the first Hyatt Place hotel in South West Asia, he launched Hyatt Place Hampi, Karnataka, and later Hyatt Place Gurgaon/Udyog Vihar, Haryana which was also his last assignment.



Le Meridien Mahabaleshwar Resort and Spa

Mahabaleshwar
Le Meridien Mahabaleshwar Resort and Spa appointed **Rishi Chopra** as the new General Manager. Chopra has 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He will now be an essential addition to the Starwood Group and will play a key role in planning, preparing & executing the annual budget and business plans for this property. Chopra has previously been associated with the Starwood Group from 2001 to 2006 as Director, Food & Beverage at Le Meridien Pune. He has also worked on brands like the Leela Hotels and The Taj Group.



Pride Hotel Nagpur

Nagpur
Rahul Kanungo has been appointed as the General Manager for Pride Hotel, Nagpur. He has worked with the Taj Group of Hotels for more than 13 years in various capacities and at various properties. Kanungo gained valuable experience as General Manager with many renowned hotels such as Dukes Retreat Khandala, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, Keys Hotels, BJN Group and Ramada Group.



JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu

Mumbai
Victor Chen has been appointed as the Resident Manager of JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu. With over 15 years of experience, Chen has worked with several Hyatt properties across India and the Middle East, namely Hyatt Regency Dubai, Hyatt Delhi, Grand Hyatt Mumbai and Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa before joining the Marriott family. Chen brings with him extensive experience of having worked in various hospitality management verticals. He holds a 3 year Diploma in Hotel Management from International Institute of Hotel Management Kolkata.



Grand Hyatt Mumbai

Mumbai
Grand Hyatt Mumbai has appointed **Shubham Chandra** as Hotel Manager. He has over 18 years of experience in operations, business development, sales and marketing with reputed names in the hospitality industry. Chandra held the role of Area Director-Sales & Marketing for South India at Hyatt Regency Chennai before he took his new assignment as Hotel Manager at Grand Hyatt Mumbai. Prior to Chennai, he was associated with various Hyatt properties in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru since the year 2001.



Lords Resort Silvassa

Dadra and Nagar Haveli
Lords Resort Silvassa has appointed **Mahesh Chand Rajwar** as its General Manager. During his 12 years tenure in the industry, Rajwar has worked with various hotels such as Ananda in the Himalayas, Tehri Garhwal, Taj Mahal Hotel, HRH Group, Kamat's Lotus Resort Silvassa, DNH, The Safari Company, Mahindra Holidays & Resort India, Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, among others. He has done Hotel Management & Catering Technology from American Hotel & Lodging Association & Oriental School of Hotel Management, Kerala.



Siddhivinayak Travels

Mumbai

Siddhivinayak Travels has appointed **Clevio Monteiro** as its Chief Executive Officer for its new division called Visa Lounge. Monteiro brings with him over 24 years of experience working with travel, aviation and technology solutions companies in various functions. Monteiro has worked with companies such as Air Sahara, InterGlobe Technologies, Suvidha Infoserve and Go Airlines. In his last assignment as Divisional Leadership at Kuoni Business Travel, he played a key role as Business Head for DVMS (Distribution Visa Marketing Services).



Rashid Kutty has joined Siddhivinayak Travels as General Manager-India for their new division Visa Lounge. He holds a degree in B.Com and a Diploma in Airlines & Travel Management from Trade Wings Institute of Management, and has 16 years of experience in Performance Management including Strategic Planning and Quality Management. Kutty will be responsible for developing sales and building the brand. He was previously associated with Sahara Airlines, InterGlobe Technologies - Galileo and SpiceJet. His last assignment was with SOTC-DVMS as the Regional Head.



TALKing People

Dr. Ahmed Albanna, UAE Ambassador to India, lives by the motto 'Life is beautiful'. Albanna firmly believes that, "One has to set goals in life and based on that one has to set targets. Once one target is reached, one should go on and set more targets and go on achieving them." He is an avid traveller and reader. "However, being a politician my reading is restricted to political and economic matters. I have travelled a lot in India and the country is beautiful in every way and each part has its own characteristics."



For **Farhat Jamal**, Senior Vice President - Operations, Taj Hotels, Resorts and Palaces, hospitality and spreading joy runs in the blood. "Each day when I look back I want to say that I have done something meaningful." He claims that reading is important for him because he wants to keep learning. "Currently I am reading Viktor Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning, and it is such a moving book." Jamal has travelled extensively around the world, but he has a soft corner for Europe.



Chandigarh will always be close to the heart of **Kulwant Singh**, CEO & MD, Lama Tours, and he claims that he has a special connection with the place. "I come from Chandigarh and I love places around the city. I like to be connected to Punjab and visit as often as possible. Outside India, London is my favourite destination. Whenever I get a chance, I stay there for a couple of days." When it comes to life, he says, "One should always stay humble and grounded and spread peace and love as much as possible."

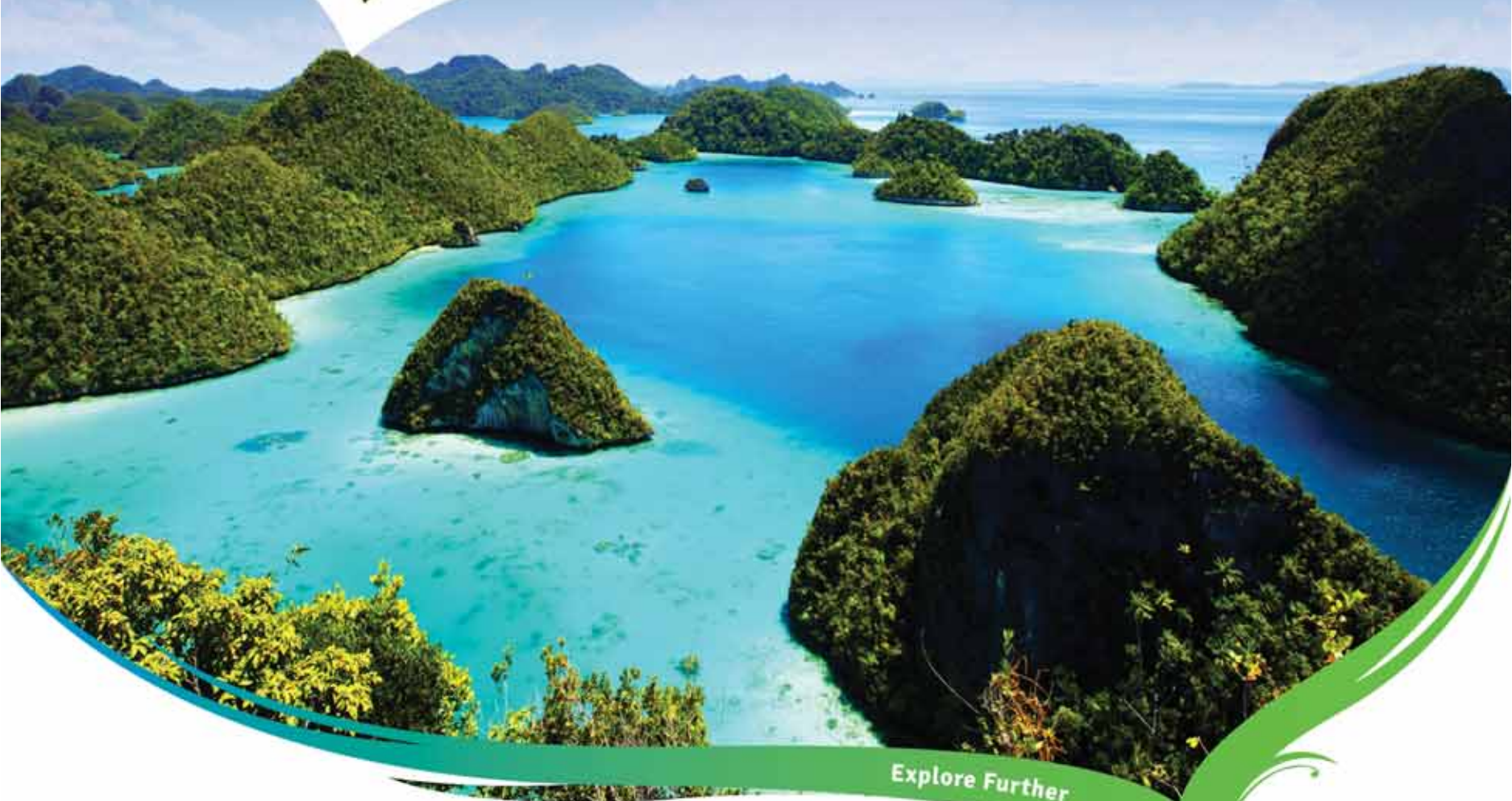




Bromo Mountain, East Java



Raja Ampat, West Papua



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Gujarat banks on its heritage

As the state's ranking on domestic tourist arrivals goes up to ninth with a total growth rate of 17.02 per cent, **N. Srivastava**, Managing Director, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, elaborates on the latest tourism offerings and highlights the developments taking place.



