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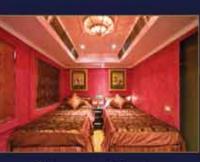
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AI invested on disinvestment?

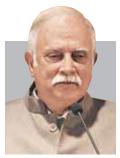
In view of the Niti Aayog and Finance Ministry suggesting privatisation of the national carrier, there are lots of questions arising over the need of this step and how it would pan out, if at all.



Inion Finance Minister Arun Jaitley recently suggested disinvestment of Air India owing to the debt the airline has till date. This comes after Niti Aayog-the government think tank-had recommended strategic disinvestment recently, claiming that the centre does not need to put in more money into the PSU despite it being in debt of around `50,000 crore.

P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Union Minister, Civil Aviation, reportedly said, "Niti Aayog has made a recommendation for the course of action for Air India. They have suggested to take steps to make it a strong and viable airline." He revealed that they were examining all courses of action to ensure this and they are not closed to any options. Similar thoughts were echoed by Jayant Sinha, Minister of State for Civil Aviation.

R.N. Choubey, Secretary, Civil Aviation, claimed that the government's primary focus is to deal with the debt. "I don't think it's easy to have a strategy for Air India right now. Selling the airline would of course be difficult because of the debt overhang it has. There are recommendations coming from all quarters, but the single most important thing is how to handle the debt. Once we find a solution to that, which will require huge buy-in by the finance ministry and the banks, then we can have a few options available, and we will decide what to do. If we solve the debt problem. we will see if there is still the need to privatise Air India, as there are many people who want the government to retain the airline in its fold," he said.



P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju Union Ministe Civil Aviation

Niti Ayog has suggested to take steps to make Air India a strong and viable airline

Saying that debt restructuring or debt swap is also an option, Choubey claimed that



Secretary Civil Aviation If we solve the

debt problem, we will see if there is still the need to privatise Air India

all this comes after a decision is taken by the ministry. which is still not clear. "Right now, as an option, there are other assets with Air India as well. If the government takes a decision to sell it. they will see if its gets more money by selling all the assets together or by selling all of them separately but simultaneously. That is a decision the government will take after a transaction advisor analyses things."

Speaking on the Finance Minister's statement, Choubey said that the minister was only sharing his views. He insisted that stopping investments in Air India is only half the solution, as it could lead to the sinking of the airline. The other half of the problem is vet to be solved.

However, he asserted that the employees' interest will be completely protected in every scenario. In fact, he said that manpower expens-

es are not a problem with Air India. "There has been no recruitment in Air India for the last 20 years, except for pilots and cabin crew. As a result, the per aircraft to manpower ratio is about 120:125 which is comparable to any other airline. Twenty years back, it was twice this number. Thus, now owing to low manpower, at least that one burden is not there. We only have to handle the debt burden, not the manpower burden," he added.

Options for Govt

- Whether to privatise the ŕ airline or not Ł
- If the airline is to be privatised then will the bid be open to national or international buyers
- Should the Govt maintain a stake in the ownership

How to make lean period pay

The tourism and hospitality industry of India believes that in order to beat the lean season of May-July and pitch the country as a year-round destination globally, the industry needs to join forces that would counter the existing challenges, consolidate the various tourism products and target newer source markets.

ANKITA SAXENA

Promoting lean season in India has been a challenge for a while. We have been trying to promote summerbased tourism circuits, with itineraries covering Amritsar, Dharamshala, Srinagar, which are cooler places, but unfortunately, tourists visiting India are still stuck to the usual Delhi-Agra-Jaipur circuit, which does not perform well in summers. We need to market our alternative tourism products better to get more tourists during sum-



Managing Director Trans India Holidays

mers. Also, a good strategy would be to promote the fact that though it is hot in India for popular itineraries, the destination offers value for money.

India has been perceived as a hot destination and the best we have are the mountains in the Himalayas that can be marketed as tourism products during the summer months in India. A large number of tourists visit Nepal for trekking and other activities while we do not get a fraction of that number as we have not marketed ourselves well. Also, it is a good idea to promote alternative tourism products during lean seasons like adventure tourism and Vasco Travel, India Travel even MICE which can generate reve- Award winner

Vikas Abbot Managing Director

nue throughout the year. The government should lay emphasis on better promotion and also establish India as a safe destination. Any price benefit or incentive can be useful in getting more tourists during lean seasons. 77





Director Senkay Travel With Difference

the above-mentioned months, then looking at other source markets is a good strategy to have year-round tourism.

