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# Air ban to affect business traffic

The US and UK governments have imposed restrictions on electronic items no larger than a mobile phone to be carried in the cabin luggage of flights from certain airports, according to a statement from IATA. The US ban is on flights from airports in Casablanca, Cairo, Istanbul, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Jordan, Kuwait, Doha, Jeddah and Riyadh, while the UK govt has banned the gadgets on flights from Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Tunisia. According to IATA, it will impact about 393 scheduled passenger flights per week, equivalent to about 2.7 per cent of the total international scheduled passenger flights to the UK. In the US, it would affect 350 scheduled flights a week, equivalent to about 2 per cent of total international flights. We asked experts from the aviation and travel industry on how this ban is going to affect passengers travelling from India, and most of them claim that the corporate travellers might choose to fly on other European airlines, while others do not think this ban would stay for long. Here's what they had to say:



**Ajay Singh**  
DDP Game Changer 2016,  
and CMD, SpiceJet, India  
Travel Award Winner

“While the ban by the UK and the US on electronic devices will not directly affect SpiceJet in any way, what might happen is that it may encourage more travellers from India to prefer Indian carriers above others. The US and UK have their own security reasons for implementing this, and as the ban does not apply to India per se, people who want to travel from India will continue to do so, just with a different airline. Indian carriers can expect to see a hike in passengers after this move.”



**Sir Tim Clark**  
President  
Emirates Airline

“Our aim is to ensure compliance with the new rules, while minimising disruption. Our new complimentary service enables passengers, particularly those flying for business, to have the flexibility to use their devices until the last possible moment. Our data shows that on Emirates' US flights, 90 per cent of passengers using our onboard mobile and Wi-Fi connectivity services do so via their smartphones. Only 6 per cent connect via their laptops, and 4 per cent via their tablets. Perhaps the silver lining to this is that they can now justifiably give themselves a break from their devices.”



**Guldeep Singh Sahni**  
DDP Trailblazer 2016,  
and President, OTOAI

“In today's time every passenger carries a laptop, iPad or palm tops so although the ban is on few airports, travellers will be affected by and large. Passengers transiting through these selected airports, say Abu Dhabi, will have a problem as well. We have warned our passengers to be careful not to carry big electronic devices with them. I believe this decision has been taken keeping in mind some inputs by the respective governments. Though I am not sure how this order will be implemented but if this can provide safety and security then maybe even other countries will look at implementing similar order.”

“I think as a traveller, and being a part of the Indian travel industry, it's bad news for everyone. Since it's a long flight to travel to the United States, and the corporates especially need their laptops and other gadgets to work for a couple of hours on their way. When there is Wi-Fi on flights, being connected is very important for everybody. I don't think this ban is going to last very long. However, in my opinion, this ban would affect a lot of corporate travel from Middle East to US, which might shift to a lot of European airlines.”



**Ankush Nijhawan**  
Managing Director  
Nijhawan Group,  
India Travel Award Winner

“Personally, I don't think it's a ban that can last very long. Let's not forget that the impacted airlines also happen to be the biggest customers for Boeing, which is an American company. I am sure there would be some sort of an understanding that taking such a measure would also come back and hurt the American economy. These countries need to understand where they would want to enforce selective security measures and in which market they want to see their products. However, I think it is a big hassle for passengers as of now, who would be bearing the brunt of this sudden ban.”



**Pran S. Dasan**  
Country Head - India,  
Sri Lanka & Nepal, flydubai

“In my opinion, this particular ban on bigger gadgets in the cabin for flights going from the Middle East to the US and UK is going to definitely impact the business of the middle eastern carriers out of India. However, the worrying part is that it will have a bigger impact on the corporate and business travel than leisure travel, because business travel is high yield. We need to keep a look out for it as this might affect our business as well. I hope we can find a solution to this soon enough. Otherwise, it would lead to a big revenue loss for these carriers.”



**Dhruv Shringi**  
Chairman, Co-founder &  
CEO, Yatra Online



**Kapil Kaul**  
India Travel Award Winner  
2016, and CEO, India & ME  
CAPA India

“It is a serious passenger inconvenience. However, it looks like a short-term development. India-US market is a robust market with almost double digit demand. Also, we are approaching peak season and availability of seats will be a problem. Thus, some Business Class travellers may shift with this ban. However, the supply is less and the demand is growing. India is bilaterally constrained, and we are not given any more seats. Apart from passenger inconvenience, I don't see any business impact because the demand is very high. Should the Middle East carriers see a drop in their booking profiles, they will have pricing interventions to make sure that the switch is back in Indian favour. Thus, I don't see any shifts or any increase in yield or fares.”



**Chinthaka Weerasinghe**  
Manager, Northern and  
Eastern India  
SriLankan Airlines

“The travel ban on bigger gadgets on flights from Middle East to US and UK is going to have a negative impact on business travellers originating from the region. As we all know, the business travellers are always looking to carry their laptops and iPads on board. It will be a hindrance for the business travellers and would negatively impact the airlines plying from these countries in their corporate travel. I don't think the ban is necessary as such because there has been no occurrence or real threat due to these gadgets. As of now, it's only a hindrance to these airlines as well as the passengers.”

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Seoul	Delhi	KE481	1300	1805	TU/THU/FRI/SAT/SUN	01ST APR - 30TH APR, 2017



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## Bhutan's online permit for Indians

Tourists from India will have to submit their biometrics at Phuentsholing and Paro entry points after availing the permit through tour operators or hotels.



AHANA GURUNG

In an effort to curb queues at immigration points and facilitate easier access, Bhutan has finally launched the Online Permit System for Indians and other neighbouring countries. The move comes about after months of deliberation and is a welcome one at that.

**Damcho Rinzin**, Marketing and Promotion Division, Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB), says, "The system was officially launched in January by our Hon. Prime Minister for regional tourists who can apply for the permit online. We are looking to enhance the experience for tourists by helping them save a lot of time especially during immigration." The online permit is free of cost and can be applied through tour operators or TCB verified hotels. However, tourists will still have to visit immigration for biometrics which is available



"We received so many enquiries from travellers where some called to find out if it could be issued during weekends – it is usually when the offices that issue the permits are closed. Since it is now online, it will hopefully make entry much simpler and convenient for everybody."

**Damcho Rinzin**

Marketing and Promotion Division  
Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB)

at two entry points, Phuentsholing and Paro.

Rinzin says that earlier availing the permit was a tedious task and adds, "We received so many enquiries from travellers where some called to find out if it could be issued during weekends – it is usually when the offices that issue the permits are closed. Since it is now online, it will hopefully make entry much simpler and convenient for everybody."

Bhutan received about 97,000 Indian tourists in 2015 and over 1,20,000 tourists in 2016, signifying that the destination is swiftly catching the interest of Indians. He elaborates, "This year, we are hopeful about the growth prospects and expect an increase of 40-50 per cent. India is the number one source market for arrivals, followed by the US and China. Bhutan is the ideal place for every kind of traveller — be it high-end

or budget. You come here to slow down, relax and rejuvenate. Thimpu and Paro are already very popular but tourists should also explore Bumthang and Punakha which offer more solitude for those who seek it."

### Reckon Up

Bhutan received about 97,000 Indian tourists in 2015 and over 120,000 tourists in 2016

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# TRAVELTALK

## VIEWPOINT

### Business as usual@ international marts?

The growing presence of the Indian contingent at ITB Berlin is surely a great way to stress on the importance of events and marts such as these to make your presence felt on a global platform. However, there are some who argue that these events are merely a brand building exercise and procuring business or cracking deals are not the mainstay at such a forum. While the ones endorsing this line of thought are growing in number, there are still some who believe that if meetings are pre-fixed and one is well prepared, these events can be the stepping stone to cracking deals and forging new relationships with clients while strengthening the already established ones. While most people are divided on what such events mean for them and their line of business, most of them unanimously voice the fact that if India is showcasing on a global platform, there needs to be sufficient marketing of Brand India and the Ministry needs to take steps to educate more travel agents and introduce new and niche products to promote India in the foreign market.

### Clipping wings

Travel ban — these set of words seem to be doing the round far too often now than ever. The recent one is the UK and US banning electronics no larger than a mobile phone in the cabin luggage from certain countries in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Turkey. The airports of Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Tunisia, Lebanon, Qatar and the UAE are affected by the ban. The ban they say is being imposed as an anti-terrorist precaution. However, airlines have come around and are suggesting alternatives to passengers. Nevertheless, corporate travel may take a hit initially as long-haul flights offering Wi-Fi services often help business travellers catch up on work. This might result in a drop in business and First Class bookings as they may shift to European carriers, which do not fall under the purview of the ban. However, many expect this to be a short-term arrangement. It remains to be seen how long this ban shall last.

# Travel insurance for assurance

Getting a travel insurance policy before an international trip is more of a necessity than an option now and it is the responsibility of travel consultants to inform their clients about the benefits of getting one.

Checking the best options for flights, visa applications, hotels, and sightseeing tours to ensure your client's holiday is enjoyable isn't enough. If you have not factored travel insurance on that checklist, you might want to add it now. If your clients still believe that their domestic mediclaim policy covers them outside India, they are wrong.

In order to compare different plans, factors such as the cover options, premium amount, medical cover, and upper age limit should be given prior consideration. The premium for an insurance plan depends on the location, the travel period, age of the traveler and the level of coverage chosen.

#### Know what is covered

Many insurance companies also provide exclusive covers which offer specialised protection to customers. Baggage loss and baggage delay are the most common problems encountered while flying, which travel insurance covers. However, one should note that coverage is offered

only when it is in the custody of the common carrier, which in most cases is the airline. One must keep in mind that it will cover only checked-in baggage and delay in receiving baggage outside Indian boundaries. This means that if there is a delay in receiving baggage in India, the policy won't respond.

Travel insurance policies also have features which cover inconvenience caused due to trip delay, trip cancellation, missed connections and loss of passport. The possibility of personal liability is also covered which may lead to litigation in the foreign country. Insurance companies also provide cover if the unattended house in India is burgled, while the policyholder is abroad. This is covered under the 'Home Burglary' benefit.

Always remember to recommend a policy from a respected insurance brand which has international presence and a strong track record. One should also take into account the claim settlement record of the insurer.

So if you want your clients to have a carefree, enjoyable and memorable trip abroad, ensure they fit travel insurance in their plan.

#### Did you know?

If travellers are in the age bracket of 6 months to 70 years, they are eligible to purchase travel insurance. People above 70 years can still purchase travel insurance but would have limited cover. The duration of travel insurance policies are up to a maximum of 180 days per trip. Premium is determined by the amount of Medical Expenses Sum Insured and it varies from \$50,000 to \$100,000. Pre-existing ailments are normally excluded in travel insurance and the premium is calculated basis country of travel, age group and trip band. Further, both outpatient and inpatient treatments are covered under travel insurance whilst the Insured is abroad. Insured may apply for reimbursement of expenses when they return to India in case of outpatient claims.

Students can avail of a specialised cover which

is in compliance with institutes abroad and it can be opted for a period of one year. A student cover also includes mental and nervous disorders, rehabilitation for drug and alcoholic addiction, sponsor protection, study interruption and compassionate visit. Students would do well to check whether the policy they intend to buy is recognised by their institute.