AHANA GURUNG & NISHA VERMA

QHow did tourism in Gujarat fare in 2015?

Tourism in the state has improved compared to 2014-2015. A total of 3.8 crore visitor arrivals were registered in 2015-2016 giving a growth rate of 17.02 per cent. We are now among the top 10 states in the country for domestic tourism and rank ninth. The previous year, we ranked at 11th so there has been a good improvement in the past year.

QWhat are the latest offerings of Gujarat Tourism?

We are majorly promoting three destinations this monsoon. The Sasan Gir National Park usually gets the highest footfall during winter or summer but this year, we are promoting the peripheral part of the park during the rains. This gives tourists an entirely different experience amidst the lush green forest. Additionally, the park is in close proximity to Somanth Temple and since it is the holy month of

such place that can be formed into a heritage destination. Patan was the capital of Gujarat during the ancient times and boasts mesmerising architecture. Siddhpur, also in Patan district, has religious significance and is home to the native Vora community. There are over 100 houses of the community which dates back to the 18th century. Vadnagar, the native home of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will also be developed into a heritage town soon.

What's more, there are 13 important locations related to Buddhism which is being developed into a Buddhist circuit. Several relics of Lord Buddha were found in Devni Mori and through the circuit, it will be portrayed as a major Buddhist pilgrim-age centre.

QWhat is being done to improve infrastructure in the state?

Under Swadesh Darshan scheme, the Gandhi themed-heritage circuit was recently approved which will cover the sites of Ahmedabad (Kochrab

Eight sites in tribal areas have been identified for development under eco-tourism as we want to add variety to the tourism experience and showcase the whole state.

QIn terms of investment, what are some of the potential areas that can be developed?

Gujarat has a lot of land across various districts that can be utilised for tourism purposes. We have identified around 25 such plots in the first phase for the development of hotels, theme parks, resorts, water parks, etc. through PPP mode. So far, eight projects on way-side amenities have been approved and given for private operation. This is valid initially for five years and extendable up to another five years. We have also given three Greenfield areas for development of hotels above 3-star for 35 years, extendable to another 35 years.

QTell us about some of the events in pipeline?

A film-making seminar titled 'Cinematic Tourism: the Way Forward' is being held on August 29 in Gandhinagar for which we have invited big personalities from the film industry. Film tourism is one segment that we really want to tap. Apart from that on Sept 27, eve of World Tourism Day, a seminar titled 'PPP Initiatives in Tourism' will be held to drive investments. We are conducting these two seminars as a pre-event initiative of Vibrant Gujarat. From October 1, the Navratri festival commences and is conducted in a big manner. It is a very festive month and takes place throughout the state. Thereafter, the tourism season begins in full swing and we have the Rann Utsav in Kutch, International Kite Festival in eight cities in Gujarat, taking place one after another.

QHow do you plan to promote all these initiatives?

Since social media has become one of the strongest mediums, we are very active on it. Apart from that, we are also conducting promotions through print and digital media.

Panoramic Approach

Gujarat Tourism will organise a film-making seminar titled 'Cinematic Tourism: the Way Forward' on August 29 in Gandhinagar

“Eight sites in tribal areas have been identified for development under eco-tourism as we want to add variety to the tourism experience and showcase the whole state.”

N. Srivastava
Managing Director
Tourism Corporation of Gujarat



saawan, several people visit the temple to offer prayers to Lord Shiva which makes for a meaningful trip. We have also started a monsoon festival in Narmada district, a tribal area in Gujarat. There, we have created three eco-tourism sites showcasing the greenery and waterfalls located in the region. Apart from that, Saputara, the only hill station in the state is being endorsed as a monsoon getaway.

QAre you looking at introducing lesser-known destinations as well?

Yes there are a few such places that have huge potential to become popular tourist hubs but need ample infrastructure development. Rani ki Vav in Patan is one

Ashram, Sabarmati Ashram, Dandi bridge) Rajkot (Alfred High School, Kaba Gandhi no Delo, Rashtriya Shala), Porbandar (Kirti Mandir), Bardoli (Sardar Patel Museum) and Dandi (Gandhi Smriti railway station, Karadi village, Dandi Memorial). The total cost of the project is estimated at ` 80 crore.

We are also developing Dandi-Salt route that is targeted at students to educate them. Projects under Prasad scheme are also underway – there are a few developments in Dwarka along with a project in Narmada River called Namrada Parikrama. Here, we will be offering cruises right till the end of the dam which lies near the Madhya Pradesh border.

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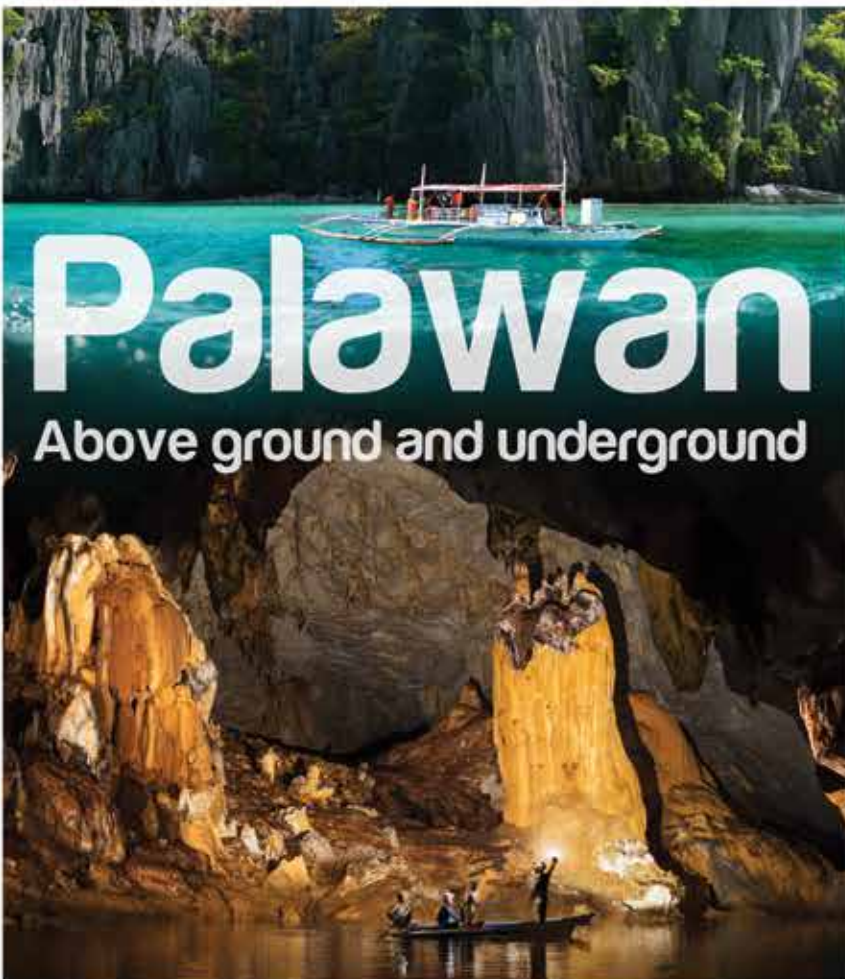
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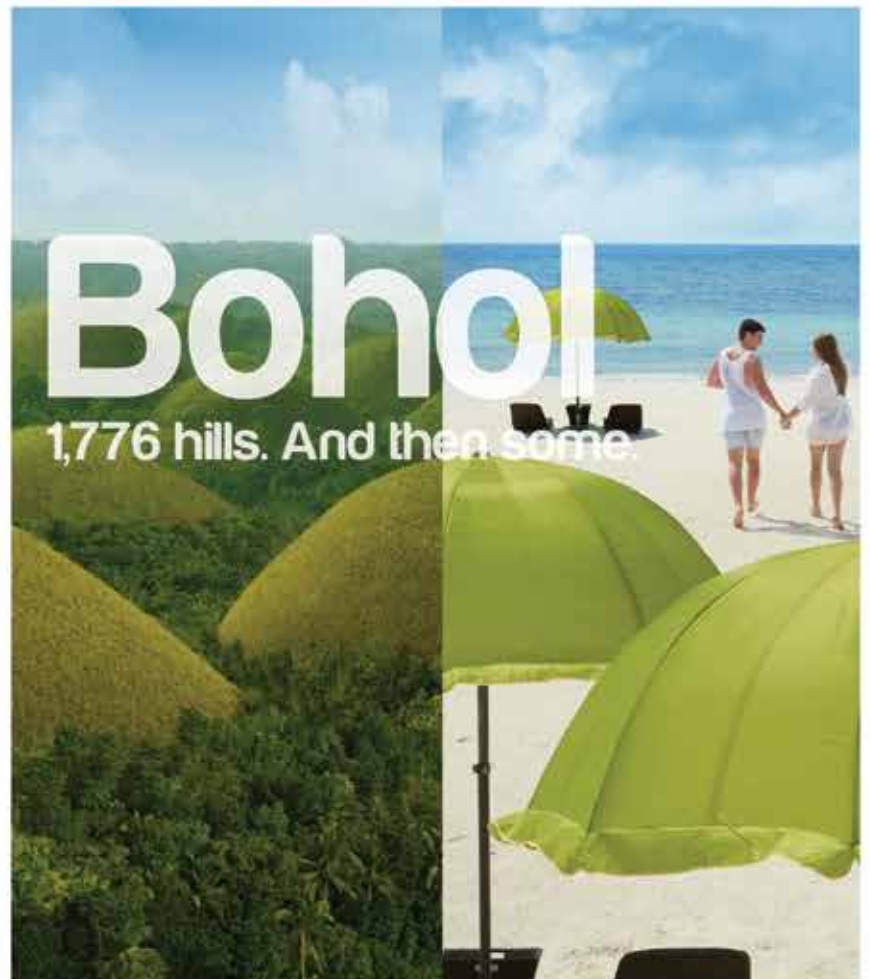
Palawan