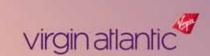
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BULLETIN

India perfect to tie the knot

FICCI's maiden Wedding Tourism Summit was held from May 25-26 in New Delhi. State governments and private stakeholders in attendance discussed opportunities in order to leverage India as a wedding destination.



The first FICCI Wedding Tourism Summit witnessed as many as 30 exhibitors, including all major hotel chains in India, interact with 50 buyers, some leading wedding planners and organisers in the country, in pre-fixed B2B meetings. Out of the total buyers, 20 were from Delhi-NCR and the rest came from other parts of India, informed **Rahul Chakravarty**, Senior Director and Head-Tourism, FICCI.

Rajasthan, the partner state for the Summit showcased various products in the state that can cater to the destination weddings segment in India. "We realised that the wedding tourism segment is growing rapidly and impetus has to be given to highlight this niche segment of travel. Thus, FICCI organised this firstof-its-kind Wedding Tourism Summit. Other FICCI events in the pipeline are Tourism Investor's Summit in July, Odisha Travel Bazaar in October and



a Tourism Policy Meet, which is scheduled to take place this year," he added.

JYOTSNA SURI

Addressing the gathering, **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said that India is doing very well in the field of tourism but if India has to achieve the target of two per because people coming for weddings stay longer and they spend more. Thus, with that perspective, there is a need for us to come up with a cogent game plan about what we need to do to promote wedding tourism and this Summit is the first initiative towards that," Billa observed. He also informed that MOT has taken

SUN

cent share in global tourism

by 2025, then work has to be

done on diversifying several

note of the issues raised at the show like making it easier for charters to fly in and out; improving connectivity and taxation policies amongst others and will work on a plan to aid this segment of tourism.

According to Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee "Destinations are taking the front seat while planning weddings these days. Keeping that in mind we decided to bring the entire ecosystem in tandem. We are trying to tap into the international market from the US, UK and other parts of Europe and at the same time hold back the Indians who are travelling abroad for destination weddings." Suri said that India has an abundance of very unique, exotic destinations that cater very well to Indian weddings and there is a need to highlight India's potential in this regard.



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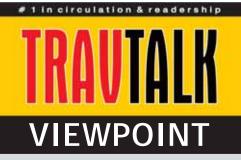
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GUESTCOLUMN



For tourism, lean is not FIT!

While outbound from India in the summer months sees a heavy traffic every year, the inbound market is still struggling. Touted as the lean period for travel by most inbound agents and hotels, the period from May to August results in low business as well as low occupancy. However, places like Dubai, with higher temperatures than India, as well as Singapore and Thailand, which too have tropical climate, still receive ample number of tourists. The reason is clear-apt marketing and the right products to attract tourists throughout the year. From amusement parks to adventure activities, they manage to grab the fancy of travellers from around the world. India can not only develop some tourist products, but also promote night tourism in the warmer regions. For agents, there is a need for better packaging, by incorporating cooler locations or mountains. Sticking to traditional markets might not reap benefits, as people from other regions also travel during these months, and these could be tapped as potential markets by agents and tour operators. Even MICE activities can get revenue to sail through these months. Summers shouldn't be that cruel after all!

No respite for hotels

ST is imminent, and while taxes have to be Gpaid, hoteliers were in for a rough deal with 28 per cent GST slab for room rent over `5000 per night. While associations did submit their concerns and recommendations to the Finance Ministry, the GST Council in their meeting on June 11 did not pay any heed to their pleas. Despite reducing GST for 66 commodities, the government was unable to see the hotel sector as a provider of infrastructure instead of a source of luxury. High taxation aside, the hotel industry is already dealing with the liquor ban as well as declining Average Room Rates (ARRs) owing to Online Travel Agents (OTAs) and hotel aggregators. While this could be a better prospect for budget hotels, the supply growth in the premium hotel category in India is expected to be only 5 per cent during 2017-2020. The current scenario looks grim and there is hardly anything to look forward to in the future, unless reforms are taken, both in terms of policies and regulations.

Vikramaji

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Editor & Publisher

Peden Doma Bhutia Managing Editor

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Shivani Kaul Asst. Desk Edito

Gaganpreet Kaur Asst. Manager Marketing

Ensure to insure domestic travel

While buying travel insurance is mostly mandatory for international trips, many travellers ignore the same when venturing out for domestic travel. Tourists need to be aware of the benefits and importance of a domestic travel policy.