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

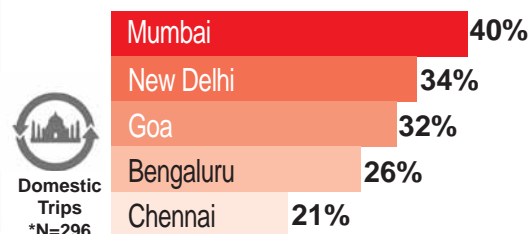
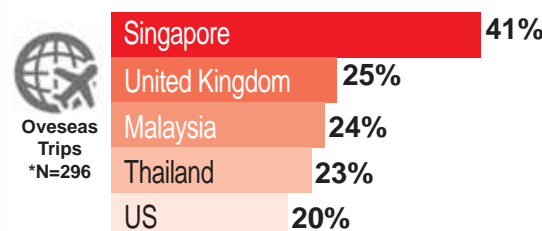


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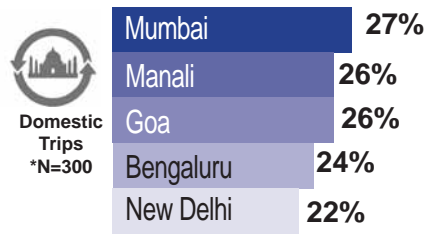
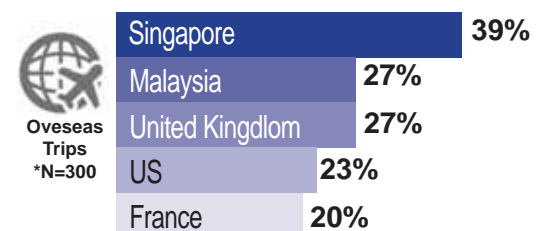
# Mumbai, Singapore high on demand

While Singapore tops the charts for Indians searching online for overseas trips, locally, Mumbai is on top of the list under domestic travel. The two destinations remain the most searched ones for travellers looking to book in the next 12 months.

Destinations most popularly booked online by locals in the past 12 months



Destinations most popularly to be booked online by locals in the next 12 months



\*N stands for number of respondents

Source: The Indian Digital Traveler by Pressy Sankaran, Criteo

# 100,000 Indian arrivals in 2017

Glen Agustin, Chief Tourism Operations Officer – Market Development Division, says the Department of Tourism Philippines wants to increase awareness through interactive workshops in New Delhi and Ahmedabad.



TT BUREAU

The island country situated in the Western Pacific Ocean has been garnering growing interest from Indian travellers, resulting in an increase of 21.37 per cent in 2016. Around 90,816 Indians visited the Philippines last year and Agustin hopes the numbers exceed the 100,000 mark this year.

In an effort to meet the target, Department of Tourism recently held training sessions in New Delhi and Ahmedabad that involved a 25-member delegation, comprising hoteliers, airlines, and representatives of tour attractions who interacted with over 200 key travel professionals.

Agustin elaborates on their increased focus on promotion and says, "Despite the fact that Indians need a visa



Glen Agustin  
Chief Tourism Operations Officer – Market Development Division, DOT Philippines

The workshops are a pilot where we not only maintain the B2B meetings but add some fun into the learning process through games that also help increase the awareness of the destination

to travel to the Philippines and that there still is no direct connectivity, the numbers are strong and encouraging. It is a good gauge of the response by Indian tourists to the efforts made by the tourism offices. Hence, this year, we are ramping the promotions and are making our presence felt at trade shows. The workshops are a pilot where we not only maintain the B2B meetings but add some fun into the learning process through games that also help increase the awareness of the destination." In 2016, India grabbed the 12<sup>th</sup> slot in source market for tourism receipts and has managed to retain the position thus far.

While leisure travel has been a key growth driver, Agustin comments that MICE movements have contributed as well and show good prospects for growth. "A lot of the MICE guests are combining their trips with soft adventure, like rafting in the Pagsanjan Falls," he adds. "In addition, we've observed more honeymoon visits and weddings is another segment that we

are tapping. Family travel is also hugely popular since the Philippines offers something for everyone."

The Philippines presents sundry activities and destinations to suit the interest of every kind of Indian traveller. Cebu boasts of both beach and cityscape, while revelers can have their fill of 24/7 parties in Boracay. Manila is

nothing short of paradise for shopping enthusiasts and entertainment like casinos and the local cuisine is worth a mention. Agustin enthusiastically shares, "Most of these places are well established and are well-known among travellers. We'd like less-frequented spots like Palawan and Davao to get more attention than they already are." ↴

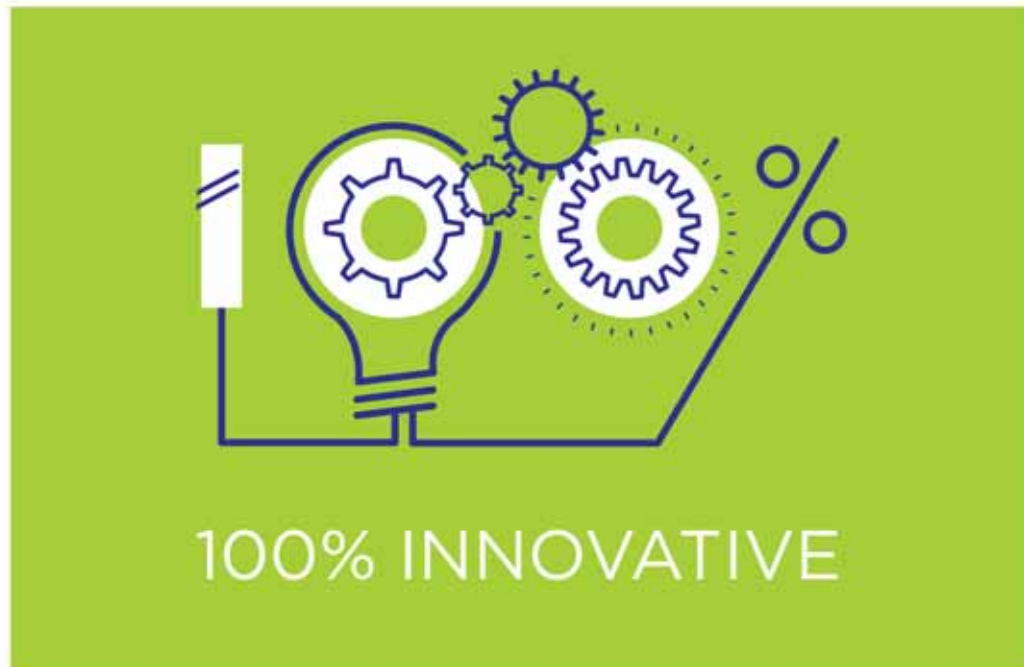
## Carlson Rezidor targets 200 hotels in APAC region by 2020

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has set a target to achieve 200 operating hotels in its Asia Pacific portfolio by 2020 and is well on track to achieve the same, informed **Thorsten Kirschke**, President-Asia Pacific, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group.

The Group announced strong 2016 results with 77 openings across the globe, the most since 2009 and signed 122 new properties marking its fourth consecutive year of signings increases. A steady growth was recorded for the Group in the Asia Pacific region with the

opening of 14 hotels in 2016. In India, the Group holds a strong portfolio of 140 hotels in operation and in various stages of development. "Asia Pacific continues to be one of the most promising and energetic growth regions of the world," he said.

"The underlying hotel performance on a like for like basis has yielded robust improvements of 8 per cent (800 bps) GOP growth. We continue to be on track to achieving our goal of attaining 200 operating hotels in our Asia Pacific portfolio by 2020," he added.



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## Peru targets MICE from India

Apart from Machu Picchu, Peru has a lot more to offer Indians, says **Luis M. Cabello**, Economic and Commercial Counsellor, Embassy of Peru, New Delhi.



Peru is among one of the most sought after long-haul destinations for Indians, and the tourism department and Embassy of Peru is leaving no stone unturned to create the right buzz about the destination. "We are participating in trade shows in India, so that we are in the market. After that, we are going to have training sessions, seminars as well as direct B2G meetings. Instead of doing big seminars, we would do more of door-to-door marketing and reach people who excel in Latin America, especially Peru. We are planning to do a lot of business in India, organise Fam tours for trade and media," said **Luis M. Cabello**.

Despite being a long-haul destination, Cabello insists that they have seen a good growth in arrivals from India to Peru. "For the last three years, since my commercial office is working here in India, the numbers are always increasing. In the first year, we



**Luis M. Cabello**  
Economic and Commercial Counsellor  
Embassy of Peru, New Delhi

In the first year, we grew almost 80% and now in 2016 we grew almost 10 per cent. I hope this year will be better than the last

grew almost 80 per cent and now in 2016 we grew almost 10 per cent. I hope this year will be better than the previous year," he added.

One of the biggest obstacle in growth for Peru is

air connectivity, but they are working towards it. "We have been in touch with some companies. It's a long flight from Latin America to India and vice versa, and we are working to improve this. We need to have connectivity to Europe or the United States for sure. When we started doing business a few years ago, we only had a few companies doing flights to Latin America. But now, everyone wants to come to Latin America as it's a new market. Long back, the scenario was same for China, but now China is our best market. Earlier people had no idea about Peru; but we are now doing things correctly. Now, a lot of people want to go to Peru," Cabello revealed.

He added that they had some companies visiting Peru because of seminars and conventions. "If big companies like Cisco are preferring Peru, there is a reason. We have good facilities, hotels, good convention centres and also Machu Picchu," he claimed.

## Fly Delhi-Ho Chi Minh in July

After the announcement of a direct flight between Delhi and Ho Chi Minh City on VietJet Air starting July, Vietnam Tourism is looking at big arrival numbers from India.



Vietnam Travel Mission with the theme 'Vietnam – Amazing destination for Indian tourists', organised by Embassy of the S.R. of Vietnam in association with VietJet Air, DMCs from Vietnam and Om Tourism, saw in presence representatives of the travel trade from India. At the event, **H.E. Ton Sinh Thanh**, Ambassador of Vietnam in India, said that India and Vietnam are celebrating 45 years of establishment of diplomatic ties this year. He mentioned that Vietnam is home to 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, well-preserved historic relics and beautiful beaches and has great potential for Indians.

"Indian travellers can find the essence of Indian culture in Vietnam through Hindu temples in Ho Chi Minh City, My Son sanctuary or even at the numerous Indian restaurants. Approximately 66,000 Indian tourists visited Vietnam in 2015, while recording an average of 32 per



**H.E. Ton Sinh Thanh**  
Ambassador of  
Vietnam in India

Approximately 66,000 Indian tourists visited Vietnam in 2015, while recording an average of 32% growth annually from 2010-2015, but this still remains a small number

cent growth annually from 2010-2015, but this still remains a small number compared to the number of Indian tourists who travel overseas every year."

He credited that this number could boost with direct air connectivity. "VietJet Air is planning a code-share direct flight between Delhi and Ho Chi Minh City scheduled in July 2017 which will definitely add more traffic from India to Vietnam," he revealed.

Asking tour operators and travel agents to promote Vietnam as a tourist destination, he said that Vietnam Tourism would organise several activities such as roadshows, participation in fairs and exhibitions for them. "Fam trips will be organised during this year to showcase Vietnam as a safe, friendly and attractive destination," he said.

**Nguyen Bac Toan**, Deputy Commercial Manager, VietJet Air, also gave a presentation at the event and informed about the direct flight between Delhi and Ho Chi Minh city. There were also presentations by various DMCs and partners from Vietnam at the roadshow.

## Experience luxury in Spain

**Ignacio Ducasse Gutierrez**, Director, Tourism Office of Spain in India, informs they've crossed the 100,000 mark for Indian visitors in 2016.



In 2017, Spain will be conducting its annual roadshows in the month of September to further boost trade relations in India. Gutierrez says, "We saw a growth of over 10 per cent from the India market in 2016. We are very happy that we have achieved our aim of 100,000 Indian visitors to Spain and in 2017, we will work harder to increase this number." With extensive promotions lined up for India, Spain is eyeing a growth of 10 per cent in 2017 as well.

Gutierrez points out that the main segments of Indians travelling to Spain are family travellers while almost 35 per cent of the traffic constitutes of MICE travellers. He explains, "While we will continue to look at family travel but in 2017 we are also shifting focus towards the younger travelling population which may be interested in the partying hubs in Spain like Ibiza. We are also targeting solo women travel-



**Ignacio Ducasse Gutierrez**  
Tourism Counsellor, Embassy of Spain in India and  
Director, Tourism Office of Spain in India

We saw a growth of over 10 per cent from India in 2016. We are very happy that we have achieved our aim of 100,000 Indian visitors to Spain

lers and honeymooners and informing the trade about the various tourism products on offer for this segment." Gutierrez further elaborates that while Spain is increasingly attracting a large

number of Indian travellers from all segments, Spain has not been well-positioned as a luxury travel destination and in order to represent the luxury travel products, the destination is putting out all information and developing products for this particular segment of travel from India.

