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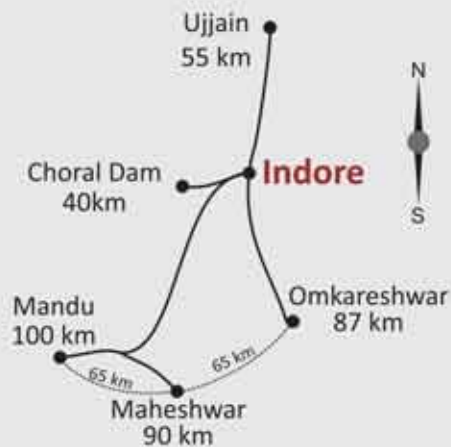
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Distance from Indore

Maya lauds excellence in East

The East India Travel Awards was held in Radisson Blu Hotel Guwahati on July 26, 2017, in appreciation of those who have played a significant role in the travel and tourism industry. The evening was graced by **R Sudhan**, Special Secretary (Tourism), Govt. of Manipur, who was the Guest of Honour, along with **Arni Sapkal**, Gladrags Mrs India Mumbai.



Joining the Gallery of Legends for his contribution and extensive work on wildlife conservation is **Dilip D Khatau**, Chairman, The Corbett Foundation & Chairman, Conservation Cooperation of India.



Tsering Wange, Managing Director, Himalayan Holidays, was honoured as DDP Trailblazer for taking adventure tourism to new heights.



Supratim Raj Basu, Founder & Director, Help Tourism, was conferred as the DDP Game Changer for bringing responsible and sustainable tourism in the spotlight.

India to harbour cruise policy

Eyeing the untapped potential of cruise tourism, the government has taken earnest steps to develop and promote this segment aggressively. A cruise tourism policy is on the cards to help ease the business and propel revenue for India from this sector as well.

 **ANKITA SAXENA**

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT), in collaboration with the Ministry of Shipping (MOS), is working on a fast track mode to bring out a policy promoting cruise tourism in India. **Rashmi Verma**, Secretary-Tourism, Government of India, informs that in the year 2016-2017, a total of 158 cruise ships visited India over 103 ships in 2013-14. Also, the number of cruise passengers disembarking in India increased from 80,645 in 2013-14 to 191,725 cruise passengers in 2016-17. With this policy initiative, the number of cruise vessels visiting India is expected to go up to 700.

Mahesh Sharma, Tourism Minister, Government of India, says, "With a 7500-km-

long coastline, India has taken some key steps to promote cruise tourism, which includes relaxation of policies and roping in global consultants. Cruise tourism is a high-end luxury tourist segment and local economy also gains from it." He adds that as per the estimates in a draft report by consultants, for various scenarios in case of low growth, mid growth and high growth, the number of cruise passengers is likely to be 4.72 lakh, 27.18 lakh and 39.41 lakh, respectively, by the year 2042-2043 and the number of cruise ships could go up to 955 by 2042-2043.

A workshop was organised recently where representatives from MOT, MOS, Bureau of Immigration,



Rashmi Verma
Secretary-Tourism
Government of India

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and Department of Revenue (Customs) and international consultants, etc., came together. Verma says, "The workshop between the two ministries was a landmark event in promotion of cruise tourism in India. We have sanc-



Mahesh Sharma
Tourism Minister
Government of India

tioned projects in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Goa for infrastructure development at the ports. We also need to promote river cruising."

Listing out the initiatives already being taken to promote cruise tourism, **Nitin Gadkari**, Minister of Ship-

ping, Government of India, informed that modern cruise terminals are being developed at five major ports — Mumbai, Goa, Mangalore, Chennai and Kochi, which will include hospitality, retail shopping and restaurants. As many as 200 minor ports will also develop jetties for easy transportation of cruise passengers. "We offer e-visa facilities at all major ports; and have introduced e-landing card for the convenience of cruise passengers among other initiatives." Gadkari also informed that the transportation potential of 111 inland waterways will also be tapped. Work will begin by the end of this year to develop 10 of these 111 inland waterways while work is already in progress in Ganga and Brahmaputra.

Ships are now allowed to stay for three days, up from the 24 hours designated earlier; and rules have been simplified. Easier standard operating procedure for cruise operations involving multiple agencies has already been issued. The government has allowed foreign flag vessels to call at Indian ports without securing a licence from the Director General of Shipping till February 5, 2024. Also, major ports will offer a minimum of 30 per cent rebate across the board on all vessel-related charges for cruise shipping and not levy any priority fee. Incentives to push cruise liners to make major ports as home ports include a rebate of 25 per cent in vessel charges, add to the existing 40 per cent discount for coastal vessels.

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Quote from Mr Joe Rajan, the Managing Director and CEO.

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We are all excited with the new developments and changes and look forward to greater times ahead with our renewed identity"



ADTOI's 8th Convention in Vizag

Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) will be heading to Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, for their 8th Convention, where they are expecting around 300-350 delegates.



After conducting its convention in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, in 2016, ADTOI finally announced its 8th Annual Convention's venue to be Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, tentatively scheduled for November 17-19, 2017. P. P. Khanna, President, ADTOI, revealed, "Andhra Pradesh Tourism has invited us to do our convention in Visakhapatnam, and we are happy to do it there as it would be a new destination for our members. ADTOI always looks for new destinations where tourism can be promoted. The tentative dates are November 17-19, 2017. About 300-350 delegates shall attend the convention, along with government dignitaries, hoteliers, airline representatives, ADTOI members from

“ADTOI always looks for new destinations where tourism can be promoted. The tentative dates for the convention are November 17-19. About 300-350 delegates shall attend the convention.”



P. P. Khanna
President, ADTOI

across the country, as well as PR and media agencies.”

He said that they are hoping for the convention to be a successful one. “As it's a city which needs to be promoted as a tourist destination in Andhra Pradesh, we are really excited about Visakhapatnam. We are not only going to promote Andhra Pradesh, but also other neighbouring states in South India,” he added.

He claimed that the travel industry is facing many

challenges currently, and they will be addressing them at the convention as well. “A lot of challenges are in front of the tourism industry right now. Right now, OTAs and online DMCs pose as a big problem for small and medium size operators. Also, the new GST regime is acting as a big threat for tour operators. Through our convention, we will discuss about these issues and look for solutions and opportunities against these challenges,” claimed Khanna.

Issues at hand

- OTAs and online DMCs pose as a big problem for small and medium size operators
- The new GST regime is acting as a big threat for tour operators

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Conventions galore

Come September and there will be a host of conventions being organised by various travel trade associations. From IATO, OTOAI and FHRAI to PATA, IAAI and HPMF, all have planned their annual conventions in the same month. Had TAAI not postponed its flagship Indian Travel Congress, the convention season would have started in August itself. In fact, ICPB will be kicking off the season as it has its convention in late August. What interests us right now are the agendas that each association will be addressing at these events. While GST will be on top of their lists, there will also be issues like OTAs and hotel rates that will be debated at all these forums. Another highlight could be the attendance of VIPs to grace these events. In fact, as many travel agents and tour operators are members of multiple associations, a good delegate attendance might be difficult at the conventions being held around the same time. While we can only wait and watch how the season turns out, we can just hope that TAAI doesn't plan its event in the already-packed month of September.

Flagging off the inbound express

The great outbound season just reached its peak this summer. This is exactly the time when inbound players start prepping up for their season, which usually starts in October. While GST has put many plans on the backburner for inbound tour operators for some time, they are still toiling hard to get business in line for the upcoming season. Promotions will also start at global shows around the world, including WTM and ITB. Hoteliers too are set for the big inbound, with new properties opening at interesting locations. While the usual Golden Triangle, Goa and the big South are booming with new upscale properties, there is a lot of development happening in Northeast India as well, with both budget and upscale brands opening in many cities there. The Ministry of Tourism is doing its bit by taking up issues, including infrastructure and promotions, but we can get a good picture about the business expected only once the GST wave settles down, especially when India is supposedly becoming an expensive destination with the new tax regime.

TRAVTALK brings to you the news and events that made headlines 25 years ago and are relevant even today. From the August issue of 1992:

ASSOCIATIONS

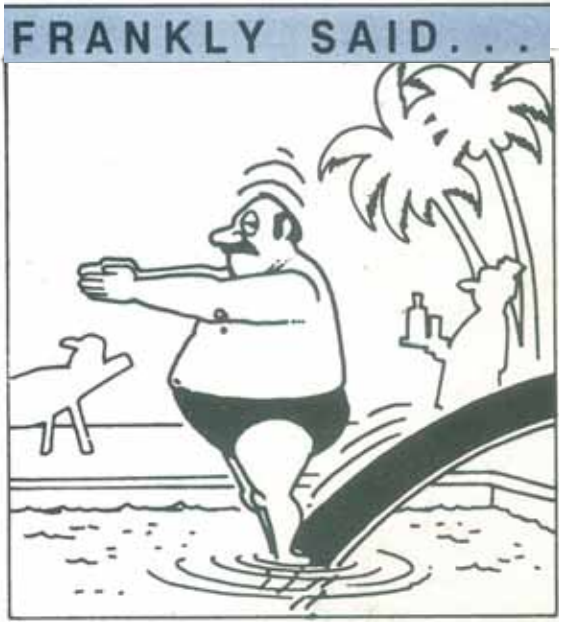
TAAI TALK

Then

- In 1992, Madhav Rao Scindia, the then Minister of Tourism, was to inaugurate the TAAI Convention in Hyderabad, and N. Janardana Reddy, who was the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, was to be the Chief Guest for the event.
- The convention was to be held at Bhasker Palace, Hyderabad, from October 2-4, 1992.
- This was the convention where TAAI was planning its Tourism Exhibition after a gap of 5 years.

Now

- Currently, TAAI has postponed its annual convention, which was scheduled in August in Kunming, China.
- The Association is working out the new dates and venue, which might be China or even somewhere in India. It could just be a revisit if it happens in Hyderabad again!!

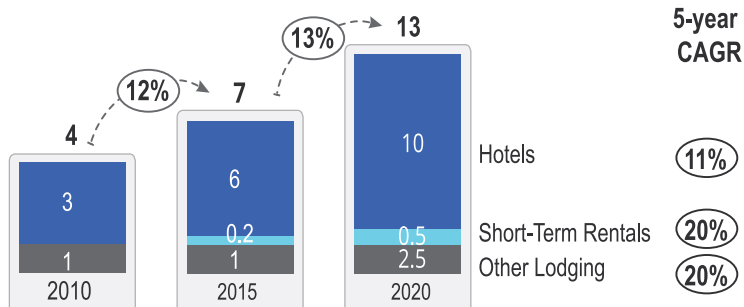


Small on budget, big on market

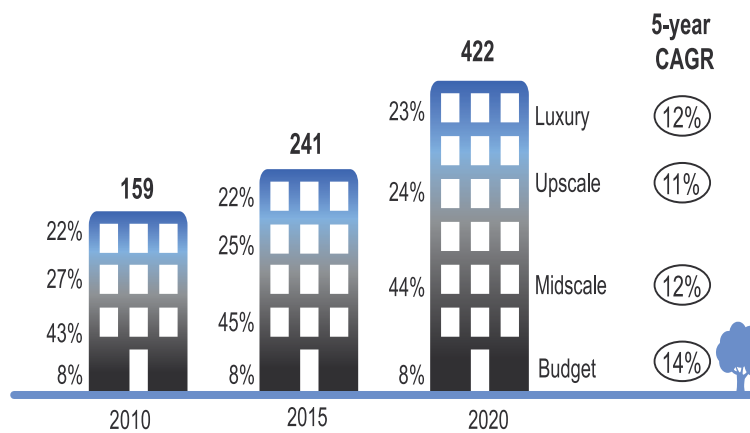
The face of the Indian hospitality industry is changing gradually with mid-scale and budget hotels garnering as much interest from travellers as luxury properties. Experts say, by 2020, budget and alternate stays will be stealing the lion's share of the hospitality market.

