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## RSVP:

Ms. Priyanka Gaikwad  
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# Budget to quell industry woes?

Demonetisation dealt an unexpected blow to the travel and tourism industry. Recovering slowly, the trade is pinning its hopes on the upcoming Union Budget as they lobby for low GST rates for tourism products.



**Vinod Zutshi**  
Secretary  
Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India

“We have made it a point to gather the travel trade and take feedback from them so that the chief concerns are underlined and brought to light. We started this system last year and so far, the issues that were brought forward have more or less been addressed. There have been several pre-budgetary sessions with the travel trade where we have shortlisted some of the most important issues. A sensible GST rate is one, along with the granting of industry status to the hospitality industry, and a couple of more requirements are some topics that we have requested to be addressed to foster growth. On our part, we are doing our best to ensure a tourism-friendly budget is prepared that will foster growth and propel the industry to greater heights.”

“From the budget, our main expectation is for GST. We hope that the tax structure should be lower for the travel and tourism industry with the GST around 5-6 per cent. Budget this time should be tourism friendly. We have requested the government, along with FAITH for lower GST and also backing the idea of ‘Holiday in India,’ on the lines of Make in India. We are also asking for waiving of GST for sectors like Chhattisgarh and North East, to encourage tourists to go to these regions.”



**P. P. Khanna**  
President  
ADTOI



**Jay Bhatia**  
Entrepreneur of the Year,  
India Travel Awards 2014,  
and Director & CEO,  
Tulsidas Khimji Holidays

“I want export status for Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE). I also hope the Finance Minister announces ease in Goods and Services Tax computing, not exceeding five per cent, taxation waivers for inbound tourism, and exemption for conducting tours for foreign tourist wholly outside India. As an agent, I also want reduction in compliance with statutory authorities. The Ministry should direct banks to charge for credit card payments below 0.50 per cent. There should also be a consultative regulatory authority with MoCA/MOT representatives for resolving issues on commission payments between principals and agents.”

“The upcoming budget, considering the great opportunities in the travel and tourism sector, should go for a 100 per cent increase in the outlay making it ₹ 3000 crores. The increase percentage will be a 30 per cent from a 70 per cent of last year’s increase. We need more operating airports than the present 130 of them. We need more spending for Civil Aviation infrastructure and connectivity. Travel and tourism industry is already challenged by taxes of around 25 per cent. Airfares are unaffordable. Budget should look at this and ease out this burden on the tourism industry.”



**E. M. Najeeb**  
Gallery of Legends, India  
Travel Awards 2015, and  
Chairman & MD, Air Travel  
Enterprises Group of  
Companies (ATE)

“There are three things we are expecting from the upcoming budget. Firstly, GST will be our main concern as we have been constantly speaking to the government for the same. We hope that it remains at a lower slab for tourism, and we are lobbying for it to be 5 per cent for tourism, so that the industry can flourish and compete with the neighbouring countries. Many European countries charge lower rate of GST and VAT, so it is going to help us. In addition, we hope that the implementation of GST is done in a simplified manner, so that it does not disrupt our businesses. We are not interested in getting the license from all the states. We want that one point where we will deposit the taxes, which we don’t mind. Thirdly, we hope that tourism is given an industry status by the government, which would be beneficial for all stakeholders.”



**Pronab Sarkar**  
President  
IATO

“Demonetisation has impacted the travel industry in a big way and I hope the new budget would have liberal policies to pacify this effect. GST rollout should be done in a realistic manner and we hope that the government realises that outbound travel is not equivalent to import and export. Hence, it should not be taxed in the same way. Also, we are hoping that the income tax limit will go down, as most of the products would come under GST.”



**Guldeep Singh Sahni**  
DDP Trailblazer,  
India Travel Awards 2016,  
and President, OTOAI



**Subhash Motwani**  
Director  
Compact Travels

“The poor implementation of the recent demonetisation drive by the government has led to a major setback across all industries. This is particularly so in the travel industry. Simplifying the tax structure in the upcoming budget will be the way to go before GST is implemented. To give a boost to the tourism industry, all complex taxes should be abolished and replaced by a transaction tax for every transaction carried out, perhaps to the tune of 0.5 per cent. After all, tourism gives a major thrust to other industries too. If GST can be implemented on time, then it should not exceed more than five per cent for the tourism industry and must be implemented across all channels of distribution - online as well as offline. Simplifying the current tax structure is the need of the hour.”

“Since the current government came to power in 2014, they have brought about several changes and positivity has been seen in the Indian economy as well. This year’s Union Budget needs to show real execution toward the government’s intent of making India an easier destination as a Global Innovation Hub. We look forward to a proper implementation of GST and aggressive measures taken to promote cashless transactions to support the current bold move of demonetisation. We also hope that the budget relooks at procurement norms to focus on quality and cost-based procurement and brings in a single independent authority to ease ‘Digital India’ implementation.”



**Kunal Sampat**  
General Manager-India,  
MSC Cruises

“Hopefully, we will see the rollout of tourism supportive GST, where different services provided by tourism and hospitality sector will be treated independently and will attract lower rate of tax. We hope to get infrastructure status for hotels with investment up to ₹ 50 crores that will enable hotels to avail long-term credit facilities at more attractive tax rates. We are looking forward to the announcement of a corpus fund for the industry as well as international associations to aggressively bid for international conferences and exhibitions. We hope the Finance Minister announces 150 per cent weighted deductions on expenses incurred by corporates on conferences and incentives within India. We have also requested for exemption under income tax for expenses up to ₹ 50,000 p.a. incurred on family holiday within India.”



**Sarabjit Singh**  
Tourism Ambassador, India  
Travel Awards 2016, and  
Vice Chairman, FAITH

“It is clear that the government is pushing taxes towards the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime. But it has not announced the percentage of GST yet. We expect the Finance Minister to clear that confusion in the upcoming Union Budget. It has already started impacting the industry whereby customers are directly approaching overseas vendors and bypassing Indian agents. We hope that the Finance Ministry will take cognizance of this as well.”



**Sunil Kumar**  
DDP Game Changer,  
India Travel Awards 2014,  
and President, TAAI



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

“When it comes to the budget, the most important subject is the rate of GST since only a subsidised rate will be helpful for us. Hence, we have corroborated to a 5 per cent GST rate. We have collectively settled on this rate by taking a leaf from other countries who have implemented a similar plan and have benefited from it. Since the tourism industry amasses a significant FEE every year, we should also be exempted from service taxes, just like the import industry is. Similarly, we feel that there should also be a refund on VAT. We hope that these suggestions are taken into consideration for the good of the industry and the country.”

“Indian civil aviation sector has registered a growth of 122 million dollars for the first time in a decade and is doing fairly well, in spite of demonetisation. Post demonetisation, the domestic air traffic in November has grown at 22.6 per cent y-o-y to 8.9 million against last year. Some of the recent announcements from the government officials have indicated that tax simplification is one of the main agenda in the budget to come. According to aviation advisory CAPA, GST may limit the growth of domestic air traffic due to demonetisation in effect, although, it is expected to soar above 20 per cent in 2017. We are positive about the upcoming budget to bring best propositions for the whole travel and tourism industry.”



**Anil Parashar**  
President & CEO, InterGlobe  
Technology Quotient, India  
Travel Award winner



# FITUR for sustainability

After setting a new record for participation numbers that reached as high as 232,000 visitors in 2015, FITUR is set to continue the trend this year from January 18-22 in Madrid.

# AHANA GURUNG

The last staging of the Spanish trade show set a record in business participation, with 9,605 businesses, 3.4 per cent more; and raised the economic impact on Madrid to €210 million. Over its five-day staging, professional participation tallied to 124,659 visitors and 2 per cent growth, consolidating the high international representation that in its two previous editions had already shown growth of 7 per cent and 12 per cent respectively.

Once again, this year's figures are expected to break all preceding records, enthuses **Ana Larrañaga**, Director, FITUR. "According to data available in early January, a total of 9,672 companies will participate, occupying a surface space of 62,092.5 square metres, 9 per cent more than at the previous staging. Among these, 47 are Indian companies," she reveals. The number of main standholders is 755 (6 per cent more), of which 392 are international (+9 per cent) participants.

FITUR has Argentina as its Principal Partner and will be the venue for the start of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development declared by the United Nations



**Ana Larrañaga**  
*Director*  
*FITUR*

Organisation and channelled through the Madrid-based UNWTO. Larrañaga elaborates, "In this context, Sustainable Tourism for Development will be the leitmotif for this 37<sup>th</sup> staging of FITUR, where we will see the efforts being made by the tourism industry to contribute through their activity to the development of a new tourism sustainability model in its main economic, sociocultural and environmental pillars."

In addition, this year's edition will prominently feature specialised monographic sections such as FITUR SHOPPING, FITUR HEALTH and FITUR GAY (LGBT), which respond to important and growing market niches with high development potential.

FITURTECH Y, organised by the Instituto Tecnológico Hotelero (ITH) — will unify at this staging, under a single brand and concept, FITURTECH and FITUR GREEN, both offering benchmark forums for technology and sustainability within the framework of the trade fair.

Larrañaga says, "I should also highlight the B2B Hosted Buyer Workshop programme; plus a renewed INVESTOUR, the Tourism Investment and Business Forum for Africa organised jointly by FITUR, UNWTO and Casa África, which at its eighth staging will focus on promoting sustainable tourism development in Africa, thus upholding the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development."

# 4k+ delegates for GPS

With over 20,000 one-on-one B2B meetings and nearly 4000 delegates expected in total, GPS 2017 will travel to six cities in this edition starting with Nagpur from January 19-21.

ANKITA SAXENA

**G**lobal Panorama Show-case (GPS) 2017 will be a paperless exhibition. **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, Co-founder, GPS and Managing Director, Jagsons Travels, informs that the GPS mobile application, available for both Android and iOS, will be a major marketplace for exhibitors and buyers alike where even visiting cards can be exchanged electronically through smartphones and tablets. "We have invested heavily in technology and partnered with Cvent. It would be in the interest of the exhibitors and buyers to have all information electronically available and shared with the attendees. This information would be accessible even post-events, saving a lot of paper in the process," he says.