Tourism Office of Spain in India will conduct its main event tentatively from September 27-29 in three cities - New Delhi, Ahmedabad and Chennai. At this three city event, 20 destinations and tourism companies from Spain will present their products to the travel trade. Spain has also benefitted from Bollywood movies shot at various locations at the destinations and is aggressively marketing itself as a filmmaker-friendly destination to woo more such projects. "We are very interested in Bollywood and the filming industry and are looking at a couple of proposals from Indian filmmakers in the near future," adds Gutierrez.

## Travel Show Experiential returns

The show, focused exclusively on experiential travel, will be held on April 8-9, 2017, in New Delhi and will gather a diverse bunch of professionals from all over.



Experiential travel has been on an upswing and the trend continues to grow as travellers evolve with each journey. Adjudged as the 'new way to travel', experiential travellers don't just visit the destination, they experience it. Travel suppliers have been re-strategising to align their products in accordance to the transition, offering more personalised itineraries, accommodation options and even destinations depending on what they have to offer.

Following the success of last year's Travel Shows, Buzz Media and Pacific Leisure Group (PLG) will be organising the Experiential – Beyond Luxury edition in New Delhi. This year, the organisers have dedicated two days for the segment, indicating the increasing demand from the industry to meet the requirements of the new-age traveller. The last edition was held in conjunction with Travel Show Business which focused on MICE.



**Sarika Rawal Bhambhani**  
General Manager  
DDP Exhibitions

In the coming edition, 90 per cent of buyers are from out of town, while 50 per cent sellers are from different countries. They will get explained and discover products during a 10-minute speed meeting

The exclusive event aims to bring a select group of sellers and buyers together to either grow or explore new

business opportunities, and provides a forum to network and get the know-how of the industry. **Sarika Rawal Bhambhani**, General Manager, DDP Exhibitions, gives more details on the closed-door show and says, "In the coming edition, 90 per cent of buyers are from out of town, while 50 per cent sellers are from different countries. They will get explained and discover products during a 10-minute speed meeting that ensures they get down to the main subject – business. Especially since time is a scarce commodity these days, the speed networking session allows the right amount of information exchange."

She adds that the two-day period will witness around 900 meetings and the attendance of around 150 handpicked guests.


### Vantage Point

The event aims to bring sellers and buyers together to either grow or explore new business opportunities




# Caper extends an arm of success


Bharat Bhushan Atree, Managing Director, Caper Travel Company (CTC), heads a slew of SBUs under the CTC portfolio and believes in taking younger players under his wing, presenting a win-win situation for both sides.



**CTC**  
HOLDING


Giving each segment of travel a focused and steadfast approach, the Caper Travel Company, a conglomerate of travel services, is the result of Atree's astute vision and determination that has cemented his position in the Indian tourism industry. The dynamic travel connoisseur heads eight verticals in total under the CTC banner, offering impeccable in-house services on inbound and outbound tourism, including MICE. Diversifying into related verticals is not only Atree's way of presenting premium solutions from skilled professionals, but is also an efficient way for SBUs to sustain and grow in the face of disruption.






**Vishal Jaiswal**  
*CEO*

The multi award-winning travel solution wing, emphasises on inbound tourism for the Indian sub-continent and caters to leisure holidays, groups, charters as well as business travellers. With a pan-India presence including overseas offices, the available in-house Linguistic Trade Guide facility for travellers from Russia, Spain, Italy, Germany and France adds a bonus to the sundry products and services.




**Sanjeev Chopra**  
*CEO*

Aayan Journeys is fast emerging as the most preferred Indian DMC across the sub-continent and is particularly popular among Australians, occupying at least 20 per cent of the market. With Aayan, witness the infinite sights of South Asian countries taking the experience a notch higher, thanks to its extensive network and alliance.



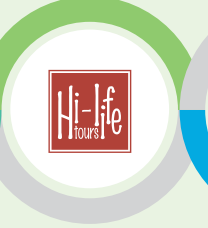
**Deepak Bhatnagar**  
*Managing Director*

The DMC brings a fresh approach to travel and guarantees a new experience with every journey. Aamantaran brings forward unlimited options to discover India's beauty, in addition to presenting innovative ways to explore neighbouring countries. A major section of their clientele comes from Japan, Europe, the Middle East and Iran.




**Vinay Albuquerque**  
*Director*

Boasting of names such as the Turtle Beach Resort in Morjim, Santiago Beach Resort in Calangute, Hotel Mayfair, Goa, and Dunsvirk Court, Mussoorie, among others, Era is a one-stop shop for the client's hospitality needs. A portfolio of standalone and boutique hotels help customers rediscover the joys of indulgence with an array of services like spa and Ayurveda, to name a few.




**Vishal Jaiswal**  
*Director*

The online travel company is backed by state-of-the-art technology and provides specialised travel programmes and tour itineraries for the wanderlust-struck. Ranging from budget to premium, Hi-Life stays true to its name and has expanded services for MICE movements, worldwide holidays and luxury train journeys, as a partner of the Indian Railways.




**Rakesh Mathur**  
*President*

The company brings the best of flight services, including domestic and international trip planning, ground handling, crew services, fuel purchasing, permits, flight clearance and so much more. The skilled team of Jet Concepts comes hand-in-hand with pragmatic experience in understanding the clients' requirement and serving tailored provisions with integration.



**Anurag Jain**  
*Director*

With a core philosophy of providing travellers with the best on-road experience, Pegasus is equipped with the most luxurious cars which have the option of being chauffeur-driven or self-driven. Ranging from airport transfers, corporate requirements, to group transfers and outstation tours, Pegasus' complete fleet comes enabled with GPS and superior amenities.



**Sean Kennedy**  
*Director*

The travel technology division generates cutting-edge expertise to sell and manage travel services online, powering all the verticals under CTC with its technical capabilities. Robust and able to handle large transaction volumes and automated ERPs, the company is responsible for bringing out business intelligence and application development services for a digital-first world.

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# Explore Great Britain beyond London

**Patricia Yates**, Director of Strategy and Communications, VisitBritain, talks about how important an event like ExploreGB is for them to engage with the travel trade around the world. She says that for them to get more travellers to Britain engaging with the travel trade is the most effective way, especially for a market like India.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA FROM BRIGHTON

**Q**What does an event like ExploreGB do for a destination like Great Britain? How does it help you drive tourism to the country?

One of our main drivers for the event is to get people to explore more of Britain. London is a global city that's very well-known, but we want to send tourists across the nation and regions. Particularly in markets like India we do that by getting products in the brochures of the Indian travel trade. This is a real opportunity to bring Indian buyers over and showcase all the attractions and hotels that they can think about packaging. We then take them around the country and show them the various destinations so that they can get a first-hand feel of it. But I don't think that's enough, so what we need to do further is tie it up with a bow almost and give them something that can be booked in their brochure. We have lots of great attrac-

tions and hotels but we need to make it easy for the Indian travel trade to make that a sellable product. We are known for our inspirational marketing, like the whole OMGB campaign is very popular, but we need to make sure that we can support the trade so that they can sell behind that campaign.

**Q**India is still a traditional market, even as there might be a rise in online bookings but people would still find it easier to book holidays through a travel agent. How are you engaging with the travel trade?

We've appointed a new country manager - Vikas Sheth and he's based in Mumbai and that's a reflection of the fact that we appreciate the fact that we need to work more closely with the trade. We've just done our mission which is looking outside the major cities in India, mainly the Tier-II and Tier-III

cities, where we hold trade engagements. Our intermediaries have just been taken over by a new director, who's reviewing how we engage with the trade, how can we support them and what we do with programmes like Britagent that we use to broaden and increase the knowledge of the agents and how do we take it into the next phase and make that useable and supportive of the international trade, so, there is lot of work going on, recognising that we want to get more people to our country and the way to that in India is absolutely to work with the travel trade.

**Q**Recently the UK and India have signed an agreement to increase air connectivity between the two countries. How much of a change will that bring about in terms of visitor arrivals for you? Any Indian cities that you'd like them to fly to?

Connectivity absolutely underpins whether people travel to a destination. We have



**“**We see historic growth from India, in 2015, we've seen visits up 8 per cent and a spend of almost £433 million. India is a solid market for us, the attraction of the Indian market is that they tend to have good regional dispersal and they tend to stay long so this is a market that sees a strong growth.**”**

**Patricia Yates**

Director of Strategy and Communications  
VisitBritain

traditionally worked in India not just with British Airways but also the Middle Eastern carriers who have great regional connectivity into India and Britain and it's worked both ways for us. The flight increases are opportunities for us of really focusing on those cities and our strategy in the future would be much more city based rather than country based. It is an acknowledgement that you

are drawing people from the regions to really go to the airports and get on those flights. I'm very happy to follow the commercial judgement of the airlines of which cities they'd like to fly to.

**Q**How has 2016 been for you vis-à-vis the Indian market?

We see historic growth from India, in 2015, we've

seen visits up 8 per cent and a spend of almost £433 million. India is a solid market for us, the attraction of the Indian market is that they tend to have good regional dispersal and they tend to stay long so this is a market that sees a strong growth. The increased investment into India recognises the fact that it's a good growth market. ↴

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# Celebrating Indo-Thai bond of 70 years

The Royal Thai Embassy organised Namaste Thailand Festival 2017, in association with Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Thailand and India.



NISHA VERMA

The three-day Namaste Thailand Festival, organised at the Bridge, Ambience Mall and DLF Promenade Mall, Vasant Kunj, in New Delhi, offered visitors an opportunity to sample Thai food, Thai products, Thai cultural performances and fun activities. Speaking on the sidelines of the festival, **Apirat Sugondhabhirom**, Chargé d'Affaires, The Royal Thai Embassy, New Delhi, said, "This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relationship between India and Thailand. The government of Thailand

are also now travelling to India, especially for the Buddhist circuit," he added.

While Thailand is already popular among Indian tourists, Stapanaseth said that they are focusing to promote new destinations and local experiences. "We received almost 1.2 million tourists from India to Thailand last year, which is about 10 per cent in-

crease from the year before. We are looking for a similar increase in 2017 as well. People already know Bangkok and Pattaya, but we are trying to create awareness for new attractions, products and services. We are focusing on east coast of Thailand, especially Koh Chang as well as South of Thailand, where we would like to share local experiences. People can go and

explore local village and learn Batik, handicrafts, cooking, etc. Other destinations like Krabi and Khao Lak are also coming up well," he informed.

### Key Attractions

TAT is focusing on east coast of Thailand, especially Koh Chang as well as South of Thailand

## Telangana proposes heliports to boost tourism

Telangana Government has proposed heliports at various locations in the state to the Ministry of Civil Aviation in an attempt to boost tourism and exploit commercially potential areas. These heliports have been proposed at Dundigal, Hakimpet, Nadirgul in Hyderabad, Basanthnagar in Karimnagar, Nagarjunasagar, Nalgonda, Alair, Warangal and Kagaznagar. The state is also planning to develop new greenfield airports at Zakrampally, Nizamabad, National Investment and Manufacturing Zone at Zaheerabad.

According to **V.N. Bharat Reddy**, Director-Aviation, Government of Telangana, "The state government has submitted the proposals to Ministry of Civil Aviation under Regional Connectivity Scheme for 10 unserved airports. These can be converted into full-fledged airports in future." Since air traffic is on the rise travellers can avail heliservices. For eg., the state government has taken up development of Yadagirigutta Temple and a heliport is being proposed at Alair.



**Apirat Sugondhabhirom**  
Chargé d'Affaires  
The Royal Thai Embassy, New Delhi

was among the first nations to establish relations with the newly independent Republic of India. Last year when the Prime Ministers of the two countries met in New Delhi, they agreed to celebrate this important landmark of history together. Hence, the Embassy



**Isra Stapanaseth**  
Director, TAT  
New Delhi

of Thailand in India has organised the Namaste Thailand Festival and Embassy of India in Bangkok will also organise the Indian festival there in the same year, which will be called Sawadhee India."

