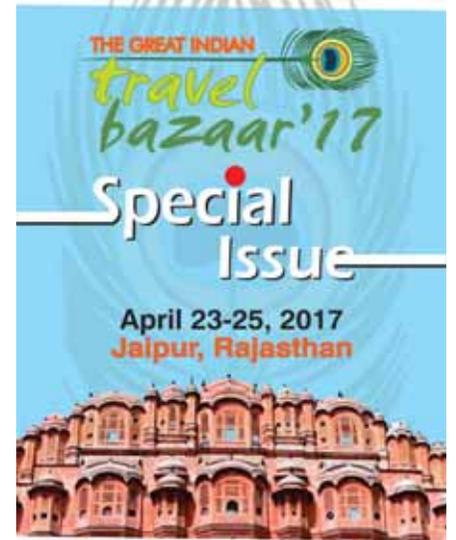


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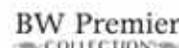
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# A decade of travel @GITB

The 10<sup>th</sup> Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB), being held from April 23-25 in Jaipur, is set to witness 10,800 B2B pre-fixed meetings. Apart from Rajasthan, eight states namely, Gujarat, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, J&K, Punjab and Tamil Nadu are showcasing their tourism potential at the exhibition.



ANKITA SAXENA

Over the years, GITB has emerged as one of the most important travel marts for inbound tourism. In 2017, the exhibition has reached newer heights. The number of exhibitors at the show has increased from 272 last year to 288 this year, informs **Rahul Chakravarty**, Senior Director and Head-Tourism, FICCI. He says, "The increased positive response from the industry shows the strong business sense that GITB provides Year-on-Year."

This year the show will allow buyers and exhibitors to engage in as many as 10,800 structured B2B meetings which have been pre-scheduled over two days. According to Chakravarty, this is an increase over last year's 10,600 recorded B2B meetings. All B2B meetings are held at the booths of the sellers. In the 10<sup>th</sup> edition, as



**Dr. Jyotsna Suri**  
Chairperson, Tourism Committee  
FICCI

many as 275 foreign buyers from 53 countries will be participating in the show. The exhibitors at the show are from varied segments of tourism and hospitality like hotels, travel agencies, tour operators, car rentals, cruises, destination management companies, etc.

This year two reports, the FICCI-YES Bank Report and FICCI-MRSS Knowledge Paper, will also be released at the inaugural session of the exhibition. "I am pleased to present the FICCI-YES



**Dipak Deva**  
Co-chairman, Tourism Committee  
FICCI

Bank Knowledge Report 'India Inbound Tourism' which captures the present tourism scenario, potential areas of development and proposes key interventions for India along with potential inbound tourism in Rajasthan to secure a leading place on the global tourism map. I am confident that this document will facilitate a better understanding of the opportunities both by the government and private sector," says, **Dr. Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson, Tourism Committee, FICCI. Suri opines that the Central



**Sanjeet**  
Co-chairman, Tourism Committee  
FICCI

Government plays an important role in developing a strong visitor economy which is evident from the fact that the Ministry of Tourism has also undertaken a slew of initiatives such as extending e-Tourist Visas (eTV) to 161 countries, releasing M-Visa and promoting different tourism products amongst others that have fuelled impressive tourism growth. She adds, "Looking ahead, the challenge lies in building world class infrastructure, rationalising cost of land procurement and simplifying licenses



**Rahul Chakravarty**  
Senior Director and Head-Tourism  
FICCI

of land towards creating 'Brand India'. In order to achieve this, the government, industry and institutions must make a collaborative effort to create a supportive ecosystem for tourism."

**Dipak Deva**, Co-chairman, Tourism Committee, FICCI, believes that GITB offers a unique opportunity to the exhibitors and buyers to immerse in multitudes of experiences at the show. Not only can they travel to the beautiful city of Jaipur to transact tourism business

but also enjoy the culture, heritage and the landscape of this scenic destination. "It is a prime state for tourism and Jaipur, as a part of the Golden Triangle circuit, is what most foreign travellers come to India to experience. Keeping that in mind, GITB is a very important show for the state, especially with its focus on inbound tourism and the numerous buyer-seller meets," he says.

**Sanjeet**, Co-chairman, Tourism Committee, FICCI, points out that GITB is instrumental in getting buyers who are selected through a stringent filtration process and it is up to the travel trade as well as the ministry to convert these fence sitters into Indian loyalists. He says, "GITB is that one show in India that captures the true business potential of inbound tourism. Over the last several years it has proved without a doubt its contribution and effectiveness in developing tourism." 🇮🇳

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# ITDC showcases tours division at GITB

The India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) is focusing on its Delhi properties and travel and tourism business at this year's Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) in Jaipur.



TT BUREAU

ITDC celebrated its Golden Jubilee last year with a series of activities and promotions. **Piyush Tiwari**, Officiating Chairman & Managing Director and Director (Commercial & Marketing), ITDC, informed, "2016 was a very interesting and proud year for us in terms of not only earning profit and motivating business growth but also for ITDC's successful completion of 50 years in the industry. ITDC posted over four-fold jump in its standalone net profit to ₹8.26 crore for the third quarter that ended December 31, 2016. Whereas, Net sales during the quarter increased by 25.97 per cent to ₹143.50 crore as against ₹113.91 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal."

ITDC's The Ashok Events (AE) Division also performed well. "AE Division handled many prestigious events during the year including organising 'Bharat Parv' at Rajpath in January and at Red Fort in the month

of August," he revealed. The company is also dedicated towards hospitality education through Ashok Institute of Hospitality & Tourism Management as well as the HRD division. "Our aim is to work towards making a difference to the academic culture for the students and our institutes offer a globally competitive curriculum and infrastructure. Last year, AIHTM formalised collaboration with the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT), under Ministry of Tourism to offer a three-year Bachelors of Science (B.Sc.) course in Hospitality and Hotel Administration. ITDC is also one of the leaders in imparting hospitality related training to students from the northeastern region of country under DONER scheme of Govt of India," said Tiwari.

ITDC is participating in GITB, and would mainly be focusing on Delhi properties and Ashok Tour & Travels (ATT) division. "Our main focus in GITB would be on

travels and tourism division ATT as well as our flagship property The Ashok along with Hotel Samrat, as they are not only part of Golden Triangle circuit but also major MICE properties. The focus of ITDC is to establish itself as a one-stop solution for travel, tourism and hospitality related services," claimed Tiwari. Apart from that they have tied up with both online and offline travel agents for various marketing and promotional activities.

GITB is focused on inbound tourism, which according to Tiwari is in great shape currently. "The rising interests of travellers from across the world indicate a healthy shift and growth in Indian inbound tourism sector. Unlike in the past, there is an increase in the share of visitors looking to spend their vacations or explore exotic Indian destinations. This growth can also be attributed to the introduction



**Piyush Tiwari**  
Officiating Chairman & Managing Director and Director (Commercial & Marketing), ITDC

of e-visas to many countries coupled with decreasing air fares. The numbers of FTAs (Foreign Tourist Arrivals) in January 2017 was 9.83 lakh as compared to 8.44 lakh FTAs in January 2016. Government has taken series of proactive steps to promote India as a great round-the-year tourist destination for the international tourists. Moreover, India is currently witnessing an incremental growth in inbound travel from APAC region which, otherwise, was led by destinations like China, USA, Europe and

Singapore. Improved and world class health services being offered by various reputed Indian hospitals have created a great potential for medical tourism," he added.

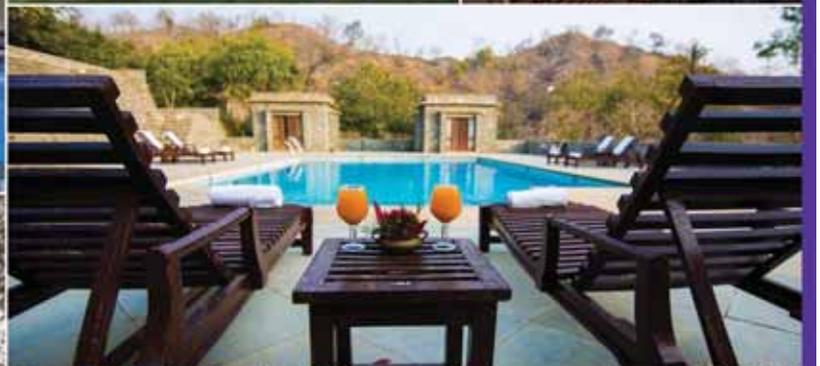
However, there are challenges as well. "The target is to achieve the 16-million-tourist mark by 2020. This will give a lot of opportunities to tour operators, tourist guides, hoteliers, and transporters. It will also give an opportunity to the government to collect more taxes. The challenges are primarily the connectiv-

The target is to achieve the 16-million-tourist mark by 2020. This will give a lot of opportunities to tour operators, tourist guides, hoteliers, and transporters

ity issues between various tourist destinations, and stiff competition with nearby destinations like Singapore, Dubai, Malaysia, Thailand, China etc.," he claimed.

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Heritage Circuit in Assam gets funds worth ₹ 98.35 cr

■ To leverage tourism sector in Assam, the Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned funds to the tune of ₹ 98.35 crores for a Heritage Circuit in the state. This was announced by **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, MoS (I/C) Tourism & Culture, Government of India. This amount which has been sanctioned for development of the Tezpur, Majuli and Sivasagar circuit under the scheme of Swadesh Darshan includes development of a composite tourist infrastructure in Majuli, comprising of an interpretation centre near Kamalabari ghat, log huts, watch towers, cafeteria, elevated walkway, solar illumination and landscaping worth ₹ 61.26 crores, development of Ranghar, Joy Sagar and Talatal Ghar in Sivasagar and development of Kanaklata Udyan and Bamuni Hills in Tezpur. Also, the Tourism Ministry has decided to transfer the rights of Brahmaputra Ashok Hotel, currently managed by ITDC, to Government of Assam. All necessary modalities to formalise the transfer of rights will be executed within next 15 days. An amount of ₹ 2 crore was also sanctioned by MOT for the Namami Brahmaputra festival.

# 9 years with Great Indian Travel Bazaar

The Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB), in its ninth edition, has scaled and improved not only its distribution, venue and delivery but also its operations and style. It's now perched in a commanding position as the only travel show in India, which addresses a dedicated audience.

There are people who don't believe in exhibitions and travel fairs and some who believe exhibitions are too massive to create a lasting impact. At RARE, we are unabashed exhibitionists. You have to be, when you promote 50 of the finest boutique hotels, heritage palaces and jungle lodges in destinations that need Google maps scaled to maximum to be located. This is what this travel show, which has sustained itself for nine long years, does for us and for many others with the same agenda — helps us exhibit to a few hundred people of the travel fraternity from India and around the world.

As someone who stuck sun board posters to tell travel agents what we did at GITB Edition 1, we are a tad nostalgic about the first few years when overseas agents were still not of the quality that exhibitors were expecting, yet the venue at the BIRLA Science Centre, (at roughly one third

the cost we pay per booth today) was a definite eye catcher. Timed just at the end of the inbound tourist season, GITB meant a fine assessment of the things that were and what could be. The RARE partner hotels from Rajasthan were always there, as it was home ground. No wonder it was nick-

Today, GITB is an important date on every operator's calendar for whom India is a destination of interest

named 'privately' as the Great Indian Thakur Bazaar. When the show moved to JECC in Sitapur on the outskirts of Jaipur, it took away post-event shopping time for many, yet the ease of going about doing business improved manifold. Just being on one floor in an air-conditioned space with good facilities made the show more efficient and comfortable.

Over the years, the format has remained roughly the same (although we

smartened up to setting up online meetings), a full day of 15 minute meetings per scheduled foreign tour operator was preceded by an inaugural party, which is mind boggling but needs your presence as it sets the pace for the next two days.

Today, GITB is an important date on every operator's calendar for whom India is a destination of interest. It would be prudent to mention here two bold initiatives that the organisation holds as its own, including their list of invitees from lesser-known markets instead of sifting through the already converted list. We have seen agents from Kazakhstan, Chile, Peru, Latvia etc. Now this might mess with their offerings to

the sellers list as we do have hoteliers complain about the efficacy of exhibiting to these markets, but as strategy to improve India's charm to the world as a travel destination, it can't be faulted. There is also a noticeable change in the quality of operators — they are younger, unlike one elderly operator, who a few years back, huffed his way to our booth and promptly fell asleep. The second initiative is to entice smaller Indian operators to exhibit and gain mileage from the show pitching them against corporate sponsors who have their large overseas contingents walking the show. The show is yet to strike a balance between various stakeholders but it is not due to lack of trying.

So as we prepare for the latest edition of GITB 2017, three months of monitoring meetings online for 12 of our participating partner hotels, designing content, planning meetings and customis-

ing hospitality and delivery, I must admit to the familiar feeling of 'not wanting to miss it', the anticipation of meeting people from the world over to tell them about the India that they may not know — a 'RARE India' away from the big monuments and popular cities and just staying with the buzz of the business. The business of exhibition!

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



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# Wed in the lap of nature

The MICE and wedding segments will be the main focus for Holiday Inn Cochin this year with a newly renovated banquet hall with a capacity of 550 persons.



It is an exciting time for Holiday Inn Cochin that has been in operation for six successful years now. The hotel has recently renovated its new banquet hall by adding capacity taking the total to 550 persons that it can now accommodate. This new addition, says **Soma Mathew**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Holiday Inn Cochin, will help grow the MICE and banquet segment for the hotel. "This year, with the newly renovated hall, the MICE and the weddings segments will definitely be our main focus."

She adds that the domestic market has definitely grown in India. "Kerala is one of the major tourist destinations and has plenty to offer – from mountains to beaches to waterfalls and of course the backwaters. The Kerala Tourism Board has also done a commendable job in promoting the destination in various national and international travel and trade shows. In-



**Soma Mathew**  
Director of Sales & Marketing  
Holiday Inn Cochin, India Travel Award winner

**This year, with the newly renovated hall, the MICE and the weddings segments will definitely be our main focus**

bound movement has been almost similar and has seen new markets coming in which is a very promising sign for our tourism and hotel industries," Mathew says.

Kerala has lots to offer to travellers not just for leisure

visitors but also for MICE and business travellers. With help from the tourism and hospitality industries, Mathew feels, Kerala can definitely become one of the most sought-after destinations for MICE as well with a little focus on development of infrastructure and better facilities for the same.