The highlight of the GPS App would be access to social media, live wall, message exchange, event surveys, pre-scheduling of meetings, interactive floor plan, details of all presentations and participating organisations. Anand elaborates that the event will stay active even after it's over and attendees can do regular

business exchange through the App. "This way they would never lose the contacts of those they met and also interact with the ones they could not meet during the event," he



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

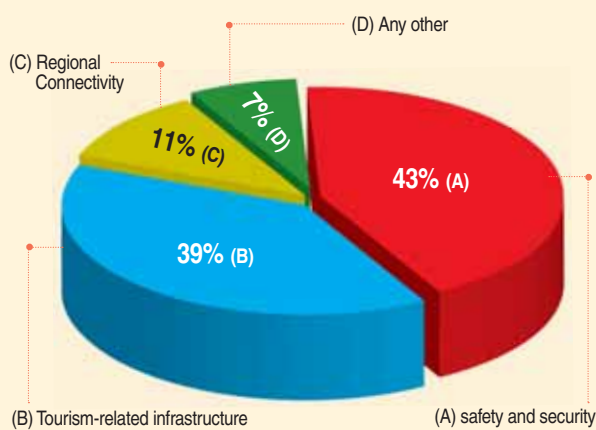
adds. GPS also plans to launch GPS Membership Card for all registered delegates, which in turn will have tie-ups with various travel and non travel products. The members can avail discounts using their GPS e-cards on their e-Wallets. "The Hosted Buyer Program offers options of pre and post tour in Nagpur. We also plan to have GPS destination workshops with B2B exchange; networking and familiarisation in 2017

at domestic and international destinations. These will be highly subsidised GPS-Educational Destination Workshops (GPS-EDW) for which we will be working closely with various tourism boards, DMCs and hotel chains across the globe.”

"We expect an average exhibitor participation of about 70 in each of the six cities with over 100 exhibitors in Nagpur alone showcasing more than 150 different products and services. Further, the total attendance of more than 4,000 participants is expected with an average attendance of about 700 in each city." Over 20,000 one-on-one meetings are expected at the three-day event at various cities.

“The future of the tourism industry lies in the Tier-II and Tier-III markets. The intention is to educate and empower the travel fraternity in these markets,” says Anand. He further explains that GPS format is widely known and well accepted across India, leading to substantial business generation. The event will have a day of educational seminars and product presentations and two days of B2B meetings. 🇮🇳

# Upgrade safety measures for tourists



As the industry vies for boosting inbound numbers and cultivating newer areas of revenue generation, **TRAVTALK** asks the travel trade what they perceive as the biggest bottleneck to achieve these targets. Safety and security received 43% votes, a sign that the industry does acknowledge the need to give tourists the confidence to be on their own wherever they are. Tourism-related infrastructure cuts a close second with 39% votes where a lot of people voiced the need for better roads and better-kept monuments and wayside amenities. Regional connectivity with 11% stood third. Close to 7% highlighted various topics like educating the front-line staff, curbing exorbitant hotel charges and airfare and rooting out fraud travel agents to maintain integrity of the industry.



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## Harvey India's Christmas brunch

Filmmaker & CEO of Harvey India, **Joe Rajan's** Annual Christmas Brunch was held at Jyran at Sofitel Mumbai BKC. It was buzzing with prominent dignitaries from the Hindi & Marathi film industry, hospitality and politics. General Manager of the hotel **Biswajit Chakraborty**, and Director F&B **Shahrom Oshtori** went an extra mile to ensure all guests had a good time.





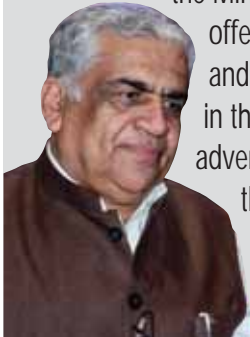
# ATOAI to expand membership

ATOAI’s newly-elected President **Capt. Swadesh Kumar** plans to increase the membership of the association to 2000 and inculcate a collaborative environment for smooth functioning during his term.



**Capt. Swadesh Kumar** has been appointed as the President of Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) for 2017-19. According to him, the association needs a new push and the new team of ATOAI is committed to shift focus from Himalaya centric to other areas of adventure tourism, covering the length and breadth of the country.

“The agenda is three fold. We plan to create a more collaborative environment for the association members and increase our membership across India,” says Kumar. One of the major initiatives of ATOAI would be to conduct seminars and familiarisation trips to different states to facilitate member interaction with the local trade and motivate them to be-



“We would be working closely with the Ministry of Tourism, offering them our support and coordinate with them in their efforts to promote adventure tourism in the country.”

**Capt. Swadesh Kumar**  
President  
ATOAI

come members of ATOAI and one such project is in the pipeline for Arunachal Pradesh. According to Kumar, presently there are only 200 members in the association which they plan to increase to 2000; there are only 70-80 active members which they hope to take to 200. “Major activities to create net working opportunities for our members would be one of our

major agendas. This would include participation in domestic and international exhibitions, roadshows, regular get-together and interaction among members etc.,” he adds.

ATOAI hopes to increase the knowledge base and share best practices amongst various travel trade organisations, so that more than

the competition amongst the members, there is increased collaboration and learning from each other. The association will also focus on skill development amongst its members. “The key today is marketing our products at a national and international platform. We would also be working closely with the Ministry of Tourism, offering them our support and coordinate with them in their efforts to promote adventure tourism in the country. We hope that the National Task Force on adventure tourism will play a very crucial role in the growth of this industry,” adds Kumar.

## Membership Drive

ATOAI has 200 members which it plans to increase to 2000; there are only 70-80 active members

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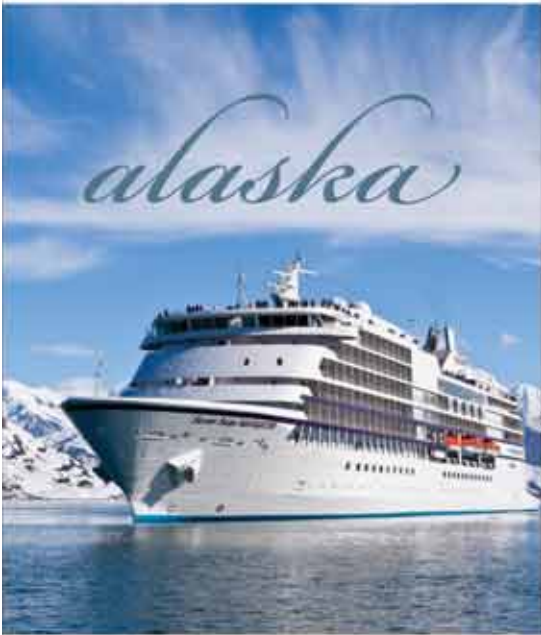
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12 Jul, 2017	VANCOUVER TO ANCHORAGE (SEWARD)
19 Jul, 2017	ANCHORAGE (SEWARD) TO VANCOUVER
26 Jul, 2017	VANCOUVER TO ANCHORAGE (SEWARD)
2 Aug, 2017	ANCHORAGE (SEWARD) TO VANCOUVER
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16 Aug, 2017	ANCHORAGE (SEWARD) TO VANCOUVER
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## Should the industry 'budget' expectations?

While the temperature in Delhi is plummeting, things are heating up at the socio-economic front. The one calendar event that everyone in the industry is looking forward to is the Union Budget that's scheduled to be announced on February 1, 2017. Many believe that the budget may help to ease the blow dealt by demonetisation. The incumbent government's decision on the Good and Services Tax (GST) rollout has also been keeping the industry on tenterhooks. A 'sensible GST' is what everyone is looking forward to and like every year, a tourism-friendly Budget will definitely be a great step towards a robust and sustainable growth for the industry. Taking a leaf from states like Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, the central government should also accord industry status to the tourism and hospitality sector. This will significantly contribute to the Indian economy and drive progress through creation of jobs, thus creating a robust tourism industry and sticking to the government's well-publicised notion of 'Aache Din'.

## Tourism for all-round development

Realising the importance of tourism in fostering social inclusiveness and reducing poverty and unemployment, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Such an initiative will help create a unique opportunity to raise awareness and mobilise all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change. For a sector that contributes 7 per cent to worldwide exports, 10 per cent to the world's GDP and provides one in 11 jobs, tourism has always been a significant contributor to the economic prosperity of a country. The idea is to push tourism towards bringing all-round development and not just focus on a few aspects. For an industry this crucial, we have a big responsibility as stakeholders to work together and not behave in a fragmented manner.

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

### MAJOR CHANGES AT MADAME TUSSAUD'S



In 1992 Madame Tussauds London had seen quite a few changes in its exhibition and opened two new themed areas called 'The Garden Party' and '200 Years of Madame Tussauds'. After 25 years, the iconic wax museum is all set to open its doors in India. Madam Tussauds Delhi will open at Regal Cinema, Connaught Place, and will be the 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the iconic museum.



## Passport power to travellers

In a study of passports based on visa characteristics, German passport has stood out as the world's strongest with a Visa Free Score of 157; Singapore ranked second and Sweden third. India stood at 167 with a score of 46.

Global Rank	Country	Visa Free Score
1	Germany	157
2	Singapore	156
2	Sweden	156
3	Denmark	155
3	Finland	155
3	France	155
3	Spain	155
3	Switzerland	155
3	Norway	155
3	United Kingdom	155
3	USA	155
4	Italy	154
4	Netherlands	154
4	Belgium	154
4	Austria	154
4	Luxembourg	154
4	Portugal	154

Global Rank	Country	Visa Free Score
4	Japan	154
5	Malaysia	153
5	Ireland	153
5	Canada	153
5	New Zealand	153
6	Greece	152
6	South Korea	152
6	Australia	152
7	Czech Republic	151
7	Iceland	151
8	Hungary	150
9	Malta	149
9	Poland	149
10	Slovenia	148
10	Slovakia	148
10	Lithuania	148
10	Latvia	148

Source: passportindex.org



# There are no short-cuts to success

Drifting away from the family business, **Bharat Bhushan Atree**, Managing Director, Caper Travel Company, found his true calling in travel and making people travel. Spearheading one of the biggest inbound travel companies in India, he is today diversifying into many other verticals.