**Isra Stapanaseth**, Director, TAT, New Delhi, said that these activities would increase awareness of Thailand in India, which in turn would also help tourism between the two countries. "We'd mainly like to focus on our way of life. The cultures of both India and Thailand have some proximities, and thus we have more people going to Thailand and Thai people

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# Go on a technology trend spotting

Sharing Economy, Big Data and the Internet of Things (IoT) grabbed the spotlight last year and caused waves everywhere. Here are some of the emerging and prevalent trends in the travel and technology segment according to various online players.



“Technology is ever-evolving and the technologies that are presented in India both for consumers and travel agencies (B2B and B2C) are bigger and better and in my opinion, more updated than the rest of the world. If you look at India, self-booking tools are getting more attention as users understand the value of it. Similarly, these are the tools that we, as travel IT providers, equip our subscribers (travel agencies) with, majorly to get the corporations online. It's not only convenience that users gain, but it helps them save a lot of time and resources as well.”



**Ankur Bhatia**  
Executive Director  
Bird Group

“The market is definitely growing, but on the other side, we see a lot of other segments which are shaky. If you observe in India, the online e-commerce companies are showing negative growth. The market is filled with constant disruptions and in such uncertain situations, it is difficult to say where the waves will eventually lead to, but travel as an industry will grow. There's more consolidation expected in the content level where activities, sightseeing and tours are going to get more consolidated. More and more customers will start dealing with the supplier directly. I also expect to see a rise in marketplaces and that's where the future will shape up.”



**Gaurav Chiripal**  
CEO  
QuadLabs Technologies

“The big trend we have seen of late is the move to mobile. A large portion of people are doing their research, planning holidays and even booking through this platform and we're seeing people look at all the possible options that they have online. Acknowledging the potential this presents, we have also made the entire holiday booking process on MakeMyTrip live on mobile and is dynamically priced so you can pick and choose the itineraries you want. Additionally, social media is being leveraged to influence the customer's decision on which destination they want to go to.”



**Ranjeet Oak**  
Chief Business Officer –  
Corporate, MakeMyTrip



**Rajeev Kumar G**  
Founder, Managing  
Director & CEO, Mystifly

“Social has and will continue changing behavioural trends as far as travellers are concerned and with more of voice-enablement or search, is the way forward for every business. You are consuming travel on a regular conversation and it has the capacity to address queries instantly. It is not only socially engaging, but the data which is available on the Internet as a medium is being utilised. The data, collected over the years, can be used to predict future trends and to strategise, which is going to change the travel industry.”



**Oliver Hua**  
Managing Director  
APAC, Booking.com

“Starting last year, we're seeing a consolidation of the industry and I think this might continue as competitors are finding this a good way to sustain in the market. Online travel will continue to boom in general because of the economic growth, Internet penetration and because more infrastructure like online payment and booking tools are becoming available to users. We expect to see a higher adoption rate of online booking for travel. The Indian market will be a good one for many years to come as it has scale, a very large base of potential customers and also a desire to embrace new technology.”



**Nikhil Ganju**  
Country Head – India  
TripAdvisor

“We've been seeing a strong growth in India especially on the mobile front. While web continues to grow, the gradual transition to mobile has been particularly exciting because it presents a huge opportunity in in-destination use. We feel there is a lot of potential in the in-destination activity space like attractions and restaurants as well and have been putting in concentrated efforts. We believe that the attractions segment is the next billion dollar opportunity and are going about increasing the supply of bookable attractions.”

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# Delhi tourism policy on the cards

The Delhi Budget 2017-18 has earmarked ₹119 crore to boost tourism and is planning to develop an ecotourism hub at Yamuna riverfront. The proposal to reduce VAT on ATF from 25 per cent to 1 per cent was the highlight though the hospitality industry did not find space in this year's state budget.

 ANKITA SAXENA

“What the Delhi Budget entails for aviation is a welcome move. Reducing the tax on ATF from 25 per cent to 1 per cent for regional flights is a very good idea and an effective one as well, because we need to connect the smaller towns and develop bigger airports in it to promote regional connectivity. I think the other states should also follow suit if they want more people travelling for tourism and other purposes. Accessibility is the key for every kind of growth, be it for tourism or any other segment.”



**Ajay Singh**  
DDP Game Changer 2016,  
and CMD, SpiceJet, India  
Travel Award winner

### Delhi Budget 2017-18 Highlights

- ❖ Announced a cut in VAT on ATF from the current 25% to 1% for flights bound for remote areas
- ❖ Total expenditure of ₹119 crore on tourism in 2017-18
- ❖ Proposal to introduce a single-window clearance system for film shoots
- ❖ Plan to develop the riverfront of Yamuna
- ❖ Plan to make the Garden of Five Senses as a hub of nightlife with a luxury food court
- ❖ It was said that a tourism policy for the state is in the making

“It is very heartening to see that Delhi has taken initiatives to develop as a better tourism hub and these steps have to be applauded. Domestic travellers may find these developments attractive and thus can extend their stay in Delhi to up to three nights. Since we operate in the North East too, the reduction of VAT on ATF is a welcome move to boost connectivity between Delhi and the remote areas. Though the ecotourism hub proposed at Yamuna riverfront is a good move, I feel if Yamuna could be made navigable and clean then short cruising on the river, with dinner and live performances, and cultural shows can add a new dimension to the city's tourism.”



**Sanjay Basu**  
Managing Director  
Far Horizon Tours



**Surpal S. Deora**  
Director  
Maxfun Holidays

“The initiative of developing riverfront at Yamuna is a bold step since this initiative was much neglected by governments and it will help strengthen ecotourism. Many global platforms can be picked up for promotions such as tourism exhibitions and niche marketing campaign which has been long neglected in the past. The city could be great attraction to heritage and modern nightlife for global travellers. The government needs to learn from

the states like Rajasthan and Kerala which run marketing drives to promote their state at international platforms.”




**Karan Anand**  
Head of Relationships and  
Supplier Management,  
Cox & Kings, India Travel  
Award winner


“One of the significant decisions made by the Delhi Government is to cut the VAT on ATF from the current 25 per cent to one per cent for flights bound for remote areas. This is urgently required as this will provide both the existing and new airlines an opportunity to grow and connect to Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Once connectivity increases, travel will increase and this will help in the development of remote areas as well. With the introduction of GST in July this year, the state government would have felt it prudent to not tax the hospitality industry.”



**Capt. Swadesh Kumar**  
President  
ATOAI

“I feel the Delhi Government's move to create an ecotourism hub at Yamuna riverfront is a very good move because these spaces can add to the number of tourism activities in the city and also preserve the environment. Though the Budget has various initiatives for tourism, I feel Delhi needs to develop and promote soft adventure activities in the Aravalli region. I also suggest that Delhi Tourism should develop a product brochure for MICE that can be held in the city as it is a big business hub and its potential is yet not harnessed.”



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# Around 10 hotels on AccorHotels' radar

AccorHotels organised its Showcase for 2017 in Mumbai and Delhi, which saw the hospitality giant's properties from around the world come under one roof to meet the travel trade partners in India.



NISHA VERMA

**A**rif Patel, Vice President Sales, Marketing, Distribution & Loyalty - AccorHotels India, revealed that 50 properties from 27 countries presented their products in the Delhi Showcase. "This is one of the largest showcases done by any brand in the country. We are very excited and the response is overwhelming. In Mumbai, we had more than 800 customers, and in Delhi we had around 700 people. I spoke to participants and all of them had some active leads to close."

He further informed that they are looking at offering a panoply of brands under AccorHotels to customers in India, and taking necessary steps for the same. "We have a larger distribution strategy in place. Firstly, we are opening global sales offices in nine cities with 42 sales people," he informed.

In future AccorHotels will showcase products from selected destinations as well



**Arif Patel**  
Vice President - Sales, Marketing,  
Distribution & Loyalty - AccorHotels India

We will cross the 10,000 mark in rooms. Our strategy now will be to grow our luxury portfolio, while not losing sight on upscale and midscale brands

in India. "We are the largest player in Singapore with 14,000 rooms, and we are going to invite all our hotels from Singapore to come to India to meet customers who have business for Singapore. However, the Showcase will remain the face of our B2B events, and we might take it to Bengaluru next year or year after that," added Patel.

Patel said that with the acquisition of FRHI Hotels by AccorHotels, they have more opportunities for devel-

opment. "In India, we have 46 operating hotels. We are going to open nine more hotels by the end of this year, which will make it 55. We will cross the 10,000 mark in rooms. These three brands give us more opportunities to work with potential developers. Our strategy now will be to grow our luxury portfolio, while not losing sight on upscale and midscale brands. We are going to be

in 26 cities by the end of this year. The new cities are Lucknow, Vadodara, Guwahati, Nagpur, Coimbatore and we just opened a hotel in Cochin," he claimed.

The travel trade remains a focus for Patel, and he claimed that they are going to work with tour operators, wedding planners, entertainment industry, corporate customers, and travel man-

agement companies. For them, it's a 360 degree approach on both B2B and B2C. He also talked about their new tool, Leisure Online (LOL). "We are the first chain to launch Leisure Online, which is a platform where without any human intervention, one can book up to 30 rooms at a participating hotel. This could be done at a rate, which is different from what one sees on a

B2C site. You can generate your own invoice and pay online," he added.

He further said that they are looking at densifying in the cities where they already have hotels like Hyderabad, Chennai and Goa. Also Patel informed that they will open another Ibis in Pune. "We will continue to densify existing network, and would also grow in Tier-II, III cities," he said.

## Number Game

- In India, AccorHotels has 46 operating hotels and it is going to open nine more hotels by the end of this year
- The hotel group is going to be in 26 cities by the end of 2017, including new ones such as Lucknow, Vadodara, Guwahati, Nagpur, Coimbatore, Cochin



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## A-350 on Delhi-Bangkok route

Along with bringing its latest aircraft, Thai Airways is set to connect more Tier-II cities with Thai Smile, reveals **Viset Sontichai**, Director-Indian Sub-continent, Thai Airways.



To stress on the importance India holds for Thai Airways, the airline is focusing on increasing the number of flights between India and Thailand. **Viset Sontichai** said, "At the moment, we have over 70 flights-a-week on Thai Airways and Thai Smile between the two countries. Thai Smile is under Thai Airways' umbrella, and operates to Lucknow, Jaipur as well as Gaya and Varanasi. They are also looking to fly to more destinations like Cochin, Guwahati, and Chandigarh. With Thai Airways, we are also looking to fly to Amritsar."

Sontichai also revealed that they have new fares for the Indian market. "We are offering very good fare in the market and we continue to do it with Thai Airways, which is high standard, premium airline with great service and big aircraft," he said.

Talking of the connections they offer, he said, "We just introduced Moscow and



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

Jaipur is a very good destination for tourists around the world, and Thai Smile offers that connection via Bangkok

opened a new operation into Tehran. We have very good connections into Australia and New Zealand. We are number one carrier from India to New Zealand in this

market, especially Delhi. We have a double daily flight from Mumbai, which is 10 flights per week, and is very good in terms of connections to Australia, New Zealand, North Asia as well as South Asia."

He added that even Thai Smile offers further connections in and out of India. "Thai Smile, for example, can connect Lucknow and Hong Kong. Even Jaipur is a very good destination for tourists around the world, and Thai Smile offers that connection via Bangkok," he said.

Thai Airways has seen a considerable growth in the past year. "For India, there is approximately 13-per cent increase compared to last year. We are also looking forward to our new aircraft A-350 that is scheduled to operate to Delhi in June this year. We are very excited, and after Delhi, where we have 19 flights in a week, we would also target to bring the new aircraft to Mumbai as well," he revealed.

## Chennai on Korean Air radar

Korean Air, which started flying into India from December 2016, has seen a positive response from the trade and is already looking at further expansion.