"In terms of ARR, the hotel has seen a very promising growth in the year 2016 and is also looking to grow further in 2017 with positive sentiments and acceptance of buyers. Repeat guest ratio has also increased which in turn has seen RevPAR growth," Mathew adds.

Holiday Inn Cochin hopes that its presence at GITB will help showcase the property and brand to the trade. "It also gives us an opportunity to understand new market trends and what is compelling buying. With 277 foreign buyers from 55 countries, it would definitely benefit both buyers and sellers," she explains.

# Dial C for Crowne Plaza

Just a stone's throw away from the Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre, the 218-room Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road is one of the biggest hotels for MICE.



While the location is its biggest USP, the Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road offers comfortable stay with a dedicated staff to take care of guests' needs. "Guests can enjoy their stay in the biggest rooms in Jaipur which are around 40 sqm in size. The Sleep Advantage programme, including premium bedding, aromatherapy, quiet zone floors and a guaranteed wake-up call, helps guests unwind and rest easier, ensuring a productive day ahead," says **Neeraj Maharshi**, Director of Sales and Marketing.

Talking of the MICE facilities at the property, he elaborates, "Spread across 44,500 sq. ft, the hotel provides excellent venues for all business purposes. The indoor and outdoor banquet venues offers flexible meeting options that can accommodate up to 2500 guests. In fact, the property is a perfect location for couples looking forward to celebrate a fairy-tale wedding."



**Neeraj Maharshi**  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road,  
India Travel Award winner

**The indoor and outdoor banquet venues offers flexible meeting options that can accommodate up to 2500 guests**

The hotel is a green building that incorporates several sustainable features. "This Green Engage certified hotel gives the property the ability to track energy, carbon and water consumption as well as to assess how waste is managed," he explains.

Maharshi is using a combination of both online and offline marketing tools to promote the property. "We need to have an integrated marketing approach, which reflects a consistent brand message. Jaipur is the city of exporters, entrepreneurs and corporates and most of the hotel business is coming from conferences and meetings. Therefore, we have reached out to these segments to generate business for our hotel. Social media marketing is also our key driver to reach modern travellers and the tech-savvy guests," he adds.

He believes that the movement of inbound traffic has been consistent in the past year. "However, pressure on rates has been noticed due to added inventory in leisure destinations covering Golden Triangle. The trend is likely to remain the same for coming years with increasing competition in the market," he adds.

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# Telangana talks tourism in the capital

With an eye to promote tourism in the state, Telangana Tourism in its roadshow in New Delhi presented its existing and potential tourist attractions for travel agents and tour operators in the capital.



NISHA VERMA

**Tejawat Ramachandru**, IAS (Retd.), Special Representative of Telangana in New Delhi, was the chief guest for the evening and talking about the roadshow, said, "It's a very good initiative of Government of Telangana, especially the tourism de-



Tejawat Ramachandru, IAS (Retd.)  
Special Representative of Telangana in New Delhi

There are a variety of tourism potentials, both existing and for the future. Right from leisure, medical tourism to a variety of things

partment. It's only the fourth or fifth roadshow in the series, but it will go a long way. There are a variety of tourism potentials, both existing and for future. Right from leisure,



Sunita M. Bhagwat, IFS  
Commissioner, Department of Tourism, Government of Telangana

Telangana Govt will provide support mechanism as well as quicker clearances for tourism projects

adventure, pilgrimage, monuments, medical tourism to a variety of things, we have everything, not only in Hyderabad, but in the rest of the 30 districts as well. Through this roadshow we can at least bring the destination to the notice of all the tour operators and stakeholders in the

tourism industry. Also, this is an opportunity to get their feedback on what else can be done to reach better heights."

**Sunita M. Bhagwat** (IFS), Commissioner, Department of Tourism, Government of Telangana, informed that they had started their roadshows in the month of November with Mumbai and Pune. "Now, a series of roadshows have been start-

ed from February onwards. We started with Lucknow, Chandigarh, Jaipur and then came to Delhi. We want to educate people about the destinations, and thus we are making inroads into North India."

The state is seeing a decent growth in the past few years in terms of tourism. Bhagwat informed, "Last year, because of Pushkaralu, there

was an increase in domestic tourists, which was more than 2 crores. Now, we are looking at enhancing these figures," informed Bhagwat.

The agenda of the roadshow was to make people aware of what Telangana has apart from Hyderabad. Ramachandru added, "We have a lot more potential, including good forest cover where one can have adventure tourism,

or wildlife for wildlife-related tourism. We also have waterbodies and big reservoirs called Ramappa, Pakala and Laknavram near Warangal. There will also be new water bodies, which would be constructed in the next 4-5 years, wherein each of the places would have the investment potential of at least a couple of billion dollars." The state will also provide support to investors through

many ways, he said. "Telangana Government would provide support mechanism as well as quicker clearances for tourism projects. If there is government land, we can extend it as part of the investment to show we are also part of the development. Today, both industrial and aviation policy of Telangana, requires one to make any application of any project online only," he claimed.

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RIDE ONLY

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|--------|----------------|
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## Service key to Kochi doors

Situated next to the tranquil backwaters of Kerala, Crowne Plaza Kochi stands out because of its service, claims its General Manager **Shuvendu Banerjee**.



The 269-room property features four restaurants and state-of-the-art conference facilities, which can cater to meetings of as small as four people to large banquet function for 600 people indoors and 1200 people at the Crowne Plaza open lawn. However, **Shuvendu Banerjee** credits it to their service, saying, "We have a team of passionate, highly professional and dedicated people who toil hard to make sure that every guest who steps into the hotel feels right at home and ensures their complete comfort during the stay."

However, being a major inbound and domestic destination, Kochi is quite a competitive market. Banerjee reacts, "The larger chunk of our clients is international travellers and they prefer us because they are looking for a Crowne Plaza experience in a city like Kochi. We try our best to ensure the best possible experience for our



**Shuvendu Banerjee**  
General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi,  
India Travel Award Winner

**A symbiotic affiliation between all partners of travel trade is essential to ensure commercial success**

guests and that takes care of the competition."

In terms of strategy, "We focus on domestic and international travellers who travel to Kochi for business or leisure when it comes to rooms, and domestic market is key focus

for F&B. However, our best marketing tool is our happy guests. Having said that, we are doing F&B promotions every month," he added.

He also said that trade plays a strong part in their promotions and sales. "A symbiotic affiliation between all partners of travel trade is essential to ensure commercial success. Events like Kerala Travel Mart and GITB and Award Functions like India Tourism Awards, of which we were part of, helps build cohesiveness and camaraderie among the travel trade partners," he claimed.

He is although quite positive about the inbound tourism coming to the country, saying, "There has been a steady increase of tourists travelling to India. Tourism shows like GITB have made a significant contribution to the same. Tourist friendly policies and initiatives are the need of the hour and policies like liquor ban, which are detrimental to the industry need to be revisited."

## Right choice for promotion

**Davinder Juj**, Hotel Manager, Eros Hotel, Nehru Place, New Delhi, says they are leaving no stone unturned to promote the property among agents and customers.



Nestled in the heart of South Delhi, Eros Hotel New Delhi, offers amazing views of Lotus Temple and the city. A diaspora of culinary options and total banqueting space of 26,500 sq. ft. that can accommodate up to 2,000 people, it is the ultimate destination for conferences and weddings. **Davinder Juj**, Hotel Manager, Eros Hotel, Nehru Place, New Delhi, said, "The hotel is known for consistently delivering the authentic Indian hospitality experience since it opened 20 years ago."

However, sustaining competition in as big a market as Delhi is not easy. "Competition is the best thing to keep high standards in hospitality industry. Thus, we deal with it by proactively knowing our guests' and business partners' expectations and exceeding them," he claimed. He believes that the right promotional strategy plays a very important role in achieving the competitive ad-



**Davinder Juj**  
Hotel Manager, Eros Hotel  
Nehru Place, New Delhi

**We at Eros Hotel have adopted a balanced approach for promoting our brand which includes personal selling**

vantage and reaching the right people. "We at Eros Hotel have adopted a balanced approach for promoting our brand which includes personal selling for targeting the domestic customers in the market; public relations for effective engagement with media and spread-

ing positive word-of-mouth among people. We also have advertising and digital marketing for brand recalling; website for interactive relations with the potential customer; customised offerings and an option of hi-speed Internet; airport transfers; sightseeing; spa and bridal packages to suit all clients. Last, but not the least, we maintain a strong engagement with people on social media platforms for communicating important news, events, awards and festivals," said Juj.

For Eros, travel trade partners have been strong supporters for years. Juj claimed, "We believe in a symbiotic relationship with our travel agents who introduce us to new FTOs and this is driven through an enticing business proposition for our partners after which sales follow inevitably. Also, we do ensure our presence in all trade events so that the brand is visible to all the FTOs and gives us an opportunity to meet the FTOs. This also builds FTOs' confidence in travel agents for recommending our hotel."

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## Jaipur, Goa on Madison radar

With an eye on business travellers, The Madison's two new properties in South Delhi and Ranthambore deliver on their promise to the MICE segment.



The Madison has introduced two new properties this year. One is a 24-room boutique property in South Delhi's business hub Nehru Place and Okhla industrial area with large spacious rooms and Hastens beds to ensure that guests get a comfortable night's rest. The second property is Madison Grand Ranthambore located in the valley of Aravallis. It has spacious rooms and all the comforts of a modern hotel.

Speaking about the focus area for these two hotels, **Ashok Shah**, Director, The Madison, says, "Both the properties are targeted at the business traveller and that is the main market segment that we are looking at. The domestic market over the last few years has grown unlike the inbound market which has gone down or remained static in some markets."

The Madison New Delhi is offering attractive special



rates and packages customised to individual needs for company executives, groups, FITs as well as B2B agents. Shah adds that the company plans to expand this year with hotels in Jaipur as well as Goa. These again will be business hotels with 25-55 rooms.

"In the mid-market segment, the ARRs have been stable with not much variation. We think the winter will be good in both domestic and inbound segments. Demonetisation did affect us for the first three months but we haven't seen any effects on business thereafter," Shah

adds. He adds that the recent liquor ban will spell bad news for the industry as many hotels and restaurant are on the so-called highway but within city limits. "We hope this is revised as the industry is suffering and discouraging new entrants into the industry," Shah opines.

Madison Grand Ranthambore also arranges for trips to the national park as well as offers assistance and guidance for local sightseeing. It can organise big events like wedding functions, socials gatherings as well as large corporate events with flexible packages. ↴

## For that perfect view of Taj

Just a stone's throw away from The Taj Mahal, Clarks Shiraz, Agra is the ideal leisure and wedding destination, claims **Rupak Gupta**, Joint MD, U.P. Hotels.



2016 ended on a positive note for Clarks Shiraz, Agra. **Rupak Gupta** confirmed by saying, "Hotels in the regions have experienced the third consecutive year of increase in room inventory. We have performed well in 2016 in comparison to 2015, though the pressure on ADR & RevPAR have continued. The property has been awarded in the categories of Best Leisure Resort & Best MICE Resort by India Hospitality Awards North and East."

The property has been in existence for 50 years, and has created a niche for itself. "The inbound traffic to our property has increased in the year 2016 from all parts of Europe, Australia, Japan and USA. The luxurious 5-star resort is spread over six acres, and has 237 well-appointed rooms, many of which overlook The Taj Mahal," he added. However, the city of Agra has many new properties to-



Rupak Gupta  
Joint MD  
U. P. Hotels

The inbound traffic to our property has increased in the year 2016 from all parts of Europe, Australia, Japan and USA

day, both new and old, which means more competition. Gupta said, "When it comes to hotels, India is something of an anomaly. We have great homegrown hotel brands in every major tourist destination or city. Yet the truth is

that much of expansion in the hotel business in India is now happening in the foreign branded sector. However, our property has the distinction of hosting guests like Jackie Kennedy, Neil Armstrong, Mohammad Ali and others. Our flexibility to accommodate variety of dietary, cultural and regional needs of the travellers is our greatest USP. In fact, with 57,000 sq.ft. of gardens and 10,500 sq.ft. of indoor hall space with a large inventory of rooms spread across three blocks to separate the bride and groom sides, it is an ideal place for destination wedding. We offer a good value for money both for the deluxe as well as mid-market segment."

Gupta has been closely working with the travel trade. "We have good relations with our travel trade partners and have been catering to their needs as per the changing market dynamics with a flexible policy helping our partners to grow with us," he informed. ↴

## jüSTa to expand in North & West

jüSTa Hotels & Resorts is leaving no stone unturned to make the brand known in the market and is all set for expansion in North and West India.



Keen on following the concept of Small Luxury Hotels, jüSTa Hotels & Resorts offers comforts of home away from a home in a hotel. **Rohit Katyal**, Head of Sales & Marketing – Delhi NCR, says, "Since inception we have been operating personalised hotels and resorts with amenities and services available in a large hotel. We work on hub-and-spoke model and try to do multiple projects in a region. The latest jewel in our portfolio is Design Hotel Chennai – A jüSTa Hotel."

Elaborating on the Chennai property, he said, "At Design Hotel Chennai, the interiors have seamlessly connected past and present international design movements to the timeless local traditions of South India. Renowned interior designer Pronit Nath has designed the property on the styles of four distinct forms of contemporary art." Talking about the Indian market and the travel trade, he said, "India is a com-



Rohit Katyal  
Head of Sales & Marketing – Delhi NCR  
jüSTa Hotels & Resorts

At Design Hotel Chennai, the interiors have seamlessly connected past and present international design movements

plex market and the role of travel trade partners is very important. Today, a traveller is not looking at the same run-of-the-mill itineraries. They are willing to experiment and travel to unique unearthed locations. Fortunately, a couple of our resorts fall in similar category

and some trade partners are willing to promote these exotic holiday options."

However, he said that the last two years have been slow for them from inbound travel trade. "From series business perspective though there has been some surge this year and the same is from FIT requirements." In fact, jüSTa Hotels & Resorts has been participating in GITB since its inception. "This event has given us the right platform and helped us to position our brand at the right level. We get exposure to create awareness among international and domestic travel trade as well as the hospitality fraternity," he added.