**TT BUREAU**  
**Q**What inspired you to make a foray into the travel industry? When and how did it begin?

Having done my Masters from Australia, where I travelled extensively fuelling my passion to navigate the globe, I was unsure if I would either join politics or my father's construction company. However, realising my footing was neither one, I did a travel and tourism course and was soon employed by a small travel company in Bhikaji Cama Place. While being subordinated was not to my liking, the love and want to travel was now the focal point of my life

**Success Story**  
 Caper Travel Company began operations in December 1998  
 The company as of now employs more than 200 travel professionals who cater to inbound segment

and I realised that there was nothing in the travel business I couldn't do on my own. That is when I began 'Caper Travel Company' in December 1998.

**Q**What have been the biggest milestones in your career? What are the three fundamentals of success, in your opinion?

Caper began as a three-man team (including me). Over the years, we have become one of the largest inbound companies in India, growing to 300-plus employees. We faced a lot of competition, and the 'then' biggies, when threatened, also tried to shut us out. However, with hard work and driven by desire we overcame all challenges to be where we are today.

There is no short cut to success but in my opinion there are some guidelines to remember. I believe that if you want something, you can achieve it with determination. Always be true to yourself, and that way you'd always be able to justify your actions. Finally,



“Both Caper and I have expanded our horizons multi-fold. We have formed new SBUs, each working with a different market, including flight ground handling as well as hotel management. We have also diversified into the making of software for a smoother and hassle-free online portal.”

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

one should work, work and work some more, because if you don't succeed at first there will always be a second time.

## YOUNGACHIEVER

**Q**Tell us about some of the roadblocks you faced while establishing yourself in the business. What motivated you to keep going on?

When I began Caper, it was much against the aspirations my family had from me. I started out with my limited savings. As we grew, the

obstacles became different, as did the competitors. The market was small and each wanted the other's share. Caper was getting bigger with more people being hired and a new office space being acquired. Not only did we have to deal with other travel companies, but also had problems with existing employees. Fortunately, with the support of my family and staff, we could tide over rough patches and emerged at the top.

**Q**So far, you have achieved a lot in the industry. What are you setting your sights on next?

Both Caper and I have expanded our horizons multi-fold. We have formed new SBUs, each working with a different market, including flight ground handling as well as hotel management. We have also diversified into the making of software for a smoother and hassle-free online portal. We are creating a buzz with our hotel and hospitality company, especially in Goa.

Our latest venture is a luxury transport company and an outbound travel company. Our aim is client satisfaction and that is the one thing which we don't compromise on.

**Q**What are the causes that are of importance to you, and which contribute to the growth of the industry?

Travel is an ever-growing industry, but is also affected by global events such as recession and terrorism. Some of the causes which are important to the industry and can push growth and increase the numbers are good infrastructure, simplified and competitive tax for tourism products, so that we can compete with our neighbours. There is a need for tourism friendly policy and aggressive promotion and marketing of Incredible India as a destination. Also, there should be wayside amenities, clean toilets at monuments and training for taxi drivers and hawkers to respect tourists and not to harass them.



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# Post demonetisation, trade seeks tax rebate

► Contd. from page 2



**Manish Dayya**  
General Manager  
Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach

“The steps taken by the government regarding demonetisation of 500 and 1000 currency notes to curb black money, counterfeit and terrorism, has set the stage for a budget full of out of the box ideas. We are hoping for some key announcements to be made in the upcoming Union Budget 2017-18 related to lower goods and services tax, extension of e-Tourist Visa and promotion of medical tourism. We also believe that the government will increasingly focus on further incentivising the consumers to push digital payment options. At Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, we are all geared up to make infrastructural upgrades in support of this move by the government in 2017.”



**Pankaj Nagpal**  
MD, Travstarz Global Group,  
India Travel Award winner

“After demonetisation, we eagerly expect a people-friendly budget in terms of reduction of taxes. We are looking forward to the much discussed abolition of income tax, imposition of banking transaction tax and implementation of GST from April 1, 2017. The implementation of GST will be a very good move for the tourism industry considering all taxes will be merged into a single tax regime and will help in bringing the cost down. I feel the move to switch to digital economy will improve business especially for the on-line travel agents and even brick and mortar stores with ease of payment options. It will be important for the government to check the cost of each transaction for digital payments which are an added burden on the sellers.”



**Riaz Munshi**  
Director, N. Chirag Travels,  
India Travel Award winner

“We hope to see a reformed budget this year with reduction in income tax and various other duties. The government has overlooked the outbound segment of travel and thus no provisions have been offered to boost this sector. For the inbound segment of tourism, government-funded schemes for infrastructure development can be expected in the upcoming Union Budget 2017-18. The GST Bill is a positive move which when implemented, will streamline the multiplicity of taxes existing in the industry at the moment. However, the catch is that if the slab is 18 per cent for tourism then the tour operators would lose out on the competitiveness of the tourism products that they sell. GST slab for tourism should not be more than four per cent if we have to grow the industry in 2017.”

“For promotion of tourism and market development assistance, an amount of `600 crore needs to be earmarked in the next budget. Due to demonetisation, B2B business in the domestic travel has witnessed a decline and small scale tour operators are finding it difficult to sustain in business. A tax holiday for tour operators generating an annual turnover of less than `10 crore is expected in the budget. Even though Kerala gets more than nine lakhs foreign tourists a year, there is no direct air connectivity from Europe to Kerala. Better air connectivity from Europe to south Indian destinations should be given priority as Delhi and Mumbai are struggling with heavy air traffic congestion.”



**P. K. Anish Kumar**  
President  
ATTOI

“I expect that the government will roll out of the Goods & Services Tax (GST) from April 1, 2017, and ensure that its implementation is smooth. The government should also ensure that there is streamlining and rationalisation of taxes after GST comes into force. We want the authorities to further simplify corporate and individual compliances rather than multiply and complicate the current processes for us. Furthermore, this year's Union Budget should reflect the ministry's renewed focus on the development of infrastructure, specially tourist and not just civic, that should happen at a rapid pace so that it truly promotes the ethos of 'Incredible India' globally.”



**Harmandeep Singh Anand**  
Face of Innovative Tourism,  
India Travel Awards 2016,  
and MD, Jagsons Travels

“The main area of concern for us is the tax. We hope for a tourism-friendly tax rate to be rolled out so that both sides can benefit from it. Other countries in Europe and South East Asia already follow the idea of GST where the implementation has only simplified matters. Currently, the tax structure is too high and very confusing since there are so many of them, which affects the selling of tickets of any kind and packages. Demonetisation has already hit the tourism industry here and it will probably take another year for the situation to resume normalcy, so we need a budget that is going to propel tourism to greater heights, and not restrict it from growing.”



**Rajan Sehgal**  
Director  
Arrivals Air Services

Contd. on page 12 ►



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# Airfares for Haj, Umrah are skyrocketing

Ebrahim Hasham Kolsawala, Chairman, All India Haj Umrah Tour Organisers Association, says that the airlines charge exorbitant fares during the peak period for Haj and Umrah. He urges the government to focus on controlling the airfares during this time so that the pilgrims don't have to suffer.

 **HAZEL JAIN**

**QHow big is the Haj and Umrah market in India?**

Haj and Umrah travel in India is a huge market. Nearly 1,35,000 pilgrims have travelled for Haj in the last three years. The yearly Haj quota for India allotted by the Government of Saudi Arabia is 1,70,000 of which 1,25,000 travel through the Haj Committee of India and the rest through private tour operators.



Ebrahim Hasham Kolsawala  
Chairman, All India Haj Umrah Tour Organisers Association

Nearly 3,50,000 confirmed air travellers in a year is lucrative business for airlines and IATA agents

Umrah traffic runs through the year. Last year, more than 1,70,000 pilgrims travelled from India during the eight months of Umrah. In India, the peak season for Umrah is during the Muslim months of Rabiul Awwal (December) and Ramzan (May/June). Also, the school vacation period of April/May and December are peak period for Umrah groups.

**QAre there any challenges this sector faces?**

The airlines charge exorbitant fares during peak periods. The private tour operators reserve seats as per their quota and their city of departure through the airlines, mostly on scheduled flights but also on chartered and special flights. High fares are fixed because such a large number of pilgrims are confirmed to travel in a stipulated time and period. Nearly 3,50,000 confirmed air travellers in a year is lucrative business for airlines and IATA agents.

**QWhich airlines offer services for Haj and Umrah?**

Saudi Airline and Air India are the two biggest carriers for Haj pilgrims. Other airlines like Jet Airways, Emirates, Gulf,

Etihad and Air Arabia also follow these national carriers. But the biggest profiteers are Air India and Saudi Arabia in the business of Haj.

**QHow do you think this matter can be resolved?**

The government's focus should be to control airfares during the peak season. The pilgrims are the target. The

agencies/airline takes undue advantage of the demands of peak season and pilgrims are compelled to pay high fares. The normal Umrah fares used to be between ` 20,000 and ` 28,000 but it now ranges between ` 30,000 to ` 40,000. For Haj, it used to be ` 50,000 which now touches ` 65,000 to ` 72,000 on scheduled flights. A point to note is that no group can reserve seats in advance.

They can only block them on the condition that they will accept the fares that are declared at that time.

**QWhat is the reason behind such high airfares?**



The airlines cite negligible occupancy one way for chartered flights and extra flights during Haj. For this they can charge more but not exorbitant

fares. The airlines take undue advantage of this and charge the same fares for scheduled flights which is totally unjustified. The government of India has to take steps for controlling the fares on scheduled flights for Haj and Umrah during the peak period. It should also control unregistered tour operators who are cheating pilgrims. Their advertising should be restricted. Only registered

recruiting agents should be allowed on the strength of their license number.