The airline organised a special Korean Night for its travel trade partners in New Delhi. Speaking at the event, **Sang Wook Han** (Paul), Regional Manager, Delhi, India, Korean Air, claimed that they have received a lot of support for the airline from their partners. "I have worked in Singapore, the Philippines and Australia before coming to India. My mission here is to expand Korean Air's network in the country," he said.

**Pukhraj Singh Chug**, Managing Director, Acumen Overseas, said that they have seen phenomenal response from the Indian passengers as well as Korean passengers. "We are doing evaluation for cities like Bengaluru and Chennai, but we have not taken any decisions. We will rather full the obligations to the two cities that we are servicing currently — Mumbai and Delhi."

"Especially the service onboard has really attracted a



**Sang Wook Han**  
Regional Manager  
Delhi, India, Korean Air



**Pukhraj Singh Chug**  
Managing Director  
Acumen Overseas

lot of Indian passengers. We are the only one to offer First Class. Even for the economy passenger, the service on board is very well thought through and well taken care of. Korea as a destination is growing, we are seeing the numbers increasing. Thus, with good connectivity, good service onboard, I believe that Korean Air is here to stay," he asserted.

With a PLF of 79-80 per cent already, as revealed by Chug, future looks quite promising for Korean Air. Han said, "In the first stages, we

want to develop our Delhi and Mumbai market. Once it gets successful, we will extend it to the other cities."

Chug said that they would first focus on making the existing flights daily, and then would work on expansion. "We want to have daily operations and even more. Very soon we will be increasing the frequency. Also, we need to work on our bilaterals. Right now, Korean Air has the opportunity to increase two more flights, which we will announce shortly," he claimed.

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# ITB: Cracking deals or brand building?

India's strong presence of around 50 exhibitors at ITB Berlin 2017 reinstates the importance of international fairs such as these and the growing importance of the European market for India. We ask the Indian exhibitors whether these fairs do translate into business or are they more of a brand building exercise.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA FROM BERLIN



**Karan Anand**  
Head of Relationships and Supplier Management, Cox & Kings, India Travel Award winner

“ITB Berlin for a large company like Cox & Kings is a perfect one-stop shop for all our businesses. This year we have a delegation of more than 25 people from the company attending the mart and they straddle all the spectrum of travel. While it's not directly a business generating avenue, there are appointments that do later translate to business, but I need to point out that that events such as these are increasingly becoming an opportunity for networking. I foresee that in future those with existing client base and prior appointments will find it more successful to be here.”

“ITB Berlin has been positive for us, we have got bookings out of it. We can't complain as times are changing, what ITB used to be 10 years back it's not the same today as now it's more about prefixing appointments and meeting your target audience. We might not be exchanging cash and bringing in confirmation and reservations right away, but yes we have contracted with very interesting people. We have showcased India and our far-flung camp areas like Ladakh and Nagaland. We have been pleasantly surprised that the interest in India which was lukewarm before is now bouncing back. It may not be as upbeat everywhere but in spite of the bad press we are doing well, we need good press and need to collectively put up the right front and the right atmosphere.”



**Rajnish Sabharwal**  
Chief Operating Officer, The Ultimate Travelling Camp, India Travel Award winner

“More than 10,000 exhibitors have come down to ITB Berlin this year and this is an excellent thing for us as it keeps things very busy here. Even as the world is increasingly seeing a vast change in regime people are very optimistic and are continuing to travel, which is a good point for the travel industry. Globally, since we have partners everywhere, we get tremendous exposure from international marts like ITB and WTM. And since these marts are attended by people coming from every nook and corner of the world, platforms such as these keep one updated on the trends that are prevalent at a particular time. This in turn helps us to gear up for the season, while going into the market.”



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

“ITB Berlin is a very well-known forum and we have been participating at this event for many years. This year too we are here to network with our clients. The first day had been good for us, but the second day seemed a little slow. I feel that we may need more push for India as a destination, as it's not very slack at most of the pavilions. Compared to ours, some pavilions look pretty busy. ITB helps enhance the branding part for our hotels. It's a very important fair for us. There is no direct generation of business but this forum helps us to establish contact with our client base. Not just that it also provides good networking platform for our existing clients.”



**Rohit Arora**  
Area General Manager  
The Park, New Delhi

“For LPTI and our brands it was a very successful ITB, the quality of meetings was good as well the response towards India where we can see that tour operators have gained confidence again in terms of growing demand for the destination. Overall, large fairs like ITB and WTM are platforms where we can meet on the spot and connect to various operators from across the globe (at ITB it's mainly operators from all parts of Europe), so it gives you a chance in a very short time to meet a broad agent base and not just for client relationship management but also for client acquisition. We make our starting point here and it helps us to open doors to build new relationships and helps us to work on relationships that are already established.”



**Mario Habig**  
CEO-Inbound Business  
Le Passage to India

“This is our fourth year exhibiting at ITB, it's not as busy as the other travel shows we attend but the quality of what we see here is great. Being a better focused travel show we find great opportunity that comes to us through ITB. For us, it is very clear that while visibility of the brand is a very important aspect cracking a deal is equally important. We do have certain objectives when we come here and we work towards it. Unlike other shows, ITB is not a platform where one can crack deals without pre-event planning so you have to indulge in a lot of activities before you come here. The better the pre-event activities, the more success you'll have. How prepared you are depends on the success of the show.”



**Rajeev Kumar G**  
Founder Managing Director and CEO, Mystify, India Travel Award Winner



**Kapil Goswamy**  
Managing Director  
Trans India Holidays

“We've had a good two days at ITB, we've seen plenty of new interest in India and we've also witnessed new people come and ask about the destination, which is a very positive sign. India as a destination is generating a lot of interest and that's great news for us. ITB is a place where we need to be visible but that visibility serves the purpose of meeting your existing clients and setting up a new client database. It's important for us as it gives us access to the European market. And it's also a place where we come looking for new business. For us, at Trans India we are looking for people who would be keen to start promoting the destination, we can help them do it.”



**Shubhangi N**  
General Manager- Sales & Marketing, GRT Hotels

“I've been coming to ITB for the last five years, and I have been meeting my large operators and FTOs who contribute large numbers to our hotels. I'd like India's Ministry of Tourism to see if we can meet new agents, because that's not happening right now, that's where there's a gap. To grow our business we need new people, at the moment we are fending for ourselves but if the ministry makes an effort on our behalf then that'll be more effective. For us, we come to market our product, and to know the present market trend and find out more about FIT business. We also need to find out if we are featured in the brochures here, and if we are not then what is the reason for our absence. For us, it's more of a platform for information gathering.”



**Manish C. Palicha**  
Head Leisure Sales  
Amritara

“So far ITB has been good for us and it has helped to meet all our expectations. The first day was very good, but Day 2 hasn't been able to pick up, though I don't really know the reason for that. Not all the people we had meetings with have been able to turn up on Day 2, but overall the experience has been good and healthy. ITB is useful for us as it helps create awareness for our brand, and most importantly it helps us to keep in touch with our old contacts. It is a very powerful networking tool. Even if it doesn't generate any business, it definitely helps us to generate leads. It opens new doors, we do meet new contacts, the ratio is 30 per cent new contacts and 70 per cent is servicing old accounts.”

“I think ITB has been pretty good, though the general reaction of people have been that it's been very slow. We had some quality meetings on the first day and towards the end of second day meetings have picked up, it was better and busier. We do get a few walk-ins but mostly we come with pre-fixed meetings and these meetings need our time and attention so it can't be over in just a matter of a few minutes. We need to start working on them way earlier. You'd find two sets of thoughts about the event. Coming from a representation background, for me the idea of being here is to disseminate information and update people about my hotel partners, be it a new routing or a new itinerary, so the platform works beautifully for me.”



**Sowmya R Vijaymohan**  
Founder & Partner, RARE Destinations & Experiences

“Day 1 was pretty empty as we were expecting more people to come. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, needs to strategise in the future about participation at such events. ITB is important for us but before visiting, the ministry should do some more publicity, both online and offline. They need to involve more tour operators. The India evenings hosted by the MOT at ITB Berlin is a great initiative but we need to plan well in advance, not just a month ahead but 3-4 months before. We need to also host pre-seminars for tour operators, hoteliers and event companies. We need to generate interest and curiosity about India among foreign buyers. FTOs will come only if there is something new.”



**Ravi Gosain**  
Managing Director  
Erco Travels

“This is my first time at ITB Berlin and it's been a great experience so far. The best part about this is that I get to meet the top management guys who are not always accessible in India. I have been to many trade fairs in India but coming in to Berlin is a totally different experience and a grand one at that. A mart like this helps us bring out the group in the international market. Since we are now expanding to international markets like Dubai and London, it helps us to gauge the market and establish new connections. The Europe market is very important for us as foreigners are very attracted to the concept that we have at Chokhi Dhani.”



**Mehul Vaswani**  
Director Hospitality  
Chokhi Dhani

# Webinars reinvent digital marketing

Webinars, the new age classrooms, are gradually making space in the marketing strategies of travel agencies. The industry believes that though digital is the way forward, webinars are emerging slowly and have a long way to go to become mainstream marketing tools like exhibitions and roadshows.

 ANKITA SAXENA

“Currently a very small percentage of travel trade attends webinars as means of attaining product knowledge. In the times to come, webinars would be a more effective means of product showcase as compared to roadshows as they not only save travel time but are also very cost effective. Roadshows require a lot of travel to transact potential business, which is very efficient through webinars. However, webinars lack the personal touch and one-on-one contact.”



**Deepak Bhatnagar**  
Managing Director  
Aamantaran Travel Company

“Webinars are more impactful compared to roadshows as they are the easiest way to reach larger audience while you sit in the cozy setting of your office. Roadshows are expensive and time consuming. However, it is also true that roadshows are needed to maintain a personal touch with your clientele. Webinars is tested and tried formula and a successful medium to reach targeted audience mostly in metro cities. Very few takers sign up for webinars are from smaller towns and remote areas. Roadshows are specifically targeted and city oriented and is a traditional medium that keeps innovating.”



**Anjum Lokhandwala**  
Founder and Director  
Outbound Konnections

“In my opinion if around 100 travel companies register for webinars, the attendee ratio still remains less than 40 per cent. In some cases it is observed that people log in to sessions and get engaged in other work. Webinars can be more impactful if the subject interests the attendees and the organisers can create awareness before the webinar whereas roadshows are conventional ways to connect with the audience which has a certain ratio of success. Though webinars are cost and time effective, the biggest disadvantage of webinar is one-sided presentation and the interaction is largely missing.”



**Ravi Singh**  
Director of Sales- India,  
24x7rooms.com



**Jaal Shah**  
Group Managing Director –  
Travel Designer Group and  
Founder – RezLive.com,  
India Travel Award winner

“Webinars and roadshow both play a significant role in reaching out to the right audience. From a company's perspective, logistically it is easier to organise a webinar than a roadshow and are comparatively cheaper against roadshows. Webinars can be recorded for future reference as well. However, they are not interactive enough in comparison to roadshows. As far as roadshows are concerned, they look to be more impactful for certain situations like product launch, new destination update, to name a few. One to one interaction is always beneficial.”



**O. P. Mendiratta**  
Managing Director, Global  
Hotel Representations

“Conventional roadshows are more impactful because of the human contact. All queries can be answered on the spot and there is an opportunity to meet more exhibitors and learn about the destinations. There are only advantages to attending roadshows. The time spent on travelling is worth it as you learn about the product, gather all necessary information, collect printed material and interact with a choice of exhibitors. The emerging digital marketing strategies, bulk mailing and webinars are emerging trends and are creating competition for roadshows to reinvent themselves.”



**Avi Arya**  
Chief Mogul (Founder),  
Internet Moguls.

“Webinars save time as you can easily access it from the comfort of your own home but when it comes to roadshows, nothing can beat one to one interaction. So, the bottom line is both the things work. A webinar combines educational presentation and training on the web. It saves time and is also very cost effective. However access to the Internet and audience environment can be a few impediments which can occur while conducting a webinar. One should organise speed meetings where 100 people meet, 10 people each in a 30 minute slot which will be more economical than roadshows.”