Travel insurance is sought mostly when someone is travelling abroad and is asked for it. Those who mandatorily buy a travel insurance policy are still few. These are usually the financially aware elite who know the benefits of availing travel insuranc e while heading off to a distant and unknown land. With the advent of the backpackers' culture in India, there's a hike in the desire to travel to unexplored places.

While one is usually packed and prepared for the known adventures, any external and unanticipated emergency during such a trip can turn a dream destination into a financial nightmare. Insurers have taken cognisance of the kind of risks one is exposed to while being away on tours and have created domestic travel insurance policies. One may dismiss it but the analysis of road accident data 2015, compiled by the Transport Research Wing reveals that about 1374 accidents and 400 deaths take place every day on Indian roads which further translates into 57 accidents and loss of 17 lives on an average

every hour in our country. Umpteen cases of loss of baggage, delay in flights, etc. are reported daily, causing a domino effect not only on the entire trip itinerary but also on your pocket.

Medical Emergencies

A policy offers monetary compensation in case of policy holder's death or any form of permanent disability caused during the trip. It also offers medical fee reimbursements for accidents/illnesses encountered during the course of the journey. Additional covers like emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of remains etc. ensure that travellers would not have to incur out of pocket expenditures for the medical exigencies he had to face.

Accidents

A lot of youngsters these days undertake several adventurous activities bucket listed by them. Due to the high risk involved, insurance policies earlier would not cover accidents consequential to these activities. However, this huge caveat in the travel insurance policies is now addressed as off late certain insurers cover

accidental bodily injury caused whilst you are performing such sports under the supervision of trained professionals.

Cancellations and Delays

Travel policy protects you against expenses incurred in cutting short your trip or its cancellation owing to the death of a close family member or medical emergency to you or your immediate family. Expenses incurred due to missed connections due to flight/train delays, bounced hotels etc. also stand covered. Such last minute cancellations and delays can amount to a lot of money and your travel insurance takes care of it all.

Lost Baggage

If you lose your baggage while travelling in a cab, train or aircraft due to theft or hold-up or it gets delayed due to situations beyond control, then your travel insurance policy reimburses you for the lost baggage or the additional necessary toiletries, medicines, etc. that you had to purchase as a replacement, on producing an invoice for them.

Theft

While you're busy posting pictures of your jaunts on social media, enjoying the bliss of a new landscape, your home stands deserted, exposed to the vagaries of burglary and theft. As most of us do not have a home insurance in place, insuring your home against such threats through your travel insurance policy, at least for the period that you're away, can be a good start.

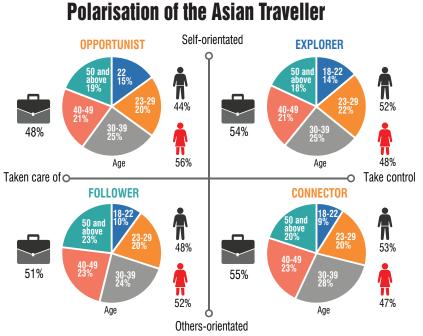
> (The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



T.A. Ramalingam Senior President and Chief Distribution Officer, Bajaj Allianz

Asian travellers love to explore

Touted as the world's largest travel market, Asia Pacific will account for 42% of global air traffic in two decades. It is imperative to analyse the type of travellers that Asians are, in order to enhance their travel experience and help businesses evolve with them.



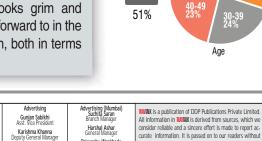
Establishing the defining characteristics of Asian traveller types will reveal their needs and aspirations. This knowledge presents opportunities to be more relevant, but the marketplace has to respond appropriately. Four out of five Asian travellers feel travel is no longer a luxury but a necessity. But 58 per cent of Asian travellers do not want to be taken care of - they want to take control. As the businesses behind travel, it is important to review how the traveller types differ from one another to keep re-adjusting and evolving with today's travellers.

Mapping out these polarisations gives rise to four distinct traveller types, with the largest proportion of Asian travellers falling into the Explorer type.

(Source: The Polarisation of the Asian traveller report by Sabre/The Future Company Research | Base: 3233 online respondents. Asia Pacific 2016)

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MUMBAL



Priyanshu Wankhade Manager Advertising Susan Eapen Marketing Co-ordinator

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STATES

Touring Arunachal to be simpler

Arunachal Pradesh government wants to merge multiple Inner Line Permits that domestic tourists need to apply for to access different regions into a single permit, while increasing air connectivity. P.D. Sona, Parliamentary Secretary, Tourism of Arunachal Pradesh, speaks to **RVAK** about the same.