Above ground and underground



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Experientialtalk

EPIPHANIC EXPERIENCES

Every experience arouses some sort of epiphany. This seems to be one of the strongest premises for travel as well and explains why more and more people are looking for an 'experience' when they travel. Because anything less doesn't seem to be worth their time, money and effort – and often in that order.

More and more travellers are choosing their destination and activities based on the kind of experience it will provide them. For what is travel if devoid of any meaningful experience? This phenomenon should, in turn, spur operators to embark on their own little journey. 'What can I offer my client – discerning as they are – that will tempt them to stay with me?' Fortunately for them, every destination has innumerable products that check all the boxes; they only need to be explored.

There is good news for operators in India. Travel search site Skyscanner revealed that in 2015 Indian travellers were the most experimental in the APAC region based on the traffic on its website, when it came to choosing destinations. The trend continues in 2016 with Indians seeking adventures off the beaten track. It also said that this year, searches to destinations such as Bhutan, Russia (possibly due to the weakening ruble) and the Middle East (not Dubai or Abu Dhabi but Iran and Jordan) went up by 75 per cent.

So what is this 'experiential' travel that is furiously trending among travel cliques? It is an intersection of places and ideas, which is where the most fascinating aspects of life unfold. It leads to experiences that often give travellers some level of happiness, satisfaction and even spiritual fulfillment – even if it's short-lived.

The second edition of 'Experientialtalk' covers some fascinating travel products: cave explorations in Sarawak, swimming with whale sharks in Cebu, experiencing the Maori life, a lesson on conservation in Ecuador. It is – as they say – just the tip of the iceberg.

HAZEL JAIN

NEWS IN BRIEF



ANTARCTICA IN AUSTRALIA

Australia's Phillip Island now has a new attraction – Island Antarctic Journey – that offers a spectacular multimedia wildlife experience. The interactive and sensory entertainment allows visitors to embark on a virtual journey to the world's most extreme continent. Visitors will see themselves on a giant screen, standing on an ice floe, patting a penguin or stroking a seal, all thanks to a cutting-edge sensory entertainment experience. The augmented reality technology is world-class.

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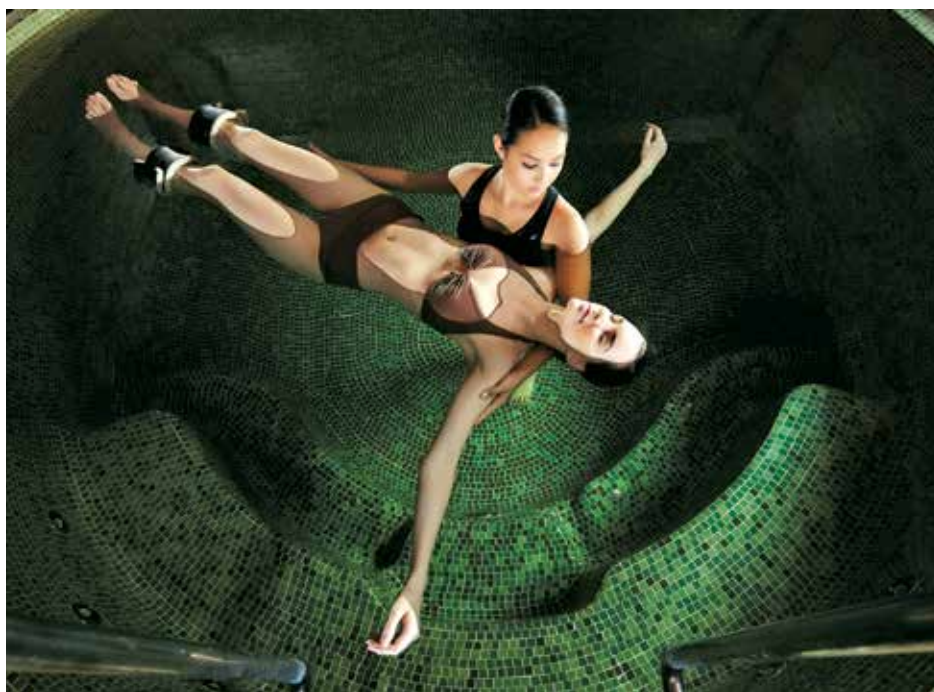
Star Wars theme park at HK Disneyland

The forces of light and dark have arrived in Tomorrowland at Hong Kong Disneyland. Starting from June 11, visitors can enjoy 'Star Wars: Tomorrowland Takeover' with special experiences that are the first of their kind in Asia, including Hyperspace Mountain, Star Wars: Command Post and the upcoming Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple. Guests can journey to a hidden Resistance base, the Star Wars: Command Post, to meet legendary Wookiee pilot Chewbacca and resourceful astromech droid R2-D2.

Party on 'top of the world'



St. Moritz is known not just for its world-class skiing, but also a rich, cosmopolitan nightlife. Among the many can't-miss bars in the region is the King's Club inside Badrutt's Palace Hotel. Night after night during winter, the hotel's renowned King's Club attracts party-hungry celebrities and night owls who turn night into day. This year the legendary club is supported by the famous Glitz and Glamour Label Hed Kandi. Only open during the winter season from 11 pm onwards.



Wellness retreats at Chiva-Som, Thailand

Chiva-Som International Health Resorts, Hua Hin in Thailand has developed exclusive programmes oriented towards the individual goals of guests and to aid specific health issues such as cancer, migraines, stress, high blood pressure and weight. Thirteen retreats will now be available, including five brand new retreats. All wellness programs require a minimum 10-nights stay. The cost is THB 2,40,000 (approximately \$ 6,820) per person for a 10-night stay in a Ocean Room (base category room) for all new five programs. This excludes service charge and taxes.

South America's first luxury sleeper train

Belmond announces the launch of South America's first luxury sleeper train, Belmond Andean Explorer, in Peru. The new train, expected to launch in May 2017, is set to travel along one of the highest rail routes on earth traversing the Peruvian Andes from Cusco to Lake Titicaca and Arequipa, on one and two-night journeys. Belmond Andean Explorer accommodates 68 guests in refined, en-suite cabins including two double cabins, 20 twin cabins and 12, bunk bed cabins for two people. Prices start from \$462 per person for the one night, 'Spirit of the Andes' journey, fully inclusive including all meals, an open bar and scheduled excursions.



Taste the Trinidadian rum

The House of Angostura – a 20-acre complex in Trinidad – includes its state-of-the-art rum distillery, a museum, art gallery, wine and spirits retail outlet, dining room and hospitality suites. Tours of the property are conducted on request. In a distillery tour, one can see the production from scratch to finish of the Angostura Aromatic Bitters – a well-known concoction of herbs, spices, barks and peels of fruits and trees, with an added secret ingredient.