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# ETAA raises a toast to team spirit

The Enterprising Travel Agents' Association (ETAA) Domestic Convention 2017 held in Hyderabad from March 3-5 celebrated camaraderie among fellow members and offered an effective platform for networking and promoting business among travel professionals pan-India.



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# Fostering entrepreneurial spirit

Focusing on self-employment, Institute of Hotel Management, Hyderabad, is nurturing budding entrepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality industry, says the principal **Sanjay K. Thakur**.



TT BUREAU

**Q**What distinguishes IHM Hyderabad from other institutes?

Established in 1972, the Institute of Hotel Management Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition (IHM-CTAN), Hyderabad, is affiliated to National Council for Hotel Management, Noida, an apex body of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. IHMCTAN, Hyderabad functions as an autonomous body and is managed by the Board of Governors headed by the Secretary-Tourism, Government of Telangana. It is the first IHM to have a programme — Start-up IHM, where budding entrepreneurs are nurtured. Also, IHM, Hyderabad is the only institute in its category to

**Q**At present, what challenges is the industry faced with?

The travel and hospitality industry is moving in the right direction and will be a very strong source of employment. Tax structure, law and order, road facilities and wayside amenities like toilets and general cleanliness are

major challenges which are stalling the tourism sector and hospitality industry. Also the industry needs to improve on its human resource policies and up the remuneration provided to the young professionals who join the industry and we hope to see positive response from 2017 going forward.



Sanjay K. Thakur  
Principal, Institute of Hotel Management  
Vidyanagar, Hyderabad

have its own Rotary Club in association with Rotary Club of Hyderabad Central to develop leadership qualities in students. To develop showmanship, students are also trained in Yoga, music, dance, gymnasium and are actively involved in indoor and outdoor sports. Another feather in its cap is that this is the first central IHM to have English Language Laboratory by i-Lotus Linguaphone, a British company to improve and guide students for better communication skills necessary for the hospitality industry.

**Q**Could you list some of your most sought after courses?

Some of the most popular courses offered at our institute are the three years' Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Hotel Administration; Post Graduate Diploma in Accommodation Operations and Management (1.5 years); Craftmanship Course in Food Production (1.5 years); Craftmanship Course in Food & Beverage Service (six months) and HSRT Programmes.

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# Incredible India contingent

Around 10,000 exhibitors from 184 countries and regions in 26 fully-booked halls set the ball rolling at the ITB Berlin Convention, held from March 8-12, 2017. The Indian pavilion with around 50 exhibitors was inaugurated by **Gurjit Singh**, Ambassador of India to Germany, along with **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and **Jaykumar Rawal**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra.



# scales the Berlin wall at ITB



# Strong Indian presence at ITB Berlin





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# India wins hearts & minds at Berlin



## New API reduces processing time

The latest version of API shows availability search results in less than a second while the structure has been optimised to lower the data size and processing time.



TT BUREAU

roomsXML has recently launched an upgraded version of its API which gives real-time access to its hotel inventory at competitive net rates. The upgrade endorses ease of use for clients in a big way as they can now search for multiple hotels of their choice in a single request and allows them the freedom to only search for hotels they wish to sell.

Founder and Executive Chairman **Prakash Bang** says, "It is an exciting time at roomsXML with the roll out of all the new upgrades. We have completed 10 years, but we do not like to stop and rest on



**Prakash Bang**  
Founder and Executive Chairman  
roomsXML

There are quite a few projects in the pipeline which will get rolled out over the course of the year to truly give unparalleled user experience

our laurels. We want to continue being innovative – that's the DNA we were born with. There are already quite a few projects in the pipeline which will get rolled out over the course of the year to truly give unparalleled user experience to our travel agent partners." The new and improved API responds to availability search in less than a second through the use of advanced database technology and inventory customisation. In addition, the API structure has also been optimised to lower the data size and processing time significantly, on the client's system.

roomsXML's B2B panel housing the popular Q-Push feature has also gone through a makeover where travel agents can email quotations directly to their customers

from roomsXML system. The process is equipped with better quality images and standardised content. Showcasing a new level of customisation, agents can now select the rooms and rates they want to include in the quotation.

## Agents experience the best of South Africa

The Fastest 50 Challenge contest launched last year invited travel agents across India to sell 50 South Africa packages exceeding nine days. The first 20 sellers won an all-expenses-paid trip to South Africa and experienced top selling products such as the Helicopter ride in Cape Town and the Bloukrans Bridge Bungy in Tsitsikamma. They started out in Cape Town and drove down to Hermanus, George and Oudtshoorn, closing with a two-night stay in Kruger National Park.



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## India #3 Asian market for Eurail

Riding on the wave of Indian outbound to Europe, Eurail has in turn recorded huge numbers. It has in fact categorised India under 'priority' markets this year that will see an uptick in budgets.

 HAZEL JAIN

Earning the position of being Asia's third-biggest market for Eurail after South Korea and China, India has chugged its way into the 'key' market category for the rail pass company. To underline how important this market has become to them, Yi Ding, Market Manager Asia, Eurail, was visiting Mumbai from Utrecht recently. She elaborates on this exciting growth and says, "In 2015, we saw that India had the highest growth rate globally for us – it was 50 per cent over the previous year. It continued to grow in 2016 by almost four per cent. In short, India was the best performing market for us the last two years."

She expects about eight to nine per cent growth in 2017 year-on-year because of the growing outbound to Europe. Much of this growth could be attributed to Eurail's Family Discount of free travel for children under 12 it had introduced in 2014. This alone led the children's share to double by 2015. In 2016, the market share of children was seven to eight per cent already – highest among all its markets.

Nahar claims that his company is the first destination management company of the Baltic countries in India. He says, "Our USP unlike many other DMCs is that we have our own offices at the base countries which are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Our respective offices provide us with back-end support in terms of ground level contracting, product designing and also

### Rail Europe relies heavily on trade

Eurail sells tickets through five distributors one of which is Rail Europe. According to **Simone Ruf**, Deputy CCO & VP Marketing and Business Development, Rail Europe, almost 85-90 per cent of sales for Rail Europe takes place through the trade channels and its GSAs. "This is why we will continue to invest in the travel trade in India, which is an important market for us. Trade will continue to be our primary focus and we will persistently support and train them," she says.

For this year, Rail Europe will have some new high-speed lines opening up,

including the Paris-Bordeaux line that will save an hour. This will be launched on July 7, 2017, but sales will start from March 15, 2017. The rail company is thinking of co-promoting this along with Atout France office in India. "We work quiet a bit with both France and Switzerland tourism boards in India and both continue to be very popular, along with London, Italy and Spain," Ruf adds.

However, it has no plans to expand its distribution network which stands at 10 GSAs India-wide today. "We believe we already get business from smaller towns through the



**Simone Ruf**  
Deputy CCO & VP Marketing  
and Business Development,  
Rail Europe

metro GSAs. Ottila will go live in Indore from March 2017. We also have a website and we have agents all the way from Guwahati to Haridwar," she says.

### Trends for train travel

Identifying a travel trend on which Eurail can also reap benefits, Ding adds, "We have seen that Indian travellers have now started to travel to other destinations by train instead of only visiting Switzerland. This is more so in regions where Bollywood movies have been shot such as Bruges (PK), Amsterdam (Queen) and even Spain." So in 2016, after doing a lot of internal

investigations, Eurail prioritised India as a 'key' market and it will become one of the markets to invest in from 2017. This also means an increase in budget for India. "As a result, our top three Asian markets — South Korea, China and India — will get almost 80 per cent of our total global budget. So you can see how important India is to us now," she reveals. In this visit to India, she met Swisstours, Thomas Cook,

Cox & Kings, Amigo Travels, TUI, and Ottila.

### Top 5 RE products for India in 2017

- ← Swiss Travel Pass
- ← Eurail One Country Pass
- ← Eurostar
- ← TGV Lyria (Switzerland-Paris)
- ← Eurail Italy-Switzerland Pass

## Making foray into the Baltic

Shivantika Bon Voyage, a destination management company catering to the Baltic countries in India, is ready to roll out its pan-Indian marketing plan for 2017 and is offering series group departures for June 2017.

 TT BUREAU

Shivantika Bon Voyage, a one-year-old company, has received a heartening response from the industry, informs, **Naveen Nahar**, CEO, Shivantika Bon Voyage. "The first year of operations had been encouraging enough for us to take a decision of expanding ourselves and venturing into a DMC."



**Naveen Nahar**  
CEO  
Shivantika Bon Voyage

**We will be offering series group departures for June 2017 with breakfast and dinner and will assist its clients for FIT movement for the Baltic region**

support us with operational management. They primarily cater to all outbound traffic generated from India." Nahar explains that the company is targeting the outbound MICE segment in 2017. Shivantika Bon Voyage will be offering series group departures for June 2017 with breakfast and dinner and will assist its clients for FIT movement for the Baltic region.

The company is deploying aggressive marketing campaigns and showcasing its products at major travel trade shows and exhibition to get the word out about its offerings. "We have already begun executing our promotional plans for 2017. We exhibited at trade fairs like SATTE and OTM. We are also looking at exclusive platforms which offer MICE exhibitions and meetings. We are also marketing through travel

trade publications in India. Our next financial year's elaborate advertising campaign is ready for pan-India launch and we are also looking at digital marketing as promotional platforms," says Nahar.

### Gaining Ground

- ← In its first year of operations, Shivantika Bon Voyage has decided to expand and venture into a destination management company
- ← They have their own offices at the base countries such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
- ← The company is looking at exclusive platforms which offer MICE exhibitions and meetings
- ← They are also working on a pan-India advertising campaign

# Business in native language

Smartling facilitates translation of web pages into the local languages of targeted markets, generating new revenue streams and covering a wider network of tourists.



According to a report by Common Sense Advisory - Can't Read, Won't Buy, 2014, 75 per cent of the buyers strongly agree that when faced with the choice of two similar products, they are more likely to purchase the one that has product information in their own language.

Smartling translation management software helps the travel and hospitality com-



Kyle Martinowich  
Sales Director, USA  
Smartling

Localisation is instrumental in longer, extended stays amongst the young travellers

panies localise their websites and create a customer journey that is sufficient to generate the highest amount of return on investment for their applications. Kyle Martinowich, Sales Director, USA, Smartling, believes localisation is instrumental in creating newer revenue sources and also helps expand the customer base in markets other than the source markets. He says, "A company which wishes to diversify its revenue streams and target newer set of consumers can consider venturing into, for example, the German or Dutch market and for that content should be localised according to that source market." He identifies hyper local products like Airbnb, Uber, TripAdvisor as the

most important ones to localise their content as they provide instant gratification.

Localisation can be done at any level of maturity for a company operating through web or through mobile. Martinowich advises that companies should look at where the individuals are coming from across the Internet and if they see an uptake in individuals coming

from a certain location only then they should consider localising to that language.

Citing examples, he points out that in the case of InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG), 96 per cent of translations were published without requiring any corrections; HootSuite saw 33 per cent reduction in its annual expense within one year of implementing Smartling. Com-

menting on the trends emerging from the India market, he says, "Indians are going to local languages for the domestic market where earlier they were sticking to English. Domestic market has seen the highest growth in 25 years and to keep that up localisation is extremely important. Also, localisation is instrumental in longer, extended stays amongst the young travellers."

## ITQ gears up for Student of the Year '17 finale

InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ) is all now set to organise the final round of Student of the Year 2017. The contest, aimed at nurturing talent from a young age, is held every year in association with travel institutions across India and provides a platform to launch the careers of best candidates.



Sandeep Dwivedi  
Chief Commercial Officer, ITQ

Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Commercial Officer, ITQ, adds, "As a pioneer of travel technology, we understand how important it is to keep the new ideas flowing in to our industry. In fact, it is the vision and aspiration of the

young minds that design the future of any trade and this is a privilege in the form of Student of the Year that we are introducing the best talent to the travel domain."