Mid-scale and Budget hotels will continue to account for >50% of branded hotel rooms

Size of Indian hotels market (Gross bookings in \$ Bn)



Breakup of Indian hotels by class (# rooms in '000)



Source: 'HVS "Hotels in India - Trends & Opportunities", 2016; Euromonitor "Lodging in India", August 2016; Press Search; Thomson Reuters Canadian "The Future of Hotels in India to 2020: Market Profile", March 2016; BCG Analysis based on Project Experience and Research.

Indian hospitality space is expected to continue accelerating from \$7 billion worth of gross bookings in 2015 to \$13 billion in 2020, \$10 billion of which is expected to be constituted by hotel bookings and the remaining by bookings for alternate stays. Alternate stays, which include short-term rentals and other lodgings, could become worth \$3 billion by 2020, as travellers, both domestic and foreign, are becoming more open to alternate stay options gradually.

In 2020, budget and luxury hotels are expected to be the areas of maximum growth. Budget hotels, which constitute 8% of the market today, are expected to grow at 13.5%, driven by the growth of the Aspirers segment on the demand side and the consolidation, standardisation and branding of currently unbranded properties through aggregator-based start-ups on the supply side.

Experience pure delight @ NZ

With the country's exemplary 100% Pure New Zealand campaign, **Steven Dixon**, Tourism New Zealand's Regional Manager — South and South East Asia, expects to continue seeing double-digit growth in arrivals from India to New Zealand year-on-year.



NISHA VERMA

The 2017 edition of Tourism New Zealand's flagship B2B event—Kiwi Link, was for the first time held in Delhi. Speaking on the sidelines of the event, **Steven Dixon**, Tourism New Zealand's Regional Manager - South and South East Asia, said, "We are excited to have Kiwi Link for the first time in the capital city

100% Pure New Zealand specialist programme

- Gold, silver and bronze levels of specialisation
- Different modules provided for specialisation
- Sponsored trip to New Zealand for select agents from the qualified lot
- Selection of agents on the basis of a draw in November 2017

of India. For the latest edition of the event, we've got support from the New Zealand tourism industry as well as from Indian travel agents. We have got a huge contingency of Indian agents here that has come from different parts of India, especially Mumbai. Interestingly, we are also seeing travel trade from Delhi in big numbers and a lot of business happening through the meetings."

He informed that they had 40 products, which included 35 tourism operators from New Zealand, four airlines and Immigration New Zealand. "This is more than we've had in the past, and this year is particularly exciting as we have launched the refreshed New Zealand specialist programme. In the 100% Pure New Zealand specialist programme, we have taken a tiered approach, with gold, silver and bronze levels of specialisation. The agents can be a part of the specialised-

course through the provided modules and attain a certain level with their merit. We will be announcing four trips to New Zealand this year for some of the qualified agents, who will be chosen on the basis of a draw in November 2017."

Dixon revealed that New Zealand is seeing double-digit growth in Indian arrivals. "We've had 57,000 arrivals from India to New Zealand between June 2016 and May 2017, which is an increase of 15 per cent from the last year, that is, June 2015 to May 2016. We are particularly excited to see the growth coming from Delhi and North India," he said. He added that India is one of their top 10 source markets.

He informed that their New Zealand partners have joined together and created interesting itineraries, which may find fervour with the Indians. They have also launched the latest version

of their 100% Pure New Zealand campaign. "Last week, we launched 'where one journey leads to another', which is our new twist on the 100% Pure New Zealand campaign. The brand has been running for 17 years and we keep refreshing it," revealed Dixon.

Getting a visa to New Zealand is not a problem, he insisted. "The visa processing time is of around five days, and it is a very simple and cost-effective process. There is no barrier in coming to New Zealand," he asserted. Talking on connectivity, he said that they have many one-stop options to reach New Zealand from India, like Bangkok, Singapore, Australia and Kuala Lumpur.

Future, he said, looks quite promising, as they are hopeful to continue seeing double-digit growth from the Indian market. "There is great support from New Zealand tourism industry and even better support from the travel



Steven Dixon
Regional Manager - South and South East Asia
Tourism New Zealand

We've had 57,000 arrivals from India to New Zealand between June 2016 and May 2017, which is an increase of 15 per cent from the last year, that is, June 2015 to May 2016

trade industry of India. The future looks promising and we are very excited about it," he concluded.

Philippines records 37% growth in Indian arrivals in May 2017

The Philippines has recorded a whopping growth of 37 per cent in Indian arrivals in the month of May 2017, in comparison to the same period last year, as per a release shared by the Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines. India is currently the 11th source market for the island nation in terms of foreign tourist arrivals, and DOT is aiming for double-digit growth this year through aggressive marketing initiatives. Speaking about this growth, **SanJeet**, Tourism Attaché, Philippines Tourism Marketing Office India, says, "We are pleased to announce such a groundbreaking growth rate in Indian arrivals to the Philippines. DOT engages travel trade partners in various awareness programmes and travel shows in order to maintain and sustain tourist traffic from the Indian market. In 2017, we aim to achieve the mark of 100,000 visitors to the Philippines from India."

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South Africa wins the wildlife game

For outbound travel agents, wildlife tourism is a growing sector as more and more Indians are pacing towards adventurous holidays overseas, exploring foreign wildlife. Moreover, when it comes to naming a favourite wildlife destination among Indians, the trade's verdict is South Africa, while India still needs to up its game in this sector.



TT BUREAU

“Kenya and South Africa undoubtedly rule the roost for wildlife tourism. South Africa offers a variety of gaming experiences, with so many national parks available in the entire country from north to south. Besides national parks, there are also private game reserves. A lot of game reserves also have Big 5. The wildlife experience here is like nowhere else and the entire world knows about it. Thus, in South Africa, wildlife, combined with a variety of other tours, makes it a great experience. Apart from South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana are also coming up.”



Siddharth Jain
Director, Click2Travel.in and
Sapphire Ventures

“While traditionally Kenya has been one destination that has captured the imagination of Indians, for an authentic experience as well as a lot of enriching opportunities, South Africa seems to be the flavour of the season. There are diverse safaris offered here with a range of price points, catering to different markets and segments. While there is also Tanzania and many other places in Africa, according to me, South Africa has caught the attention of the Indian imagination.”



Suzanne Pereira
Senior Vice President Trade
Relationships & Communica-
tions, Thomas Cook

“There are many destinations around the world that interest Indian travellers for wildlife specifically. Indians are warming up to the idea of this kind of adventure holiday and it is visible. A number of Indians are choosing wildlife-specific itineraries. Kenya and Tanzania already have many takers. Now, even Rawanda is picking up for the guerrillas. In South Africa, apart from the usual parks there are game parks, close to Durban as well, where tourists can spot the Big 5. Wildlife tourism is only going to increase from India.”



Chitra Bhatia
Managing Director
Aashman Air Travels



Sandip Shaw
MD
Capital Tours

“There are many products in India for wildlife tourism, and Indians can easily explore each to view the myriad flora and fauna that the country is blessed with. Ranthambore, Kanha and Bandhavgarh are the most popular destinations in India for wildlife tourism. However, there are not many good jungle or wildlife resorts to support wildlife tourism in India. Hence, most Indians prefer to go to South Africa, Kenya and Latin America for safaris because the infrastructure and facilities provided there are highly developed.”



Sanjay Aggarwal
Proprietor
Sun and Sand Tours and Travels

“Wildlife tourism in India is still in its nascent stage, so people are exploring destinations in other parts of the world. One of the many popular destinations for wildlife tours and experiences is Kenya. South Africa also interests a lot of Indians. This is because the wildlife parks there are exceptionally good. There is complete differentiation as compared to any other wildlife destination. There is a huge variety of animals there and the arrangements to take a look at them are very good. People enjoy the kind of safaris they get in these countries.”



Sandeep Jain
President
Ad-Voyage Travels

“South Africa and Kenya are undoubtedly the top-spot holders in the list of best wildlife tourism destinations in the world. Indians love to experience the safaris in these countries, as they offer unforgettable sightings of many rare animals. In fact, these countries have seen a huge growth in Indian tourists coming to experience their wildlife products, especially because wildlife tourism is growing within the country as well. A lot of new resorts and sanctuaries are coming up in all the states and are being promoted on a national level.”

Eros Hotel targets leisure tourists

Strategically located in the business district of South Delhi, Eros Hotel has recently refurbished its inventory and has also revamped its website to encourage guest engagement and increase revenue generation.



TT BUREAU

Eros Hotel, Nehru Place, provides close proximity to major corporate hubs as well as tourist attractions and that is one of its unique propositions, believes **Dhananjai Singh**, VP Operations at Eros Hotel New Delhi, Nehru Place. He feels that another USP of the hotel is the set of choices it offers for shopping, dining and entertainment in and around

the hotel, which makes it stand apart from other hotels in New Delhi. The Hotel offers 218 guest rooms and suites, with a banqueting space spread over an area of 25,000 square feet, which can accommodate up to 2000 guests. The hotel also offers various F&B options. The spa — Healthy Self offers various healing treatments, along with facilities like steam, sauna and individual jacuzzis. Apart from this, the hotel also

offers a 9-hole Putting Green, specially for golf lovers.

Eros Hotel caters to both business and leisure segments due to its close proximity to the business districts and is also focusing on inbound tourism. “Our mix would essentially be 55 per cent domestic and 45 per cent international travellers. We recently completed refurbishment of the rooms and salon and will

be relaunching Lounge AND Bar soon,” says Singh. The Hotel plans to maintain strong visibility on all social media and digital platforms and an active presence in print media.

Singh explains that travel trade has been one of the strongest supporters for the hotel in revenue generation. “We believe in a symbiotic relationship with travel agents who connect us to new FTOs,

and this is driven through an enticing business proposition for our partners after which sales follows inevitably. We also maintain a constant synergy with online booking portals for better reach, content management and online reputation,” he adds. The hotel has also revamped its website with a vision to make it more user-friendly and encourage guest engagement, which in turn will help in revenue generation.



Dhananjai Singh
VP Operations
Eros Hotel New Delhi, Nehru Place

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Tax and infrastructure plague inbound

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) is taking up many initiatives to boost the arrival of foreign tourists to India, however, inbound tour operators claim that they face many challenges. While the new tax regime remains one of the major issues, the right publicity and well-maintained infrastructure also pose as major deterrents for incoming tourists.



“When it comes to challenges in the inbound sector, nothing has changed for a long time. We have the same kind of situation everywhere. There are no new destinations coming up. What we need to do right now is concentrate on the existing destinations, promote them and make them fruitful. The current taxation structure is also a deterrent as there is a lot of confusion within the fraternity regarding the same. As part of IATO, we are trying to resolve the issues of the members, but it will take some time for things to settle down.”



Rajiv Mehra
MD, Uday Travels and Vice President, IATO

“Currently, GST is the biggest issue for inbound travel. By levying as much as 28 per cent GST on hotels and 18 per cent on AC restaurants, the government is making India expensive. Thus, India cannot remain a competitive destination for travellers, as it would become around 30 per cent more expensive than others. We were earlier thinking that tourism would be given the same status as export under 5 per cent GST, but that did not happen.”