**Need of the hour**


The Government of India can control fare on scheduled flights for Haj and Umrah and also control unregistered tour operators



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## Mumbai's evening in Paris



Lido De Paris-Bateaux Parisiens and Atout France organised a special screening of Bollywood movie Befikre #MadeinFrance at Insignia INOX, at Nariman Point on December 9, which was preceded by an evening of cocktails and aperitif at The Sunset Lounge, The Trident Nariman Point.

## Tech the way to theme parks

Rajeev Jalnapurkar, CEO, Ramoji Film City, and the only Indian representative in the APAC Government Relations Sub-committee of IAAPA, USA, explains how the attractions industry can help to increase tourist numbers to India.



TT BUREAU

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), Virginia USA, represents facility, supplier, and individual members from 99 countries and Jalnapurkar would be serving the Sub-committee for the year 2017. In 2017,

the Sub-committee's mission is to implement comprehensive communications and advocacy approach to educate key governments, media, consumers, public and other external constituencies. The Sub-committee will also formulate a three-year tactical plan to increase understanding and spread awareness

about the amusement parks and attractions industry in the Asia Pacific region.

Jalnapurkar comments, "India offers a tremendous opportunity to increase the number of amusement destinations. Beyond the metro cities, amusement parks are accessible to a much larger community and with this objective we aim to work with the national and state governments to create better entertainment avenues for visitors." He further points out



Rajeev Jalnapurkar  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ramoji Film City

Visitors' attractions like these can help domestic tourism as well and add entertainment activities for the youth travellers

that in comparison with any Asian country the number of foreign tourist footfalls in India is certainly low and to increase tourism attractions, the amusement park industry can add value and help in guest retention. The theme park industry is at the infant stage which offers an opportunity to contribute to its popularisation. "In order to popularise the theme park, water parks, family entertainment centres, attractions, museums etc., we need to bring in modern technology of mapping, laser show, holographic etc., which can create and enhance the experience at our heritage sites. Visitors' attractions like these can help domestic tourism as well and add entertainment activities for the youth travellers," adds Jalnapurkar.

IAAPI is also organising an annual exhibition which will see participation of various stakeholders from across the globe. IAAPI also rewards achievers in different disciplines.



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
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## Ras Al Khaimah announces strategic alliance with TUI

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) has announced a strategic partnership with TUI India to promote and enhance its presence in the Indian market. With this alliance, Ras Al Khaimah TDA aims to further strengthen the key aspects of the destina-



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

tion amongst the Indian audience. The partnership came into effect on January 1, 2017.

The agreement includes promotion of the emirate by TUI India through specially created itineraries, special promotions on its consumer website as well as a series of co-op activities and campaigns.

**Haitham Mattar**, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah TDA, said, "India is one of the top source

markets for us, we are aiming to enhance strategic efforts to drive awareness across India through our dynamic marketing campaigns and relationships with key partners in the public and private sectors. We are glad to begin the New Year with an association with such a renowned travel company and are looking forward to welcome more Indian tourists in future."

**Vishal Sinha**, CEO, TUI India, added, "Ras Al Khaimah is quickly becoming a leading choice for Indian travellers of all ages. We will focus on creating attractive packages and aggressive promotion of the destination through right mix of media channels."

With India ranked as the emirate's fourth largest international source market, RAKTDA has seen extensive trade and promotional activities to ensure continued growth from the Subcontinent. As per the latest official data, the northern UAE emirate recorded a 19 per cent rise in Indian hotel guests between January and November in 2016 when compared to the same period in 2015.

## Great expectations once again

► Contd. from page 8



**Luv Malhotra**  
Immediate Past President  
HRANI

minimum criteria in order to let tourism and hospitality industry grow from and within India."

"We have close to 30 days before the budget is going to be announced and GST is what we are looking forward to. We have advocated to the government that GST percentage slab for the tourism and hospitality industry should be kept in the lowest possible bracket as that can help make India a more competitive destination when compared globally and more so to its neighbouring destinations. We are also hoping that the tourism and hospitality industry is given the exports status. These two are the

"Our expectations are high but what fraction of the prospects will actually be implemented, we will get to know only when it's rolled out. GST is one of our main concerns for which the rate should be regulated along with double taxation on tickets. The most recent directive by the central government on service charge being optional is one of the moves to simplify the exorbitant taxes in the country, but it is only a small portion of the issues. We are also rooting for industry status for the tourism industry. There should also be an income tax rebate for salaried individuals and more benefits for them. Interest rate on various things like house loans, or cars etc., should be substantially reduced."



**Vijay Gupta**  
Immediate Past President –  
North India, TAFI Managing  
Director, Golden Phoenix Travel



**S.M. Shervani**  
Honorary Secretary  
FAITH

planning has been put on hold until the budget is rolled out. Once it's out in the open, only then can we attune our strategies accordingly and adapt to the situation that is brought forward."

"Every year we have big expectations from the budget and if it would work in our favour. The only expectation is that if we are on the lowest slab of GST, the industry will get an impetus and will be very encouraged to bring more business to the country. The budget will play an important role in our planning and will determine how business will fare this year. In addition, the effects of demonetisation are still ongoing and yet to be substantiated so most of our

"The Union Budget is a very important aspect of our economy and the entire country is looking for a progressive budget. As part of the travel and tourism industry, we are looking for a good amount of budget allocation to the places of interest for the tourists which will attract more inbound visitors to our country. We also expect a rebate on taxes like service tax, monument entrance fees, parking charges at the airports, reduction of excise duties and income tax as this will be highly appreciated. The entire world is looking at India to encash this opportunity. We also hope that the government will extend industry status to the travel and tourism business."



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# Tourism & AI on upward trajectory

With an aim to sensitise the travel trade and keep them abreast about the latest developments, PATA India Chapter hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> Update and Outlook Meeting with the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, and Air India on December 26, 2016, in New Delhi.



**Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary-Tourism, Govt. of India and **Ashwani Lohani**, CMD, Air India, were present on the occasion and addressed the gathering on their achievements and plans for the year ahead. **Runeep Sangha**, Executive Director, PATA India explained that the platform would be a good one to receive first-hand information from the respective bodies and for the members to give feedback via a Q&A session on issues pertaining to the industry and its growth.

Zutshi was optimistic about tourism's prospects for 2017 and provided an elaborate update on the progressive strides made by the Ministry to build on FTAs to India. He stated, "We have been exceeding the global growth of tourism and have stuck to our target of 10 per cent growth on an average for this year. Not only have we seen a drastic increase in international tourist arrivals, the domestic sector is equally flourishing. From 30-40 per cent growth in 2015, we are expecting the domestic tourism growth to touch around 60-70 per cent."

He informed that the Ministry of Tourism is working on several fronts to promote tourism in line with the policies and vision outlined by the Government. The Tourism Secretary also underlined several events such as the Incredible India Tourism Investors' Summit, Bharat Parv and Buddhist Conclave, and confirmed that another edition is planned for 2017 owing to their success.

Expansions and consolidation for the national carrier will go hand-in-hand, revealed Lohani, with plans to add at least 13 new destinations afoot. "We will be launching a minimum of six new routes in 2017 and about six more in 2018. The whole idea is to add 100 new aircraft by 2020 and to convert the existing fleet into a relatively newer one. 2017 will also focus on turning profits for Alliance Air along with the rapid expansion of Air India's fleet and number of destinations," he added.



(L-R) Vikram Madhok, Jatinder S. Taneja, Vinod Zutshi, Runeep Sangha, Ashwani Lohani, Pankaj Srivastava and Sanjeet

**Pankaj Srivastava**, Director – Commercial, Air India, and the team presented the significant stride the airline had made in recent times. As Air India Express turned a profit of ₹105 crore in 2016 for the first time since its launch, all possible efforts are being made to overcome legacy issues, the team reassured.

AI enhances free check-in baggage on Delhi-Mumbai route

■ Air India is allowing up to 40 kg and 50 kg of free check-in baggage for economy and business class passengers respectively on Boeing 747 Delhi-Mumbai service. Passengers flying on Delhi-Mumbai route can avail this facility from January 7, 2017. Presently, Air India allows 25 kg in economy class and 35 kg in business class of free check-in baggage on its flights as compared to 15 kg offered by other airlines. Air India is the only carrier to operate the 423 seater, four engine jumbo jet wide body aircraft called, B747 on the busiest route of India.

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**Growth Forecast**

From 30-40 per cent growth in 2015, the MOT expects domestic tourism to grow around 60-70 per cent



# Scotland on five-city mission across India

■ Ten tourism businesses are joining VisitScotland in India this week aiming to grow a market currently worth £12 million to the Scottish economy. The national tourism organisation of Scotland, partnering with Etihad Airways, is leading a two-week business development mission in the emerging



market. This in conjunction with the group's attendance at VisitBritain's three-day Destination Britain India event in Pune.

The VisitScotland business development mission will give companies such as Go2 UK Travels, a destination management firm which has reported a 200 per cent increase in Indian visitors to Scotland in recent years, the opportunity to hold face-to-face meetings with up to 400 key tour operators in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru.

In addition to the main schedule, representatives from

VisitScotland and the other companies will also conduct meetings with key partners in Pune and Ahmedabad.

Between 2013 and 2015, Scotland welcomed an average of 29,000 visitors from India, with the country's scenery, history, culture and whisky all proving particularly popular. **Malcolm**

**Roughhead**, Chief Executive, VisitScotland, said, "India is an important emerging market for Scottish tourism and this business development mission – our first of 2017 – will allow tourism businesses to meet face to face with tour operators. It will provide our partners with an excellent platform to showcase their products and we look forward to welcoming more Indian visitors to Scotland as a result."

The events were held in Bengaluru (Jan 10), Pune (Jan 11-13), Ahmedabad (Jan 14), and will be held in Delhi (Jan 17) and Mumbai (Jan 19).

# Refining the Indian palate

Reunion Island witnessed an approximate growth of 68 per cent in Indian tourist arrivals in 2016. The tourism board is taking up promotional activities such as Fam tours, training chefs and organising a food festival in Chennai.