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### Tech Specs

- 84 per cent of the global population is reached by mobile-broadband network (Source: ITU, ITC Facts and Figures, 2016)
- Many companies feel there translation quality is bad but have no means to measure it. Only 41 per cent of translation providers measure translation quality, almost 64 per cent of these providers are regularly asked to rework

# EVENT TALK

## APRIL 2017

PATA Adventure Travel Conference and Mart 2017	Henan, China	1 - 4
BIT Milan	Milan, Italy	2-4
Hotel Operation Summit India	Mumbai	4
Best of Australia roadshow	Bengaluru	5
Hotel Investment Conference South Asia	Mumbai	5-6
Azerbaijan International Tourism Fair (AITF)	Baku, Azerbaijan	6-8
Travel Experiential Show	New Delhi	8-9
Ras Al Khaimah roadshow	Mumbai	10
Best of Australia roadshow	Chennai	11
Ras Al Khaimah roadshow	New Delhi	12
SITT	Novosibirsk, Russia	13 - 15
Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair (KITF)	Almaty, Kazakhstan	19 - 21
Shanghai World Travel Fair 2017	Shanghai	20 - 23
GITB	Jaipur	23-25
Arabian Travel Market (ATM)	Dubai, UAE	24 - 27
Digital Travel Summit APAC	Singapore	25-27
Hospitality Investment World Indonesia	Jakarta	26-27
WTTC Global Summit	Bangkok	26-27
Annual Meetings & Events Industry Conference (AMEIC)	Sydney	April 30 - May 2

## MAY 2017

South India Travel Awards	Kochi	2
3 <sup>rd</sup> UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism	Gipuzkoa, Spain	8
Rendez-vous Canada	Calgary, Canada	9-12
TRENZ 2017	Auckland, New Zealand	9-12
ITB China 2017	Shanghai, China	10-12
Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)	Sydney, Australia	14-18
IMEX	Frankfurt, Germany	16-18
Phocuswright Europe	Amsterdam, Netherlands	16-18
INDABA	Durban, South Africa	16-18
WTM Connect Asia	Penang, Malaysia	17-19
PATA Annual Summit 2017	Negombo, Sri Lanka	18-21
Connections Luxury	Ireland	21-24
FICCI Wedding Tourism Summit	New Delhi	25-26
CINZ Meetings 2017	Auckland New Zealand	31 May-1-June

## JUNE 2017

IATA AGM 2017	Cancun, Mexico	4 - 6
ILTM Asia	Shanghai, China	5-8
The Meetings Show	Olympia Grand London, UK	13-15
International Travel Expo (ITE)	HKCEC, Hong Kong	15-18
Connections Meetings	Quito, Ecuador	18-21
Beijing International Tourism Expo (BITE)	China National Convention Centre Beijing, China	23-25

For more information, contact us at: [talk@ddppl.com](mailto:talk@ddppl.com)

## ASSOCIATION TALK

# 17<sup>th</sup> IAAPI Expo records success

India is touted to be the next big destination for the amusement and entertainment industry and this was proved by the success of the Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries Expo in Mumbai.



TT BUREAU

The 17<sup>th</sup> IAAPI Amusement Expo organised by the Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI) in February 2017 was proof that the sector has been gaining popularity as a subsidiary for the tourism industry in India. Inaugurated by **Ashok Goel**, Founder Member and Director, IAAPI, the event was held in Mumbai. Also present at the occasion were **Ajay Sarin**, President, IAAPI and **N. D. Rana**, Chairman Trade Show and Director, IAAPI.

The three-day exhibition this year was supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, under its banner of 'Incredible India'. This year, Maharashtra was the Host State and Government of Andhra Pradesh was the Partner State. The exhibition witnessed participation from over 115 exhibitors from India and 21 overseas countries, spread across 10,000 sqm exhibition floor area showcasing latest innovative rides and equipment for amusement park, theme park, water park, adventure



(L-R) Pradip K. Sharma, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, IAAPI; Ajay Sarin, President, IAAPI; Guest of Honour Ashok Goel VC&MD, Essel Group; N. D. Rana, Chairman-Trade Show; Yogesh Dange, Past President, IAAPI

sport and family entertainment centres. This year saw 27 new exhibitors. Participating nation were Bulgaria, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Philippines, Principality of Liechtenstein, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, Netherlands, Turkey, UAE, UK, USA.

Big players from the industry shared their learning, innovative ideas, schemes and experience. Many important issues related to the amusement industry were also discussed in depth. Apart from business transactions, the show also provides an exposure to in-

ternational trends through its many foreign participants.

The exhibition presented a unique platform to all stakeholders, a meaningful insight to current trends, new technologies, sustainable and environment friendly products as well as global best practices in the amusement industry. Speaking on the importance of the amusement sector in terms of tourism, Sarin said, "The amusement sector is a social infrastructure giving outdoor entertainment to children and youth of tomorrow's India who are otherwise glued to gadgets and television sets. It encour-

ages our children and the youth to engage in outdoor games and activities which is filled with thrill, fun, and are often educative."

Globally, the amusement and theme park industry is well-supported by respective tourism boards and countries like USA, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and the UAE attract huge international tourists. The sector contributes to their country's foreign exchange and also generate business to other sectors like hospitality, travel, F&B and local handicrafts. Most importantly it also creates employment opportunities. 📈

# GBTA eyes 300 members by 2018

With a membership of less than 100 at present, Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has embarked on pan-India educational drives to increase its membership to 300 by 2018. The association will also organise its annual conferences-cum-expo in Delhi and Mumbai this year.



TT BUREAU

GBTA India's agenda for 2017 is focused on aggressive membership drive targeting both the buyers and the industry; to prompt them to join the association and take advantage of networking, research reports, educational seminars and professional certifications.

According to **Gaurav Sundaram**, Regional Director-India, GBTA, the overall objective is to educate a larger number of buyers and corporate users of the science of business travel, the value of partnerships with their travel management companies, importance of peer-to-peer networking and knowledge sharing.

He feels these workshops are ways to take GBTA closer to the clients; share



Gaurav Sundaram  
Regional Director-India  
GBTA

We have already commenced our workshop series in primary cities starting from Mumbai this Feb

content which they can integrate into their operations and convince them about the

value and power GBTA can bring to them by becoming a member of the association.

"We hope to increase our membership to 300 by 2018. Currently the GBTA membership in India is less than 100. We have already commenced our workshop series in primary cities starting from Mumbai this February, going to cities like Bengaluru in March, Gurugram and Noida in April and finally in Hyderabad in May. We are offering a 50 per cent rebate for 60 days to become members of GBTA and avail benefits at a lower rate to commemorate our anniversary in India," he said.

GBTA will also be organising two annual conferences cum expos in Delhi on August 18, at Pullman Aerocity Hotel and Mumbai on October 6, at Taj Lands End Mumbai. This

year's activities will conclude with a Business Travel Forum at ITB Singapore on October 27, 2017, informed Sundaram. Enumerating other initiatives of the association, he further adds that an ethics committee has been set up to formulate an ethics charter for its members. Once the members subscribe to this charter, it will ensure standard delivery of services and adoption of best practices in business.

### Business Travel Workshop Series:

- 📍 April 7 : Gurgaon
- 📍 April 21: Noida
- 📍 May 19: Hyderabad

### GBTA Conference:

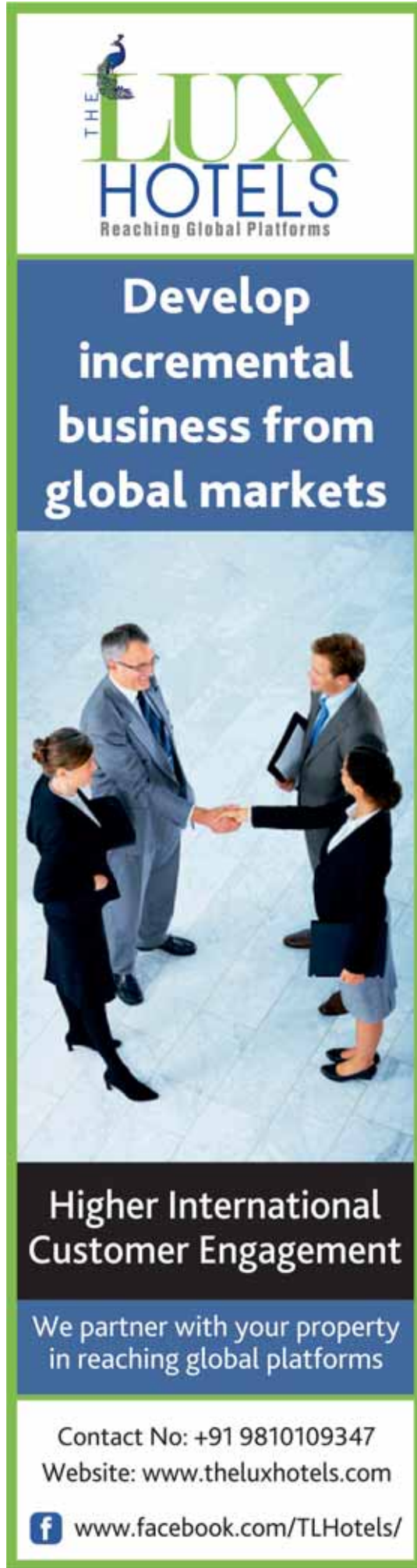
- 📍 August 18: New Delhi at Pullman Aerocity Hotel
- 📍 October 6: Mumbai at Taj Lands End Hotel



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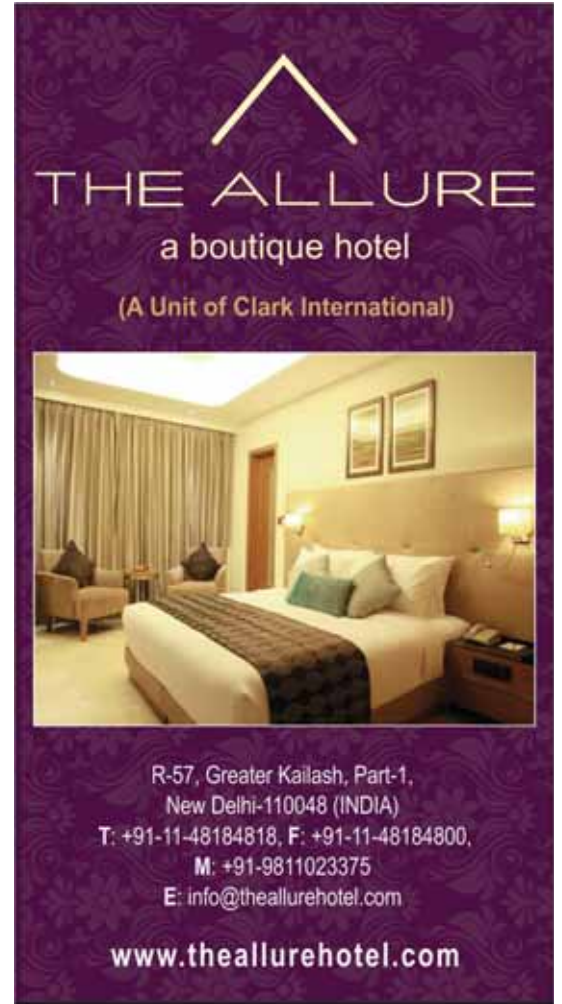
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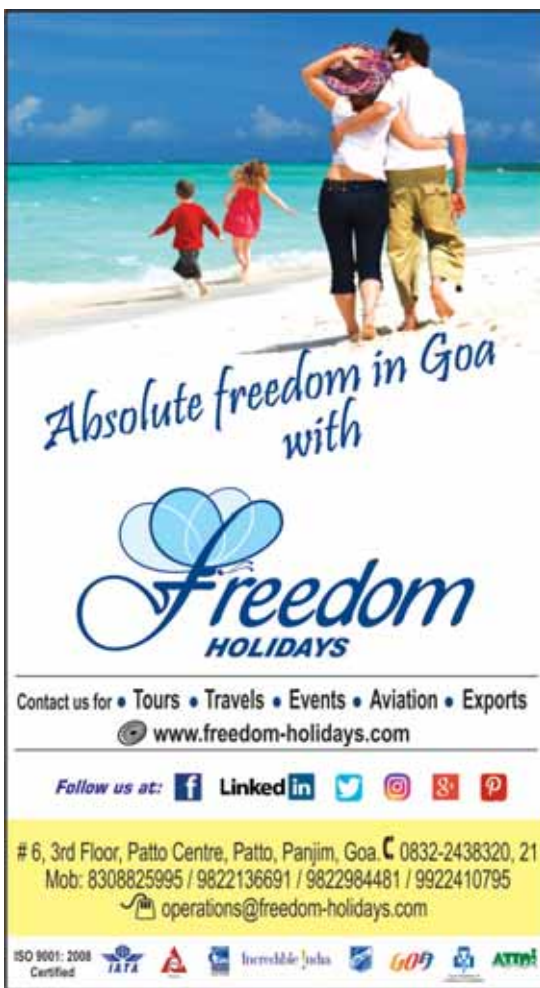
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**Hahn Air**

**Dreieich**

Hahn Air has appointed **Dennis Huk** as Head of Global Account Management. Huk will lead a team of more than 20 Directors Global Account Management and Service Partners around the globe who are responsible for executing sales and marketing activities as well as trainings and product presentations for 100,000 travel agencies worldwide. Before joining Hahn Air, Huk held various sales and account management positions at Aegean Airlines, Austrian Airlines and LATAM Airlines. For the past 5 years, he worked as Manager Partnerships at Avis Budget Autovermietung.