E M Najeer
India Travel Award Winner and Chairman & Managing Director, Air Travel Enterprises Group of Companies (ATE)

“The biggest challenge that the tourism industry is facing today is GST, where 28 per cent tax is being charged on hotels and multiple taxes are being levied on tour operators. This would make India very expensive and we are going to out-price ourselves from our neighbouring countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka. If the government is serious on developing tourism, then taxes for the tourism industry should not be more than 5 per cent throughout the board and it should be on value addition only.”



Subhash Goyal
DDP Trailblazer, India Travel Awards 2014, and Chairman, Stic Travel Group



Deepak Bhatnagar
MD
Aamantan Travel

“Currently, the biggest challenge is the new tax structure, which would make us uncompetitive in the South-east Asia region. Second concern is the image of the country. From an economic perspective, India is getting better, but from a tourism perspective, things like crimes against women and the border situation are affecting the decisions of people to travel to India. While India remains a potential destination for heritage and culture, there are infrastructural challenges. Apart from that, cleanliness of monuments and the issue of guides also remains a challenge.”



Ravi Gosain
Director
Erco Travels

“The major challenge currently is GST. We have not been able to send quotations to our agents as we have to get our brochures ready for the upcoming season, which starts in October. We are already late in doing that as usually this is done around April-May only. Another major problem is the shortage of promotional budget for India Tourism. This results in decreasing participation in international fairs and the presence of India is not seen at these places. The negative impact of this will be visible in a period of one to two years.”



Rajesh Mudgil
MD
Planet India Travels

“The international markets are slow and India's reputation as an expensive destination and negative publicity of various issues in the country are proving to be a challenge. There is overall economic downturn and an unpleasant image of the country in tourists' mind. In addition, there are different kinds of taxes, and hence, there is no growth. Tourism department is saying many things, but there is not much happening on ground. Directors of the overseas offices of India Tourism have not been appointed as yet, owing to which one cannot expect much in terms of promotion.”



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Tourism policy for Uttarakhand

With a new policy on the anvil, the state plans to upgrade infrastructure and develop products, ranging from spiritual and adventure tourism to wellness and culinary.



TT BUREAU

Uttarakhand is gearing up to launch its new tourism policy, which aims to foster infrastructure development and ease the process of investments in the sector. By utilising the state's diverse products, the tourism ministry plans to position the state as a tourism hotbed.

Speaking at the Tourism Investors Meet organised by FICCI, **Satpal Maharaj**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttarakhand, said that the investors must look beyond the 'dhams' that the state is famous for and should look into developing the lesser-known destinations as well. He added, "In the new tourism policy, we are proposing different circuits under Spiritual Tourism that can be effective in dispersing tourists throughout the state. Some of these are the Devi circuit, the Vaishnav circuit, the Nagraj circuit and the Shankar circuit among others, where tourists can visit the related places and take in the sights." This



Satpal Maharaj
Minister of Tourism
Government of Uttarakhand

In the new tourism policy, we are proposing different circuits under Spiritual Tourism that can be effective in dispersing tourists

year, around 1.7 lakh pilgrims took part in the Hemkund Sahib Yatra, he revealed.

Promotion of culinary tourism is also on the anvil, in an effort to make the state's cuisine as well-known as

other signature cuisines, like that of Punjab.

The state is working towards making Uttarakhand a winter destination by boosting the infrastructure in the mountainous spots, so that they appeal to the adventure lovers and tourists alike. "We want to develop ski resorts and create state-of-the-art facilities for winter sports to draw more tourists to our state. This will motivate more travellers to explore the destination even during winter, and our proximity to the country's capital is an added advantage for us," he elaborated. While an upgrade in the infrastructure for the ski resort in Auli is being looked into, more are planned to be developed in the state.

The Minister feels that Uttarakhand has the potential to become a wellness destination due to the abundance of hot springs. He explained, "If the area around the hot springs in Tapovan is developed, it can easily draw tourists from around the world."

Explore Andaman with experts

AndamanExperts.com recently upgraded and rebranded its web portal. It aims to help the travel trade find all the information about the destination.



TT BUREAU

AndamanExperts.com is a product of Leisure Republic DMC, a destination management company for Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The company recorded a growth of 60 per cent in the last financial year and has been doing good business consistently in 2017. "We are expecting an even better response post the relaunch of our web portal. We have redesigned AndamanExperts.com keeping in mind the future trends and to help our trade partners with the most apt information and content about Andaman Islands, along with answering their queries instantly online. We have upgraded the web portal with a mobile responsive interface, which enables it to prepare quotations instantly and get all the destination-related information quickly," says **Mahi Singh**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, AndamanExperts.com.

Singh believes that the new website is quite interac-



Mahi Singh
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
AndamanExperts.com

We are expecting an even better response post the relaunch of our web portal. We have redesigned AndamanExperts.com keeping in mind the future trends

tive and will be able to answer almost every question related to the Andaman Islands. "Our goal with this upgraded web portal is to provide our visitors an easier way to learn about the destination and

our services and find solutions. While creating the new version, we tried to integrate everything that could be helpful to our B2B clients. We have also answered some general questions such as 'things to keep in mind before you go to Andaman', 'travel information', 'what to carry while packing', 'right season to travel to Andaman', 'nightlife at the destination', 'experiences to expect at the destination' and even the 'significance of a tour operator for the destination'," adds Singh. AndamanExperts.com will exhibit at the national and international B2B platforms and trade fairs like SATTE-Delhi and IITT-Mumbai and some other shows.

New Changes

- Mobile responsive interface, which facilitates preparation of quotations instantly
- FAQ's answered, like 'travel information', 'what to carry', 'right season to travel'

First Amritsar, then Kasauli

After offering the best in comfort and service in Amritsar, Humble Hotels is ready to amaze travellers in Kasauli with its new property – Blossom Resort Kasauli.



TT BUREAU

Located adjacent to the popular Lawrence Road and in close proximity to the famed Golden Temple, Humble Hotels Amritsar is ideal for business travellers as well as those looking for a relaxing weekend. Understated elegance remains the design philosophy of this property, which is visible at the intimate lobby without any ornate chandeliers and elaborate flower arrangement. The full length windows allow lots of natural light and provide an overview of the courtyard with a beautiful water body. Apart from that, the hotel boasts a modern and tastefully done conference hall, covering an area of 5600 sqft, which can be used for any kind of event or function.

Vinay Chaturvedi, General Manager, Humble Hotels Amritsar, further adds, "The hotel has 42 well-appointed guest rooms including two smart suites. The trained staff at the hotel works dedicatedly to



Vinay Chaturvedi
General Manager
Humble Hotels Amritsar

After successful running of this premium 4-star hotel for four years, we have opened a boutique resort, Blossom Resort Kasauli

meet each and every need of our guests; for example, they can organise medicines even post-10 pm or wash garments of hard stains even after the laundry is closed."

Humble Hotels Amritsar's trendy eateries fill the void of fine dining in the city. Also, the property offers complimentary twice-daily shuttles to the Golden Temple. Talking about the occupancy at the property, Chaturvedi reveals, "Last 300 days were very fruitful as we have had 89 per cent occupancy during this period, in comparison to 73 per cent last year."



While Humble Hotels Amritsar is the first property in the chain's repertoire, they have now ventured into Kasauli with their next property. "After successful running of this premium 4-star hotel for four years, we have opened a boutique resort, Blossom Resort Kasauli, in the most famous hill station in the north."


Growth Galore

- Humble Hotels Amritsar has seen 89% occupancy as compared to 73% last year

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Europe gains rank for Indian weddings

The destination weddings market from India is growing at 30-40 per cent annually, with an ever-increasing number of travellers scouting for new and exotic destinations in India and abroad to tie the knot. Ras Al Khaimah, Sri Lanka and Turkey are emerging as popular destinations for Indian weddings, say travel experts.



ANKITA SAXENA

“The Indian travellers today are looking for new experiences and destinations. The most popular destinations for weddings continue to be Thailand, Malaysia and Bali. The cost for an Indian wedding in Thailand is around R 70,000-80,000 per person whereas it can cost up to `2 lakh per person in Europe. Other popular destinations include Dubai and Abu Dhabi while Ras Al Khaimah is an emerging destination. Turkey and Sri Lanka are also some of the upcoming destinations that are very friendly in terms of Indian weddings abroad.”



Madhulika Saraf
Director
Gainwell Weddings and Events

“The big fat Indian wedding business is a booming one with a growth rate of 30-40 per cent year-on-year. Though Thailand tops the list as a popular destination for weddings, I feel Muscat is also a destination with good infrastructure to cater to Indian weddings. Other destinations that can soon gain a lot of attention for Indian weddings abroad include Sri Lanka and Singapore in Asia, and Austria in Europe. Destination weddings have become popular and we have seen that even mid-sized families are now considering weddings at exotic locations in India and abroad.”



Surinder K. Dewan
Managing Director
Dewan Travels

“We have received an increased number of queries for European destinations. Switzerland, Austria and Spain are the upcoming hotspots. Flight connections are the biggest challenge when one wants to travel to Europe for weddings. Tourism boards are our points of contact at the desired destinations, which help us partner with the right logistic providers. Beach destinations that have good flight connections are also very popular. Seasonality issues is another deciding factor when choosing a wedding destination. For a European destination wedding, one needs to plan at least a year in advance.”



Ekta Sharma
Managing Director
Khyath Design Holidays



Rizwan Sherif
Managing Director
Sherif Travel and Tours

“We have seen the destination weddings market scale up to new heights in the last few years. The Indian market is evolving and people are no longer looking for a conventional wedding arrangement. They are willing to experiment and explore all parts of the world. Destinations like Turkey, Greece, South Africa, Jordan, Bali, etc., are a favourite among Indians for getting married abroad. However, until recently, food arrangement had been a major challenge

in destination weddings for Indians.”



Karishma Shah
Senior Consultant- MICE,
Tamarind Global

“Today, our clients come to us with out-of-the-box destination requests for weddings, which not only shows that the destination wedding market is growing but also that the Indian clientele is evolving. Destinations that are gaining popularity are Ajman, Bahrain, Baku, etc. Italy and Austria are also upcoming destinations for Indian weddings abroad. Thailand and Dubai have now become run-down destinations. The major challenges in this industry are flight connectivity and large number of seats required in bulk on a particular route.”



Virender Anand
Managing Director
Upasana Wedding Planners

“The Indian travellers today have moved beyond traditional destinations for travel purposes and the same applies to destination weddings as well. Some European destinations that are emerging for this sector are Italy and Greece while Dubai and Thailand are the most common destinations. The average cost per person for a destination wedding for a minimum 3-4 nights is `40,000-50,000, excluding the air fare. Getting flight tickets for a large pax is the biggest challenge in this segment.”

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Jet opens up Europe, US to South India

With two new international flights from Chennai and Bengaluru starting this October, Jet Airways will effectively open up the continents of Europe and North America to South India.



HAZEL JAIN

Expecting a load factor of more than 85 per cent right from the beginning on its yet-to-start, non-stop services on the Chennai-Paris and Bengaluru-Amsterdam routes, Jet Airways is buoyant about these new international routes. **Jayaraj Shanmugam**, Chief Commercial Officer, Jet Airways, reiterates this and says, "Since these new services are based on an already-existing demand, we expect a good load. What our customers want is direct connectivity and our new services will give them that. Having said that, the idea behind starting these services is not just to get our customers to Paris

or Amsterdam; it's much beyond that. It is about opening up the whole of Europe and the United States to them. We are talking about 34 codeshare destinations in Europe – if you include interlines, then it is another 30 destinations – and 24 destinations to the United States. Once they are in North America, it is about 200 domestic connections."