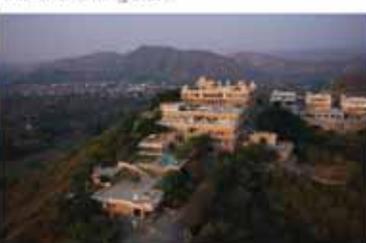
Katyal revealed that they are now aggressively looking for opportunities to expand in North and Western part of India. "We would like to continue to be in domain of Small Luxury Hotels with 50-60 rooms and other recreational facilities," he added. ↴



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# Ranakpur next stop for MICE

With a growing interest from the domestic market, Mana Hotels is focusing on attracting corporate off-site and wedding segments for its luxury resort in Ranakpur.



In today's competitive landscape, every hotel has to keep reinventing its services. The focus for Mana Hotels this year is to offer great value for money. This is reflected in its packages which will entice guests and travel agents alike to promote Ranakpur as a destination. One such incentive reveals **Dheeraj Jain**, Sales & Marketing Manager, Mana Hotels, is its offer for a complimentary stay for one child per room.

Jain, who has been with the company for six years now, says, "Ranakpur is primarily a leisure destination. Therefore, our primary clientele is individuals or groups looking for a break. In addition to this we have seen growing interest for corporate off-sites and weddings at Ranakpur. We hope to grow this segment in the coming years."

Mana Hotels luxury resort in Ranakpur offers a



Dheeraj Jain  
Sales & Marketing Manager  
Mana Hotels

We have seen growing interest for corporate off-site and weddings at Ranakpur

scenic setting in the Aravalis. The local sightseeing and excursions are also unique which will meet the needs of both domestic and inbound travellers. "We hope our friends in the travel trade will give Ranakpur its due in the coming years. It is a destination that has been hugely under-rated," Jain says.

The hotel's focus over the last few years has shifted towards the domestic market. The reason for this is the inability of the inbound market to include Ranakpur in its itinerary for a night halt. It is primarily used as a lunch stop between Jodhpur and Udaipur. "But thanks to the support from the travel trade, we get a healthy percentage of these lunches filtered by criterion such as budget and quality. Since our inception, our focus has been on guest satisfaction. This mantra has helped us achieve our financial goals for the previous years and we hope it will do us well in the future as well," Jain adds.

Speaking about GITB, he says that it has been a wonderful platform for every hotel and tour operator to showcase their product to their potential audience and this holds true for Mana Hotels as well. "We hope to meet and collaborate with several foreign and domestic tour operators during our pre-scheduled interviews at GITB," Jain exclaims.

# Cashing in on cashless India

Khandela Haveli has welcomed India's go-cashless drive by installing card machines and training its staff to deal with online transactions.



Girdhar Pratap Singh  
Owner  
Khandela Haveli

Khandela Haveli's heritage boutique hotels have a special emphasis on gracefully blending original architecture with modern-day amenities. That is what makes its two properties relevant for tourists across all segments. It has been a constant endeavour for the group to make continuous improvements and upgrades at both Khandela Haveli in Jaipur and Castle Khandela in Sikar city (located between Agra and Bikaner) to make the guests' stay an experience in itself.

Speaking about various upgrades that the two unique properties have seen recently, **Girdhar Pratap Singh**, its owner who is a descendant of Raja Raisal, says, "We have added two more rooms in the Haveli and are coming up with an exclusive dining experience at the Castle. No two rooms are alike in both the properties and the minutest of details are worked

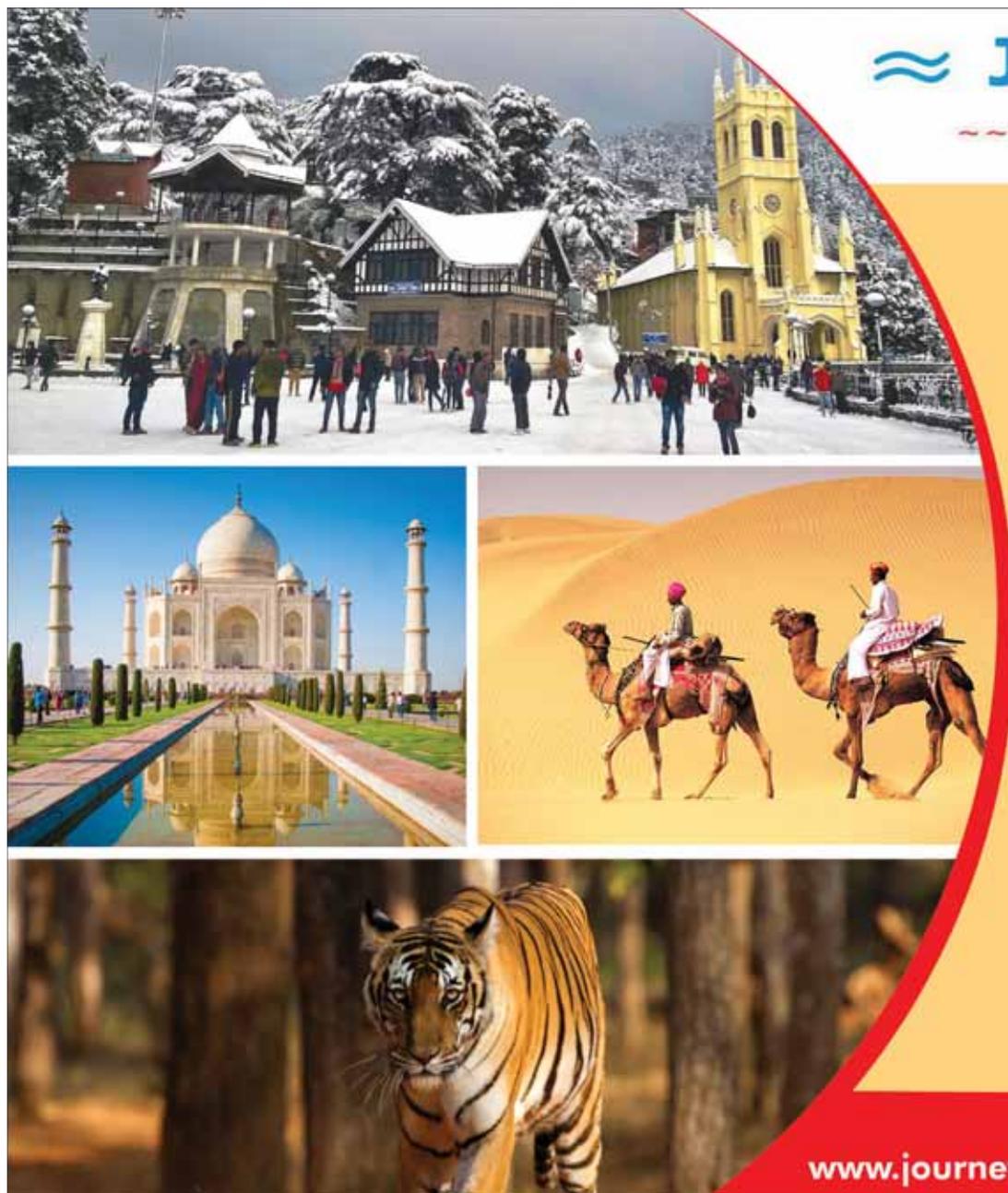
We have added two more rooms in the Haveli and are coming up with an exclusive dining experience at the Castle

upon so that the guest is delighted and completely comfortable."

He believes that GITB is a necessary platform for hotel owners. "The role of tour operators is of great significance. GITB offers us hotel-

iers opportunities to meet and have in-depth interactive sessions with the travel agents directly. Such sessions are essential for us to be aware of the current market trends and demands of the guests. They help us market our property internationally. GITB has a global appeal and is well attended by exhibitors and buyers from all over the world making it an overall profitable experience for all parties. With so many changes happening around us it becomes imperative that we get a platform to be heard," Singh adds.

Referring to the recent demonetisation drive by the current government, he talks about how his hotels have moved with the times. "To facilitate cashless transactions, we have installed card reading machines at various places and our staff has already been trained to deal with these. Fortunately, our foreign guests were already aware of all cashless modes of payments and we also take it as a welcome change," he says.



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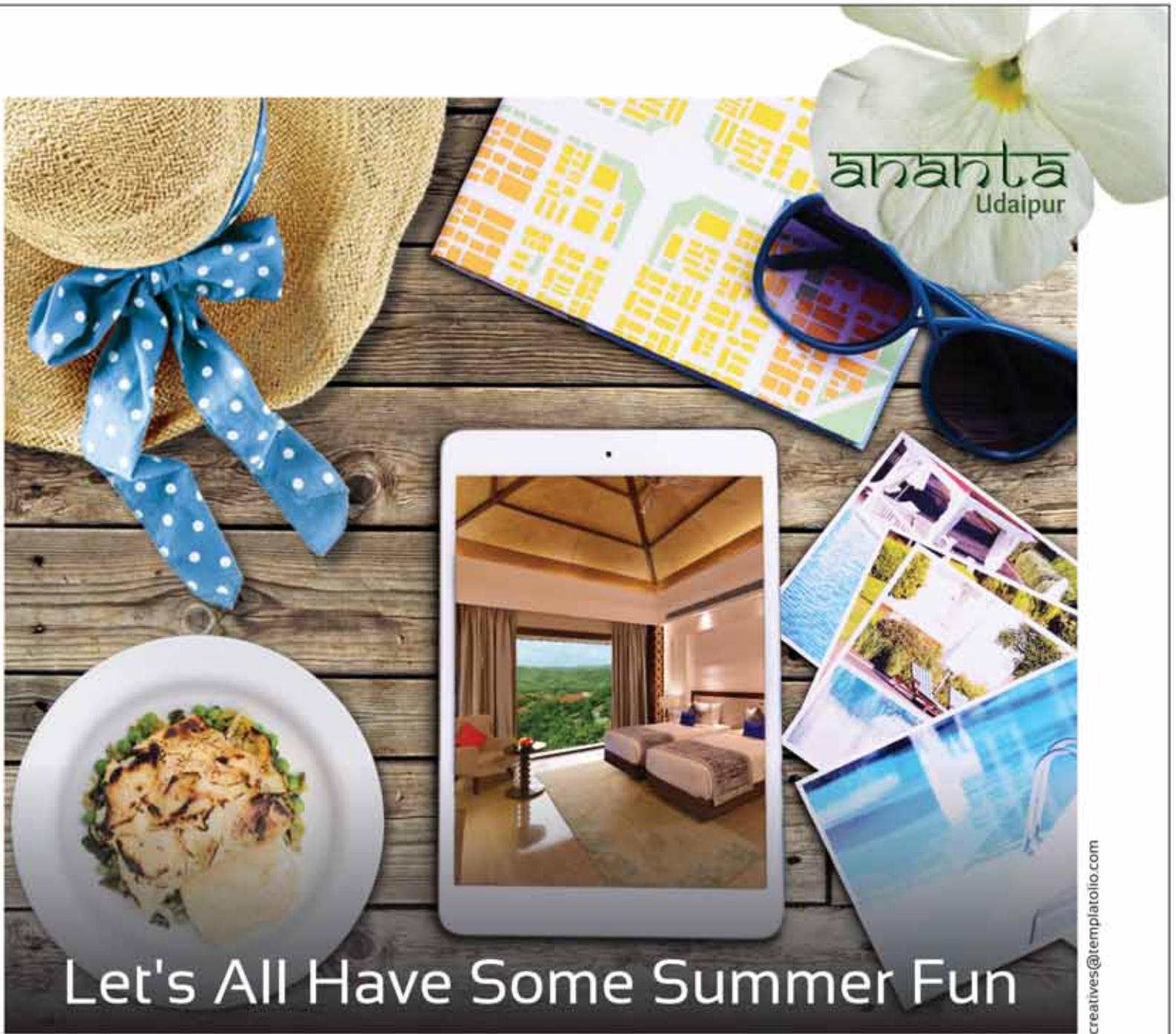
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# Ananta eyes more inbound

Leveraging on the GITB advantage, Ananta Hotels & Resorts will focus on increasing inbound business while nurturing the domestic market for its properties.



Having been associated with Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) for many years now, Ananta Hotels & Resorts has reaped the benefits of being present at this forum. Yet again, it has partnered with the trade show to increase footfalls to all its properties. **Dipesh Sharma**, Director, Sales & Marketing, The Ananta, Udaipur, says, "The focus will be to have good B2B meetings to increase the footfalls of inbound tourists for us in the future. Inbound has always been a segment that Ananta has focused on and striven to increase. For sure the numbers have a big scope to increase in future to cater to more and more foreign nationals at Ananta Hotels & Resorts."

However, the domestic market is not far behind. Speaking about how the domestic market has performed for Ananta Hotels in 2016, Sharma adds, "We expect



Dipesh Sharma  
Director Sales & Marketing  
The Ananta, Udaipur

The focused segments this year will be conferences and inbound, and on how we can keep ourselves aside from the online portals

that Ananta, Udaipur and even Ananta, Pushkar will be hugely impacted in terms of business from the domestic segment. We have mostly received good FIT leisure traffic throughout the year specially in the summers. This was

well-supported by the conferences and weddings market."

He adds that the hotel group is at the end of the day obviously focused on all the segments for business and to showcase its wonderful hotels in Pushkar and Udaipur. "But yes the focused segments this year will be conferences and inbound, and of course on how we can keep ourselves aside from the online portals," Sharma says.

The Ananta hotels saw many developments in 2016. "We have already added many recreational activities in both our hotels to keep our guests busy in the hotel itself. These recreational activities also help our corporate groups in terms of team-building exercise that is a huge part of conferences," Sharma reveals.

### Focus Areas

- Increase in footfalls of inbound tourists and conferences and corporates

# 19 new properties in 2017

Cygnett Hotels and Resorts has aggressive expansion plans to add 19 properties to its portfolio by the end of 2017, out of which 5 are already in pre-opening stages.



Cygnett Hotels operated six hotels in 2016 with average occupancy of 75 per cent; ADR of `3000-4000; and RevPar of `2625. The company is planning to add 19 new properties to its portfolio by the end of 2017 and currently five of its properties are under various stages of pre-opening, informed **Sarbendra Sarkar**, Managing Director and Founder, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts. "At Cygnett we firmly believe that our success will be driven by exceptional value for all our stakeholders. It is the only brand focused towards future consumer trends of total wellness in business hotels. We offer exceptional quality service at affordable price. Cygnett Hotels holds multiple brand options which offer their partners co-branding which a different for each brand," he says.