Ride a helicopter in Munich

Visitors can get a bird's-eye view of Munich city with a helicopter ride. They can start their helicopter tour over the beautiful southern Bavaria at Jesenwang airfield west of Munich. Admire the five lakes area, overlooking Ammersee See, Pilsensee, Woerthsee, and Lake Starnberg. Even more adrenalin kicks in during one of the helicopter trial lessons. The Five Lakes Tour is for €149 per person for a duration of 20 minutes. All tickets are transferable.



Discover Seychelles' undersea world

The beauty of Seychelles is just not about its pristine greenery, stunning beaches and clear turquoise blue seas, but its underwater world is also a great part of its unique attraction. Diving and glass bottom boats have provided both locals and visitors to Seychelles the chance to see how life under the sea is without getting wet. The new 'Penguin' semi-submersible submarines will give visitors a chance to appreciate sea life and understand the importance of preserving the island's marine environment. The two eco-friendly units are battery-powered and can last for eight hours.

Zippering through NIAGARA

Niagara's newest tourism experience has taken flight. WildPlay's MistRider Zipline to the Falls has been opened to the public by The Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) and WildPlay Niagara Falls. It consists of four parallel lines that take guests on a 670-metre long scenic ride from Niagara Parks Grand View Marketplace to the historic Ontario Power Company building located within the Niagara Gorge.

The new zipline provides visitors with a breathtaking and authentic Niagara Falls and Niagara Parks experience. WildPlay's MistRider Zipline to the Falls will operate from July until late October 2016.

The Niagara Parks Commission began examining the possibility of a zipline attraction within the Park as early as 2011. Following community and stakeholder consultations, the Commission then engaged



the services of WildPlay Niagara Falls, through an open and competitive procurement process, to undertake the construction and operation of WildPlay's MistRider Zipline to the Falls and WildPlay's Whirlpool Adventure Course activities.

WildPlay Niagara Falls is a partnership between some of Niagara's leading hospitality and attraction providers matched with the consulting and technical expertise of a prominent zipline and aerial adventure operator, WildPlay Element Parks.



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INR 78800 per Person







inclusions:

- Return flights on Air Seychelles
- 3 night stay in a Junior Suite
- Daily breakfast & dinner
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- Return transfers
- Hotel taxes.

Validity Till 30th Sep 2016 | GST @ 4.5% not included.





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Contiki Holidays, dedicated to 18 to 35-year-old travellers and an underlying theme of experience-based holidays, represents the ethos of the youth travel movement that is now taking over India. Its Global CEO, Geneva-based **Casper Urhammer**, embodies this passion which is as easily perceptible as his cleft chin.

• The ried PIPER OF TRAVEL

HAZEL JAIN

How would you define experiential travel?

Experiential travel for me is about connecting with a destination. It's about experiencing its people, the history, and culture. Travel is so much more than just visiting a place and ticking it off a bucket list. It's the experiences you have at that place and the stories you recall after visiting there. At Contiki, we're all about encouraging young travellers to have the time of their lives. Whether it's the food you had at a particular

café in Paris, or the views of the beauty of the Swiss Alps, it's these connection to a place that makes for the best experiences and leave a lasting impression.

Why is experience so important when one is travelling?

Experience is important because travel is one of the few opportunities in life when you really get to try something new. You are in a completely different place



with completely different surroundings and it's an experience like no other. At Contiki we often ask our travellers on the first day of their trip "when was the last time you experienced something for the first time" and many of them struggle to answer. When we ask them the same question a few days into their trip they're able to rattle off dozens of new experiences and that's what travel is all about.

How has the traveller profile in India changed over the years?

Many of our travellers from India are first or second time travellers and for them venturing into the world on their own or with friends or a partner, is a life-changing experience. Contiki has recently strengthened its efforts in India, so we can help more and more young Indians explore our beautiful world with like-minded travellers. Young Indians travel very well with other travellers from around the world who join Contiki trips. They like to meet other travellers from other countries, they like to socialise, they like to share their travel experiences. In terms of where they come from – traditionally it's travellers from the big cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, who join our trips. But recently we're seeing young Indians from cities like Chennai and Pune.

What travel trends do you see emerging from India in the next couple of years?

As more and more young Indians break the mould of travelling with their families, we're seeing an increase in independence from our travellers. Initially, we saw them travelling in small groups or with a friends or partner. Over the last couple of years, we've seen more young Indians choosing to join Contiki trips by themselves which is actually very much in keeping with Contiki's overall profile where more than 50 per cent of our travellers choose to go it alone. We're also seeing a change in the destinations young Indians are choosing to travel. Europe has, and always will be, the top pick for young Indian adventurers, but we're starting

“
Anyone can eat a croissant or see the Eiffel Tower – but who can say they travelled to France and stayed in a 16th century French Chateau that was once home to royalty?
”



to see a new generation of travellers to more far-flung destinations like USA, Australia and New Zealand, and even as far as Latin America.

How do you see experience-based travel grow and evolve in India?

Young travellers are asking themselves 'what should I do when I travel?' rather than simply 'where should I travel?' It's about things to do as much as the destination itself. This year, for example, we've seen a significant increase in travellers who want to experience the Northern Lights. Contiki has fittingly introduced a new Iceland trip this year, which is proving very popular for young Indian travellers as it serves to offer this very experience. Young Indians also like to keep up with what's new and trending and a great example of this is where we've seen a significant rise in the popularity of our trips to the Balkan destinations like Croatia where the popular *Game of Thrones* series is filmed. Again, it's these experiences and the chance to 'Be Part of the Story' (as we say at Contiki) that drives the popularity of these destinations.

How does Contiki promote and offer experiential travel to Indians?

Contiki is the original travel company for the 18 to 35 age group. We listen to what our travellers want and we respond accordingly. Again, travel is so much more than just visiting a destination. One of the highlights for many of our travellers is staying at the Chateau du Cruix, a beautiful 16th century French Chateau in the Boujalais Region which Contiki actually owns. Young Indians, like all travellers, are forever seeking something special from their travels. Anyone can travel to France and eat a croissant or see the Eiffel Tower – but who can say they travelled to France and stayed in a 16th century French Chateau that was once home to royalty? A Contiki traveller – that's who!



For more information, please contact:

Sonia Prakash: sonia@buzzindia.in
Shubhangi Chitre: shubhangi@buzzindia.in



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BINTAN VOWS

Betrothed couples looking for a perfect place to be joined in wedlock can stop at Bintan Resorts, Indonesia. It promises to please every member of the 'big Indian family'.



An integrated lifestyle resort destination located on the northern coast of Pulau Bintan, Bintan Resorts in Indonesia is a place like no other. Located about 60 minutes via a catamaran ride from Singapore, Bintan Resorts is a multi-award winning, integrated tropical beach resort destination with world-class facilities. 'Bintan Resorts' refers generally to the area on the entire northern coast of the Indonesian Island of Bintan which is master-planned and managed by PT Bintan Resort Cakrawala.

Bintan Resorts is gaining popularity in the Indian market and awareness has certainly increased in the last few years. This has gained momentum with the lifting of entry visa requirements by the Indonesian government. It is often twinned with Singapore – complementing Singapore's big-city appeals with Bintan Resorts' serene and natural tropical island ambience.

As the Indian outbound travel market gains in sophistication and desires out-of-the-usual trodden path destinations, Bintan Resorts fulfils this need

perfectly. Being part of the 'Singapore holiday' it provides the familiarity and sense of expected comfort yet an adventure to a 'new' destination.

Spread over 18,000 hectares, Bintan Resorts currently houses five independently owned and operated beach resorts, four designer golf courses, as well as a range of recreational facilities and attractions within it. This makes it a very convenient venue for weddings, especially for the Indian market, considering there is ample space for big and multiple ceremonies as well as a wide variety of accommodation options for the extended family. Price varies as various resorts cater to the different target groups. One of the resorts is the Bintan Lagoon Resort.

BINTAN LAGOON RESORT

Bintan Lagoon Resort is a fully integrated resort with its own direct ferry service. This 310-hectare property includes a 413-room deluxe hotel, 57 resort villas, a golf club with two 18-hole designer golf courses and a full complement of recreational and dining facilities. Bintan Lagoon Resort offers a choice of 413 rooms and suites, all with private balconies facing the South China Sea

Spread over 18,000 hectares, Bintan Resorts houses five independently owned and operated beach resorts, four designer golf courses, a range of recreational facilities and attractions within it.





Bintan Lagoon houses The Great Hall, a 20,000 square feet pillar-less banquet hall with a ceiling height of 5.5 metres. It offers a theatre-style seating capacity of up to 1,300 guests. The island's first party club, Silk, is located here.