The two new international flights will commence from October 29, 2017. These are in addition to the third daily non-stop service from Mumbai to London Heathrow, starting around the same time. Introducing Chennai and Bengaluru direct flights also indicates a strategy to

develop hubs in South India. "For the longest time, we had Mumbai and Delhi as our key hubs in India for most of our international flights. We used to fly from South India earlier in the 2000s – Chennai to Brussels and Bengaluru to Brussels. We stopped after just one year of service because of financial crisis. In the last one or two years, a lot of customers from that part of India have started asking for direct flights from their cities. We studied the market and found that it has grown from eight to ten per cent," Shanmugam adds.

Jet Airways will have codeshare partners in this initiative – Air France, KLM, Delta and Virgin Atlantic. "I



Jayaraj Shanmugam
Chief Commercial Officer
Jet Airways

With us, passengers can fly to Amsterdam and go on to stay in the US and from there fly to London or Paris and come back

don't think any other airline out of India offers the option of going through one gateway and coming back via another. With us, passengers can fly to Amsterdam and go on to stay in the US and from there fly to London or Paris and come back.

He expects a mix of business travellers, tourists and student traffic on these two routes. To support them, the airline has also tweaked some of the domestic connections between Chennai and Bengaluru as part of its summer schedule for the domestic market. These are expected to be made from surrounding cities such as Mangalore, Madurai and Coimbatore since bookings

are also originating from the secondary cities in the south.

In terms of promoting these products, Jet participated in a four-city roadshow with Atout France in Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi. It is also working with the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions for joint promotions.

New flight info

- ✦ The two new international flights will commence from October 29, 2017.
- ✦ These are in addition to the third daily non-stop service from Mumbai to London Heathrow, starting around the same time.

4th MPTM in Bhopal from Oct 27-29

Over 200 national and international buyers and around 100 exhibitors of distinct Indian markets are expected to participate in the mart, informed **Hari Ranjan Rao**, Secretary, Tourism and Public Service Management and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation. With the theme Seek-Discover-Explore, the mart will offer a B2B platform to bring together tourism stakeholders and representatives from heritage hotels, conference venues, tour operators, wildlife parks, etc.

The mart is supported by various trade organisations like ADTOI, ATTOI, IATO, FAITH, TAAI and TAFI. Rao informed that this year, the number of attendees to the mart is expected to cross over nine crore. International participants attending the



Hari Ranjan Rao
Secretary, Tourism and Public Service Management and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation

show include representatives from Singapore, Spain, the UK, the US, the Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Thailand, Poland, Austria, Australia, France, etc. Rao said, "The travel mart is an opportunity in which the tourism aspects of the state and the policies and schemes are conveyed to the investors."

How open are Indian skies?

As international airlines struggle with limited flying rights to India, **Sudhir Sreedharan**, Senior VP, Commercial (GCC, Subcontinent, Africa), flydubai, speaks on restrictions in tapping the high growth potential between India & UAE.



TT BUREAU

As the Dubai sector exhausts its bilateral seat capacity of 62,500 flights a week between India and Dubai, flydubai is hoping to see a fresh round of talks to further enhance the offerings on this sector.

A study, commissioned by Emirates and conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), said that the airline's operations in India added \$848 million to the country's gross domestic product, supported over 86,000 Indian jobs and generated almost \$1.7 billion in foreign exchange earnings in 2014-15.

In light of these figures, **Sudhir Sreedharan** says,

"We are struggling with limited constrained capacity and are not growing in India. Today, the seat capacities on both sides stand completely utilised. The last aviation bilateral talks were in 2014. We are hoping and waiting that the Indian government calls for bilateral talks soon and comes up with a formula that helps in developing certain zones (special economic zones) and helps us open skies there."

While Emirates continues to be the long-haul carrier from Dubai, flydubai wants to stay focused towards the tertiary markets and connect them to Dubai. "We have asked the Indian authorities to consider giving us access to 11 airports in the



Sudhir Sreedharan
Senior Vice President, Commercial
(GCC, Subcontinent, Africa), flydubai

DONER region. I have been hammering the authorities in India that they are not allowing a demographic fair representation of India for our youth to participate in the growth of the GCC," highlights Sreedharan.

The airline also claims to be the first airline to put a pe-

tion to fly to Bhubaneswar, Srinagar and Chandigarh. "Give me the approval and we will land in six weeks. Give us the opportunity and we'll develop the airport. The investment on the flights and route development will be all ours and the jobs that will be created will benefit India," he adds.

Trying to find a win-win situation for all, Sreedharan adds, "With over 80 airports in India today, we can offer a formula where we can say that airports, until they reach a fixed annual capacity benchmark, will have an open sky policy. This allows the interested airline to invest, create jobs and allow more free movement of trade and people." ✦



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Toronto-Mumbai get closer

The city's travel trade couldn't be more excited about Air Canada's Mumbai-Toronto-Mumbai direct non-stop service, which launched recently. This is what they had to say.



TT BUREAU

“This is a landmark event. Flying directly to Toronto will be a highlight for the holidaymakers to Canada. Nothing could boost the traffic figures more than this – both ways. Travellers from Mumbai to Toronto could also fly to Vancouver post October and fly back from Vancouver to Delhi and then back to Mumbai. Canada is still a virgin destination for the India market and Air Canada was not in the Mumbai market for a long time. With this flight, India and specially the western region stand to benefit. I now hope for a Mumbai-to-Vancouver flight so that reaching the Canadian Rockies, Banff and surrounding areas becomes easier.”



Sunil Bijlani
Founding Partner & CEO
Vacation World

“This is a fantastic opportunity not just for Air Canada but also for tourism and for business between India and Canada. The more air-lifts and connectivity we have out of India, the better it is for everyone concerned. It will benefit our economy and improve ties with Canada and help strengthen our friendship. Whenever there is a direct flight, there is automatically a vast clientele, the FIT as well as the business travellers, even high-end groups and families that love direct flights. The Canadian Tourism Board has been very active in India for many years now and doing a successful job and this is a reflection of that hard work.”



Karan Anand
Head - Relationships
Cox & Kings



Louis D'Souza
Executive Director
Tamarind Global

“This is wonderful news and with this new capacity, we really see our business grow for both inbound and outbound. It is a wonderful opportunity to tap into the leisure segment that comes in all the way from Canada as well as for the travellers going from Mumbai to Toronto and onwards. We wish all the best to Air Canada. Canada has an interesting mix of ethnic Indians and Canadians and we hope to tap into this mix to explore both Indians visiting the country for the first time as well as Indians who have moved to Canada, as well as Canadians who want to explore the beauty of India.”



Manjula Godia
Owner
Varun Worldwide Vacations

“I am very excited about this new Mumbai-Toronto direct flight. Not only will this save a lot of time of the passengers but Air Canada is also a preferred airline for the high-end clientele that we cater to. I particularly like Air Canada as an airline and I am sure it will meet the expectation of the luxury clientele. As a destination, Canada will benefit from this new flight as Indian travellers will not have to depend on connecting flights.”

Japan eyes piece of Indian pie

After opening the doors of its Indian office in New Delhi, JNTO is gearing up to draw more Indian tourists to the country and plans to add another office in Mumbai.



AHANA GURUNG

Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO) opened its office in India last year in an attempt to tap the country's booming outbound segment. With its presence in New Delhi, the NTO would now like to extend its services to Mumbai, informs **Kenichi Takano**, Executive Director – Delhi Office, JNTO.

Japan has witnessed a steady growth in the number of Indian tourists, he says, and the idea is to keep adding to the numbers. He adds, “We received around 123,000 Indian tourists in 2016 as compared to the year before, and growth of about 20 per cent was witnessed. Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima and Osaka are some of the popular places in Japan Indians have been visiting.”

Apart from Mumbai and New Delhi, JNTO is also eyeing cities like Chennai, Bangalore and Kolkata as



Kenichi Takano
Executive Director – Delhi Office
JNTO

Apart from Mumbai and New Delhi, JNTO is also eyeing cities like Chennai, Bangalore and Kolkata as potential source markets for tourists

potential source markets for tourists.

The Japanese capital, Tokyo, is a natural pitstop for most travellers and about

60 per cent of Indian tourists travelling there are mainly for business purposes, informs Takano. “However, we are targeting families, honeymooners and business travellers as Japan's tourism products are extremely diverse,” he comments. “We have theme parks like Disneyland and Universal Studios for families, onsens or natural hot springs for wellness lovers, history and culture, and breathtaking natural products like the world-renowned Mt Fuji.” He states that Indians usually visit Japan for about two weeks and there is a rising interest for Hokkaido to experience the sakura season, which occurs between spring and summer.

While JNTO has been promoting the destination extensively through print and electronic media, branding in malls and airports and B2B seminars in Mumbai and New Delhi, they plan to etch the destination in Indians' minds

through the most popular and prevalent medium – Bollywood. A remake of the 60's blockbuster movie, Love in Tokyo, the film will partly be shot in Japan, and Takano hopes this will be instrumental in capturing the attention of the Indian travellers.

Takano highlights the minimal presence of Indians in other sectors as well and says, “Japan doesn't have too many Indians working there or even students, so we are trying to change this. We are especially trying to invite Indian hotel brands to set up properties there so that this factor can appeal to the Indian market.”

Fact File

- Japan received 123,000 Indian tourists in 2016
- Remake of the 60's Bollywood movie Love in Tokyo is in pipeline



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OTOAI fields questions on GST regime

Outbound Tour Operators' Association of India (OTOAI) organised a GST seminar with CA Ashok Batra, to help its members understand this new tax regime and get their related problems addressed.