In 2016, Cygnett's hotels in metro cities like Kolkata received an average of over 20 per cent international guests



Sarbendra Sarkar  
Managing Director and Founder  
Cygnett Hotels and Resorts

while non-metro city hotels received an average of five per cent international guests from across the globe especially from the US, Europe, China, Bangladesh, Russia, South East Asia and the Middle East. The hotel in Goa, focused on leisure travel, received around 24 per cent international guests.

Sarkar points out that Cygnett is a technology-savvy brand which invests a lot in keeping up with latest cutting-edge technology. Recently Cygnett adopted cloud based Central Reservation System (CRS) and Online Reputation

Management Software which allows the hotel chain to increase brand visibility and high room revenue through its distribution and e-commerce. "Our analysis of the market shows that 60 per cent of the social media users are open to being approached by brands and thus Cygnett is primarily focusing on digital marketing," says Sarkar. He also feels that GITB has emerged as one of the most important travel marts for inbound tourism which is not only instrumental in putting India on travel itineraries of the foreign buyers but also showcases new destinations of the vast country.

Discussing trends in the hospitality industry, Sarkar explains that with the advent of the Internet, easy smartphone access and ubiquitous mobile coverage, the business to consumer model has become the norm and online travel agents are growing exponentially. Old economy business model is being forced to change by newer technologies. ➤

## JEWEL IN THE CITY OF TAJ MAHAL

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

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

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

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# Jal Mahotsav: Making a splash

The month-long Jal Mahotsav, hosted by the Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Department Corporation (MPSTDC), brought to the forefront water-based adventure tourism, a new avenue to boost arrivals and revenue.



JESSY IYPE FROM HANUWANTIYA (M.P.)

The calm waters of Indira Sagar Dam contrast the buzzing festival which has sprung up on its banks in Hanuwantiya, spread approximately 950 sq. kms. Called as Jal Mahotsav or water festival, organised by the Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Department Corporation (MPSTDC), the festival was held from December 15, 2016, until January 15, 2017. The fest proved to be an ideal getaway for business

The Jal Mahotsav offered tourists different kinds of adventure activities be it air, water sports or land adventures.

There is now a body to take special care of all inbound and domestic tourism activity



Tanvi Sundriyal  
Additional Managing Director  
MPSTDC

ski, cruise, night camping, craft bazaar, and much more. The logistics for Jal Mahotsav, a large-scale event managed



pick-up and drop. There was also an arrangement for pick-up and drop from around 700 km like Surat and Nagpur. Guests were welcomed with refreshment hampers while on the way. A dedicated team for the guest logistics was also appointed."

For visiting the islands, speed boats were allocated. A team was there to ensure safety of the guests. Within the venue, there were bullock cart, golf-cart, bicycles to ferry guests.

### Promoting Adventure Tourism

The formation of a State

Tourism Board in Madhya Pradesh has been authorised by the state tourism cabinet. **Tanvi Sundriyal**, Additional Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC), informed, "There is now a body to take special care of all inbound and domestic tourism activity. In these areas, the private investors can set up camping sites, do walking trails, trekking, cycling etc., in a legit manner. It is a unique initiative taken for the first time in the country. No other state has a legal structure which allows adventure tourism activities in such a manner."

### From being tiger state to adventure state

After marketing itself as a tiger state, MP now wants to showcase its water and adventure tourism products. Jal Mahotsav was planned to showcase the potential and possibilities which Madhya Pradesh holds for investors, travel planners and adventure tourists on the bank of Indira Sagar Dam in Khandwa district. Another reason to organise Jal Mahotsav was to offer employment opportunities to the local people and promoting the local art and culture.

### Connectivity

Distance of Hanuwantiya tourist complex in Khandwa district is 130 kms from Indore. It is 150 kms from Maheshwar, 85 kms from Omkareshwar and 48.5 kms from Khandwa. By different routes from Bhopal, distance of Hanuwantiya is 300 to 350 kms

One can travel to Bhopal by Shatabdi Express, and from there hop on a bus or private car for Hanuwantiya or take Intercity Express train to Indore and then take a bus. MP tourism can also help avail a car to Hanuwantiya as well. Flight options to Indore are always available



and leisure travellers alike as meetings were held on houseboats. The festival also promoted adventure activities on water, air, and land, exploring the small islands within the dam and much more. The Madhya Pradesh Government envisioned opening new dimensions in the tourism sector to attract investments and increase tourist inflow to earn revenue while generating employment.

The area was equipped with luxury of Swiss tents. A water body of about 900 sq km with 91 hopping islands, dense forest, it inherited the tag of being the ideal destination for camp-fire, trekking and bird watching. The adventure activities included zip lining, kite flying, club house, all-terrain vehicle, land parasailing, paramotor, hot air balloon, water zorbing, water parasailing, motor boat, banana ride, jet

by Aum Events and Promotions India, was a vast segment itself. For the production, 250 truck rounds were used to transfer goods and commodities to the venue from across India. The planning of which was initiated 60 days before the event. **Prakash Kundalia**, Director, AUM Event and Promotions India, stated, "Numerous compact MPVs, vans, family cars, mini and luxury buses were booked for guest



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# Pals: The friend in need for hotels

Having started operations eight months ago, Pals Hotel and Marketing Solutions has an array of properties under its belt with the numbers steadily increasing month after month.

TT BUREAU

Pals Hotel and Marketing Solutions has been actively promoting properties all over India in an effort to assist tourists from India and the world with their accommodation requirements. The solutions company commenced operations eight months ago and has managed to bag 12 properties in the timespan.

From places like New Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Ranthambore, Rishikesh, Covalam, Munnar and Pondicherry, to name a few, Pals brings a variety of options in some of the best tourist hubs in the country.

**Pratibha Arora**, Director - Business Development, Pals Hotel & Marketing Solutions, says, "The fact that we have managed to bag a dozen prop-



**Pratibha Arora**  
Director - Business Development  
Pals Hotel & Marketing Solutions

erties till date in less than a year is a true testament to our services. We cater to mid-segment groups from all over the world, namely Europe, the Far East and Australia, including domestic tourists." She adds, "Social media and digital means of advertising have been very beneficial in spreading the word around and it is definitely effective as the response is increasing steadily."

# Caper anticipates good season ahead

The Caper Group looks forward to a fruitful season, having clocked a 25 per cent growth rate amongst all its verticals last year, says its CMD **Bharat Bhushan Atree**.

TT BUREAU

As the summer season looms upon us, it often sets the tone for the lean season in North India, which generally translates to less

business and fewer tourists. However, Caper Travel Company is aggressively promoting summer destinations like Ladakh, Kashmir, Himachal and Sikkim to have traffic in lean summer season as well.

**Bharat Bhushan Atree**, CMD, Caper Group, elaborates, "We have launched our new summer products based on Himalayas and summer retreats, places like Ladakh, Kashmir, Dharmshala (seat of Dalai lama) and Darjeeling, Gangtok for overseas market. Soft treks in the mountains



**Bharat Bhushan Atree**  
CMD  
Caper Group

We invite professionals who aspire to live their dreams of entrepreneurship, to head new SBUs supported by CTC Holding

also aroused interest for summer season among adventure enthusiast tourists from CIS countries and Eastern Europe.

According to Atree, an increasing number of tourists have shown interest in Ayurveda for wellbeing and health tourism and Kerala in monsoon is beautiful which can be promoted in Gulf market, a region which does not see rains. Despite the hurdles 2016 brought forward, Caper benefited with a significant growth in all the markets and verticals compared to last season. On their future plans, he informs, "We have multiple plans of growth by adding niche products into our existing markets and exploring new markets for our traditional popular products. Next year, we are bullish in our approach and marketing activities, we invite professionals who aspire to live their dreams of entrepreneurship, to head new SBUs supported by CTC Holding."

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# Hoteliers looking forward to GST

As the government readies to table the GST Bill in July this year, TRAVTALK got talking to hoteliers on the impact the bill will have on the hospitality industry.



**K.B. Kachru**  
Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, South Asia

“It’s really fantastic that GST has finally happened. We will see positive side of it, particularly for the rooms. However, in terms of restaurants, we are still awaiting certain clarifications. While we don’t know which way it will go, it would really be good for the industry and the country at large.”

“I think it’s a great move to have a single tax across the country. This would mean that there will be no disparity in taxes in Tamil Nadu and Kashmir or Bhubaneswar and Mumbai. It will also eliminate the tax on tax, which we pass on to the consumer. However, the quantum of GST and the level at which it is pegged will in itself have a major impact. Thus, anything between 18-19 per cent is great, but if it goes above 20 per cent, it won’t be very positive. However, overall, it’s a fantastic move.”



**Ajay Bakaya**  
DDP Game Changer, India Travel Awards 2015, Executive Director, Sarovar Hotels

“I think GST is one of the best things that have happened in the country. I hope that the constructive tone prevalent in the country will get it done. GST will make it easier to do business in India. The success of GST has been proven so many times in many countries in the last 50 years.”



**Rakesh Sarna**  
Managing Director & CEO, Indian Hotels Company Limited

“In the short term there could be a little pain. However, in the long term there is only gain. It means a lot more transparency and clearer pricing. All the successful economies in the world have GST. While I think 18 per cent is quite steep, but at the moment all the Indian taxes together would be steeper than 18 per cent. Thus, in the long term, it’s a great thing.”



**Michel Koopman**  
General Manager, Leela Ambience, Gurgaon

“Life will just become simpler with GST. Imagine there will be no calculation of a plethora of taxes to arrive at the gross figure. This would be so much easier for our finance and operations teams to deal with billing and would avoid short changing of guests. It would just get a lot of clarity and ultimately the guest will win.”



**Rohan Sable**  
General Manager, Novotel Goa Resorts & Spa and Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel

“It will majorly have a positive impact on the industry. When industry gets a benefit, it stokes more manufacturing and activity, and hospitality is an automatic gainer. Also, owing to the variables and taxations in multiple states and multiple cities, the common tax would be a great benefit for our customers. Thus, overall, it would benefit us and our customers. It’s a great move and I hope it comes together quickly.”

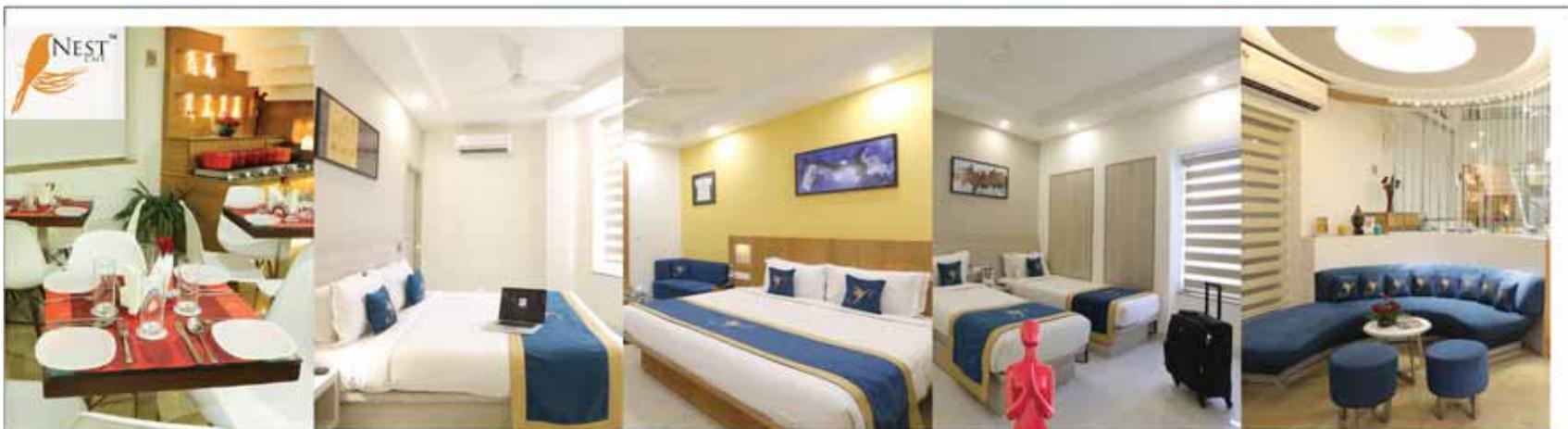


**Rattan Keswani**  
Deputy Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotel Company

“The year ahead isn’t bleak for the industry. No change in GST, across platforms, will benefit the hospitality sector. Reduced direct tax rates will give entry-level customers a fair share of disposable income. These developments will immensely benefit premium hospitality chains.”



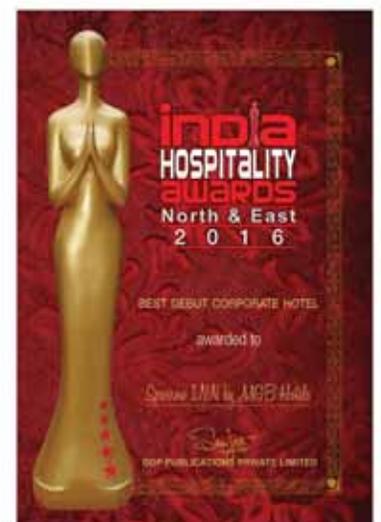
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## New stop for bleisure travel

Dook Travels, a DMC specialising in CIS countries, has added Azerbaijan to its kitty as its latest offering to the discerning Indian traveller.



Dook Travels, a leading destination management company catering to the outbound segment of tourism from India to the CIS countries is promoting travel to Azerbaijan in 2017. **Sandeep Kumar Gupta**, Director, Dook Travels, informs that even though the company has been sending Indian tourists to Azerbaijan since 2012, it's only now that they have shifted their focus to tours in and around the capital Baku. "We are promoting this destination in a big way starting 2017 and have seen great response already. The sight-seeing and nightlife in Baku is already a big hit among European and Middle Eastern tourists but remains largely unexplored by Indian tourists. That essentially means great business opportunity for travel agents from India," says Gupta.

The company's other Director, **Gopal Krishan Kapoor**, believes that the robust operations at their destination countries, focused

products and the experiences that are offered to the tourists, sets them apart from similar companies in the industry. "There has been a 40 per cent Year-on-Year growth in 2016 and we handled approximately 14,000 tourists.