Reunion Island offers a wide range of breathtaking landscapes and abundant scenic beauty. "Travellers looking for a new destination have opted for Reunion Island. Our major asset is the active and safe volcano – Piton de la Fournaise. The Island has tropical climate and is extremely rich in flora and fauna. A combination of beaches and mountains – Piton de Neiges – the highest peak; diversity in nature; spa and wellness; gastronomic experiences and fresh water activities are on offer at the destination," says **Rasika Mathur**, Senior Manager Sales & Marketing-India, Tourism Board of Reunion Island. She further points out that as 22 per cent of the population is Indian origin, Reunion Island has a high VFR traffic from India, especially the South.

**Vineet Gopal**, Director-India, Tourism Board of Reunion Island, informs that the



**Rasika Mathur**  
Senior Manager Sales & Marketing-India  
Tourism Board of Reunion Island



**Vineet Gopal**  
Director-India  
Tourism Board of Reunion Island

destination is expecting a higher double digit growth in 2017. To promote the destination, the tourism board is working very closely with the B2B and B2C agents and is focusing on educating tour operators and travel agents. "Visa procedure has also been simplified for Indian travellers. Connection to Reunion Island has been made easy with Air Austral which operates a non-stop flight between Chennai and Reunion Island twice a week in interline connection with Air India from various cities in India," says Gopal.

Mathur explains that for 2017, the tourism board has

designed various sales and marketing plans which includes promoting the destination through electronic, print and social media; participating in various travel events; organising roadshows for the travel trade partners; conducting familiarisation trips; revamping the website etc. Also, there are special training programs for chefs on preparing Indian cuisine in the pipeline. Reunion Island is organising a food festival in Chennai in February 2017 to showcase the local Creole cuisine to Indian travellers.

"Our initial focus is on packages and promoting the

destination with 6N/7D package. The package can be clubbed with neighboring islands, as Reunion Island is only 45 minutes by air from its closet neighboring Island Mauritius. Itineraries can be designed and customised as per the requirements of the tourists," adds Gopal. The cost of the package differs depending on the number of days, hotel category and activities tourists choose. According to Mathur, adventure activities both hard and soft are offered which no other island destination can offer. Trekking along the volcano; playing with dolphins, whale watching, deep sea fishing, paragliding, micro flights etc. are some of the popular leisure activities amongst Indians.

## Island Connection

✈ Air Austral operates a non-stop flight between Chennai and Reunion Island twice a week in interline connection with Air India from various cities in India



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# Domestic market growth @15% in 2017

The year 2016 witnessed a surge in domestic tourism with increasing number of Indians opting for experiential holidays to unexplored domestic destinations. While Jammu and Kashmir saw a decline in tourist figures due to political unrest, the biggest gainers were Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Goa and Kerala.



ANKITA SAXENA

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

## Popular Destinations

**Tushar Jain**, Director, Bulk Trip, informs that travel-

lers showed more interest in the North East, Kerala, Leh and Ladakh, Ooty, Coorg, Mysore and Goa. "These destinations have a good potential to draw travellers including families and hon-

Pradesh, Agra, Jammu and Kashmir and Kochi.

## Hidden Gems

"There are lots of hidden but amazing tourist destinations like the valley of flow-

domestic tourists, Jammu and Kashmir is developing Jammu and its adjoining areas as a hot-spot destination for tourists. Ladakh is already very popular with domestic tourists and it may emerge

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

## Trends

A common trend — to explore the unexplored — holds true for domestic travel as well. Khanna says, "Demonetisation and the upcoming Budget 2017-18, coupled with GST for tourism sector, will hopefully bring in a smooth transition in our economy leading to optimism in travel trade and domestic tourism shall also register its normal growth of 10-15 per cent."

## Way Forward

Sehgal feels that in order to boost domestic tourism,

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

## Hot Spots

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



P. P. Khanna  
President  
ADTOI



Rajan Sehgal  
Chairman-Northern Region  
TAAI



Tushar Jain  
Director  
Bulk Trip

eymooners. People also had frequent visits to metro cities for business purposes," he says. Other popular destinations for domestic travel this year were cities like Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur in Rajasthan; Shimla, Kulu, Nainital and Mussoorie in Himachal Pradesh; Gujarat, Madhya

ers in Uttarakhand; Gwalior, Orchha, Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh; Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh and they need awareness. The state tourism boards play an important role in this aspect," says Sehgal. Khanna adds, "Since Kashmir valley is not a preferred destination now among do-

as the next hot-spot destination provided connectivity improves. Apart from this, the Buddhist Circuit is also an emerging sector."

## Average Budget/Spends

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



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## New address for Akbar Holidays



Akbar Holidays recently opened a new office at Nariman Point, Mumbai. K. V. Abdul Nazar, Chairman & MD, Akbar Group, welcomed the trade partners and media at the opening ceremony.



## High demand for 3-4 star hotels

Hotel Park Ocean, which began operations in mid-2016, focuses on brand awareness and expects to grow its market share in 2017 through travel partners.



TT BUREAU

**Sandeep Jain**, Managing Director, Hotel Park Ocean, feels that the USP of the property is its pricing along with facilities such as meetings and banquet space, spa, swimming pool and international cuisine restaurant. The hotel's central location and accessibility to all means of transport like

the bus stand, railway station and the Jaipur International Airport adds to that list.

Jain informs that they began operations in mid-2016 and the property has been doing positive business. "We have great expectations in 2017 as we already have some business on the books and our business strategy for the summer and winter sea-

son will help us grab the market share," he says. In 2016, Hotel Park Ocean saw 60 per cent international guests and 40 per cent domestic traffic. Jain opines that there is a high demand for 3- and 4-star hotels which he is sure will increase day by day. He points out that nowadays maximum guests look for a budgeted accommodation which is well looked after and



**Sandeep Jain**  
Managing Director  
Hotel Park Ocean

We are targeting our own representations in major metro cities like Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata and Ahmedabad

3-4 star hotels are able to deliver this.

Discussing the growth strategy and marketing plans for 2017, Jain explains that the property is aggressively approaching the market. "We are targeting our own representations in major metro cities like the National Capital Region, Mumbai, Kolkata and Ahmedabad. We are collaborating with the print media and social media platforms to establish our presence as much as possible. We are also attending all major travel trade shows," he says.

"A large share of our business is from the partners and that is because we are very flexible with them. We work very closely with them in order to understand their business requirements especially market specific ones such as those from the European market, Far East market or the GCC market," adds Jain. The hotel designs market specific, tailor-made packages with its travel partners and also organises business networking events and familiarisation trips to update the trade about the products on offer, informs Jain.

# Travel SHOW

## ANNOUNCING EVENT DATES FOR TRAVEL SHOWS IN 2017!

**Experiential  
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April 8-9, 2017 (Sat - Sun)  
Delhi NCR

**Wedding  
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July 8-9, 2017 (Sat - Sun)  
Delhi NCR

**Technology  
SHOW**

September 2-3, 2017 (Sat - Sun)  
Delhi NCR

**Business  
SHOW**  
Beyond M.I.C.E

December 2-3, 2017 (Sat - Sun)  
Delhi NCR

## Exhibitors are invited to save the dates!

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\*Our exhibitors for the year 2016.



# Rail Museum chugs forward

The Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation along with TAAI and IATO will be promoting National Rail Museum as a cultural and heritage tourism spot.



NISHA VERMA

The Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) recently organised a curtain-raiser event — *Navotsav Saanjh* — with the members of TAAI and IATO in attendance. Gracing the special programme with his presence was **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, MOT, who said National Rail Museum and the likes have the potential to boost tourism in the country.

**R. K. Verma**, Secretary, Railway Board, revealed that they are focusing on heritage tourism and the event was one step towards promoting the same. "The national railway museum is a collection of all the old railway artefacts and we are trying to improve the infrastructure here and support this museum, so that people who come to India, especially Delhi, see the old wagons and coaches. We are trying to develop tourism here," he added.

**Uday Singh Mina**, Director, National Rail Museum,



**R. K. Verma**  
Secretary  
Railway Board



**Dr. A. K. Manocha**  
Chairman and Managing Director  
IRCTC

gave a detailed presentation about the Museum and the upcoming projects that they are working on to attract tourists and corporates to the destination. The programme also saw a number of cultural performances from Manipur as well as Punjab.

**Dr. A. K. Manocha**, Chairman and Managing Director, IRCTC, supported the thought saying that Railways has already spent close to ₹ 30 crores in upgrading this museum by providing musical fountains and renovating artefacts. "We have also provided double-storey restaurants, as well as restaurants where the

food is delivered by miniature trains. There are three simulators, which have already been installed and we are planning to put more simulators of diesel engine, steam engine, as well as that of a rail journey."

Manocha says they are focusing on attracting MICE tourists to the museum. "We want to organise various events, cultural programmes, handicraft shows, as well as the visit of foreign dignitaries. We have full support from the railway board in making this museum a lively place. We will soon be taking over the rail museum in Kolkata and will do some work for rail museum in Chennai."

## Agents explore scintillating Seychelles

Akquasun Holidays, Air Seychelles and the Hilton Group of Hotels jointly hosted a Fam trip to Seychelles for travel agents from Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The agents were offered extensive exposure on the destination, the products it has on offer for India travellers and the services and offers of the airline for the destination.



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# Deutschland lures the travel trade

German National Tourist Office (GNTO) India's four-city roadshow showcased the country's various tourism products to the travel trade to attract larger number of leisure and business travellers to the destination.

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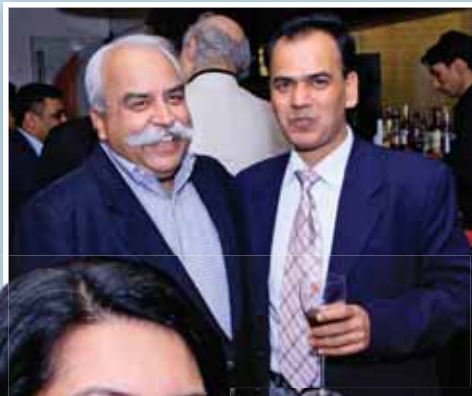


# network talk

*a social networking session*

# Travel trade rings in

The first Network Talk of the year, organised by TRAVTALK, and The Park New Delhi, saw the who's who of the travel industry in presence, as they exchanged New Year wishes and discussed work over canapés and cocktails.