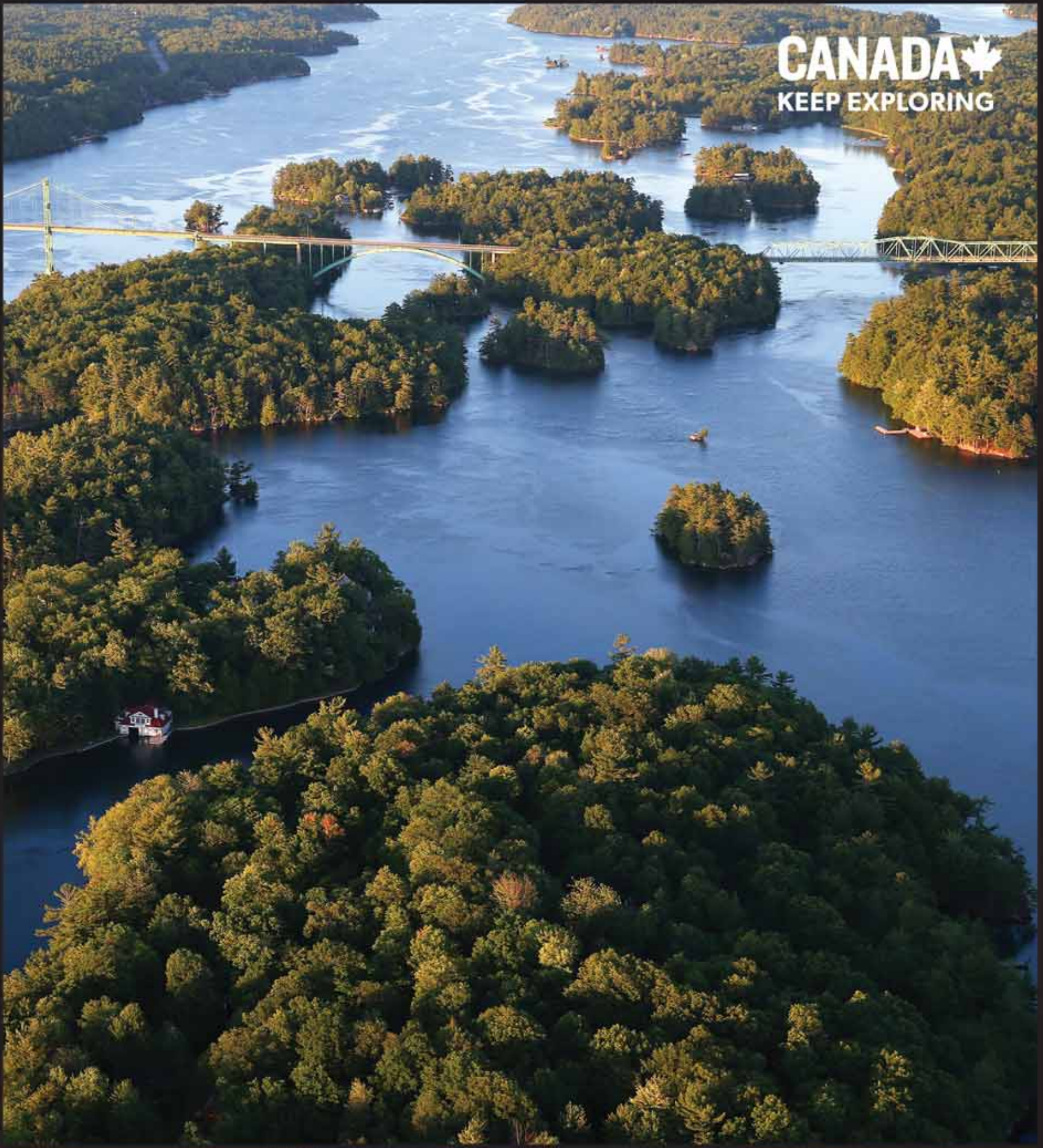


Amadeus India honours partners

Celebrating over two decades of continuous contribution and successful market leadership in the industry, Amadeus India treated their partners to a night of comedy and revelry at the Roseate House New Delhi. Key partners were appreciated for their support through the years, while comedian Sunil Grover had the audience in splits with his humorous and engaging performance.



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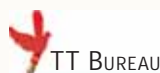
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Mumbai - Ellona Pereira : ellona.pereira@buzzindia.in, +91 96194 99168

GST continues to puzzle the trade

After one month of implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) bill, the tourism and hospitality industry is still confused about the various modalities of this tax structure. India Travel Award winners, though laud the new regime, are awaiting clarification on its application.



► Best Corporate Hotel - Crowne Plaza Bengaluru Electronics City

No negative impact on tourism & hospitality

The GST bill, implemented on July 1, sent ripples down the tourism and hospitality industry with multitudes of reactions, but according to **Ajinkya Kulkarni**, Director of Sales, Crowne Plaza Bengaluru Electronics City, it's still early to comment on the impact of GST. "I don't think this new regime will affect the travel and tourism industry negatively. In fact, a lot of hotels will now fall under the 18 per cent tax bracket and hence, in some cases, the price will also lower down, which will increase the business revenue," he says. In terms of change in travel patterns, Kulkarni believes that as of now, GST has not affected the travel pattern negatively and he feels that travel will only grow in the years to come. "Our guests need not worry. I am sure things will pan out well as the time passes," he adds.



► Best Boutique Resort - Mountain Club Resort

Cost of hotels up by 10% under GST

After the announcement of GST regime with different tax slabs for hotel rooms, the hospitality industry is hoping the government will reconsider a single slab of 18 per cent, to create a level playing field, apart from giving a boost to tourism, informs **Benny George**, General Manager, Mountain Club Resort. He says, "With room rates above ₹7,500 being slapped with a 28 per cent GST, hotel companies are seeking a reduction to bring it back to the earlier level at which the luxury and service tax was about 20 per cent, which remains the major challenge for the hospitality industry." He further adds that while GST is a gross tax and there is input credit available, the cost for hotel companies has risen by almost 10 per cent. "The government should realise that while neighbouring countries like Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia etc. levy taxes ranging from 5-10 per cent, we cannot afford to have such high taxes," he says.



► Best Global Distribution System (GDS) - Travelport Galileo

Industry bound to thrive under new tax regime

GST has come as a fresh breath to the complex tax structure of India, believes **Sandeep Dwivedi**, Chief Commercial Officer, InterGlobe Technology Quotient. He elaborates that implementation of GST is sure to pose certain challenges, which happens whenever a big change settles in. But, with time, the taxation norms would become clearer and with the support of the Indian government, the industry is bound to thrive. "At InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ), we are optimistic and have well in advance adapted to the required alterations to be applied on all our products, including financial and accounting software. The implementation of GST has been smoother for us due to earlier preparations and readiness," says Dwivedi.



► Best Tour Operator - Spiceland Holidays

Positive step but clerical work increases

It is too early to comment about the effect of GST on the day-to-day business, informs **Riyaz UC**, Managing Director, Spiceland Holidays. He says, "We are getting enquiries/confirmations as before. In short term, tourism may be affected negatively as hotel accommodation is expected to be more expensive, but, in the long run, it will pick up as usual. Travellers may be more attracted to other countries like Sri Lanka due to cheaper packages, but as a whole, the earning capacity of people will increase." However, Riyaz points out that with GST, clerical work has increased for every month and service providers are prompted to issue bills and are to compulsorily keep proper records of the services provided.



► Best Customised Tour Operator - YourTravelSecretary

Look forward to amendment in GST tax slabs

Many taxes have been subsumed under GST and a single tax system will bring down the overall cost, and eventually, this benefit will be passed on to consumers, believes **Mayank Grover**, Managing Director, YourTravelSecretary. He elaborates that conferences and events are going to benefit the most by GST. Package and hotel rates have lowered for travel agencies but with two options to avail credit. He says, "So it is more of a business decision on how to move further with this. However, the cascading effect of the tax still exists as there is no credit available on lower rate and involvement of multiple agents in a given package increases cost." Grover further adds, "We are in touch with leading associations of our industry, and working with them on how current rules in GST can be modified further in benefit of everyone. Government of India is open to receive suggestions and opinions from the leading players of the industry and they assured us that some amendments will be done in the coming time."



► Best Green Hotel - Holiday Inn Express Chennai Mahindra World City

Increased awareness needed amongst small vendors

With the implementation of GST, the hospitality industry as a whole has not been affected negatively, feels **Sanket Jivangikar**, General Manager, Holiday Inn Express Chennai Mahindra World City. "It is only a different way of working and it is only a matter of time that we will adjust with the new procedures. We have not faced any problems as we have been passing the benefits to our clients and with GST it is no different," he says. However, the hotel is facing a challenge in procuring new electronic items for the property as the suppliers are unsure of the tax bracket under which they shall charge GST. "The bigger units have more or less fallen in line with the new structure. It is the small vendors that need to be educated about the benefits, and we as organisations need to discourage business in cash. There needs to be an association formed to address the issues of these smaller vendors to ease the process for them," he adds.



VFS cautions against visa fraud

VFS Global urges travel agents to be aware of fake visa and immigration scam by fraudsters posing as VFS employees and enlists these telltale signs that they need to be aware of.



In recent months, VFS Global, that partners with 52 client governments worldwide to provide visa services, has been faced with a vexing problem. A small but significant number of people who have applied for visas to various countries have been getting calls from fraudsters posing as company employees, giving them false prom-

Investigations into the matter have pointed to misuse of technology, where fraudsters zero in on easy victims. Unfortunately, some unsuspecting visa applicants, raring to start life anew in a foreign locale, have readily parted with the amount. Malhotra adds, "The modus operandi is fairly similar: they may pose as employees of the organisation and promise job or immigration opportunities to applicants.

Using 'spoofing' software that masks the original number, the initial phone call shows that it has been made from an official VFS Global phone number. The victims are then asked to visit the company's official website where they can find the same number. In due course, further 'authenticating' documents, such as official job letters and other official notifications, are sent to them via email."

If the visa applicants are happy to accept the offer that has been made, they are then asked to make a lumpsum payment without delay to a bank account, also provided in the email. Wherever applicable, the scamsters use the veiled threat of visa rejection or deportation if funds are not deposited. Further, they also seek personal information of the applicant under the pretext of re-validating details.

With an increase in the number of instances of such fraudulent operations taking place, misusing the name of VFS Global, the company has begun to take proactive measures to warn applicants of this menace. Malhotra says, "Through our call centres, SMS alerts, website updates, emails etc, we are sending out messages that no personnel or representative from VFS Global

is authorised to guarantee a job or immigration to applicants in any of the client countries. Also, VFS Global has categorically stated that applicants should not make upfront payments and refrain from giving out personal information to anybody. They should also avoid publishing their passport number or visa application number on public domains or social media platforms."



Vinay Malhotra
COO-Middle East
and South Asia

There have been instances when the initial phone call supposedly from VFS Global would be followed up by official-looking employment offer letters and other

ises of job or immigration prospects abroad.

Vinay Malhotra, COO-Middle East and South Asia, VFS Global, reveals, "There have been instances when the initial phone call, supposedly from VFS Global, would be followed up by official-looking employment offer letters and other documents, sent by email. In acceptance of the job or immigration offer, the visa applicants would be asked to deposit huge sums of money to a bank account, details of which could be found in the letter."

These should set alarm bells ringing

- ➔ If you receive emails with job offers or immigration promises from personal email accounts (such as Gmail, Yahoo, etc.)
- ➔ When pixelated and out-of-proportion VFS Global logos are seen on official-looking documents, such as an employment offer letter or similar contractual documents



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*Opening Soon

Thomas Cook spreads its risks

By acquiring a significant part of Kuoni's global Destination Management Services network, Thomas Cook has broadened the base of its risks. It will no longer be completely dependent on India-centric business.



HAZEL JAIN

With the acquisition of a significant part of Kuoni's global Destination Management Services (DMSs) network, reportedly at ₹125 crore, Thomas Cook India Group will now be able to offer seamless delivery to the group and its B2B and B2C customers across 21 countries.

With this, **Madhavan Menon**, Chairman & Managing Director, Thomas Cook India Group, says, "We went ahead with this because we realise that being present in Asia was an important element of our strategy, especially in the in-bound business in Asia, as it caters to traffic coming from the US and Europe. This is a niche market that affords better margins, and these are countries

that require assistance when their people travel," he explains.

By doing this, Thomas Cook has effectively created a global footprint for itself. It allows it to diversify the base of its business as well as its risks out of India. "We are no longer dependent on India-centric business. We are now building businesses in other geographies and can offer end-to-end

service to business travellers and corporates in these destinations. In the home countries of these DMSs, we can benefit from the relationships they have with the local hotels and transport providers," Menon adds.

These businesses will generate negative working capital for the company as they will generate cash from day one. "So it has come at an attractive

valuation. We will be cross-promoting these businesses. But they require sales force and our intent is to create a common sales force wherever possible," Menon further says.