**Sandeep Kumar Gupta**  
Director, Dook Travels

Year 2016 was a very busy year for us even through the winters, which is considered off-season," says Kapoor. The company also added Ukraine to the list of destinations offered in 2016 and set up operations in Kiev. With better flight connections and popularity of the destinations promoted by Dook Travels,

the company is expecting a drastic increase in tourist traffic to the CIS countries.

In terms of segment growth, Gupta points out positive increase in MICE movements to the CIS coun-



**Gopal Krishan Kapoor**  
Director, Dook Travels

tries from India. "Apart from the usual MICE groups, we've seen growth in smaller family groups embarking on leisure travels to CIS countries. Indian tourists have started taking longer vacations and are engaging in adventure and cultural activities of the CIS countries," says Gupta.

## Unique experiences @Senkay

SenKay Travel With Difference aims to show a different side of India and attempts to appeal to travellers by building an emotional connection through unique experiences.



Established in 2010, SenKay Tours and Travels is one of the leading DMCs in the country. It is highly specialised for India, Nepal and Bhutan inbound arrivals and is well-known for its value-added features in all the itineraries. The objective of SenKay Tours and Travels is to make travellers experience the real spirit of India in the most comfortable and joyful manner with the highest level of priority to customer service.

**N.R.S. Shivan**, Director - Operations & HRD Division, SenKay Tours and Travels states, "The finest way to discover the Indian Sub-continent is to undertake a journey with SenKay Tours & Travels. The first-hand knowledge of closely travelling with the end-customers makes SenKay a very unique Destination Management Company taking care of minute details of all travel needs. Our vast experience and ca-



**N.R.S. Shivan**  
Director - Operations & HRD Division, SenKay Tours and Travels

tering to every need of the customers gives an extra confidence to the travellers giving them a feeling of 'home-away-from home'."

A new division termed SenKay Travel With Difference under the same parent company has been launched recently which aims to bring experiences that tug at the heartstrings of their clients. **Abhishek Jain**, Director-Marketing, Finance and Product Development, SenKay Tours and Travels, gives more details on the same and says, "As the name suggests the new venture is all about experiencing a different India



**Abhishek Jain**  
Director - Marketing, Finance and Product Development SenKay Tours and Travels

which a traveller couldn't ever possibly imagine. It aims at transmitting emotions and excitement among travellers by doing something different to make their journey an unforgettable one. Unlike many other travel companies, it focuses on the individuality and uniqueness of lesser explored areas of the destination."

### New Products

SenKay Travel With Difference has been launched to bring experiences that tug at the heartstrings of travellers

## Easing group bookings

Best Western Hotels & Resorts, in partnership with HotelPlanner, launched its BWGroups RFP Tool, a robust platform to advance group booking process.



Continuing its stride as a first mover in the hospitality industry, Best Western partnered with HotelPlanner to enhance the way meeting planners search and book group accommodations. HotelPlanner is a hotel deals booking service that specialises in negotiated group hotel rates, extended stays, and corporate meeting planning for reservations at hotels.

As a result of this strategic partnership, Best Western launched the BWGroups RFP tool. The benefits of this new and advanced solution are two-fold: meeting planners have a user-friendly, simplified interface to better connect with Best Western and book group business; and Best Western Hotels operate off of a system built with innovative technology to better manage and respond to group business leads.

Speaking about this



**Tajinder Singh**  
VP Sales & Marketing - India, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka, Best Western Hotels & Resorts

Our new platform will enable our hotels to capitalise on these additional revenue opportunities and enhance our customers' experience

new tool, **Tajinder Singh**, Vice President Sales & Marketing - India, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka, says, "It is built with state-of-the-art technology, providing enhanced capabilities and intuitive

design to make sourcing groups, following up with clients and booking business faster and easier. With features such as online RFP management, email notifications, optional auto-response, and reporting and analytics features, this tool simplifies processes and helps hotel gain more group business. Group business continues to be a segment that we perform exceptionally well in, and our new platform will enable our hotels to capitalise on these additional revenue opportunities and enhance our customers' experience."

The BWGroups RFP Tool has been rolled out to all Best Western branded hotels in North America. With the platform's early success, the company has announced it will be launching the BWGroups RFP Tool on a global scale to its 4,200 hotels in more than 100 countries and territories worldwide including India.



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# Focus on heritage & food tours

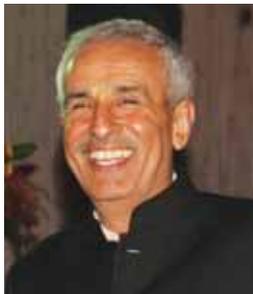
Trans India Holidays has added new activities for their guests and is working on introducing food tours and sports-themed holidays.

TT BUREAU

Trans India Holidays believes in continuous re-invention of products and itineraries to be relevant to the times and the evolving needs of different kinds of travellers. The travel group has recently added new and innovative products that aim to showcase India's heritage and myriad cultural offerings.

Kapil Goswamy, MD,

Trans India Holidays, elaborates on this initiative and says, "We have recently added new products such as heritage walk tours in almost half a dozen cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Goa, Cochin etc., that will give clients a better and more personal experience of the destination. Holidays focused on the varied cuisines of India is also something we are working on, owing to the increasing interest shown by travellers." He adds that they



Kapil Goswamy  
Managing Director, Trans India Holidays

are also working on sporting holidays, and are now pitching the idea to several cricket-

ing and other sporting clubs overseas to bring their teams to India. Overall, Trans India Holidays has had a good year in 2016, informs Goswamy, with an increase in business from almost all the markets that they work with. Better business was witnessed in the first quarter of 2017 that exceeded Goswamy's expectations. On the subject of demonetisation, he mentions that it had no impact on inbound tourism as far as numbers are concerned.

# IHH eyes domestic market and MICE

The group intends to tap into the booming domestic sector by creating lucrative packages and by adding properties to its offerings.

TT BUREAU

Indian Historical Hospitality (IHH) promotes some of India's finest boutique hotels, heritage hotels, wildlife destinations, luxury camps and hill resorts from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The group boasts of properties

such as Royal Desert Camps Jaisalmer, Chandela Garh Jodhpur, Vivaana Haveli Mandawa, to name a few, and provides end-to-end solutions for all accommodation, travel and logistics-related requirements.

Alok Bhatt, Director Sales & Marketing, Indian Historical Hospitality, informs that plans to add new properties on the list are ongoing and will be officially announced soon. He comments, "This year we will be adding a new property in South and in North India for which negotiations are still on and we hope to finalise these. 2016 has overall been a good



Alok Bhatt  
Director Sales & Marketing  
Indian Historical Hospitality

year for business though we were expecting more, especially from the inbound segment." He hopes that the impending GST to be launched in July will provide the much-needed push.

While the focus for IHH has always been on B2B and more so on the inbound market, Bhatt says they cannot ignore the huge potential in domestic market. "With the 7th pay commission likely to be applied this year, we are looking at higher growth in domestic travellers. We are also focusing on weddings, conferences and special events and trying to create lucrative packages to target this segment. Most of the properties we promote are heritage, off beat and with lot of character and charm and yet quite affordable." Bhatt opines that representative organisations from both travel and hotel fraternity should be more active to take up important issues prevailing in the industry to officials from tourism, finance and other departments the government. "They should bring up and address matters like removing limit of encashment of forex for foreign travellers and also reduction in taxes which I feel are still quite high. Such issues should be raised at travel shows like GITB so these can be highlighted to the Govt."

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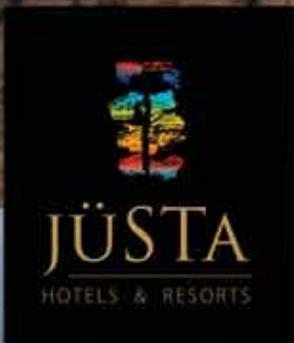


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## Lords focuses on Gir hotel

GITB will be the perfect platform for Lords Hotels & Resorts to showcase Vishal Lords Inn – Gir Forest, which is the only property closest to Gir National Park.



The latest hotel from Lords Hotels & Resorts in Gir offers an unparalleled advantage to tourists visiting the park because of its location. Vishal Lords Inn – Gir Forest, that will be launched this April, is one of the closest hotels to The Gir National Park. **Rishi Puri**, Vice President, Lords Hotels & Resorts, feels that the location is a big plus for the hotel chain as well. He says, "Being the only region in Asia that is home to lions, Sasan Gir enjoys year-round flow of tourists. Also, Gujarat Tourism has been actively promoting this park as an adventure destination. We are the only hotel chain in Gujarat that operates hotels at an average interval of 100 km and provides stay options that cover a gamut of traveller segments." This will be its 27<sup>th</sup> property in the country and 16<sup>th</sup> in Gujarat.

Lords Hotels & Resorts has comprehensively covered the state with hotels that cater



Rishi Puri  
Vice President  
Lords Hotels & Resorts

We have also narrowed down properties in New Delhi, Lucknow and Mumbai and are hoping to bring these on board

to business, pilgrimage, leisure and now adventure. Calendar year 2016 was one of the better years for the hotel chain as compared to the last few years when occupancies were at an all-time low. Puri says, "Our Average Room Revenues increased by nine per cent last

year and 2016 was great for us on several counts too. We added four properties to the chain last year, taking the count to 26."

Many of its properties are located in business areas across the different states in the country which offer state-of-the-art MICE facilities at competitive tariffs. The hotel chain is now in advanced stages of discussions with the promoters of niche hotel properties in Indore, Kanpur and Rishikesh which may come under the Lords Hotels & Resorts banner in this year. "We have also narrowed down properties in New Delhi, Lucknow and Mumbai and are hoping to bring these on board before the end of the year," he reveals. Speaking about the hotel chain's participation in GITB this year, Puri says, "The travel mart is one of India's important platforms for promoting inbound tourism. Being present at this event will help us reach out to potential audiences and also to network."

## Orchha: The new MICE spot

The Orchha Palace & Convention Centre is the new addition to the Ashok Oswal Group's portfolio, specialising in MICE and destination weddings.



Ashok Kumar Jain  
Managing Director  
Ashok Oswal Group

Orchha Palace and Convention Centre is built to exacting international standards and backed by state-of-the-art conferencing facilities. This 100-room property spread over 12 acres of land offers three halls with seating capacity for 100-2000 attendees and is one of the biggest facilities in this part of the region, informs **Ashok Kumar Jain**, Managing Director, Ashok Oswal Group.

The Convention Centre is also home to multiple weddings. "We have combined spirituality with nature at the property and are a destination that offers a city and countryside experience simultaneously. Since the opening of Orchha Palace, we have seen 22 weddings at the destination whereas 16 are already in the pipeline by June 2017," says Jain. Till now the new property has recorded 2500 room nights from domestic tourists, 1200 room nights from FIT and GIT foreign travellers,

Since the opening of Orchha Palace, we have seen 22 weddings at the destination whereas 16 are already in the pipeline by June 2017

while it has recorded over 100,000 visits. The Orchha Resort at Betwa River is another property with 44 rooms which caters to the discerning clients looking for a cultural and relaxing experience and promotes

Orchha as a leisure destination. The company also operates Touraids, a ground service handling travel agency that offers a large fleet of 45 luxury coaches and over 200 cars spread over to five branches – Agra, Jhansi, Khajuraho, Varanasi and Gwalior. "We have been recognised by Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation with the distinction of the Best Handling Agent in Northern and Central India," informs Jain.

Catering to the evening entertainment activities, the Group also runs Kalakriti Cultural and Convention Centre, a state-of-the-art auditorium, aimed at live performance, meetings, conferences and even product launches with the seating capacity of approximately 600 pax. The Group offers a shopping delight to the high-end tourist traffic to Agra through its Kalakriti showrooms. The company is already working with travel agencies like Cox and Kings, LPTI etc. to drive its tourism business.

## Luxury tents by Rajasthali

Located in Jaipur, Rajasthali Resort & Spa is getting ready for the wedding season with additional luxury tents, while also expanding to include MICE and FITs.



Rajasthali Resort & Spa is a luxury resort in Jaipur spread across 25 acres and set against the imposing background of the Aravalli Mountains which accentuate its magnificence. It has 53 elegantly appointed rooms and tents. The hotel is equipped

Spa, says, "We are working on upgrading our tents with additions to our luxury tents. We are also trying to associate some celebrity names with the tents. We will also launch a fine-dining restaurant by the poolside shortly."

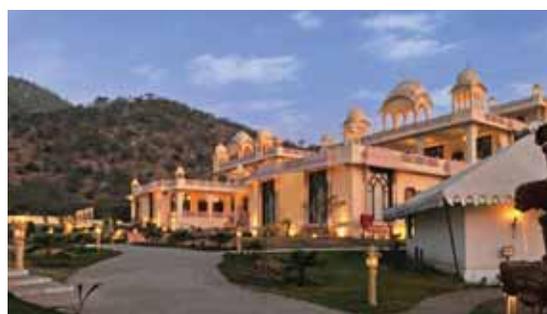
Since Rajasthan is a hub for destination weddings, its

According to him, the resort ARR has been fairly good in the last year but with the demonetisation coming in the second-last quarter of the financial year, the business slowed down a little. "Things are looking further gloomy with the liquor policy and GST that is yet to be implemented. Business is being affected and there is still no clarity on the same. Our hotel association should take it up with the government as it is a major revenue loss to the state government as well as us," he opines.

The property is part of the GITB as Pillai thinks it is one of the few good platforms of travel association where everyone gets an opportunity to present their property to all the segments and verticals of business.

### Target Audience

Since Rajasthan is a hub for destination weddings, its major clients are NRIs looking for destination weddings



with modern facilities from satellite TV and Wi-Fi, swimming pool, kids pool, Pavitra Spa, kids room, multi-cuisine restaurant and outdoor dining as well as a bar.

Speaking about new developments at the resort, **Pradeep Pillai**, Vice President, Rajasthali Resorts &

major clients are NRIs looking for destination weddings. Apart from this, corporates, MICE and weekend travellers are also its patrons. "We are now trying to focus on inbound travellers and FITs. However, inbound is low as they prefer city hotels while we are about 18-20 kms away from the city centre," Pillai adds.

## A home away from home

Colonel's Retreat, a boutique B&B property in the heart of South Delhi, reflects the warmth of home that beckons travellers to return for more.



Situated in a cosy nook of South Delhi, Colonel's Retreat, a boutique B&B property caters to travellers from a wide geographical market and sets itself apart by offering close-to-home, personalised services. The hotel banks on its individuality as a quaint property amidst the concrete jungle of the capital and the warmth it brings to its guests.