**InterContinental Hotels Group**

**Dubai**

InterContinental Hotels Group has appointed **Rajit Sukumaran** to the role of Chief Development Officer in the Asia, Middle East and Africa (AMEA) region. He brings more than 12 years' experience in Development, Acquisitions, and Feasibility from his previous role as Senior Vice President, Acquisitions & Development, Asia Pacific at Starwood Hotels & Resorts. Prior to joining Starwood, Sukumaran worked in the Corporate Finance division of PricewaterhouseCoopers Singapore. Sukumaran graduated from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University with a degree of Bachelor of Accountancy.



**RCI**

**Bengaluru**

RCI has announced the appointment of **Aruna Jathar** as Director-Marketing & Operations for RCI India. Jathar joins as a member of RCI's senior leadership team and will focus on strategies to enhance customer acquisition. With more than 17 years of experience in marketing, CRM and Digital across retail, telecom and consumer durables industries, Jathar's most recent assignment was with Dell. Prior to Dell, she has worked with Metro Cash and Carry where she was an integral part of the growth strategy for India.



**Conrad Pune**

**Pune**

Conrad Pune has appointed **Sachin Didolkar** as the new Director of Business Development for Hilton first luxury property in India. Didolkar comes with 12 years of experience in the hospitality industry, having worked at Taj Hotels & Resorts, Jumeirah Hotels, Emirates Palace and Starwood Hotels & Resorts. Prior to joining Conrad Pune, Didolkar was a part of the Sheraton Grande in Pune, and Le Meridien Mahabaleshwar as Complex Director of Sales & Marketing. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Hotel Management from Swiss Merit School.



**JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu**

**Mumbai**

**Bharat Ratanpal** has been appointed as the new Director of Sales and Marketing at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu. With over 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Ratanpal's primary expertise lie in sales and marketing along with customer servicing, strategic planning and people management. He began his career in 2003 at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu itself, where he worked as a Reservation Sales Agent. He then moved to Grand Hyatt Mumbai as Sales Coordinator in 2004. In 2007, he was promoted to Associate Director of Sales of MICE and travel trade.



**JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar**

**Mumbai**

**Rimal D'Silva** has been appointed as the Director of Human Resources at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. Prior to joining JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, D'Silva was the Director of Human Resources at Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai. She completed her Post Graduate Degree in Human Resources from Welingkar's Institute of Management in 2002 and joined JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu as a Management Trainee in Human Resources. During the programme she gained exposure to cross functional roles in Human Resources & Training.



**U&I Holidays**

**New Delhi**

**Vikas Sharma** is the new Sales Manager for North India at U&I Holidays and he will be based in New Delhi. He started his career over a decade ago at Wish Bone India Travels. Over the years, he has headed Operations Group and FIT Reservations with Dubai DMCs like NDT and CWTT and is a Certified Dubai Specialist. He also handled Cultural Exchange and Promotions Tourism at The Embassy of Czech Republic in New Delhi. In his current role Sharma will be responsible to drive sales and marketing and revenues in the region.



**New Delhi**

**Chandra Shekhar** has been appointed as Sales Manager at U&I Holidays for its Delhi office. A student of management, Shekhar has completed his Post Graduate Diploma in Management from the Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management (IITTM) in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Armed with a travel degree, Shekhar was earlier working with Sand & Pebbles in Bhubaneswar as a Tour and Transport Executive, before joining U&I Holidays in his present capacity.



**Kolkata**

**Ratul Kundu** has been appointed as the new Sales Manager for the East India operations of U&I Holidays. Kundu comes with around six years of experience in the travel domain in B2B sales. His prior experience of the eastern market comes from his stint at Cox & Kings, Odisha, from where he started his career. He is not a stranger to the Delhi market as he has worked in the Capital city before as well. He has also worked with online travel service provider — arzoo.com. After taking charge at U&I Holidays, Kundu will be functioning from Kolkata.

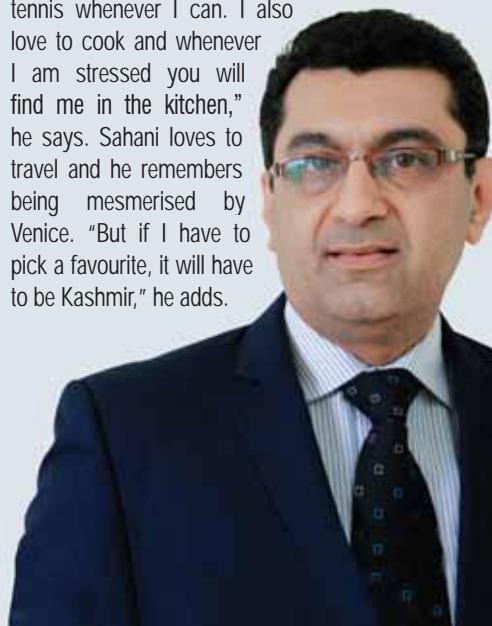


**TALKing People**

**Pinki Arora**, Marketing Representative for North & East India, Bangladesh & Nepal, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), says, "The industry has changed over the past few years and has opened up more avenues for women." On balancing work and personal life, she adds that although the task can be challenging, it solely depends on how one organises their lives where family support plays an important role.



**Varun Sahani**, General Manager, Orchid Hotel, feels that this industry never gives the flexibility to relax. "But I make sure that I spend ample time with my wife, son and my little angel. I love to swim and play tennis whenever I can. I also love to cook and whenever I am stressed you will find me in the kitchen," he says. Sahani loves to travel and he remembers being mesmerised by Venice. "But if I have to pick a favourite, it will have to be Kashmir," he adds.



**Aditya Shamsher Malla**, General Manager, Four Points by Sheraton, unwinds with a round of golf and cycling with his son. "These are the two best stress-busters for me. One thing I am most passionate about is quality – whether it's at work or outside it," he says. Malla loves to travel and cherishes his time off travelling. "One of my most memorable holiday moments is being ferried on a fisherman's boat nine nautical miles off the coast to an uninhabited island and treated to fresh prawns and fish while sipping on feni!"







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# RAK woos adventure lovers

Ras Al Khaimah is aggressively enhancing its presence in India through strategic partnerships, and is intensifying its focus on adventure tourism in line with UNWTO's Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, reveals **Haitham Mattar**, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (TDA).

**AHANA GURUNG**

**Q**Ras Al Khaimah has been actively promoting the destination in the Indian travel trade. Have the efforts reflected in the Indian tourist arrivals?

Ras Al Khaimah is now widely recognised as one of the most rapidly developing tourism sectors in the UAE. The northern emirate recorded a 28 per cent rise in Indian hotel guests in 2016 when compared to 2015. With India ranked as the emirate's fourth largest international source market, RAKTDA has seen extensive trade and promotional activities to ensure continued growth from the Sub-continent. To strengthen our presence in the market, we have also formed new strategic partnerships with India's leading tour operators and have partnered with Cox & Kings and TUI. Additionally, Ras Al Khaimah has proven to be a popular destination for Indian weddings.

**Q**What are the driving factors for the overall growth?

As the destination's diverse tourism offering continues to mature, the last 12 months saw a series of significant developments in the adventure tourism segment and the hosting of international sporting events like the Ras Al Khaimah 2016 Golf Challenge, and conferences. Collectively, our achievements stimulated increased visitor numbers from

**Q**Since Ras Al Khaimah houses some of the most exclusive hospitality brands, how has the sector fared?

I must highlight that Ras Al Khaimah has witnessed a strong hotel performance that withstood increases in hotel supply and changing source market conditions. Key hotel KPIs are growing at a rate which is well above most GCC markets. A 10 per cent increase in occupancy

and hiking routes across the emirate, with a focus on Jebel Jais, the UAE's highest mountain peak.

**Q**Which segments are you particularly targeting?

Ras Al Khaimah's natural and cultural assets are well positioned to target three key high-yield global tourist segments, which are wellness seekers, active adventurers & cultural ex-



“Ras Al Khaimah's four largest international source markets (including India) each recorded double digit year-on-year growth in 2016, with German visitors up 24.6% last year and now contributing one in 10 of all visitors to the emirate. The UK and Russia also reported similar visitor increases of 35% and 19.5% respectively.”

**Haitham Mattar**  
CEO, Ras Al Khaimah TDA

was observed in hotels throughout 2016, reporting an average of 71 per cent from January to December. Similar growth was posted across all key performance

placers in addition to traditional sun, beach and golf tourism. Hence, RAK-TDA has outlined plans to leverage the emirate's natural attributes key focus of this strategy includes rolling out policies and initiatives to support a recent partnership with UNWTO, which sees Ras Al Khaimah serve as a sponsor of the United Nation's Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

The emirate boasts a diverse array of natural landscapes that appeal to all walks of visitor, whether its beach-seekers, active adventurers or wellness seekers. Through a programme of careful development, we are intent on enhancing these attractions for the benefit of travellers and offering a sustainable tourism product pool which preserves the rich local culture and traditions that the region is known for. Under the umbrella of authenticity, the emirate offers a rich history, dating back 7,000 years and boasts 18 historic fortifications, castles and towers — all of which are rare to find within the UAE.



Dhaya Fort

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both established source markets and emerging ones.

Ras Al Khaimah's four largest international source markets (including India) each recorded double digit year-on-year growth in 2016, with German visitors up 24.6 per cent last year and now contributing one in 10 of all visitors to the emirate. The UK and Russia also reported similar visitor increases of 35 per cent and 19.5 per cent respectively. We are also seeing a surge in growth from Scandinavia and Central Europe. Year-on-year, the UAE continues to remain the most significant source market in terms of visitor numbers, accounting for 41.2 per cent of total visitors to Ras Al Khaimah last year.

indicators with RevPAR increasing by 5.5 per cent year-on-year 2015, while Room Revenue grew 10 per cent. Meanwhile, the emirate's accommodation portfolio registered four per cent growth in average length of stay, rising from 3.19 days in 2015 to 3.32 days last year.

**Q**In terms of tourism products, what are some of the key developments in pipeline?

The region's first commercial Via Ferrata (Iron Path) was launched in November 2016 and has been a commercial success. The three-course Via Ferrata spans the rocky facades of Jebel Jais, the country's highest peak which rises to 6,266 feet and is part of the rugged Al Hajar mountain range where the average climate is 10 degrees Celsius below mean Gulf temperatures.

Other product developments in 2017 include the opening of the world's longest zip line, which was announced last year, and the launch of official cycling

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