What the deal entails

This transaction will allow the management of these DMSs to operate on their own. "We will allow the in-house management in each of these



Madhavan Menon
Chairman & Managing Director
Thomas Cook India Group

In the home countries of these DMSs, we can benefit from the relationships they have with the local hotels and transport providers

companies to run their businesses as they deem fit. We will support them and help them in making decisions that both sides believe will help the business. All the businesses are profitable. There are synergy benefits that will come out of it, both in the inbound as well as outbound business," Menon says.

There will be a shareholder-subsidary relationship between Thomas Cook India and the five companies. Each of these companies will have either a board with independent directors or an executive board which Thomas Cook India will also participate in. There will be active interaction but it will be limited to providing support since each of these companies will have their own priorities. The human capital acquired with this deal is about 1200-1400 people.

Look East

When Thomas Cook India acquired Kuoni Hong Kong, it realised the opportunities that Asia provided. Menon adds, "The more we looked at all the Asian countries, the stronger we felt about its potential. We were on the lookout for a business but we didn't think it would be Asian Trails. Long-haul travel will soon re-emerge and my estimate is that Asia will be a major beneficiary of this. The bulk of that travel will happen in Asia. Secondly, the hotel and road infrastructure in South East Asia is outstanding. So it makes complete sense. Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam are all emerging destinations."

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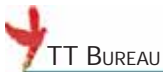
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Air NZ on a flight of fantasy

Air New Zealand takes viewers on ‘A Fantastical Journey’ in its latest safety video that features Hollywood actors Katie Holmes and Cuba Gooding Jr.



Air New Zealand has teamed up with American actors Katie Holmes and Cuba Gooding Jr. for its latest safety video titled ‘A Fantastical Journey’. Air New Zealand’s safety videos have collectively generated more than 108 million views online to date.

The latest video is an Alice in Wonderland inspired adventure, featuring a number of iconic locations throughout New Zealand, including the Southern Alps; Otago – including Dunedin and the Moeraki Boulders; the Conway River in Canterbury; Wellington; Mt Taranaki; Waitomo Caves; Rotorua; Cathedral Cove in the Coromandel; Tolaga Bay (north of Gisborne); White Island and the Auckland Harbour Bridge. New Zealand singer and



songwriter Gin Wigmore has recorded her own version of the song ‘My Little Corner of the World’ for the background track for this video.

Jodi Williams, General Manager of Global Brand and Content Marketing, Air New

Zealand, says, “A Fantastical Journey will put all eyes on New Zealand by showcasing some of the best the country has to offer. With the help of Hollywood stars Katie Holmes and Cuba Gooding Jr., our latest safety video takes viewers on a journey to New

Zealand’s stunning beauty, incredible culture, friendly people and amazing flora and fauna while also sharing the airline’s key safety messages. For this video, we took a different approach creatively, working closely with our creative agency True and Auckland-based production company Assembly throughout the process. They helped render world-class special effects to the video and subsequently, fulfil our aim of taking people on a tour of the country which is nothing less than magical.”

Gin Wigmore says she’s loved teaming up with Air New Zealand again after first working with the company on its first creative safety video the ‘Bare Essentials’ in 2009 and then again more recently to record a version of the track ‘Tomorrow’ from the movie Annie for the airline’s ‘Where To Next?’ campaign.👇

Indonesia with TRN Marketing

Indonesian DMC, Panorama Destination, has partnered with Gurgaon-based TRN Marketing to provide an unforgettable experience to Indian travellers coming to Indonesia.



Buoyed with the continued growth of Indian arrivals to Indonesia, Panorama Destination, an Indonesia-based DMC, has joined hands with Gurgaon-based TRN Marketing to ride the trend and provide Indian visitors with an unforgettable experience in the archipelago.

Talking about the new partnership, **Renato Domini**, CEO, Panorama Destination, said, “We are delighted by our association with TRN Marketing in India. I am assured from my discussion with **Sidhartha Roy**, Senior Vice President, TRN Marketing, that we will have a new

focus, with a professional commitment to our future goals and objectives.”

Statistics reveal that Indonesia has hosted approximately 370,000 Indians in 2016, which could be attributed to free visas for Indians from the Indonesian government as well as added connectivity, with new thrice-weekly scheduled flights between Mumbai and Jakarta by the Indonesian carrier Garuda. This is in addition to the existing inventory of other airlines. Comprising skilled and experienced industry professionals, who possess extensive local industry knowledge, the staff at Panorama Destination is guided by innovative and progressive management. The



Renato Domini
CEO
Panorama Destination

company is headquartered in Jakarta and has branches across the archipelago. Hence, it can offer the finest service to Indians coming to Indonesia for their holidays.

Panorama Destination is in existence since 1999

and has been facilitating holiday arrangements for over 180,000 clients annually. Their portfolio offers a wide variety of products and services, including packages for adventure travel, wedding and honeymoon travel, educational excursions, cruises, golfing trips, culture tours and MICE provision.

Complimenting Panorama Destination efforts in India, TRN Marketing, with a branch office in Mumbai as well, offers a wide array of marketing and sales processes in the Indian market. They support the principals with key insights and solutions to build new segments and markets for their clients.👇

Nijhawan Group rep for Serena Hotels East Africa

■ Expanding their portfolio of offerings, the Nijhawan Group has added Serena Hotels East Africa to its list and will represent the leading hospitality brand in India. Serena Hotels is well-known in the continent with 24 up-market hotels, safari lodges, resorts and safari camps located in exquisite and exotic locations

around Africa, with the likes of Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and Mozambique.

Announcing the partnership, **Priyanka Nijhawan**, Director - Representations, Nijhawan Group, shared, “We will support the tour operators and travel agents in their sales and marketing efforts to maximise the number of Indians

staying at Serena Hotels. With the addition of Serena Hotels to our representation portfolio, we can now offer a niche product in East Africa to our travel partners to further enhance the experience of their clients”. **Rosemary Mugambi**, Regional Sales and Marketing Director of Serena Hotels East Africa, commented, “We are

delighted! The India market is an extremely important market for Serena Hotels, a market that has consistently shown its potential as Indian travellers are now really exploring East Africa. We are excited at the opportunity to present exciting and memorable experiences to our esteemed Indian visitors.”

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Tigerair merges with Scoot

■ Nine months after Scoot and Tigerair announced their intention to pursue a single brand and operating licence under the enhanced Scoot brand, the airline industry bid farewell to Tigerair Sin-

These include Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi, Tiruchirappalli and Lucknow. "Scoot was very well received after the launch of our first three destinations in India last year; the response



gapore, as its last flight departed from Singapore for Tiruchirappalli on July 24. Now, all the flights previously under the Tigerair brand will be operated under the Scoot brand and Scoot flights will operate under the TR flight designator code. This marks the completion of the Scoot-Tigerair integration process that began last May when the airlines were brought under a common holding company, Budget Aviation Holdings. After successfully commencing operations in India last year, value airline Scoot is all set to take up new destinations under its umbrella that were running under Tigerair.

was remarkable. We hope to create the same impact in Bengaluru, Tiruchirappalli, Kochi, Lucknow and Hyderabad by bringing great prices without compromising on the safety and comfort of the passengers," said **Bharath Mahadevan**, Country Head, India, Scoot. To celebrate the merger with the single Scoot brand, special one-way promotional fares from Bengaluru have been introduced for destinations like Singapore, Bali and Hong Kong. Additional 10 per cent discounts are also available through promotional codes for a booking period from July 25, 2017 to Aug 6, 2017.

TUI & Korea Tourism join hands

To update the travel trade on the incentives offered to promote South Korea as a sought-after destination, an event was recently organised in New Delhi by TUI and Korea Tourism Board. The event was supported by Korean Air and Asiana Airlines, and it highlighted exclusive tie-ups TUI holds with Incheon airport, where TUI clients can avail a variety of benefits.



Park your stress here

HARSHAL ASHAR



The Burj Khalifa

Towering over the city, the magnificent Burj Khalifa is emblematic of Dubai. It has an elevator that moves at 10 metres per second and takes visitors to a level where there is an advanced telescope that offers spellbinding views of the entire city.

Qasr Al Sultan

Luxury and authentic Arabian hospitality merge to offer a fascinating experience at the Qasr Al Sultan - The Sultans Palace. Qasr Al Sultan offers diners private as well as family-friendly dining options. It offers cuisine from every corner of Arabia, with an array of live cooking stations and fresh food made from the choicest ingredients.



Taking fun to a totally new level in the region, Dubai proves to be a holistic leisure destination that has something for everyone, irrespective of age and demography. Let's take a look at few of the leisure points that makes Dubai one of the most sought-after holiday destinations.

Motiongate Dubai – Dubai Parks & Resorts

The largest Hollywood-inspired theme park in the region, Motiongate Dubai in Dubai Parks & Resorts brings three legendary film studios to life: Columbia Pictures, DreamWorks Animation and Lionsgate. Here, movies like Madagascar, Step Up and The Hunger Games have been recreated as roller coasters, immersive attractions, thrilling rides and more. Plus, budding filmmakers can have a lifetime experience of watching the wonders of behind-the-scene filmmaking on real-life movie sets at Studio Central.



Bollywood Parks Dubai – Dubai Parks & Resorts

Bollywood Parks Dubai – the first of its kind in the world – showcases the magic of Bollywood through interactive rides, multimedia theatre shows full of dance and romance and action-fuelled experiences. There are also live performances here based on some of the biggest Bollywood blockbusters across five themed zones. The highlight of the park is the region's first Broadway-style Bollywood musical, Jaan-E-Jigar, at the stunning Rajmahal theatre.



Riverland™ Dubai – Dubai Parks & Resorts

Riverland™ Dubai is the central entertainment, dining and relaxation point of Dubai Parks and Resorts, the entry to which is free. It comprises four vibrant districts: The Peninsula, India Gate, The Boardwalk and The French Village, all of which are designed to give a glimpse through time. Visitors can also calm their senses walking along the river. And when hungry, they can dine at more than 50 outlets with mouth-watering cuisines from around the world.



LEGOLAND® Dubai – Dubai Parks & Resorts

For all the little architects and builders out there, Dubai Parks and Resorts has LEGOLAND® Dubai that offers more than 40 Lego-themed rides, shows and building experiences. It encompasses 15,000 Lego models and six themed lands where kids between 2 and 12 can play to their heart's content. Then, for the little builders to cool off, there is a LEGOLAND® Water Park. It boasts over 20 Lego-themed water slides and attractions such as the wave pool, Duplo toddler play area and Build-A-Raft River.





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GPS is back with a bang!

The second leg of Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) opened in Ahmedabad and moved on to Chandigarh for its second edition. Both tier-II cities saw an overwhelming response from the travel industry and made the second leg too a great success. The highlights of this event were the much-awaited session on CA Manish Gadia from GST by GMJ & Co., the numerous product presentations by exhibitors, and table-top B2B meetings between exhibitors and buyers.



Chandigarh



Ahmedabad

Where world-class hoteliers are born...

Institute of Hotel Management Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition, Chennai (IHM Chennai) is striving to educate young hospitality aspirants as per the international standards of service and assist in the growth of Indian tourism. IHM Chennai's Principal, **S. Rajamohan**, elaborates on the educational initiatives of the institute.



TT BUREAU

QHow is IHM Chennai different from other institutes?