Speaking on the concept of the hotel, **Suman Khanna**, Director, Colonel's Retreat, says, "About 10 years ago, we found that if you didn't want to spend at five-star hotels, there was a dearth of places to stay in the city of Delhi. Either one had to pay serious money for a nice room or settle for second grade stuff, which did not meet up with the European standards of cleanliness, safety or ethics. We decided to create a small hotel and the only yardstick was that it should be a place where we would love to stay ourselves.



Suman Khanna  
Director  
Colonel's Retreat

We are happy with what we are doing and want to do the little things we already do, just a wee bit better

Thus, the idea was born. It's not work anymore, but a passion, and it's fun."

Colonel's Retreat has been a favoured choice with new guests, domestic and international alike, being added every year along with return customers who come back

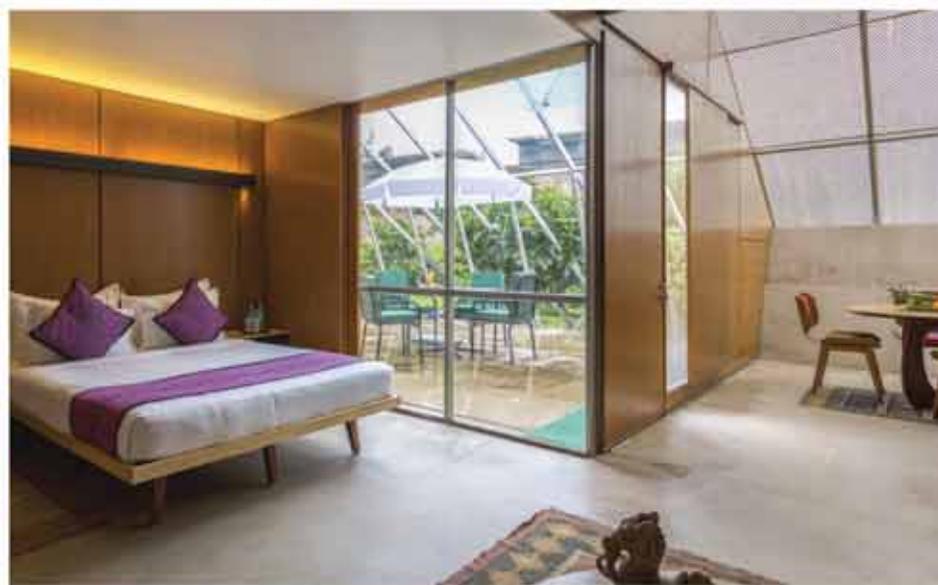
for the tailor-made hospitality services. "We are not a cookie cutter property," she states. "Small personalised properties like ours can't be duplicated unless we clone ourselves. If we expand we will lose our USP. We are happy with what we are doing and want to do the little things we already do, just a wee bit better."

For Khanna, last year went well and while demonetisation did not impact bookings, other challenges still prevail that serve as roadblocks to further growth. "The business environment is not easy and the buyer is spending carefully. The buyer wants more and better but is not willing to pay for it. That is the real challenge all industries face, not just the hotel industry," she opines.

### Other Properties

- At the Airport, New Delhi, is 10 minutes from T3
- Shil Villa, Kashmir, a heritage hotel on the banks of Jhelum

  
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## Nearly 50% rise in FTAs on Medical Visa in 2016

■ As many as 201,333 foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India on Medical Visa were recorded in 2016, while there were 1,34,344 FTAs in 2015 and 75,688 FTAs in 2014. This information was given by **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge) in a written reply in Rajya Sabha.

In order to simplify and speed up the procedure of obtaining visa for tourists coming to India for medical

purposes, the Government of India has extended the facility of e-Medical Visa. Other measures taken by the Government to facilitate the tourists coming through e-Medical Visa are: Extension of duration of stay for upto 6 months may be granted on case to case basis on merits of each case by the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO)/Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO) concerned.

Triple entry will be



**Dr. Mahesh Sharma**  
MoS for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge), Govt. of India

permitted as against single entry earlier. In case of emergency, if Medical Visa is recommended by an accredited hospital in India, Indian Missions/Posts abroad should decide on such request within 48 hours of getting the application.

## Foresee is now Dubai bound

Foresee Aviation is all set to bring about a change in their marketing and promotional strategies this year and is set to expand in the US and Dubai.



Last year was a mixed bag for the charter aviation market, said **Santosh Kumar Sharma**, Director, Foresee Aviation. "2016 has been a very interesting year for us. There was a slight dip in both corporate as well as leisure charter business. During the first quarter of 2016, the business showed a promising trend and so did

the last quarter. However, the second and third quarter weren't that good. Overall, we grew by 12 per cent, which was lower than last year," he added.

Thus, they are taking necessary steps. "We are already in talks with a few operators in southern India, where the number of private aircraft is less, to get into a contract for exclusive mar-

keting. In Delhi, apart from our existing fleet of aircraft, we have also added Learjet 60XR, Learjet 45XR and two more Super King Air B200s. We are going to capture the corporate fliers based out of Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai, apart from reaching out to some big names in cities like Cochin, Vijaywada, Salem, etc.," explained Sharma.

He further informed that their Mumbai office is fully operational now with sales & marketing team in place. Talking about further expansion, he said, "Our USA office will also get into action within a month. This is going



**Santosh Kumar Sharma**  
Director  
Foresee Aviation

We are already in talks with a few operators in Southern India, where the number of private aircraft are less, to get into a contract for exclusive marketing

to be a big achievement for us. We are looking at starting an office in the Middle East, particularly in Dubai very soon."

Sharma claimed that there are quite a few challenges in the charter aviation market. "One of the major challenges we are facing in aviation industry today is the lack of parking space for the private aircraft. As a result, the client has to bear the cost for flying the aircraft from the nearest base for their trip. Government has not reduced the jet fuel prices in proportion to the fall in international crude oil prices. Services provided at all Indian airports including some of the major ones continue to be far below the global standards. Also, the airport connectivity with the cities is extremely limited," he said.

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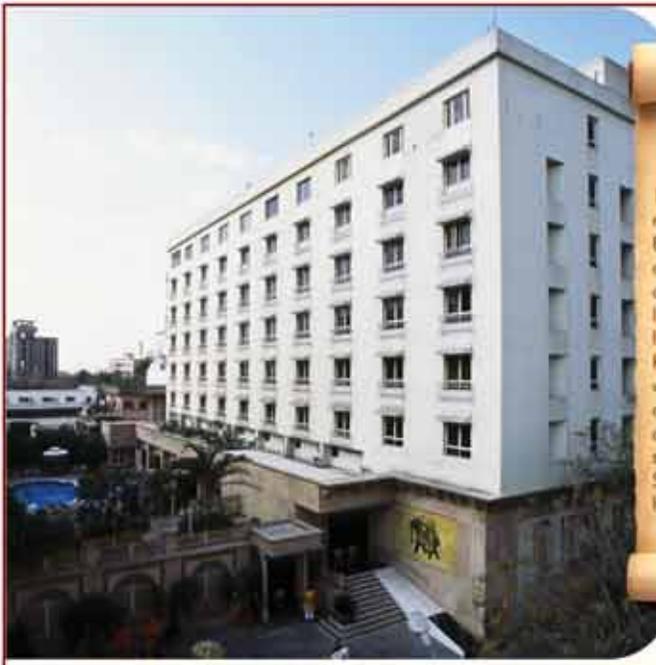
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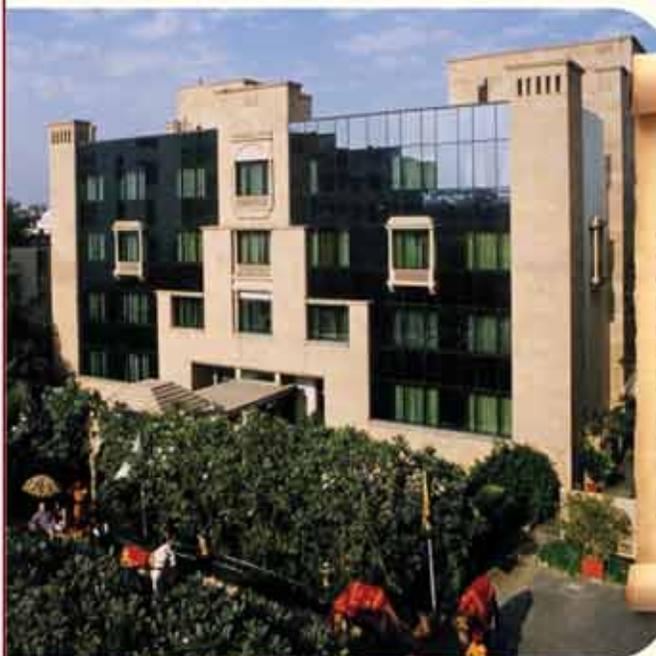
**Hotel Mansingh,  
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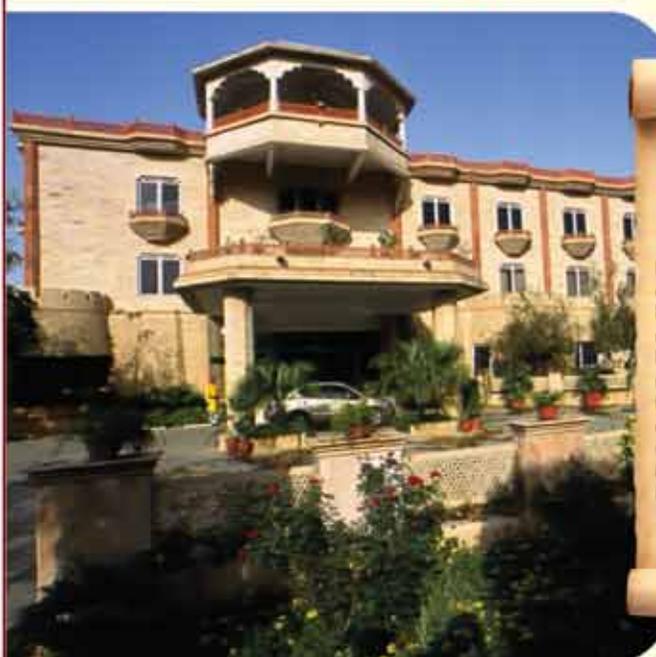
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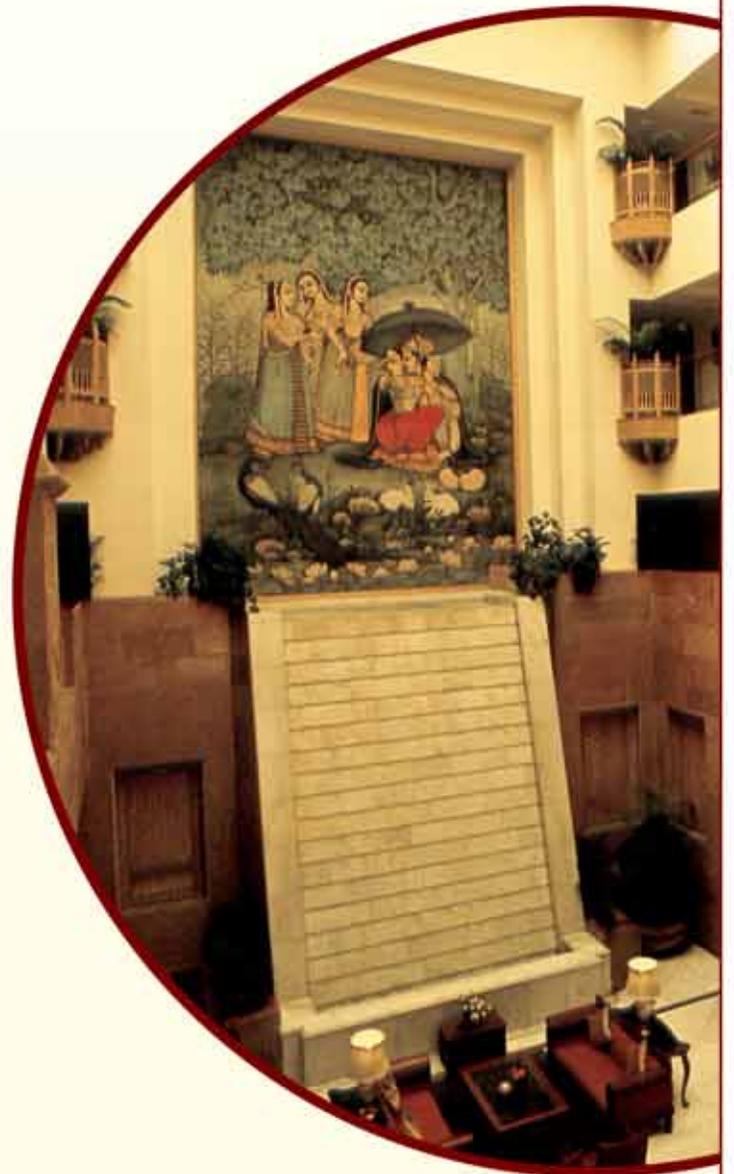
An Executive Block with 53 well-appointed rooms & suites, designed to mix business with pleasure, with the provision of personal valet, mini bar and jacuzzi in every suite. Fax machine and PC on demand. There's more an executive lounge, a well-equipped business centre, library, a well-stocked bar and multi-cuisine restaurant Garden Court to delight the palate.



**Mansingh Palace,  
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Rejoice in the holy and festive environment of the town and bask in the ancient and majestic ambience of the hotel designed like an 18<sup>th</sup> century fortress. It's a memorable experience to live in the family suites that are an architectural marvel and to savour Continental, Chinese, Mughlai & Rajasthani cuisines at its Sheesh Mahal restaurant.

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# Gear up for TUTC's Chamba & Diskit camps

The Ultimate Travelling Camp (TUTC) is the flagbearer of glamping (glamorous camping) in India. After a successful run, the company is now all set to start operations on their Chamba Camp Thiksey and Chamba Camp Diskit in Ladakh from May 15, 2017.



The concept of glamping has only grown popular with TUTC's luxury tents in Ladakh. **Rajnish Sabharwal**, COO, TUTC, says that the idea behind introducing India's first luxury mobile tents was to offer 'evolved travellers' a seamless blend between the pleasures of being close

open new camps. "We definitely want to take the idea of glamping to other hidden recesses of India as we aim to bring India's rich culture, history, wildlife and cuisine to our discerning guests. However, currently our focus is mainly on our three camps. We begin operations for Chamba Camp Thiksey and Diskit in Ladakh from May 15," he informs.