HAZEL JAIN

Aware of the hurdles that http://www.communication.com/states/stat ates, not just for foreign tourists but even domestic, Arunachal Pradesh's Department of Tourism has said that it is working towards easing it. Voicing this concern is P.D. Sona, Parliamentary Secretary, Tourism of Arunachal Pradesh, who says, "We are aware of the problems that Indian passport holders

in remote areas for defense purpose that will now serve dual purposes and be used for civilian operations as well, which should sort a lot of problems of connectivity." These airports are already in place and are not under the UDAN scheme. Sona adds that the department has floated a tender and is in talks

with multiple airline operators for charters that will include small aircraft and choppers.

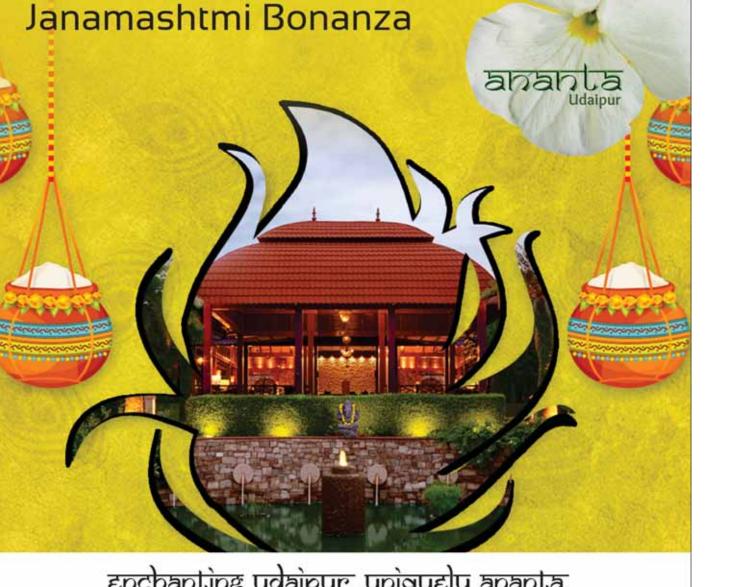
While domestic tourists arrivals have shown an increase, it is the international tourist arrivals that are worrying for the state due to security restrictions. To this Sona adds, "We do get a lot of international tourists but the only hitch is the restrictions on them entering the state. They have to seek Protected Area Permit (PAP) which is creating a bottleneck. We have been pursuing this matter with the Central Government but understandably they have reservations regarding this because of the international border."

Sarovar Hotels launches The Lazizi Premiere Nairobi

Sarovar Hotels has launched The Lazizi Premiere Nairobi, a luxury hotel positioned inside the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA). The hotel, managed by Sarovar Hotels, was inaugurated by H. E. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya. President Uhuru Kenyatta officially opened the 144-room premium hotel as part of the government's tourism and hospitality transformation strategy. Conveniently located inside the JKIA airport, The Lazizi Premiere Nairobi is designed to be the best and most luxurious hotel in the area.

Speaking at the launch, K. Bakaya, Manag-Ajay

ing Director, Sarovar Hotels, said, "Kenya is the business hub for Africa and has one of the most diverse accommodation facilities. Nairobi being the hub of East Africa offers a great launch pad for our expansion and growing our footprint in the African region. Travellers in transit, airline crews and other local and international visitors intending to avoid traffic enroute to the airport have not had much luck as most hotels are still quite a distance from the main international airport in the capital city. We are aiming to tap that segment with The Lazizi Premiere."



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Honorary Parliamentary Secretary Tourism of Arunachal Pradesh

We have planned a review meeting on issues such as multiple Inner Line Permits that Indians need to apply for to access the different districts in the state

face when entering and travelling within Arunachal Pradesh. So we have planned a review meeting for the same. We plan to resolve issues like multiple Inner Line Permits that Indians need to apply for to access the different districts in the state. We want to make them into a single permit with a time limit."