# 2017 with the best in the business



Contd. on page 26 ▶

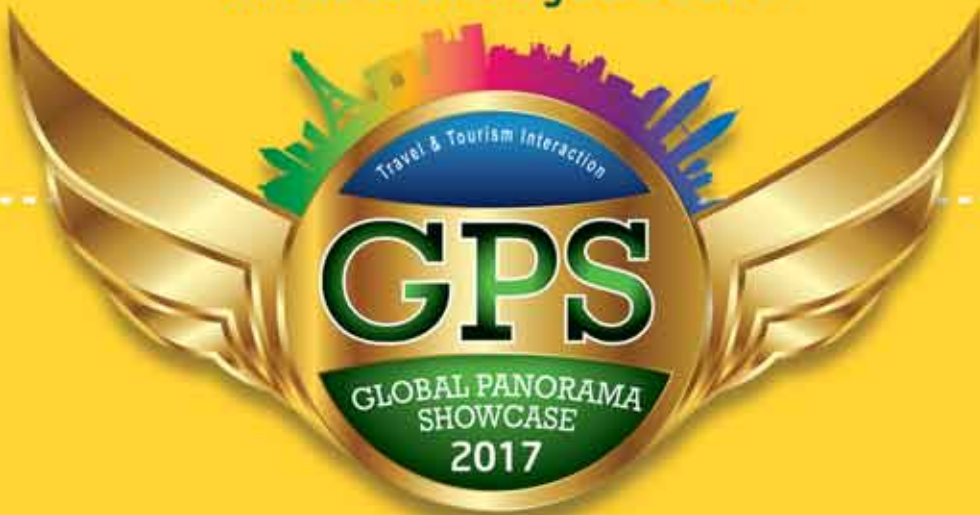


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# Kazakhstan means business

Kazakhstan is out to woo the Indian MICE market and the travel trade as it recently showcased its products at an event in New Delhi in association with Global Air.



**TT BUREAU**  
Organisers of the event, **Vikas Khanduri**, CEO, Holiday Merchants, said that they have been known as the Russian consolidators for a long time and hence they became an obvious choice to represent Central Asian region as well. "We want to project Kazakhstan as not

tives for corporates. We exclusively work with the travel trade fraternity, which too is inquisitive about this destination and wants to explore possibilities to sell it."

Stressing on the tourism potential of the destination, **Bulat Sarsenbayev**, Ambassador, Republic of Kazakhstan, says, "Kazakhstan is

are talks to increase the frequency to at least 10 flights in a week very soon. We also have charter flights between Almaty and Goa during the peak season."

Increased connectivity would be a great boon for MICE, revealed Khanduri. "With great venues, which can accommodate 400-500 people, and a daily flight there is a possibility of organising events easily in this destination. Economical hotels, vibrant lifestyle, and warm people make it the right place for any MICE activity," he added.

In fact, Sarsenbayev claimed that he has seen the numbers increasing between both the destinations. "When I joined in 2014, the number of Indians travelling to Kazakhstan was only 6000, and in 2016 we are expecting around 11,000 Indians travelling to the destination. In 2015, a total of 16,000 tourists travelled from Kazakhstan to India, visiting mainly Delhi, Goa, Kerala, Chennai and even Shimla."

# Experience Swiss winters

Switzerland Tourism has launched its summer campaign for 2017. The winter campaign focuses on active holidays and adventure activities in Switzerland.



**TT BUREAU**  
With focus on the winter tourists, the winter campaign — "You can but you don't have to" — showcases multiple options like skiing, sledging and snowboarding for the active traveller and Christmas markets, open air hot springs and igloo stays for the more relaxed visitors looking for pure white relaxation in winter. The summer campaign — "Nature wants you back" — to be led by Switzerland's Brand Ambassador **Ranveer Singh**, will be packed with an array of activities such as sky-diving, wakeboarding, canyoning etc. combined with Switzerland's best touristic and nature highlights.

**Claudio Zemp**, Director — India, Switzerland Tourism, says, "We had a very strong year last year with a 22 per cent increase and this year we are looking at similar growth. In terms of source markets too, India has grown. India is now the eighth largest source market for Switzerland, overtaking Holland and Belgium in Europe this year. We have done

Switzerland Travel Experience roadshows in five cities — Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, New Delhi and Kolkata — where we met both frontline travel agencies and key buy-

paign is a different take on relaxed holidays where one can give rest to the body not by sleeping but by indulging in soft adventure activities and live in pure environments."



**Claudio Zemp**  
Director — India  
Switzerland Tourism



**Ritu Sharma**  
Deputy Director — India  
Switzerland Tourism

ers. A few months ago, we had taken Indian agents to our India Workshop in Switzerland and have received tremendous support."

**Ritu Sharma**, Deputy Director, Switzerland Tourism India, adds, "Although Indians love to go on a vacation during the summers, we do hope for a change after the winter campaign. The summer cam-

She further informs that in 2015 nearly 600,000 Indians visited Switzerland but this is only the overnights in hotels. She says, "We are given to believe that tourists who stay in apartments, Airbnb and other forms of accommodations are nearly 200,000. This year we had set an internal target of 646,000 Indian tourists and looks like we will achieve it."



**Vikas Khanduri**  
CEO  
Holiday Merchants



**Bulat Sarsenbayev**  
Ambassador  
Republic of Kazakhstan

just a place with great nightlife, but with great entertainment, great MICE, niche tourism, as well as luxury travel. The response has been great and we have already started getting enquiries for incen-

not far away from India. It's only a three-hour flight from Delhi and there is great connectivity between the two destinations. Air Astana offers a daily flight between Delhi and Almaty; and there



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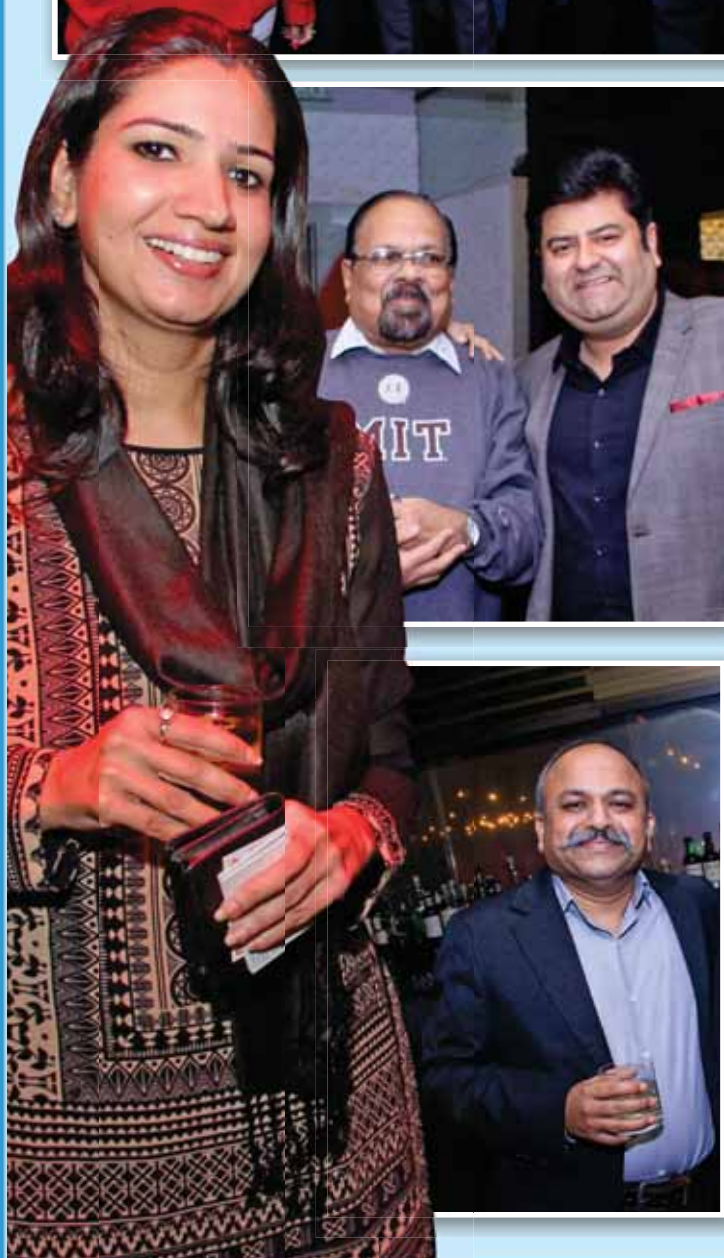
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## DID YOU Know?

### SE Asian economies steer ahead

David Scowsill, President and CEO, WTTC, said Southeast Asia was one of the best-performing tourism regions. In 2015, the contribution of travel and tourism to the economies of Southeast Asia grew by an average of 7.9%, ahead of South Asia (7.4%) and Oceania (6.2%).

## DID YOU Know?

### Muslim travel worth over \$138bn

GDP impact of global muslim travel sector exceeds \$138 billion, according to the first Global Economic Impact of Muslim Tourism Report by Salam Standard

# Dubai is now targeting MICE

Dubai Tourism office in India now has a separate team for Dubai Business Events, which would specifically work towards boosting MICE business from India.



NISHA VERMA

The first of its kind four-city roadshow for Dubai Business Events saw several stakeholders like DMCs and hotels showcasing their MICE offerings and products for MICE operators in India. Karina Lance, Senior Manager, Sales and Convention Services, Dubai Business

Events, informed why they wanted to focus on MICE business in India separately. "We have had an office here since the past 19 years, but now we have a dedicated team for MICE. MICE is one of the largest segments for us and we did what we had done five years ago on entering the Chinese market, where we specifically targeted incentives and con-

ferences from that market. We've had roadshows in the past promoting leisure, cruise, and luxury. However, business event is a different segment, and there is a different way to approach it. I believe that we need more technicalities, as the requirements and demographics of this segment are different, and that is what we are addressing here."