Indians love beach weddings

Asad Shiraz, Director, Bintan Resorts International, talks about how Bintan Resorts is prepping to welcome big wedding groups from India.

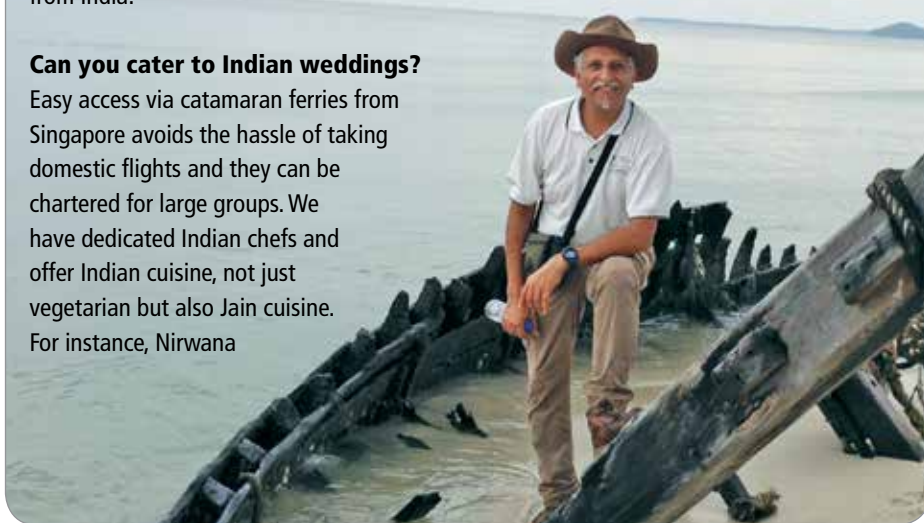
What kind of numbers do you do from India?

In 2015, Bintan Resorts received over 19,000 Indian visitors. For 2016 (January to May), Indian arrivals have already grown by nine per cent and since this is only the start of the peak travel season, this number is expected to grow. In 2017 we are expecting a growth of 12 per cent from India.

Gardens not long ago was the venue of an Indian wedding party from Surat where some 400 guests from India spent several days of Indian wedding revelry which included musical programmes, fireworks and a ceremony on the beach. The grooms (there were two of them) arrived in style on elephant-back.

Can you cater to Indian weddings?

Easy access via catamaran ferries from Singapore avoids the hassle of taking domestic flights and they can be chartered for large groups. We have dedicated Indian chefs and offer Indian cuisine, not just vegetarian but also Jain cuisine. For instance, Nirwana



or lush gardens. Other recreational facilities include two free-form swimming pools, a well-equipped gymnasium, two floodlit tennis courts, multi-purpose floodlit courts for basketball and badminton, as well as cycling, archery, ninebots, ATV rides, a kid's club and more. The three to four-bedroom villas come with spacious living and dining areas and full kitchen facilities.

There are 12 wining and dining options in the resort including four specialty restaurants. The island's first party club, Silk, is located here. Bintan Lagoon houses The Great Hall, a 20,000 square feet pillar-less banquet hall with a ceiling height of 5.5 metres. It offers a theatre-style seating capacity of up to 1,300 guests. Additional space areas include a ground floor reception foyer holding 500 standing guests and an outdoor roof terrace on the second floor which can accommodate 200 guests.

The Bandar Bentan Telani Ferry Terminal has daily ferry services from Singapore's Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal. In addition, Bintan Lagoon Resorts runs its own ferry service from Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal directly to this resort. Vehicles are available for hire and transfer services to the various hotel resorts. A number of independent transport providers also offer chauffeured cars for hire. Indian nationals are eligible to apply for Visa-On-Arrival at special counters of the Immigration Office at Bandar Bentan Telani Ferry Terminal.



Whale OF A TIME!

Katrina Kaif did it and now discerning tourists from India can too! Swimming with the whale sharks in Cebu's Oslob region in the Philippines has become the hottest travel trend.

While doing a fashion shoot for the cover of Vogue magazine recently in the Philippines, actor Katrina Kaif famously dove right in when a pair of whale sharks appeared swimming at Oslob. The Bollywood diva soaked up the sun on the endless white sandy beaches of Cebu and swam with intimidating yet mesmerising whale sharks on Oslob while discovering the tranquil beauty of the place.

This area gained popularity after a tourist observed whale sharks swimming around for food and hired a fisherman to take him there for a closer viewing. It has now become a must-do tourist attraction in Cebu.

Tourists can now come and experience swimming with the whale sharks, the most glorious creature ever, in some of the most-clear waters in the Philippines. There are several places in the Philippines where visitors can swim with whale sharks. One of the best places is the 'Oslob Whale Shark Watching' centre at Oslob in Cebu. They can get up close with the world's largest fish — the whale sharks — preferably during good weather and clear water before the temperature goes up.

The diving activity is safe as the visitors are accompanied by a guide and boatman and is very economical in comparison to other continents. The cost includes PHP1000 per person for 30 minutes snorkeling and PHP1500 per person for an hour's diving.

Navritu Kaushal Rai, Account Director, Philippines Tourism Marketing Office India, reveals that the Philippines Tourism Marketing Office India has been promoting the attractions in and around Cebu. "Indian travellers are now open to experience unique activities like swimming with the whale sharks and hence our trade partners are offering attractive packages for such travel enthusiasts," she says.

Rai notes that whale shark interaction centre in Oslob invites travellers with families, swimming and diving enthusiasts to enjoy watching the whale sharks in their natural habitat. "Solo Indian travellers love to explore unique attractions and swimming with the whale sharks will surely meet their expectations. Besides this, the Philippines is known for some of the best spots for diving, surfing, snorkeling and swimming," she adds.



NAVritu KAUSHAL RAI
Account Director
Philippines Tourism
Marketing Office India

HOW TO GET THERE

- **By Air**

There are no direct international flights to the Galapagos Islands. The only daily flights to the Galapagos Islands depart from Quito (Ecuador's capital) and Guayaquil on mainland Ecuador

- **Trade contact for booking**

Atul Parekh, CEO, Latin Aventuras:
022-23521746; travel@latinaventuras.com





ORIGIN OF SPECIES

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

In 1835, a group of tiny islands off South America's coast inspired Charles Darwin to write his greatest work on evolution. It has since been preserved well and remains a sight to behold. But the experience comes at a price.

The Galapagos Islands has a special claim to fame that no other place can make. Ninety-five per cent of the Galapagos Islands' biodiversity remains intact till date. In other words, the presence of man on the islands has caused only about five per cent loss of original biodiversity.

They are a group of about 19 big and small volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean west of Ecuador that started forming at least eight million, possibly even up to 90 million, years ago. The islands are famed for their vast number of endemic species that were studied by Charles Darwin, which contributed to his theory

of evolution by natural selection. Ecuador is an anomaly in itself. It has tropical vegetation but also penguins. Its sea temperature is tepid but the equatorial line crosses the islands from east to west. A place lost in the Pacific Ocean, where visitors can observe sea lions, boobies, iguanas, and giant tortoises closely.

While foreign tourists are allowed to visit any island, entry has been restricted by the

The Galapagos Islands are a group of about 19 big and small islands in the Pacific Ocean west of Ecuador.



Door to Ecuador

Jorge Diaz, Trade Officer & 2nd Secretary, ProEcuador

How do you plan to promote these islands in India?

ProEcuador continues to educate Indian tour agencies about this small world in one fascinating country. We also take the initiative to connect them with Ecuadorian tour agencies in order to promote packages suitable for Indian tourists.

We are currently planning an educational trip to Ecuador with a special focus on the Galapagos Islands.

What would you recommend to visitors from India?

They can visit the 'Charles Darwin Foundation' located in Santa Cruz Island, a non-profit organisation dedicated to promote conservation, education and scientific research.

Also, it is important to mention the magnificent Bortolome's Pinnacle, San Isabela and Floreana Island and volcanoes. Visitors can do a wide range of water sports or swim/snorkel accompanied by sea lions, penguins and whales!



There are only 116 visitor sites in the Galapagos: 54 land sites and 62 scuba-diving or snorkeling sites. Small groups are allowed to visit only in two to four-hour shifts.

cost. Foreigners need to pay \$100 on arrival at the Galapagos Islands plus a migration card for \$20 that is compulsory for everyone. This amount must be paid on arriving in Ecuador (at the Quito or Guayaquil airport). So, just the entrance to this place is at a total of \$120. Kids less than 12 years old pay half of this.