The state is also aware of the lack of connectivity to the mainland and has therefore put a plan of action in place. Sona reveals, "We have developed multiple Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs)

Connecting masses

nfo@templatolio.com

- Multiple Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) developed by the state government in remote areas for defense purposes can now be used for civilian operations further solving the connectivity problems
- Under UDAN scheme, the tourism department has floated a tender and is in talks with multiple airline operators for charters that will include small aircraft and choppers

Air Astana to fly Delhi-Astana from Jul 2

Air Astana has announced the expansion of their Indian operations by adding new flights between Delhi and Astana, starting July 2, 2017. The airline offers three times a week flights with onward domestic Kazakhstan and international connections within Air Astana network. Travellers can fly from Delhi to Astana with fares starting from just `18,592 return allinclusive. Those wishing to attend Expo 2017, which will be hosted by Astana city between June 10-September 10.

The airline is also of fering connecting flights between Delhi and Istanbul via Astana, starting from 33,861 all inclusive. The DEL-IST flight departs from Delhi at 12:00 hours and arrives at Istanbul at 21:10 hours, while the IST-DEL flight departs at 22:10 hours and arrives in Delhi the next day at 10:55 hours.

Time to don new cape in S Africa

South African Tourism aims to bring to the forefront all its unexplored natural bounties and showcase more than just Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban, reveals Sisa Ntshona, CEO, South African Tourism in an interview with TRAVTALK.

F Karishma Khanna from Durban

Please share vour Qinbound traffic numbers in terms of percentage growth? Any in the pipeline?

Currently, we are experiencing record numbers that have never been experienced before. We saw about 10 and a half million international arrivals in the year 2016. We are poised for further growth in 2017. However, it's important to note that the world has a travelling population of over a billion. So we still get less than one per cent of the market share. South Africa has set its target of increasing its market share of the international arrivals, and this has led us to a simple strategy that we have to attract an additional 5 million international arrivals to our country in the next 5 years. This is driving our focus and resources and our efforts are aligned to that.

QAny special offerings/ strategies specifically targeting Indian tourists? The better we know our

target audience, the better we are able to market to them our tourism products. It's also important to know that you cannot look at the Indian market as one homogenous market. It's got different flavours and different preferences and we want to make sure that we cater to each one proficiently.

How's your campaign Q"Wow in every moment" been doing?

WOW! Its doing great! It was a very simple campaign. We look around for big words, but "wow", which is the simplest one, is the perfect word to describe the feeling that surfaces when people get to experience and actually interact with South Africa. The "Wow



campaign" was all about what's

that natural emotion coming

through as people discover our

country and that was very suc-

cessful. Kind of really simple

What are the high-light destinations in

South Africa that Indians

provinces and believe me, we

have not brought all of them to

the fore. We have been focusing

South Africa has nine

but understandable.

can explore?

66We have been focusing primarily on three provinces: Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg, But now we want to bring the others to focus as well. You can go from Northern Cape, which is almost like a dessert and is known for star gazing in the night sky, to Limpopo. 🄊

Sisa Ntshona

CEO. South African Tourism

primarily on three provinces: all the time and we are going to bring all of them through quiet Durban, Cape Town and Jo-

hannesburg. But now we want

to bring the others to focus as

well. You can go from Northern

Cape, which is almost like a

dessert and is known for star

gazing in the night sky, to I im-

popo, where the safaris are. We

want to have a melting pot as

you put it - even if you come

to South Africa for the 3rd or 4th

time, you will not be repeating

what you did before. There will

be new experiences unravelling

Anything else you would like to add?

loudly going forward.

Indian market is a very important market for us. We are investing a lot of resources and time into it, and we are working with all of our partners, inside as well as outside of the Government, to make sure that we forge hassle-free connectivity between the two nations.

Spotting the next disruption in travel

Virtual Assistants or chatbots, video reviews or an all-inclusive personalised online itineraries, what could be the next big wave in digital travel? Experts give their opinions. DEBATE



Nikhil Ganju Country Head, TripAdvisor Domain – Online travel content, reviews

The area where we are seeing the maximum in-trip activities is in reviews and I feel video reviews are going to change the way people perceive feedback. We started working on video reviews a cou-

ple of years ago for our app and launched it recently. The interesting thing is that you can only do the reviews in real-time, while experiencing the property, and in the mobile context, it seems much more natural. The property may not be able to act on a negative review immediately, but will be able to solve the problem for the next guest.