IHM Chennai has taken various special initiatives and drives to keep pace with the international standards and this sets us apart. We have been constantly ranked as one of the premier institutes for education in tourism and hospitality. IHM Chennai signed an MoU with Lycee Nicolas Appert, Pays de Loire region, France for staff and student exchange



S. Rajamohan
Principal
IHM Chennai

We train students on a par with international standards of hospitality education

programmes and training and another MoU with Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) for faculty and student industrial exposure. Their managers in exchange conduct demonstrations and guest lectures at the institute. The institute is also a lifetime member of International Accreditation Organisation (IAO) USA and of Higher Learning Accreditation Consultant and Training (HLACT). IHM has also taken various green initiatives and eco-friendly measures from the perspective of sustainability.

QWhat courses are offered at the institute?

We offer two-year Masters course in Hospitality Administration and a three-year Bachelors course in Hospitality and Hotel Administration. Various one-and-a-half-year diploma courses are also offered for specialisation in fields like Food Production, Bakery and Confectionery, Front Office Operation, Food and Beverage Service and Craftsmanship Course in Food Production.

QWhat does the institute envision?

We plan to set up a 30-room Advance Training Centre, which can accom-

modate 75 pax in the conference room, and a banquet hall, which can accommodate 1000 pax to be self-sufficient to organise various events at the institute. The institute strives for excellence today to prepare students to succeed in the challenging world tomorrow. The various courses taught at the institute impart knowledge, skill and attitude for suitable manpower in the

hospitality and service industry and also generate opportunities for research and field work. We train students on a par with international standards of hospitality education. The curriculum followed at the institute is as per the standards of the National Council for Hotel Management, Ministry of Tourism and IGNOU. We also facilitate students in entrepreneurship.

QPlease elaborate on the hands-on training offered to the students.

We provide hands-on training to the students in various areas like star categorised hotels, flight catering units, retail stores and outdoor catering, and also involve them at all the events undertaken at the level of the institute.

QWhat according to you is the way forward for tourism and hospitality industry?

India's tourism potential is very high, with a vast variety of tourism products on offer. Domestic tourism is ever increasing but inbound tourism needs a push and has to be targeted better. Better tourism infrastructure, enhanced connectivity, skill

development of the human resource and a vigorous wide-scale international campaign for inbound tourism can boost the numbers. We need to make obtaining Indian visas easier and cheaper, set up a National Quality Assurance for tourism, offer more familiarisation trips to tour operators and focus on interactive online content and promotion.

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Training that raises the bar

TravelGyaan has been conducting sought-after training workshops and webinars. **Nikita Rawtani**, Director, TravelGyaan gives an insight on the company.



TT BUREAU

With a strong background of training and marketing behind her, **Nikita Rawtani**, Director, Rudra Marketing as well as TravelGyaan, believes that it is the best way to empower an industry. While Rudra Marketing is into marketing, PR and representation, TravelGyaan conducts training programmes and webinars. At the moment, Rudra Marketing has three clients: UAE-based DMC called Royal Gulf Tourism, Ace Travel & Incentives in Greece, and African Eden in Kenya that covers east African countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda etc.

Rawtani adds, "When we started in 2015, we were focusing on fewer clients to be able to provide quality service. Over the years, we have built goodwill and a strong network in the travel trade and now we are ready to bring in more clients. Rudra Marketing specialises in boutique travel representation and offers a spectrum of products – from Dubai to east Afri-



Nikita Rawtani
Director, Rudra Marketing and TravelGyaan

When NTOs conduct trainings, only one or two members from each agency can attend, and the information doesn't percolate down to the entire department

ca. Its aim is to help the market evolve and expose it to regular as well as niche products."

TravelGyaan, on the other hand, complements this with training. "Training is

my area of expertise. I started this company because I realised that there was a huge vacuum in terms of product knowledge. For instance, when NTOs conduct trainings for the trade, they have limited invites and only one or two members from each agency can attend, and the information doesn't percolate down to the entire department," she adds.

TravelGyaan has conducted online training for products such as Switzerland Tourism, German National Tourist Office and Destination Gold Coast. Upcoming trainings are for Seychelles and Korea. It has also conducted training for a list of NTOs on the sidelines of IITT and OTM 2016 shows, like Israel Tourism and Air Arabia. "We can handle any product – whether it is hotels, NTOs, airlines or a DMC. For training, we do both offline as well as online. This encompasses webinars, which are in real time, as well as e-learning, which is done through modules and without any direct interaction," Rawtani explains.

Q Experiences in Antarctica

As part of their 'Curated Journeys by The Q Experiences,' **Vasim Shaikh**, Founder, Q Experiences, unveiled an exclusive 200-people-only trip to Antarctica.



TT BUREAU

The White Continent is the first cruise line by an Indian company that will take groups to Antarctica. The 11-day expedition would start from Ushuaia, the southern-most city of South America on December 9, 2017. **Vasim Shaikh** said, "The White Continent is our initiative to make people experience Antarctica. We are looking at passionate world travellers to be a part of this expedition. The best way to unveil this journey is to introduce the ship we will be taking to the Antarctic waters. It is one of the most modern and luxurious ships, which is well-equipped with a gym, salon, spa and theatre. We also have international artists who will be performing on board, including pianists and singers."

One of the highlights of this expedition, especially for Indian guests, is having London-based Michelin-star Chef Atul Kocchar on board. "Atul Kocchar will be on board to take care of Indian and vegetarian food during the expedition, which is usually



Vasim Shaikh
Founder
Q Experiences



Rati Shroff
Manager-Business Development
Q Experiences

a major concern for Indians." The expedition would cost ₹690,000 per head and the itinerary has been curated indigenously for a niche clientele. **Rati Shroff**, Manager - Business Development, The Q Experiences, said, "We have come up with a crisp refined version to experience Antarctica, which is where we put together an 11-day journey, where one gets to explore the Antarctica Peninsula. The ship sails from Ushuaia and takes two days to cross the Drake Passage, which is the confluence of three oceans. Once the travellers get there,

they can get to experience the Antarctica peninsula through several landings. One of the highlights is going to be one of the research centres, which is now a museum, where one can actually send a postcard to anyone in the world. The authorities there also stamp the passport as a memory of visiting Antarctica. There is also a visit to Weddell Sea, which is one of the quietest places in the world."

She revealed that they are planning something in Africa and will be launching 'Q Romance' for honeymooners.

Sands Resort Macau's night of fun

The industry's crème-de-la-crème descended to The Lalit New Delhi for an evening of cocktails and entertainment hosted by Sands Resorts Macau. Appropriately themed 'A Night to Shine', the event acted as the platform to introduce the resort's newest offerings to the travel partners and also included dazzling performances by talented in-house Streetmosphere artists.



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EVENT TALK

AUGUST 2017

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Fiji Tourism roadshow	Bengaluru	1
Visit Indonesia roadshow	Pune	3
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kochi	3-5
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Kochi	7
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Amazing Thailand roadshow	Chandigarh	9
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La Cita	Florida, USA	29-31
ICPB Convention	Hyderabad	29-31
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SEPTEMBER 2017

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German National Tourism Organisation roadshow	Delhi NCR	4-5
German National Tourism Organisation roadshow	Ahmedabad	6
German National Tourism Organisation roadshow	Mumbai	7-8
IATO Convention	Bhubaneswar	7-10
TTF	Surat	8-10
Busan International Travel Fair	Busan, South Korea	8-11
OTOAI Convention	Ras Al Khaimah	13-16
Czech Tourism roadshow	Bengaluru	13
PATA Travel Mart	Macau	13-15
HPMF Conference	Jodhpur	14-16
FHRAI Convention	Bengaluru	14-16
IAAI Conference	Kochi	14-17
IITM	Delhi NCR	15-17
Seychelles Tourism Board roadshow	Delhi NCR	18
Seychelles Tourism Board roadshow	Ahmedabad	20
IITM	Mumbai	21-23
JATA Tourism Expo	Tokyo, Japan	21-24
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IITM	Mumbai	22-24
World Routes	Barcelona	23-26
Tourism Ireland roadshow	Mumbai	24-26
Tourism Ireland roadshow	Delhi NCR	27-29
IATA World Financial Symposium	Dublin	25-28
IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2017	Bangkok, Thailand	26-28
IFTM Top Resa	Paris, France	26-28
India Hospitality Awards	Delhi NCR	29

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

TAAI-NR elects its new team

Travel Agents Association of India — Northern Region has elected **Neeraj Malhotra**, Co-founder and CEO, Ganpati Travels, as its Chairman. **Gaurav Dogra**, Founder, Plan Your Holiday, is the Honorary Secretary while **Gurdevinder Singh** of Bhagwant Travel and Tours is the Treasurer.



TT BUREAU

With the new team in place, TAAI-NR reveals its various plans for the upcoming term. Malhotra says, "I am thankful to the team for their support and faith in me. Going forward, our first agenda is to consolidate the members and also focus on increasing membership during our term. Our industry has been going through a rough phase for quite some time now. First with demonetisation and now with the implementation of GST, it is important that the members stick together to raise a single voice for our concerns and offer suggestions to the government."

Malhotra informs that TAAI-NR will be conducting various knowledge sessions and workshops to address and explain to the members how they can work under



GST, as there is still a lot of confusion amongst them regarding day-to-day activities. "Also, in collaboration with various organisations like PHD Chamber of Commerce and CII, we will be holding education seminars for our members to increase the information quotient. We are also looking at offering value additions to our members like education conferences abroad, more familiarisa-

tion trips to learn about new destinations and sell them to increase their revenue arm," adds Malhotra. TAAI-NR also plans to partner with multiple tourism boards to conduct learning sessions for its members.

Expressing gratitude towards the members, Dogra feels that with the new role, there is greater responsibility and though times are tough,

these challenges will present better opportunities for the industry. "We plan to make the Northern Chapter more interactive and will be connecting with the members more often both on an individual basis and representing them at various forums," says Dogra. Singh also thanked the team for its support. He says, "We plan to bring in more confidence amongst the members with respect to the association and also offer them more value for their money through various educational trips and seminars that we shall be conducting soon."

GST issues



TAAI-NR will be conducting various knowledge sessions and workshops to address and explain to the members how they can work under GST

There's no one to 'guide' us: IATO

Shortage of tourist guides in Maharashtra is troubling inbound agents. IATO, which has been trying to resolve this issue, is now out of ideas.



TT BUREAU

While e-visas for foreign tourists visiting India are on track, the most basic of facilities for them are hard to find—guides. Struggling with this issue since a long time is the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), which has been in discussion with various stakeholders to iron this issue out.

Himanshu Agashiwala, Chairman, Maharashtra Chapter, IATO. "We have a huge shortage of experienced guides in Maharashtra. Out of the total appointed by the Department of Tourism, only 50 per cent are active. Others are either out of state or country, or they are old. As a result, they have started asking for a huge fee, and we are unable to cope with this current demand for guides. We are currently paying four times the normal amount. We can manage if it's a big group but it's not feasible to pay `25,000-30,000 to one guide for a day for a group of five to seven tourists."



Himanshu Agashiwala
Chairman, Maharashtra Chapter, IATO

He adds that even the cruise operators have complained to IATO that the guides have not been behaving well. "We took this matter up with MTDC, urging them to have city-wise guides appointed by MTDC and have a course for guides by MTDC. They agreed to this. We sat down, prepared an entire guide course, everything was passed and was sent to the ministry, all this over the last one and half years. But now when we ask MTDC for an update, we get no reply. They don't seem to be concerned about this," he adds.