WHAT TO SEE HERE

There are only 116 visitor sites in the Galapagos: 54 land sites and 62 scuba-diving or snorkeling sites. Small groups are allowed to visit only in two to four-hour shifts to limit impact on the area and all groups must be accompanied by licensed guides. Cruise tours are the best way to see the islands.

Visitors can snorkel with the penguins, explore the islands in search of giant tortoises, and marvel at the marine iguanas going out to sea in search of algae. They can watch the courting ritual of blue-footed boobies in silence, or the gathering of huge cetaceans in the waters of Canal Bolivar in the west of the Archipelago.

Darwin Island is the most famous dive site in the Galapagos Islands! Whale sharks and schools of hammerheads and dolphins play in the waters. **Fernandina** is popular for the flightless cormorants, Galapagos penguins, marine iguanas, sea turtles, rays and the Galapagos hawk. No foreign species has ever invaded this island.



A day in THE LIFE...

A musical journey like none other, relive your past and come together with the ultimate rock band- The Beatles!

DEVIKA JEET

A short train ride from London, Liverpool, is the birthplace of the Beatles and the city that shaped their early music and lives. Experience the city that honed their sound and see the places that inspired their most memorable songs. Home to some of the best musicians the world has ever seen, this city will definitely make you *twist and shout* and is your *ticket to ride* from *Penny Lane* to *Abbey Road* remembering the *strawberry fields forever*.

Located in the heart of the city is the award-winning Beatles Story, the world's largest permanent exhibition purely devoted to the lives and times of The Beatles. Located in the Fab Four's hometown on the stunning UNESCO World Heritage Site at the Albert Dock, the Beatles Story takes visitors on an atmospheric journey through the lives, times, culture and the incredible music.

Hear their stories from their relatives and friends and become a part of the musical legacy that they have left for the world. This magical history tour is sure to take you down memory lane and see how four young lads from Liverpool were propelled to the dizzy heights of worldwide fame and fortune to become the greatest band of all time – from their Liverpool childhood, through the early days of the band, to world domination and on to their solo careers.

A special mention of the Beatles trip to India and the time spent in Rishikesh with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who helped them find their way to meditation, is sure to hold your attention for a little longer. This exhibition can take anywhere from an hour to four hours, depending how big a fan you are.

The Beatles fever doesn't end there, no true fan will head back without visiting the popular watering hole, the Cavern Club. The Beatles played at the Cavern Club nearly 300 times, helping it become the most famous live music venue in the world.

"Destinations are now part of the story [holiday] but increasingly experiences are the story, travellers need to know that the experience will be memorable, that one can enjoy with the family and loved one and is something that will be a memory 10-20 years later. We are encouraging tourists to visit the rest of Britain [beyond London] and they will be truly impressed with what all Liverpool has to offer," says **Christopher Rodrigues**, Chairman, VisitBritain.

Liverpool promises a musical experience like none other, music is not just about clubs and museums for this city, it's part of the everyday life that puts a smile on your face.



CHRISTOPHER RODRIGUES
Chairman
VisitBritain



“

Royal Davui offers clients what many other resorts simply are not able to — privacy. Today, privacy is a luxury that we all strive for.

CHRISTOPHER SOUTHWICK
Director (Sales & Marketing)
Royal Davui Island Resort, Fiji

”

GETTING THERE

- Fiji is located in the center of the South Pacific with flights arriving into Nadi International Airport. The resort can assist in arranging all transfers from Nadi to the island and back. Due to its remote location and Fiji's civil aviation requirements, there is a strict 20 kg bag weight limit.
- **Tariff:** Prices start from approximately \$1,160 per couple including all meals. Guests booking five nights or more receive an additional two nights free of charge. Non-motorised sports are included in the rate to allow couples to explore the island on a sea kayak, stand-up paddle board or hobie cat.





Fijian LOVE

If ever there was a cozy spot for lovers that allowed them to indulge in carefree indolence, it would be the Royal Davui Island Resort – an adults-only resort in Fiji.

What could be more exclusive than being tucked away on one's own secluded island? Very few places, certainly, and one of them is this luxurious, all-inclusive resort, Royal Davui Island Resort.

Just a 30-minute speedboat ride from the Pacific Harbour in Fiji and surrounded by dive sites, the resort is an exclusive adults-only sanctuary situated in Beqa Lagoon. It offers honeymooners and couples a level of Fijian luxury, elegance and privacy not found in most large resorts. This one can accommodate only a few guests at a time ensuring complete privacy and freedom to be secluded in one's own tropical oasis.

This boutique luxury island resort has 16 villas spread across 10 acres of tropical landscape with private plunge pools in each of the villas. Wishing to keep the island as natural as possible, the owners designed the villas, buildings and amenities to blend into and around existing vegetation and ancient trees. The reef surrounding the island has been declared sacred and no fishing is allowed within a mile of the island, creating a stunning marine reserve with countless species of fish, clams and coral for guests to enjoy.

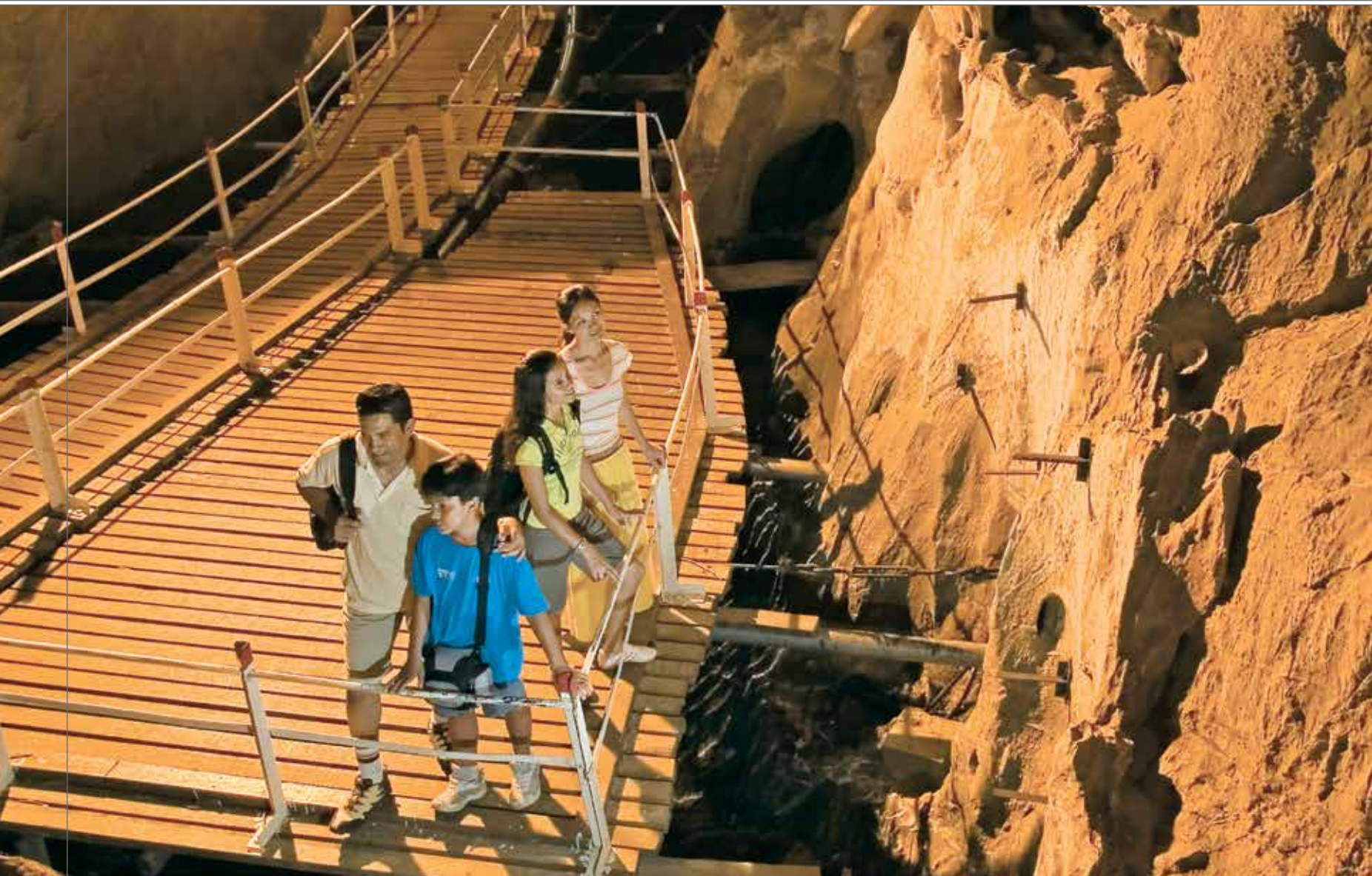
Couples can indulge in spa treatments here designed by Pure Fiji, Champagne breakfast on a deserted sandbar, or in the simple pleasures of doing nothing on a private beach. Royal Davui's resort activities provide multiple ways to enjoy the lagoon. With the resort's island catamarans, paddle boards or sea kayaks, couples can snorkel to explore the fringing coral reefs. For the more active guests, the waters near the resort offer deep-sea fishing and some of the Pacific's most spectacular dive sites.