Carl Vaz, Director, Dubai Tourism – India, agreed and shared that the MICE market from India to Dubai is quite big and still has a lot of potential, which they are looking to tap. "Dubai is the largest outbound market in terms of numbers. In 2015 we had over 1.6 million Indians visiting Dubai, from leisure, business, MICE, as well as the VFR segment. Dubai Business Events as a team will now be much more active and aggressive in India, in terms of reaching out not

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Karina Lance  
Senior Manager, Sales and Convention  
Services, Dubai Business Events

MICE is one of the largest segments for us and we did what we had done five years ago on entering the Chinese market

only to the MICE industry, but also to the weddings segment, which is also part of events," he informed.

Lance said that they have an incentive program for MICE groups. "We have a certain matrix for different groups and numbers coming in. Whenever we get an enquiry, we evaluate the economic impact in the city, and based on that we offer different type of service, either in kind or sometimes a marketing fund, if the group number is very big."

She goes on to explain a two-fold strategy they will execute in the future. "We understand that we need to directly speak to corporate clients in different sectors, but at the same time, we also value the fact that those corporate clients also work with intermediaries and agents. Thus, our approach is always to work with the two," Lance added.

### Number Game

In 2015, Dubai had over 1.6 million Indians visitors, from leisure, business, MICE, as well as the VFR segment



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# GST continues to be on everyone's mind

In the wake of demonetisation, the travel and hospitality industry is expecting Budget 2017-18 to offer some relief and revive the industry growth trajectory. India Travel Award winners identify clarity on the GST Bill as one of the key hopes this year.



## ► Best Online Travel Product-B2B — RezLive.com

### Better promotion for tourism

**Jaal Shah**, Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group and Founder, RezLive.com, says that 2016 turned out well for the tourism industry, which is set to achieve greater heights with the support of all the local tourism bodies and incumbent government. He feels that the Ministry of Tourism has been pulling out all the stops to promote India tourism and this has further helped in employment and revenue generation for this sector.

"Few key steps have been taken to improve connectivity and accessibility but there are some areas where we need to improve like providing better travel facilities, improving infrastructure, rationalising taxes and pressing upon safety norms. Thus, the government needs to put in place a budget that will help promote tourism in the country and ultimately result in better industry revenues and employment opportunities," he says.



## ► Best Design & Debut Hotel — Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences

### Uniformity of taxes expected

**Sandeep Johri**, General Manager, Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences, explains that he expects uniformity in the tax structure from the upcoming Budget 2017-18. "This will result in consistent pricing in the hotel industry pan-India," he says. The GST Bill, which is expected to be rolled out soon this year, has raised expectations amongst the travel trade. The industry is hoping to see clarity on the same when it is implemented. "Also, I anticipate that relaxed tax slabs will lead to higher disposable income for people and hence better time for the hotel industry. We look forward to implementation of GST, that will bring everyone on a common ground," adds Johri.



## ► Best Inbound Tour Operator — Clubside Tours and Travels

### Revive tourism industry with incentives

According to **Suresh Periwal**, Managing Director, Clubside Tours and Travels, one of the most important reforms, to be implemented this year is GST. Periwal says, "The tourism industry had not recovered from the recession in Europe when demonetisation hit us. This move has had a huge impact on the outbound and domestic travel market. Any increase in the taxes applicable post GST will be a further deterrent for tourists to travel." He cites this as a vital reason for the government to consider the tax slabs reasonably under GST. "It is important that the Union Budget introduces incentives which will help to revive the industry from the setbacks we have seen," he adds.



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# EVENT TALK

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FITUR	Madrid, Spain	18-22
Best of Australia workshop	Kolkata	19
Visit Scotland roadshow	Mumbai	19
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Nagpur	19-21
IITM	Kochi	19-21
IATO Annual Day	NCR	22
6 <sup>th</sup> Thailand Tourism Forum 2017	Bangkok	23
EMITT	Istanbul	26-29
TTTF-WTTM	Mumbai	27-29
South African Tourism roadshow	Chennai	30
South African Tourism roadshow	Bengaluru	31

## FEBRUARY 2017

South African Tourism roadshow	New Delhi	1
South African Tourism roadshow	Mumbai	3
Austrian Tourism Board roadshow	Mumbai	7
U&I Holidays- Bali roadshow	Chennai	6
U&I Holidays- Bali roadshow	Bengaluru	7
IBTM Arabia	Abu Dhabi, UAE	7-9
Austrian Tourism Board roadshow	Chennai	8
CAPA India Aviation Summit	Mumbai	8-9
Austrian Tourism Board roadshow	New Delhi	9
U&I Holidays- Bali roadshow	Kolkata	9
IITT 2017	Mumbai	9-11
Visit Indonesia roadshow	Mumbai	10
U&I Holidays-Bali roadshow	New Delhi	10
Visit Indonesia roadshow	New Delhi	13
U&I Holidays-Bali roadshow	Ahmedabad	13
U&I Holidays-Bali roadshow	Mumbai	14
SATTE	New Delhi	15-17
Aviation Festival Asia	Singapore	21-22
AIME 2017	Melbourne, Australia	21-22
OTM	Mumbai	21-23
ACE of M.I.C.E	Istanbul, Turkey	22-24
IAAPI Amusement Expo	Mumbai	22-24
Philippines roadshow	Mumbai	24
IITM	Kolkata	24-26
Mysore Travel Mart	Mysuru	24-26
Philippines roadshow	New Delhi	27
TTF	New Delhi	27 Feb-1 Mar
ILTM Japan	Kyoto, Japan	27 Feb-1 Mar
Phocuswright India	Gurugram	28 Feb-2 Mar

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## ASSOCIATIONTALK

# Skål Bombay wants to corporatise

**Partha Chatterjee**, President, Skål Club of Bombay, has been trying to make the club more professional and streamline it while expanding its membership base by including individuals and entities from allied industries as well.



TT BUREAU

Ever since he took over the mantle in October 2016, **Partha Chatterjee**, President, Skål Club of Bombay, has been trying to corporatise it to make it more streamlined. It is already in partnership with networking organisations for expats and likeminded professionals and is in talks with chambers of commerce for joint functions of mutual benefit.

Chatterjee adds, “We are looking at twinning opportunities across the globe with like-minded cities on cultural, commercial, ethnicity and connectivity matches. Moreover, since feedback and communication forms the crux of any professional

organisation, our club is using its WhatsApp groups, Facebook and other social media platforms to reach out to its members and understand their needs.”

The president is also keen on expanding its membership base to include individuals from other industries as well. The club currently has 150 members but covering only airlines, consultants, destination management companies, hotels, inbound tour operators, cruise liners, outbound tour operators, reservation systems, tourism authority, travel agents and travel educational institutes. “There is scope to get memberships also from Mumbai airport, car hire, congress centers, golf courses, holiday camps, medical tourism, ports, railways, res-



**Partha Chatterjee**  
President  
Skål Club of Bombay

taurants, spas, sports tourism, travel insurance and the travel media. This will bring in new scope for ideation and general development,” Chatterjee reveals. The new committee has already inducted industry giants like **Jehangir Katgara** and **Sanjay Sethi** as advisors and will be inducting some more.

Not just numbers, the club also wants to change the

demography of its members. Currently, 80 per cent of the members are men and only 20 per cent are women. Also, 24 per cent of the total members are between 30-40 years, 36 per cent between 40-50 years and 40 per cent over 50 years. “So there is scope to change the mix and increase participation from women and the youth,” he adds.

### Upcoming Initiatives

- Skål Bombay is looking at twinning opportunities across the globe
- The association plans to expand its membership
- It will also invite more women and youth to join as members

# A masterclass from TAAI to students

The association’s Western Region Chapter wants its members to interact with students as guest lecturers at two of the educational institutes it has tied up with. Knowledge shared, it says, is knowledge gained.



HAZEL JAIN

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) Western Region Chapter is keen on making its members interact with students of travel and tourism from time to time to share their knowledge and expertise in the area. The association has signed MoUs with the School of Tourism and Hospitality at DY Patil University in Nerul in Mumbai’s Navi Mumbai region as well as the HR College for Degree course B.Voc in Tourism & Hospitality Management.

**Sampat Damani**, Chairman Western Region, TAAI,



**Sampat Damani**  
Chairman-Western Region  
TAAI

said, “We are continuing with our agenda to educate and mentor the next generation with relevant training and making the curriculum more to the industry specific. Not just the Managing Committee members but all our mem-

bers are free to go as guest lecturers at these institutes. We will also request Sudhir-Patil of Veena World to speak to the students at DY Patil.”

He added that the members could touch upon topics such as how tours are planned and executed, ticketing and reservations controlled by airlines. “We will be helping in designing the course and suggesting changes to the syllabus at DY Patil as well. The first batch will start in April 2017. The focus will be on making the course more practical and include industry practices and not just

theory. The students should be ready to be part of the industry once they graduate,” Damani adds.

He added that the students will be able to intern in some of the members’ offices as well as get help from them in campus placements. “We will also invite them for TAAI events so they can observe and interact with the community. Everyone wants a trained hand but if no one gives a fresher an opportunity how will they get trained,” Damani adds. The new course at HR College will also start from April 2017.

## MTDC bets big on local festivals



Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation recently organised its first ‘Sarangkhe Festival’ from December 13-27, 2016, in order to boost tourism in Nandurbar. The festival witnessed more than 2,000 horses and showcased horse dance shows and tribal dance by the locals.






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## InterContinental Hotel Group

### Greater Noida

**Greesh Bindra** has been elevated to the post of Regional General Manager, North & West India hotels in South West Asia by IHG. With an extensive experience of over 33 years across various brands, Bindra has been with IHG for almost 15 years now. He has completed his General Managers Program with Cornell University in 2006 and has also won many awards including the Best General Manager at India Travel Awards 2015. As the Regional General Manager, Bindra will further contribute to IHG's growth in the Northern Indian markets. Being the GM of Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, he will oversee the performance of the company's 13 hotels within the region.



## Wilderness Safaris

### Mumbai

Wilderness Safaris, Africa has appointed **Renuka Natu** to manage its sales representation in the Indian market. She has over 20 years' experience in the travel and tourism industry and in-depth knowledge of the Indian market. Previously, she has worked with Kuoni India and Switzerland Tourism before launching her own travel representation company in 2010. She has represented the Schilthorn Cableway and the Zanzibar Collection in the past and her clients are - East African DMC Vintage Africa, Governors' Camp Collection; African Hotels and Adventures as well as DMC for South Africa.