OBITUARY

O.P. Ahuja




Chairman and Managing Director
Holiday Maker Tours and Travel
(1930-2017)


It was perhaps one of the worst times for IATO; the leadership had dwindled, the in-fights were in the open and there was no one to hold the reigns. It was then that a sincere, honest and forthright leader was recognised—O. P. Ahuja. His commitment to the industry and ability to work together with all made him the unanimous choice for the President of the Indian Association of Tour Operators from 1989-93.

And then, did he deliver—he took everyone along and drew IATO to a new high. Without him, the association would not exist or may have had other competing associations working for the same cause. After serving the apex body of the tour operators in India, the founder of leading travel operator, Holiday Maker, also obliged associations like PATA (India) Chapter and Indian Tourism Human Resource Development Committee with his wisdom and priceless guidance.

The demise of this Hall of Fame awardee literally marks the end of an era—an era that understood the ethos of the travel and tourism industry and the importance of the national associations' role in its development.




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


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Korea Tourism Organization

New Delhi

Michael Kwon has been appointed as the new Director of Korea Tourism Organization, India Office. He will be heading the India office for next three years and will be located in New Delhi. Previously working as the Director of International Tourism Strategy team at Korea Tourism Organization head office, Kwon has been associated with KTO for 25 years and has an all-round exposure across different verticals of KTO, like HR, Planning & Coordination, Inbound Marketing & Performance Evaluation. He was the Deputy Director of KTO Chicago office between 2005 and 2007 and successfully established KTO office in Jakarta in 2011. Holding a major in tourism, he is also a certified Public Labour Attorney in Korea.



Clarks Shiraz

Agra

Debashish Bhowmik is the new Senior Vice President for Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra. Bhowmik has 30+ years of experience in hospitality industry, out of which he has spent over 14 years with Clarks groups of hotels. Bhowmik returns to Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra after working with an academic management company as Head of their Melbourne unit. Bhowmik will be responsible for taking Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra, to greater heights through his strong acumen in Hotel Operations, Business Development and Relationship Management. Bhowmik has a Bachelor's degree in Arts and a Diploma in Hotel Management & Catering Technology and has done Certificate course in Hotel Administration.



Fariyas Hotels & Resorts

Mumbai

Jagar Thakur is the new Vice President Of Fariyas Hotels & Resorts. Before this, he was the Vice President and General Manager of Fariyas Resort Lonavla. An Arts graduate, and a Diploma holder from Institute of Hotel Management Srinagar, Thakur has also done MBA in Hospitality Management from Corlins University. He has 25 years of experience in hospitality industry. Apart from the Fariyas group, he has worked with Centaur Lake View Hotel Srinagar, Dukes Retreat Khandala, Grand Kakatiya Sheraton Hotel & Towers Hyderabad, The Leela Goa, Hyatt Regency Mumbai, Four Seasons Hotel Riyadh, Four Seasons Golf Club Dubai, Grand Hyatt Mumbai and Hyatt Regency Kuantan Resort, Malaysia.



Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel

Bangalore

Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel welcomes **Sujeet Kumar** as their new General Manager. He has moved here from Sheraton Colombo. With 20+ years of experience in the industry, Kumar has held various positions with brands like ITC Park Sheraton, Chennai; ITC Windsor Manor Sheraton, Bangalore; Goa Marriott Resort; Renaissance Makati City Hotel, Manila; JW Marriott Medan, Indonesia; and The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management from Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration in Manipal.



JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort and Spa

Mussoorie

Ramandeep Marwah has been appointed as the General Manager of the 115-key JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort and Spa. He has moved here from JW Marriott Pune, where he was Director of Operations. His journey with JW Marriott started in 2012 and continues till date. He has also worked with Taj Hotels, Resorts and Palaces; The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts; and Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts. A graduate of the 'Elevate' programme of Marriott International, he has over 20 years of experience in hospitality industry.



Fariyas Hotel Mumbai

Mumbai

Nilesh Raorane is the new General Manager of Fariyas Hotel Mumbai. A Commerce graduate, with specialisation in Financial Accounting and Auditing, and a Diploma holder in Hotel and Tourism Management, Raorane has over 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He started his career with K Raheja Group of Hotels. After that, Raorane moved to Fariyas Hotel Mumbai as Front Office Manager and moved up to become the Rooms Division Manager, then the Resident Manager and now the General Manager, as a part of which he is successfully handling hotel operations, strategic promotions, online marketing and guest experience.



Jaipur Marriott Hotel

Jaipur

A stalwart with 17 years of industry experience, **Monica Suri** joins Jaipur Marriott Hotel as their next General Manager. Prior to this, she was the General Manager at Le Meridien Kochi. She started her journey as a Hotel Management Trainee with Taj Hotels and Resorts, in the F&B department, and then moved on to work with other renowned brands like Le Meridien, Ahmedabad; The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace; The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa; and The Westin, Gurgaon, New Delhi. She also relocated to Tanzania for a year, where she took the job of a Corporate Trainer for a set of six hotels. Suri has done her Hotel Management from IHM Bangalore.



Pullman New Delhi Aerocity

New Delhi

Pullman New Delhi Aerocity announces the appointment **Charu Lal** as the Director of the brand's Woo Wellness Spa and Salon. A stalwart within the spa, health and beauty arena, Lal brings with her 10 years of experience, garnered working with noteworthy brands like the Taj Group. A well-read person, Lal has a Bachelor's degree in English from St. Johns College in Agra and a Master's degree in English Literature from Agra University. She also has a B.Ed. degree from Agra University.



Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal

Bengaluru

Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal, America's famous hotel brand and a part of the Wyndham Worldwide Group has appointed **Anshul Goswami** as the Director of Sales and Marketing for its first property in India. With over 13 years of rich and relevant experience, Goswami has been associated with many reputed groups in her professional journey, like The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi; The Grand New Delhi; The Leela Palace Kempinski and The Lalit Ashok Bangalore. Her last stint was with Movenpick Hotel & Spa Bangalore. She is an alumni of Institute of Hotel Management Dehradun and specialises in sales and marketing.



TALKing People

Cindy Lui, Executive Director – Sales, Venetian Macau, is an avid shopper and can't resist shopping in Europe and Japan. She exclaims, "I love Europe for its unique and elegant fashion and it is always on top of the game there. Japan is one of my favourites for state-of-the-art technology and one can always be assured to find the latest things there." Since Lui is an outdoor person, she loves relaxing by the beach while on vacation and enjoys going for jogs and picnics to unwind.



Prakash Jayadevan, General Manager of Fairfield by Marriott Kathmandu, loves to spend time with a book. He also enjoys reading cartoons like Calvin & Hobbs and Dilbert. He is passionate about teaching Nex-gen hoteliers and grooming them. "In my free time, I love to travel. My most memorable holiday moment is my recent trip to Pokhara in Nepal. Also, in my favourite destination is Munnar in India and Bangkok outside of it," he says.



Hanneli Slabber, India Country Manager – South African Tourism, believes that everything in life should be done properly or should not be done at all. She further said that she is able to contribute to job creation in South Africa through tourism. "It's an incredibly humbling experience and I feel a strong sense of satisfaction," adds Slabber. After staying in India, she has started reading about Indian history and consequently fallen in love with the country. She loves to explore the country; Andaman is currently her favourite destination in India. Outside India, she loves visiting Kenya.



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24 years of flying high

Oman Air completed 24 years of operation in India. **Paul Gregorowitsch**, CEO, Oman Air, visited India to meet travel and commercial partners in the country. In an exclusive interaction with **TRAVTALK**, he talked about the company's expansion plans and India as a potential market.



NISHA VERMA

QHow important has India been as a market for Oman Air?

India and Sultanate of Oman have had a long-lasting relationship through centuries. Twenty-four years ago, one of our first international destinations outside Oman was Trivandrum. Since then, we have been able to build up to contribute to the economic development of India and Oman and also take advantage from it. We have 700,000 Indian nationals working in Oman. Today, we are allowed to fly to 161 flights a week to 11 destinations in India. The summer of 2016 and 2017 has seen a growth of 500 additional seats, which is enough for the next 24 months. We are flying triple daily flights to Mumbai, Hyderabad, Cochin and Delhi, and creating full connectivity in our hub, not only for the GCC countries but also to Europe, where we have started double daily to London and a new flight to Manchester. These connections can offer great opportunities to the Indian market to use our services. In winter, with our additional frequency to Mumbai, we will add around 2000 seats, which will make us have close to 28,000 seats moving between Oman and India.

QWhat load factor are you seeing between India and Oman?

The load factor is quite high and the people in India like the product of Oman Air because we are offering an exceptionally good service at affordable prices. Out of India, 40 per cent of our guests are travelling to the GCC and 60 per cent are also highly attracted to our international markets, in which Europe is very popular. Our latest operations to Manchester and London, along with the connections to Frankfurt, Zurich and Munich, are liked very much.

QAre you thinking of connecting to new destinations in India?

Unfortunately, in India, we don't have any new destinations coming up. However, we are following closely the plans of the Indian government to open more regional airports, which we are looking as business cases. We will see if these airports are cannibalising on the existing destinations or not; if they get entitlements in addition to our existing bilateral agreement; and if there is really enough demand to open them up. Our priority for 2018-19 is to consolidate our exist-

ing destinations, increase the number of seats by having larger aircraft, and then add new destinations to our portfolio. We are adding new destinations globally, but we are doing that in partnership with other airlines, like with Lufthansa, we have a codeshare for Frankfurt and Munich.

QAre you looking to invest in the Indian market?

We are here on a journey as well. Indian economy is very strong and the people here want to travel as tourists as well as businessmen. In fact, there is a huge rise in the percentage of businesswomen travelling on our airline from India. Although we are getting good return on our investment in India, till 2022, we want to consolidate on the existing mar-

ket to our award-winning business class seats. We took this decision owing to the economic downturn, which is affecting the entire GCC market. The addition of the new fleet should be completed by 2023.

We have very clear objectives. We want to run a safe airline and remain the airline of first choice for customers, especially with our award-winning business class. We don't want to go for commodity, but want to be a boutique airline. We want to make money and cater to the growth of our country. India is a very important player in this growth strategy. We want to contribute to the economy of Sultanate of Oman. During 2017, we could contribute close to 900 million Oman

“Today, we are allowed to fly to 161 flights a week to 11 destinations in India. The summer of 2016 and 2017 has seen a growth of 500 additional seats, which is enough for the next 24 months.”

Paul Gregorowitsch
CEO, Oman Air



kets, because we need to stabilise. By that time, we'd have additional aircraft, allowing us to grow further and even expand our network.

The Indian government might consider to have open skies for destinations within 5000 kilometres, which if materialises in the next two years, would automatically create a level environment. This, in addition to the government's plans to open new airports, would allow us to open new destinations in India.

QCould you elaborate on the expansion plans of Oman Air?

Our original plan was to reconfigure our existing 330-300 fleet, which is currently flying between London and Muscat as well as to the Far East with three classes. However, instead of that, we decided to get brand new 787-900s, with eight first class suites, in addition

Rial, which is equivalent to around \$2.5 billion. We want to bring tourists and create jobs in the tourism industry of Oman and also create business opportunities in Oman and via Oman.

QWhat has been the impact of the current GCC crisis?

Let me first express our concern that the peaceful environment is being disturbed by the current actions taken by the governments in the Middle East. This is creating only losers because the Middle East is seen in the world as one entity, and if this type of instability is seen externally, it could affect the tourists' demand to visit the entire Middle East or using it as a transit hub for an onward journey. We hope that the situation would come back to normal and that we can live in peace and prosperity and promote the Gulf region in its total entity to the rest of the world. 🌹

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