The resort works closely with Tourism Fiji and its travel partners to promote its products within the Indian market. **Christopher Southwick**, Director-Sales & Marketing, Royal Davui Island Resort, Fiji, says "Royal Davui offers clients what many other resorts simply are not able to — privacy. All the 16 stunning villas at Royal Davui are located atop small cliffs that surround the island with thick tropical gardens between each. This means that when you are sitting and enjoying your plunge pool, no one can see you! Today, privacy is a luxury that we all strive for."

Bula Vinaka!

Trade contact for bookings from India: res@royaldavuifiji.com





Craving for CAVING

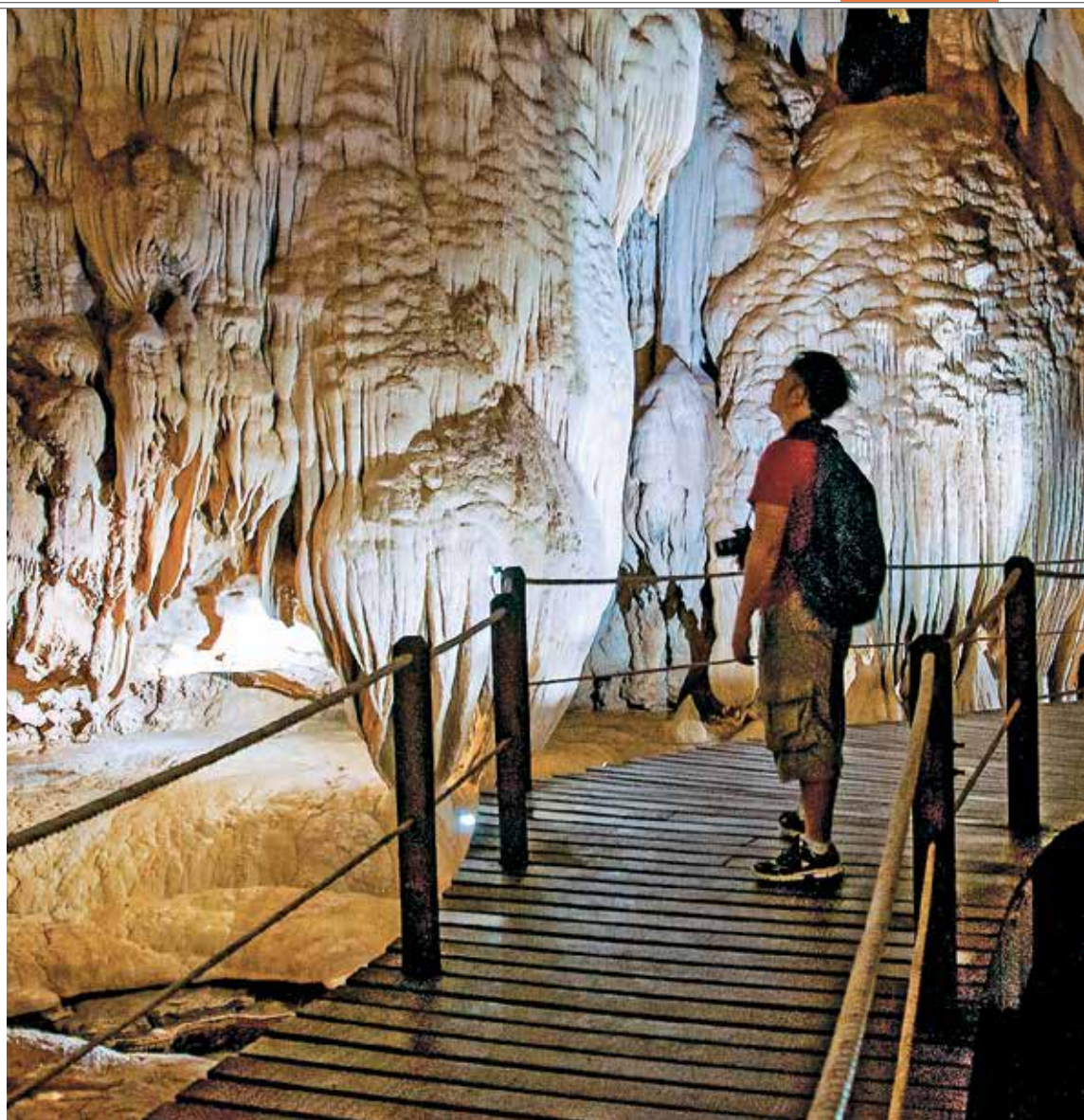
The Mulu National Park in Malaysia's Sarawak state is home to the world's largest cave chamber. It is famous for its karst formations in limestone and draws explorers and adventurers.

The Held Deep in the jungles of the Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak, the Malaysian state on the island of Borneo, rest the legendary Mulu Caves. Mulu is home to the world's largest cave chamber known to man, the largest cave by volume and one of the largest cave passages in the world. These are undoubtedly one of the greatest series of caves on the planet.

Mulu's concentration of caves, its geomorphic and structural characteristics are an outstanding

resource, which allows a greater understanding of Earth's history. Mulu provides outstanding scientific opportunities to study theories on the origins of cave faunas.

Mulu has outstanding scenic values, including the natural phenomenon of millions of bats and swiftlets leaving and entering the caves for food is a superlative wildlife spectacle. Considering Mulu's spectacular scenery and its biological significance, it was successfully listed as a World Heritage Site in November 2000. Its World Heritage



status has created renewed interest in the park as well as the caves and a genuine desire of the government and people of Malaysia to ensure it is adequately protected.

THE DIFFERENTIATING FACTOR

Over millennia, the flow of water draining from the slopes of Gunung Mulu National Park towards the sea has cut deep gorges through the park's limestone mountains and, within the rock itself, a complex network of vast caves has been formed. Since 1978, these caves have been the focus for a succession of expeditions. Under the surface of the planet lies a parallel world, a world of great beauty and mystery formed over thousands of years by the most elemental of forces, the passage of water through rock. This world, the domain of caves, remains largely unexplored.

MULU WORLD HERITAGE PASS

- **Foreign Adult:** RM 30
- **Foreign Child:** RM 10 (7-18 years). Six years and below are free
- **Accommodation** is available on site at Gunung Mulu National Park headquarters, as well as at the Royal Mulu Resort and across the Melinau River at Benarat Inn also known as Benarat Lodge. Homestays and other cheaper lodging are available too

TRAVEL DETAILS

The months of June, July, August and September are usually busier than other times of the year. It is recommended to make bookings for accommodation and guides in advance. Mulu is remote and isolated. That means no banks, no chemist, hardly any roads and not many options.

There are daily flights from Miri and Kuching, and three times a week from Kota Kinabalu on Malaysia Airlines. Nothing quite beats arriving in Mulu than from the air. Flying over this vast landscape visitors have the unique opportunity to a bird's-eye view of the tropical river systems that weave their way to the South China Sea. On descent, tourists will get their first glimpse of the Melinau Formation which rose from the sea floor around five million years ago and is now home to some of the largest and most famous caves in the world. The local community provides reliable shuttle services to and from the airport.

CHARGES

All park entry tickets to Gunung Mulu World Heritage Area will permit visitors to enter the park for an unlimited number of times but only over five days. Tickets are non-transferrable. Visiting or staying in the park for less than five days does not alter this fee. If the stay in Mulu World Heritage Area is longer than five days, visitors are required to buy a second ticket. These fees are for park entry only; additional fee for tours and activities apply.



Adventure tourism is high on the agenda of Indian travellers and cave exploration in Mulu is one such adventure.

MOHD HAFIZ HASHIM
Director of Tourism Malaysia
Mumbai office





MUCH ADO

in Munich

Equivalent to boisterous fun, Munich's annual beer festival, Oktoberfest, is an important part of the Bavarian culture and should not be missed. For the sake of culture, of course!





Held annually for 16 days over September and October, Oktoberfest (or Weisn as it is locally called) is an important part of Bavarian culture, having been held since 1810. It began as a wedding for the Bavarian crown prince Ludwig to Princess Therese from Saxony-Hildburghausen in 1810. Today, it has become an open-for-all party.