Sabharwal is leaving no stone unturned to reach the right people for promoting the experience around the world. Shedding light on the same, he says, "We have recently been accepted into Virtuoso's rich portfolio of luxury suppliers and through this association we aim to reach out to a wide base of luxury travellers across the

world. Our dedicated sales team across India, UK, USA, UAE and Russia reaches out to our potential customers through various communication mediums both online and offline. TUTC partners with leading Destination Management Companies (DMCs) to leverage their existing relationships and/or reach to premium customers."

In addition to that, TUTC has been working very closely with major tour operators and travel agencies across markets and have special travel incentive programs to motivate them further.

The company is also participating in trade exhibitions and trade events in the country.

### Glamping Time

- ↳ TUTC begins operations for Chamba Camp Thiksey and Diskit in Ladakh from May 15
- ↳ They have sales team across India, UK, USA, UAE and Russia to reach out to potential customers across the globe



Rajnish Sabharwal  
COO  
TUTC

With personalisation and customised packages taking centre stage, Luxury Camping as a travel trend will see an increase in 2017

to nature, or having unique travel experiences in carefully selected exceptional locations in the mountains, deserts, jungles and unexplored countryside.

Glamping, as a concept, is rapidly evolving in India. "There is an upbeat in bookings for our camps in Ladakh and Kohima. India has finally opened up to the concept of luxury camping as more Indians show the zeal to go beyond the ordinary and experience the unexplored," he adds.

In 2016, he informed, they saw mixed interest from affluent Indians, but an increasing number of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) experienced the camps, basically to showcase their home country to their second-generation families, as well as foreigners who like to experience this concept in India. "In 2017, there is an opportunity to explore this further in an unconventional and preferred way. With personalisation and customised packages taking centre stage, Luxury Camping as a travel trend will see an increase in 2017," he claims.

However, despite the trend becoming popular, TUTC is not in a hurry to



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## WelcomHeritage in Kasauli

WelcomHeritage Glenview Resort, Kasauli, is the group's latest property to open its doors for guests in the scenic locales of Himachal Pradesh.

TT BUREAU

A perfect hill escape, WelcomHeritage Glenview Resort is just a short drive away from Kimughat. Situated vertically below the Manki Point, the resort faces the famous Lawrence School, Sanawar and offers breathtaking views of the pine forest and the mountains. With 50 exquisitely designed rooms in Premium, Luxury and Suite categories, the property offers the best amenities for its guests, including mini bar, 40" LED television, temperature control, satellite channels, in-room tea and coffee maker, Wi-Fi connectivity, complimentary daily newspaper and turn down service. Suites are also equipped with iPod docks for in-room entertainment and Jacuzzi. The bathrooms have rain shower cubicles and deluxe amenities.

Guests can relish culinary delights from around the world at the multi-cuisine restaurant Flavours, offering bright and comfortable



ambience. The Chill-Out Bar offers an extensive selection of wines, spirits and cocktails. There is also a Hill's Lounge, which offers a wonderful place to unwind with a refreshing cup of tea amidst the panoramic view of the hills.

It is the first resort in Kasauli to offer an infinity swimming pool along with a kids' pool. Very soon, the property will have a Fitness Centre, Spa, kids' zone, pool table, table tennis and library for recreation activities.

It's also a great meeting and conference venue. The Grande Hall can

accommodate up to 250 guests inside and 400 guests when clubbed with the resort's terrace the Sky Deck, acting as a venue for gala dinners, events, meetings or social functions.

Those staying at the property can take excursions to Manki Point, Church of England, Lawrence School, Sanawar, Old British Cantonment, Central Research Institute, Baba Balaknath Temple, Shirdi Sai Baba Temple, Sunrise & Sunset point and Gilbert Trail. The Kasauli Mall and Kasauli Club are only a 10-minute drive from the resort. ↴

## Luxury meets sustainability

Fateh Collection, Udaipur, brings a host of experiential activities to discerning travellers and has recently added three resorts to its portfolio.

TT BUREAU

Fateh Collection aims at providing quality service to those who indulge in heritage properties and revel in bespoke activities that are truly authentic to the region. Experiences like private dining, vintage car rides, jeep safaris and zip lines are among the many services offered to enhance the guest experience. Additionally, the group represents three heritage resorts Fateh Garh Udaipur, Fateh Niwas Udaipur and Fateh Safari Lodge/Fateh Safari Suites in Kumbhalgarh.

Among many heritage properties in Rajasthan, Fateh Garh is perched on a hill facing the city with views of the palace complex, Lake Pichola and rest of the city. The property was transplanted from its original location to this hillock, and has been in operation for over eight years now. "Because it was transplanted, it falls under a category called Herit-



Jitendra Singh Rathore  
Director  
Fateh Collection

What we offer is sustainable, ethical and responsible luxury and that separates us from rest of the havelis and hotels in town

age Renaissance," informs Jitendra Singh Rathore, Director, Fateh Collection.

The property is a living example of how heritage

can join hands with sustainability. "We have recycled most of the woodwork and stone work. We have a windmill and solar panels that take care of 30 per cent of our energy needs. Most of the staff is from the neighbouring region and have employed about 30 ladies from the villages close by, most of whom were part of the construction team. What we offer is sustainable, ethical and responsible luxury and that separates us from rest of the havelis and hotels in town," informs Rathore.

The property is quite popular and receives good number of both international and domestic travellers. "It varies from inbound tourists in peak winter months to domestic travellers in summer months. We do get a lot of MICE business as well because of the location and views from the property. Our main international markets are the UK and the US," he said. ↴

## Tales from the wildlife

Nestled on the edge of Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve, Paatlidun Safari Lodge, is focused on catering to the inbound market in the untamed wild.

TT BUREAU

The 12-en suite cottages of the property are spread over 13 acres. Guests can relax in their private plunge pool and relish the food at the restaurant. The buildings are constructed in typical Kumaoni style, while the materials are locally sourced, reveals Varun Mehta, Director Sales & Marketing, Templeton Group.

Mehta informed, "Paatlidun Safari Lodge offers experiential stay to all its guests and our staff goes an extra mile to meet guests' expectations. The USP of the property is the rustic look of the lodge offering experiences, which are unique as well as interesting to engage our guests."

With so many other properties around Jim Corbett National Park, there is a lot of competition in the region. However, Mehta disagrees, "Our competition is not in Corbett, we want to compete with other ex-



Varun Mehta  
Director Sales & Marketing  
Templeton Group

Our competition is not in Jim Corbett, we want to compete with other experiential properties across India as that's where we get our learning from

periential properties across India as that's where we get our learning from. It's about different strategies that work operationally and we learn as a property."

To promote the property, Paatlidun is focusing on digital marketing, as according to Mehta it is the right way forward. In addition to that, they are also engaging with the travel trade to improve the sales. "Travel trade is one of the most important and key source for our business. We have a strong relationship with our trade partners and seek their support to boost our sales," he added.

However, for the inbound scenario, Mehta feels that while it is doing well for many regions, it's not that good for Corbett. "For Corbett, we really need to work hard to get inbound tourism back and make them experience Corbett. Our focus is on the inbound market."

### Going Digital

- Paatlidun is focusing on digital marketing
- They are also engaging with the travel trade to improve the sales

## A knotty affair in Udaipur

Inder Residency Udaipur plans to increase its room revenue by 10 per cent in 2017 and is branding the hotel as a wedding and MICE venue to attract corporates.

TT BUREAU

Part of the Season's Group, Inder Residency Udaipur is a five-star luxury property that specialises in MICE events and serves as a destination for weddings. The 144-room property recorded 50 per cent occupancy in 2016 with average room rate of ₹4,110 and RevPAR of ₹2,055. "We received guests from across segments like weddings, MICE and FIT. The hotel specialises in destination weddings offering nine accor areas, three lawns, four banquet halls, one bar and two restaurants to cater to this segment. Inder Residency Udaipur offers the best and most personalised service for the corporate traveller," says Devendra Sharma, General Manager, Inder Residency Udaipur.

In 2017, the hotel has plans to tie up with a number of wedding partners and is also coming up with additional facilities for residential clients. Sharma informs that if guests have booked



Devendra Sharma  
General Manager  
Inder Residency Udaipur

Ahmedabad/Gujarat firms will be targeted for day use of conference facilities and room nights for visiting executives

all 144 rooms, they may use all food and beverage venues of the hotel without any rental for additional venues. The marketing objective of the hotel is to communicate the unique set of services and value additions that it offers to its guests rather than to simply focus

on improving the bottom line costs.

Outlining the financial objectives of the hotel in 2017, Sharma elucidates that the hotel will focus on increasing the overall room revenue by 10 per cent on the past year; accomplish growth within the given budget of \$250,000; increase corporate contracted rates to reflect the return of confidence in the corporate travel market and keep payroll expenses down and reduce the level of overtime within the workforce. Under a targeted marketing strategy, the hotel's primary focus is the segment of professional visitors to the region from the travel trade, weddings and MICE sectors, where annual corporate contracts can be entered into. "Ahmedabad/Gujarat firms will be targeted for day use of conference facilities, room nights for visiting executives and long stay professional guests. Other new markets such as the IIM Udaipur and Vedanta business sector are also in the pipeline," informs Sharma. ↴



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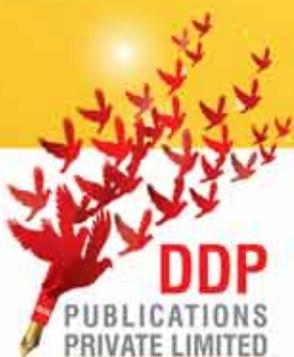
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# Domestic market growth @15% in 2017

Experiential travel is a fast emerging trend among discerning domestic travellers who seek to explore the unexplored destinations. While Jammu and Kashmir saw a decline in tourist figures due to political unrest, the biggest gainers were Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Goa and Kerala.



According to **P.P. Khanna**, President, Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), domestic tourism has done well in 2016. "Most of the popular tourist destinations have received good number of visitors during the year with an increase of around 16-17 per cent over the last year, except in Kashmir valley due to disturbances during the latter part of the year. We are very hopeful for 2017 as demonetisation shall compel tourists to travel within India," he says. **Rajan Sehgal**, Director, Arrivals Air Services, and Chairman-Northern Region, TAAI, adds, "Domestic tourism is the main source of income left for a travel agent and it was doing well despite the traffic to Jammu and Kashmir being affected due to the unrest from last few months."

#### Popular Destinations

**Tushar Jain**, Co-founder, Bulk Trip, informs that



**P.P. Khanna**  
President  
ADTOI



**Rajan Sehgal**  
Chairman-Northern Region  
TAAI



**Tushar Jain**  
Co-founder  
Bulk Trip

travellers showed more interest in the North East, Kerala, Leh and Ladakh, Ooty, Coorg, Mysore and Goa. "These destinations have a good potential to draw travellers including families and honeymooners. People also had frequent visits to metro cities for business purposes," he says. Other popular destinations for domestic travel this year were cities like Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur in Rajasthan; Shimla, Kulu, Nainital and Mussoorie in Himachal Pradesh; Gujarat, Madhya

Pradesh, Agra, Jammu and Kashmir and Kochi.

#### Hidden Gems

"There are lots of hidden but amazing tourist destinations like the valley of flowers in Uttarakhand; Gwalior, Orchha, Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh; Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh and they need awareness. The state tourism boards play an important role in this aspect," says Sehgal. Khanna adds, "Since Kashmir valley is not a preferred destination now among domestic tour-

ists, Jammu and Kashmir is developing Jammu and its adjoining areas as a hot-spot destination for tourists. Ladakh is already very popular with domestic tourists and it may emerge as the next hot-spot destination provided connectivity improves. Apart from this, the Buddhist Circuit is also an emerging sector."

#### Average Budget/Spends

The average budget of a domestic traveller fluctuates depending up on the mode of travel and choice

of accommodation. Jain says, "The average budget of a domestic traveller is between `15000-`20000 per person. Travellers mostly prefer to have a domestic package including accommodation, transport, meals and standard tours." Sehgal points out that till October 2016, there were low budget to luxury travellers with average budget ranging from `3,000-`25,000 per person per day.

#### Trends

A common trend — to explore the unexplored — holds true for domestic travel as well. Khanna says, "Demonetisation coupled with GST for tourism sector, will hopefully bring in a smooth transition in our economy leading to optimism in travel trade and domestic tourism shall also register its normal growth of 10-15 per cent."

#### Way Forward

Sehgal feels that in order to boost domestic tour-

ism, better connectivity, reasonable hotel rates with good quality, check on airfares, tourist-friendly trains and other means of transport facilities and most importantly safety and cleanliness is needed urgently. Khanna points out that the Ministry of Tourism and state tourism boards need to work more closely with ADTOI when conducting roadshows and forge joint promotion committees to boost this segment of travel. "The government has to keep domestic tourism in the minimum slab of GST. State tourism boards also need to offer incentive schemes for domestic travel agents and conduct roadshows," he adds.

#### Hot Spots

Some unexplored domestic destinations are Uttarakhand, Gwalior, Orchha, Khajuraho, Ladakh, among others

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## Freedom gets innovative

Freedom Holidays aims to launch new products this year in an effort to recuperate in the aftermath of demonetisation.



Freedom Holidays has been active in the Indian tourism industry for over two decades and draws focus on all three segments – inbound, outbound, as well as domestic. While the company is a witness to the frequent fluctuations in the sector, demonetisation hit Freedom's business and slowed it down considerably. **Martin Joseph Thypodath**, Chairman and Managing Director, Freedom Holidays, comments, "Last year, business was affected since November due to demonetisation so it was nothing great. We are expecting the momentum to pick up this year post-demonetisation and the state elections."

To ensure good recovery growth, Freedom is working on several new packages to add to their portfolio of offerings and attract a larger client base. "The packages will be more relevant and present a variety of options to suit the requirements of different trav-



**Martin Joseph Thypodath**  
Chairman and Managing Director  
Freedom Holidays

We are expecting the momentum to pick up this year post-demonetisation and the state elections

ellers. We are currently working on the same and will be rolling it out soon," he informs.