## AccorHotels India

### Gurugram

**Madhu Joshi** has been promoted to Director of Marketing for AccorHotels India. She will be responsible for providing marketing leadership for AccorHotels' growing portfolio of brands operating across a fast expanding network in the country. Joshi brings over 16 years of experience. She became a part of AccorHotels in 2009, joining Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and Hyderabad International Convention Centre. After a brief stint outside the group, Joshi returned in 2013 as the Director-National Marketing & Communications for Hotel Formule1, a position she held up until this appointment. She holds an MBA from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management.



## Alila Fort Bishangarh

### Jaipur

**Vijay Krishnan** has been appointed as the General Manager of Alila Fort Bishangarh, Jaipur. Drawing on more than a decade of experience in the hospitality business, Krishnan will be responsible for all operations. Previously, Krishnan was the GM of Four Points by Sheraton Jaipur where he had successfully completed the conversion of The Anya, Gurgaon to Starwood Hotels & Resorts. Krishnan started his career with the Oberoi Hotels & Resorts and went on to build his credentials over the years with Starwood Hotels & Resorts, The Park Hotels, Hyatt Regency and Le Meridien.



## Pacific World

### Noida

**Naveen Rizvi** has been appointed as the new Regional Director for Pacific World India and Indian Ocean Region. Rizvi will manage India, Nepal and Bhutan - as well as other countries within the Indian Ocean including Mauritius, Sri Lanka, The Maldives, United Arab Emirates (Dubai and Abu Dhabi), Oman and Southern Africa - will specifically focus on product development and innovation with regard to meetings, incentive and event experiences. Rizvi has over 18 years experience managing congresses, meetings and events in the region. He has overseen key conferences and diplomatic events in India.



## The Chedi Mumbai

### Mumbai

The 316-room Chedi Mumbai, GHM's highly anticipated hotel opening for 2017, will come under the leadership of Italy-born **Giulio D'Alberto**. D'Alberto's first encounter with GHM was in 2007 when he was promoted from the Director of Finance role to General Manager of The Chedi Milan, a position he held for more than two years. He returned to the GHM group in 2012 where he was assisting with pre-opening task force activities for new hotels, like The Chedi Andermatt in Switzerland. D'Alberto was recently with the Ahn Luh team for the Qiandao Lake project before taking on this project in Mumbai.



## Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road

### Jaipur

**Varun Goel** joins Crowne Plaza Jaipur as Crowne Meetings Director. He comes to Crowne Plaza Jaipur from Hyatt Amritsar where he held the Associate Director of Sales post. Goel has been associated with properties like The Taj Group of Hotels & Resorts and Lemon Tree Hotels earlier. He has done his graduation from IHM Aurangabad which is affiliated with Huddersfield University (United Kingdom).



**Sonal Malhotra** has been appointed as Associate Director of Sales at Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road. She would be leading the sales activities from Delhi NCR region. Prior to joining Crowne Plaza Jaipur, Malhotra worked with Radisson Blu, Accor group for over six years. Her expertise in handling MICE and Corporate Sector would further enhance and open doors to new opportunities for Crowne Plaza Jaipur.



D'Alberto will be supported by another longtime GHM staff - **Christoph Girsch**, the former Executive Assistant Manager in charge of hotel operations at The Chedi Muscat in Oman. Girsch joined The Chedi Muscat as the resort's Director of Food & Beverage in 2009. His role requires him to interact with a large multi-lingual and multi-cultural team, participate in marketing-related events on behalf of the property, and meet budget expectations. In this appointment as The Chedi Mumbai's Resident Manager, Girsch's experience will be brought to the fore as they raise the bar for luxury hospitality.

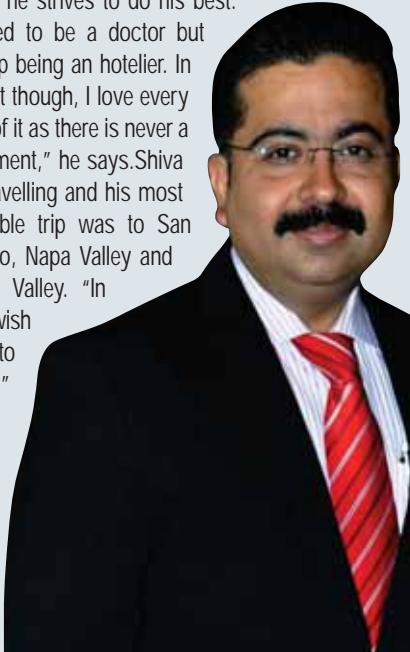


## TALKing People

**Manmeet Ahluwalia**, Marketing Head, Expedia (India), is learning Hindustani Classical music and he enjoys to audience theatre and recitals. Travelling is another activity which he relishes and wants to visit Egypt, Russia and Croatia in 2017 and would love to visit Cabo, Rome and Budapest all over again. He says, "Self-satisfaction drives me to work hard and I would like the millenials to know that we should take out time to travel, as it is very enriching and inspiring."



**Gaurav Shiva**, General Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore, unwinds by riding his bike. He is passionate about his work and when he's involved with a project at work, he strives to do his best. "I wanted to be a doctor but ended up being an hotelier. In hindsight though, I love every minute of it as there is never a dull moment," he says. Shiva loves travelling and his most memorable trip was to San Francisco, Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley. "In India, I wish to travel to Ladakh," he adds.



**Ritesh Mastipuram**, Founder and MD, O2 Spa feels that he has learnt a lot from travelling. "It's very critical to continuously keep learning from each of the visits. Identify the top three things that you have seen and try to improve and implement the knowledge in your existing organisation." Mastipuram spends his free time reading business and interior design books and magazines. He hopes to visit Vancouver, Alaska and Dubai in 2017.





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# e-visa overhaul opens avenues in '17

While last year was full of highs and lows for the travel industry, an optimistic **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary-Tourism, Govt. of India, reveals that India Tourism's double-digit growth surpassed the global tourism growth rate and chalks out plans to accelerate the progress in this year.



AHANA GURUNG

## How has 2016 been for tourism in India?

We grew faster than the world last year. If you take the figures of the past two years, particularly 2016, we have been exceeding tourism's global growth rate which is at about 4.5 per cent. The latest figures during January-November, 2016, were 78.53 lakh FTAs with a growth of 10.4 per cent as compared to the previous year. I am proud to say that we have retained the 10 per cent growth rate that we started with and feel that we are going to register almost 11 per cent growth in 2016 as compared to 4.4 per cent growth in 2015. Even Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from tourism witnessed a growth of 14.7 per cent with ₹ 1,38,845 crore collected during the same period over last year.

Domestic tourism has been growing at a fast pace too. We ended 2015 with about 1.43 billion domestic tourist visits; this year we may touch around 1.65-1.7 billion, which will be the highest number so far. Similarly, domestic tourism's growth rate is expected to touch 60-70 per cent over 30-40 per cent in 2015.

## What are some of the amendments in e-visa?

Thanks to the persistent efforts by respective people, the e-visa has been highly successful. During January to November, 2016, a total of 9,17,446 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 2015, registering a growth of 168.5 per cent. We started with 30-40 countries and today we have 161 in total. The demands that were raised by the travel trade on various platforms have been implemented as well.

As per the Cabinet meeting on November 30, the government has approved the e-visa for medical and business, along with the existing tourist visa. For the first time in this country, medical visa is going the electronic way and so is the case with business visa. This has been one of the biggest landmark decisions, and it's going to catapult Indian tourism into a new orbit.

The best thing is that the e-visa application period, which used to be 30 days, has been extended to 120 days, which

will be more convenient for foreigners who plan their travel much in advance. The validity was just 30 days and now, it has been increased to 60 days. Also, when tourists come to India, they would like to visit other countries of South East Asia and come back so we have made a double entry for e-tourist and e-business

creatives on Indian heritage and have selected 36 monuments for it. We are also going to pick out more themes which will cut across all the states. With a focus on Jammu & Kashmir and the North East themes, we are on a spree of making films — various international channels have made eight documentary films for



“I'm proud to say that we have retained the 10% growth rate that we started with and feel that we are going to register almost 11% growth in 2016 as compared to 4.4% in 2015. Even FEEs from tourism witnessed a growth of 14.7% with ₹ 1,38,845 crore collected during the same period over last year.”

**Vinod Zutshi**  
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India

visa. For e-medical visa, triple entry has been provided and is a redeeming feature. Film visa has also been streamlined and rationalised which has come at the right time and will encourage film tourism.

us on the NE, one on each state. Another five films are being planned to promote MICE, adventure and medical segments.

## How far has infrastructure and tourist circuit development progressed?

Over the past two years, we have sanctioned a total of 49 projects worth ₹ 4162.99 crore under Swadesh Darshan which have been taken up by the states. We have also increased the sites in the PRASAD scheme and added eight more for development in West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, and two in Uttar Pradesh for which projects are being sanctioned. 2016 is one of the unique years where we have spent funds worth a year's work, in the first six months of the year. We plan to double that amount this year so that development of tourism is consistent and ongoing.

## What steps are you taking to ensure that India's diversity is portrayed in promotions?

After a brief hiatus, we are back in domestic marketing and have picked up various themes representing different states. Presently, we are running

## How is MOT addressing the issue of visibility?

Visibility has always been of importance to us and we have always sought out different ways to make ourselves more prominent. The media campaign we have launched is unprecedented. We have reached out to various news houses and travel channels and are about to launch the second phase of the media plan in January. It will run for the next six months so that there is a continuity of our visibility in national and international media.

### Tourism benchmarks

- Tourist helpline and SMS-based campaign has received over 4000 queries and 3.5 crore SMSes in a year of its launch
- MOT had set a pavilion and a session on tourism at Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas from January 7-9 in Bengaluru
- First meeting of adventure task force was held on Dec 21, 2016, and plans to organise the Adventure Travel Trade Association's (ATTA) convention are afoot

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