Present here are Munich's largest and most traditional breweries who invite beer lovers to drink beer by the litre, and relish traditional Bavarian foods such as giant 15-inch wide pretzels. Attendees to this jamboree can also

QUINTESSENTIALLY GERMAN

Munich, with its air of polished prosperity, is quintessential Germany. The old and the new co-exist here with cherished traditions like Oktoberfest, rubbing shoulders with designers shopping, sleek cars and high-powered industry. The Bavarian capital on the Isar river has strong roots in the past. It's Baroque and Rococo architecture, lush parks, museums and historic venues such as Schloss Nymphenburg, the summer palace of the rulers of Bavaria, are the favourite haunts of tourists and locals alike.

listen to live brass bands playing traditional Bavarian music as well as more up-to-date music, along with hundreds of other people from all over the world, dancing and singing. Teetotallers don't need to worry: sodas and water are also available.

The fest takes place during the 16 days up to and including the first Sunday in October. As per that calculation, the beer festival should be held from September 17 to October 3, 2016, this year.

OKTOBERFEST PARTY AT LÖWENBRÄUKELLER BEER HALL

If seats to the beer festival are sold out or attendees have a mind to do some clubbing after the beer halls have closed, they can go over to the 'Wiesnzelt' at Stiglmaierplatz where they can party with no curfew, every

day from September 16 to October 2, 2016, except Sundays.

The 'Wiesnzelt' at Stiglmaierplatz is the only event during the Oktoberfest which offers both; a futuristic Wiesn atmosphere with Oktoberfest band 'Bergluft' without closing time! This is just 2 kms from the 'Theresienwiese' where Oktoberfest takes place.

BEER TENTS ON THE OKTOBERFEST

There are multiple beer tents at the Oktoberfest to choose from. Here's a quick guide to some of them:

For a cozy and traditional experience, head to the **Augustiner Festzelt**. Its particularly authentic atmosphere is partly thanks to the fact that the beer served here comes from Munich's oldest brewery and is still tapped from classic wooden kegs. The regional delicacies and the friendly waiters and waitresses also make the Augustiner tent one of the most rustic of them all.

Run by a shooting club, **Armbrustschützen-Festhalle** can accommodate around 7,500 people. Decorated in the unmistakable style of the Alpine foothills, the German crossbow championships are traditionally held here every year during the Oktoberfest. The meat for the Bavarian delicacies comes entirely from their own livestock and great attention is paid to ensuring the quality is carefully monitored.

It truly is the heaven of the Bavarians: the **Hacker Festzelt**. With its famous white and blue ceiling, which was designed by Oscar winner Rolf Zehetbauer, it is one of the most famous tents of the Oktoberfest. It provides room for around 9,300 guests and is the size of a football pitch.

The **Hofbräuhaus** is known far beyond the borders of Bavaria, with its reputation extending around the world. The same goes for the Hofbräu Festzelt. Almost 10,000 people can be accommodated here and there's even a standing area for enjoying a swift litre of beer. The ceiling is decorated every year with 16 tonnes of hops, in the middle of which the angel Aloisius sings his grumpy hosanna.



Living the MAORI LIFE

New Zealand's Maori culture is an integral part of Kiwi life and travellers can learn about it by living with the indigenous people and understanding their culture first-hand. This is a gateway to an authentic traditional Maori experience. Kia ora!



HAZEL JAIN

More than 200 years ago, British explorer Captain James Cook landed in New Zealand to come upon a bay that had food supplies in abundance at the several Māori villages settled there – in stark contrast to the earlier observations he had made in Poverty Bay. This, he named the 'Bay of Plenty'.

One of the villages here, about an hour's drive from the shore of 'Bay of Plenty', is the Mitai Maori village in Rotorua, family-owned and operated. Mitai Maori village is set upon sacred Maori land which boasts natural and spiritual fresh water spring 'Fairy Spring' and glow worms set within their natural habitat. Here visitors can immerse themselves in New Zealand's Maori culture – whether they are students of anthropology or learners of world cultures. The Mitai family has tried to offer an authentic Maori cultural experience of New Zealand.

GOOD TO KNOW

- **Location:** Mitai is 20 mins drive from Rotorua Airport and offers transport from all local accommodation.
- **Visas:** A visitor visa is processed within 15 working days.
- **Air connections:** New Zealand's international gateways are Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown. To travel within New Zealand, Air New Zealand and Jetstar are the main providers.



Maori experience for Indians

Wetini Mitai-Ngatai,
CEO, Mitai Maori village,
talks about the special efforts
they make to cater to the
Indian traveller.

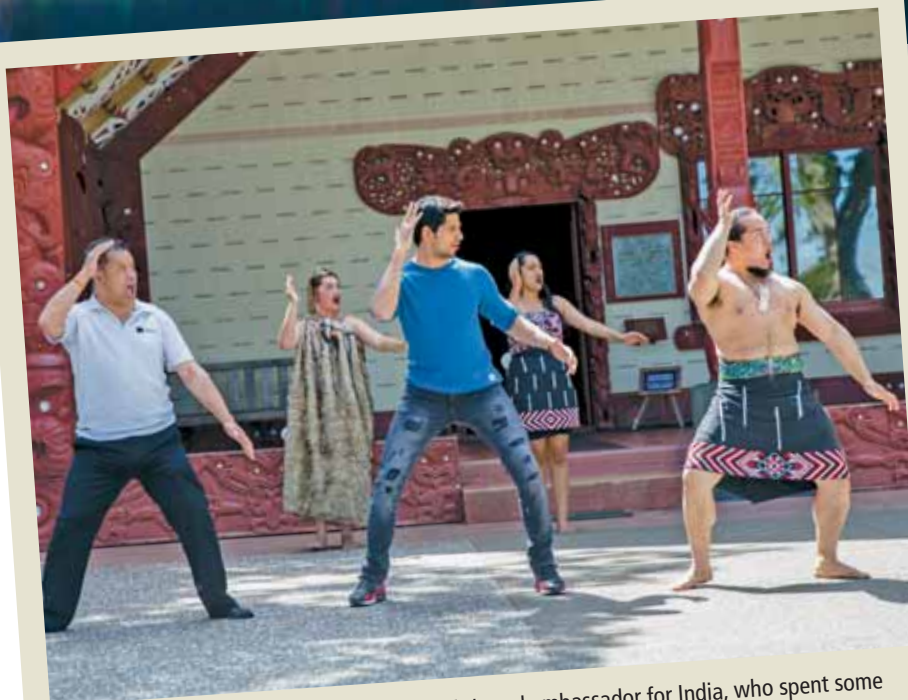


What segments are you looking to tap?

We have an interest in tapping groups (students), MICE and FIT segments. Aside from our Mitai Maori village experience, we offer an array of combo experiences which would fit nicely with all segments of the Indian market. We have been working with neighbouring operators in offering clients the opportunity to get close and view a Kiwi bird in an open encounter, tuataras and other indigenous wildlife.

Can you cater to special Indian dietary needs?

We believe the Indian market would be interested in experiencing Maori culture. We can specifically cater to our Indian guest by offering Indian dishes such as dal curry on a bed of jeera rice, with naan bread, papadum and gulab jamun, along with the hangi offering served from a buffet.



Sidharth Malhotra, Tourism New Zealand's brand ambassador for India, who spent some time with the Maoris, quips, "To witness the power of Maori warrior dance, the Haka first hand was remarkable. I was in awe of the passion of the performers and I deeply respect their culture. To be allowed to take part in these Maori traditions is an honour. Their culture is so powerful and it is great to see it being celebrated to this day in New Zealand."

Student visitors to New Zealand can enjoy a powerful cultural performance, showcasing the Haka war dance coupled with the poi dance.

An indigenous cultural experience here includes everything from a hangi meal, a performance by the tribe, to warrior canoe and visiting the sacred freshwater spring. Hangi is a traditional New Zealand Maori method of cooking using heated rocks buried in a pit oven.

Student visitors will be able to witness and enjoy a powerful cultural performance, showcasing the Haka war dance coupled with the grace of the poi dance (ball on the end of a string). Haka

is a Maori war dance; it is not only a challenge to opponents but also a mark of respect. Warriors in traditional attire paddle in an ancient warrior canoe and display their traditional weaponry and combat styles.

After the traditional dinner, visitors can take the guided walk through the forest and listen to the guide talk of the traditional uses of the flora and fauna for healing purposes. They can also view glow worms in their natural habitat.

Ras Al Khaimah



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