When it comes to the most sought-after destinations, Goa rules the roost among the domestic destinations, while Bali, Thailand, Singapore and

Malaysia are very popular for outbound travel this year, states Thypodath.

As the avenues for medical tourism open up with the Central Government adding more policies and initiatives to further the niche segment, Freedom sees good possibilities in it and lays special emphasis on it. The travel group is active on the medical tourism front even in a day and age when tourists can source all the information on the Internet with the click of a button.

Thypodath explains his stance and says, "Agents are necessary as it provides numerous benefits to tourists. Not only can we help reduce the medical treatment cost by arranging hospital facilities and treatment, we can also arrange post-medical relaxation tours to the tourists at a very economical price. In short, it is like killing two birds with one stone, where the tourist can avail quality medical treatment and enjoy post-treatment holiday."

## Vasco clocks 12% growth Y-o-Y

The inbound tour company has overcome several roadblocks in 2016 and plans to add more niche products to its line of offerings this year.



Vasco Travel began its operations in the Indian inbound tourism more than two decades ago and has since expanded into Latin America, Canada and the United Kingdom. The company now organises tours under the themes of nature, rejuvenation, culture, offbeat, cuisine and getaway, not only in India but in Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives as well.

**Vikas Abbott**, Managing Director, Vasco Travel, shares that 2016 was a challenging year due to various global factors and increasing competition, to name a few. He adds, "We timely addressed these issues and we were able to show a growth of 12 per cent Year-on-Year. I see these challenges to continue, especially terror attacks, the recent occurrence being in Stockholm." He mentions that Kerala and Rajasthan have been an all-time favourite among



**Vikas Abbott**  
Managing Director  
Vasco Travel

We timely addressed these issues and we were able to show a growth of 12 per cent Year-on-Year

international tourists and the trend continues this year. Abbott also plans to include more niche experiences in their tailor-made programs for guests.

Among the many challenges in the tourism

industry, sustainability is an important one for Abbott, who also implements responsible tourism practices in his line of work. He highlights the fact that "India is presently (and very sadly) at the very bottom – 139<sup>th</sup> of 141, of countries across the globe for environmental sustainability in tourism, as per World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2015. This is not a place where we want to be."

Apart from the cause, Abbott asserts the need for regulating taxes and policies which he hopes would come into effect this year for the benefit of the tourism industry, as well as the economy. He says, "The government plays a pivotal role and should consider reinstating tax policy 80HHD under the Income tax Act. With the GST finally coming in July, I hope that there will be some rationalisation of the taxes and we are able to offer competitive products to our clients comparing with other South Asian destinations."

## Focus on the Middle East

Focused mainly on inbound and corporate travel services, Green Chili Holidays is making sure to offer its clients everything under one roof.



**Kunwarjeet Singh**, Director - Sales & Marketing, Green Chili Holidays, claims the company to be a one-stop shop for services for corporate and individual clients including events, conferences, meetings and inbound tours. In fact, for inbound, they are moving beyond the regular destinations. "While we sell the Golden Triangle and other popular destinations, we are now getting into the Northeast market and promoting destinations like Sikkim, Darjeeling, Shillong, and Manipur. These are the new destinations and should attract traffic soon," he said.

Singh has seen the inbound business change in the last few years. "The US, UK and Dubai are our biggest source markets and we do maximum business from there. In fact, there are a lot of NRIs from Dubai as well as the UK, who like coming to visit India. However, we have been catering to the US market a lot and that's where we



**Kunwarjeet Singh**  
Director - Sales & Marketing  
Green Chili Holidays

We have been catering to the US market a lot and that's where we get maximum business from

get maximum business from. In the recent years, we have started getting business from European market as well, especially from Spain and we are also well established in Italian and French market," he informed. He also said that they are currently focusing on the Middle East mar-

ket, as it has a lot of potential for inbound travel.

He added that customers today are looking for experiential travel and they take care of the same. "Clients today prefer experiential tours and we take them to places which are not there in regular itineraries. We incorporate new things in their itineraries, so that they can indulge in new activities and experience new places alongside their normal tours," shared Singh.

He is quite hopeful for GITB and said, "It's a great platform for local tour operators to meet international agents. I have seen a lot of meetings at GITB converted into business. In fact, our company is doing business with many people I met last year at GITB."

### Source Markets

The US, UK and Dubai are Green Chili Holidays' biggest source markets and we do maximum business from there

## Glamping gets popular

Synergi Hospitality Marketing strives to ensure brand visibility and revenue optimisation of its partner properties and is promoting glamping in India.



Synergi Hospitality Marketing promotes 10 properties and 4 camping experiences, each with their unique features. It offers sales and marketing services to expand and enhance the revenue earning frontiers for its hospitality partners. In 2016, the organisation moved away from the hotel-oriented experiences to focus on the active traveller's needs and thus also facilitated its partners to organise various movements like weddings in palaces and camped wilderness, biking groups, luxury camping at Ujjain Kumbh among other fairs, safaris and wilderness experiences for groups of handicapped travellers and also promoted the tourism potential of Gujarat.

"We offer a wide platform of marketing to our hotel and hospitality partners, to ensure a brand visibility and recall value. The company is henceforth committed to providing tools and insights to maximise sales and optimise the revenue. We recog-



**Shruti Pandey**  
Owner  
Synergi Hospitality Marketing

We offer a platform of marketing solutions to our hospitality partners, to ensure brand visibility and recall value

nise the potential of glamping within India and thus promote experiential properties that are in sync with its natural locale," says **Shruti Pandey**, Owner, Synergi Hospitality Marketing.

Inbound tourism forms the largest market for guest

movement to the company's partner properties and thus Pandey believes that GITB is a valued platform where the company is able to network with a wide range of foreign buyers and also provide them with updated information about their partners. She feels that in 2017 and beyond, India will regain its favoured status in the travel plans of foreign guests. "With stable economics and favourable environment the forthcoming years should see an increased foreign tourist inflow. We also foresee the new generation of travellers who seek experiential travel and to satiate their thirst, more accommodation will be required that offer experiences rather than just stay," adds Pandey.

### New Offerings

Last year, the organisation moved away from hotel-oriented experiences to facilitate various movements like weddings in palaces, biking groups, luxury camping and wilderness experiences for handicapped travellers

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## Park Ocean eyes expansion in Jaipur

Located in the heart of the Pink City, Hotel Park Ocean has plans to expand the brand by adding another property in Jaipur.



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The property is a relatively new one and even with the city teeming with various accommodation options, Sandeep Jain, Director, says that the hotel is well received among leisure and business travellers. Housing 48 rooms in total, its proximity to major attractions such as Jantar Mantar, Hawa Mahal, City Palace and the walled city, is what makes it a preferred choice among many clients, he adds.

"We mainly cater to the leisure segment (60 per cent) and corporates (40 per cent). For a new property, I think we've received very good response, thanks to the huge support from our trade partners. This motivated us even further to enhance our products and thus, we recently added a gym, Fresco spa and a rooftop lounge as well," informs Jain.

Apart from F&B options like the pan-Asian restaurant called Republic of



Sandeep Jain  
Director  
Hotel Park Ocean

We mainly cater to the leisure segment and corporates. For a new property, we've received very good response

Noodles, a recreational bar Slounge, a coffee shop and a resto lounge, Park Ocean also boasts of a 2200 sq. ft. conference space and has been in demand for MICE, especially weddings.

Asserts Jain, "Our busiest months are from October to March which is the time for weddings and corporate events. We want to expand our

brand in the mid-scale segment where guests don't have to compromise with the services. Value for money for high-standard services is what we aim for and want to continue the same spirit with the addition of another property in Jaipur, in the coming months."

## LH A350-900XWB debuts on Munich-Mumbai route

■ The Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA) witnessed the fly-in of the Airbus A350-900 XWB by Lufthansa German Airline, making it the only airport in India to handle daily operations of two Airbus A350-900 XWB, the world's most advanced premium passenger aircraft.

The newest addition to the Lufthansa fleet will embark on daily 8-hour flights to Munich, which is also one of the airline's hub location. With a maximum seating capacity of 293 passengers, the cabin has 48 passengers in Business Class, 21 in Premium

Economy Class and 224 in Economy Class.

The luxury aircraft ensures a spacious atmosphere with its wide seating and high ceilings, and provides a quiet, well-lit cabin, with a relaxing environment and the best of in-flight amenities, in all classes. The aircraft is fitted with state-of-the-art in-flight entertainment with a Wi-Fi adaptive cabin that offers passengers access to

movies on demand and mobile phone connectivity, letting them keep themselves updated with work, news or even browse social media and play games online. The Airbus A350-900 XWB marks a generational shift in long haul aircrafts, emphasizing passenger comfort and envi-

ronment-friendly operations as much as flight range and load capacity.

With increasing number of passenger travelling to international destinations, CSIA, Mumbai, one of the busiest airports in the world with single runway system, has through the development of its state-of-the-art infrastructure, actively encouraged airlines to operate on new foreign routes with wide bodied aircrafts so as to meet the rising passenger demand, despite constraints.







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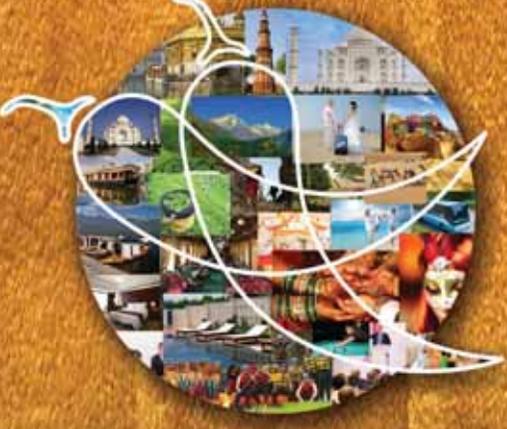
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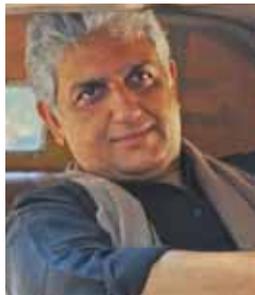
SenKay Group and its three divisions aims to provide an unparalleled travel experience through unique offerings and its service.

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The SenKay Group currently comprises of three independently operated companies – SenKay Tours and Travels, SenKay Global Tours and Events Management, and SenKay Travel with a Difference, which aims to provide the best of hospitality, leisure corporate travelling as well as events and entertainment to their guests.

Anil Kumar, Chairman and Managing Director, SenKay Group, says, “The segments are all different and unique in essence and style. Our philosophy, creativity and quality design, together with prompt response to market demands, has brought rich dividends resulting in a rapid expansion of our businesses and excellent feedback to our marketing agenda.” Although each have their own individuality, Kumar says an essential common base ensures synergy in the group.

Commenting on their work philosophy, he states, “We don’t just make travellers visit a destination. We



Anil Kumar  
Chairman and Managing Director  
SenKay Group.

Our business depends on our being able to, not only meet, but rather exceed our client’s expectations

present a unique way of making travellers explore and experience the Indian sub-continent by presenting personalised services and off-beat activities that they will surely cherish for a lifetime. Our business depends on our being able to, not only meet, but rather exceed our client’s expectations.”

## Care for coffee with Tamara in Coorg?

With its spa – The Elevation, the Tamara Coorg is vying to make its mark as a wellness retreat cocooned amid coffee and spice plantation in Karnataka.

TT BUREAU

This luxurious property offers wellness experience along with a number of nature-based activities like trekking, birding, plantation tour, and coffee brewing experiences.

The experience of The Tamara Coorg wellness journey is well stitched between a luxury stay, yoga, meditation, and its signature spa. A 100-year-old plantation bungalow now restored into a spa - The Elevation, has been designed to ensure that guests truly enjoy the serenity of its peaceful surroundings

and is a perfect getaway to unwind from the daily grind. The well-appointed 6 treatment areas include a couple room with private Jacuzzi, steam and shower area; three Ayurveda rooms with attached steam and shower area; a facial studio, and a manicure and pedicure station and swimming pool. The Elevation Spa has introduced a new concept of wellness called “antarmauna”, which means inner silence. During the stay, guests can experience tranquility within themselves. Products which are used in the spa complement the range of treatments and



therapies and most of the ingredients used during the therapies are locally grown. The state-of-art Yoga Temple

is also unique in all aspects of architecture, proportion, pattern, material, texture, colour, sound and temperature.”



## Fly with Us plans roadshows for trade

Apart from participating in exhibitions and doing social media promotions, Fly with Us Global Representation is also looking to organise their own roadshows to reach out to the trade.

TT BUREAU

‘Fly with Us Global Representation’ is a travel marketing and representation company which has been formed with a vision to empower and assist newly formed DMCs or upcoming DMCs to establish their market base within Indian travel fraternity. Eric Marks, Business Head, Fly With Us Global Representation, revealed, “This company has been formed by two travel professionals with combined

experience of over 30 years in the travel and tourism industry as well as the aviation domain. We represent our DMC partners to B2B operators, consolidators, wholesalers, event management companies and MICE companies within Indian travel trade.”

Their USP, claims Marks, lies in our strong relationship with trade partners and associates. “We have very transparent policy of working with our DMCs and our trade partners,

We have put our efforts to touch base with our trade partners. In the near future, we are planning to organise our own roadshows in association with our DMCs and destinations tourism boards

Eric Marks

Business Head, Fly With Us Global Representation

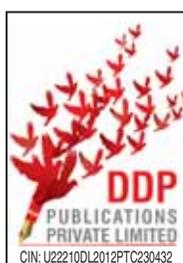
which actually gains confidence from clients,” he added. According to Marks, relationships with their partners is very important. “Faith is the basis of

every relationship and we always endeavour to serve 100 per cent of what we have committed to our trade partners.” On brand promotions, he said

that they always participate in exhibitions and roadshows. “However, in the current times, we can’t deny the power of social media. We have put our efforts to touch base with our trade partners through social media, blogging or community base promotions on social media applications. In the near future, we are planning to organise our own roadshows in association with our DMCs and destinations tourism boards,” he added. “We can see that India is already doing good in

inbound business. Increased awareness through rigorous roadshows conducted by respective state tourism boards, has created a buzz within international tourism community.” added Marks.

Being one of the most trusted exhibitions, at GITB, we could expect trade partners who are really interested in working with destinations that we are promoting. Hence, this would be of immense help for our business,” he claimed.



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