Abhishek Rajan Head-Travel Marketplace, Paytm Domain - Mainly online payments, now expanded to travel

The entire booking flow can go from search and result to a virtual assistant or chatbot addressing your requirements. This is definitely going to change the face of how bookings will be done. Several companies

like Kayak, Expedia and Skyscanner have already experimented with it for flight bookings. On the experience side, virtual reality is going to be key in the decision-making part of a traveller's journey, where they can have a glimpse of the destination and understand what they're really getting into. This applies for hotels too. The qualitative experience is generally paramount in this aspect.



Sharat Dhall COO, Yatra.com

Domain – Online Travel Agent

Holiday packaging part is still largely offline and has not taken off all that well online. Everybody is grappling with that challenge in terms of how to stitch it all together. An online player, who is able to do that without a glitch,

particularly in markets where things are a bit complex from an overall travel perspective, in terms of infrastructure, modes of transport, different kinds of accommodation, sightseeing and attractions, will really be the distinguishing factor in digital travel.



AVIATION AirAsia X flies Mumbai-Bali

Indonesia AirAsia X has recently launched Mumbai-Bali direct daily giving added impetus to not just leisure traffic between the two countries but also business.

TT BUREAU

Taking advantage of the liberal bilateral agreements that have been signed between India and Indonesia, Indonesia AirAsia Extra has started a direct flight from Mumbai to Bali (Denpasar) from May 19, 2017. This will be a daily flight, with a 45-minute layover in Kuala Lumpur. The airline will operate on this route using its A330-300s with 377 seats (12 flatbeds and 365 in economy).

Capt. Sulistyo Nugroho

Hanung, CEO and Director, Flight Operation, Indonesia AirAsia Extra, who was in Mumbai to announce this development says, "We had been looking to connect the two countries for a long time. We are the first low-cost carrier to start a long-haul flight on this route. We will probably start with low load factors, but expect the numbers to increase not just from Mumbai but also from Bali. We have good domestic connections from Bali to JogJakarta, Solo, Jakarta and Surabaya,



but we are looking to connect other cities in Indonesia as well."

Indonesia AirAsia X does not have any interline with any other airline for this route. However, it will enjoy the Fifth Freedom Right that will allow it to carry passengers from Indonesia to India and from here to a third country. Hanung adds that AirAsia offers international connections from Kuala Lumpur to places like Japan and Australia with cheap fares for passengers from Mumbai. "We have always seen demand grow once we put in capacity. We do plan to add more cities from India as well as Indonesia. like Jakarta or Medan."

Suresh Nair, General Manager (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal), AirAsia Berhad, says, "We started the flights with an introductory fare of `2552 (plus taxes). Currently, we are offering a return fare of `14,999." Saut Siringoringo, Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia, adds, "We saw more than 380,000 Indian arrivals to Indonesia last year without a single direct connectivity. This second connection between the two countries will ensure that this figure will multiply. We are also working to get Bollywood and are in discussions with a few production houses."

Munich beyond connections

Munich Airport is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year by reinventing the concept of an 'airport city'. It offers a seamless and convenient gateway to Europe.

TT BUREAU

Donning many a feathers in its cap, Munich Airport is the only European airport that has been awarded a 5-star ranking by Skytrax and was voted 'The Best Airport Terminal in the World' in 2017. According to Corinna Born, Director of International Media Relations, Munich Airport, the location of the airport serves as the gateway to other European destinations. "We think we have a very unique airport concept because we are an airport city offering a clinic, variety of events, plethora of shopping and dining outlets, hotels, visitor's centre, kindergarten, beer garden, etc.," says Born.

Commenting on the connectivity from India, Born informs that there are two nonstop daily flights from Delhi and Mumbai, operated by Lufthansa to Munich. Munich Airport serviced over 42 million passengers in 2016 and is expecting to register a three per cent growth in 2017. Of the total traffic at the Airport,



Corinna Born Director of International Media Relations Munich Airport

Over 59,000 Indians arrived at Munich Airport in 2016. Out of the total arrivals 64% were on business trips while the rest were for leisure

only 30 per cent is contributed by transit passengers. "Over 59,000 Indian nationals arrived at Munich Airport in 2016. Out of the total arrivals, 64 per cent were on business trips while the rest were for leisure. We feel there is a lot of opportunity and capacity to stay in Munich, visit and explore the city and beyond," adds Born. Adding on transit flights, she elaborates that on the long-haul network within the Lufthansa Alliance System, 13 onward connections to North America are offered, which is one of the main connections taken by Indians.

The Airport strives towards providing its passengers a seamless travel experience and is upgrading its technological facilities. "We have recently come up with InfoGates, which offers real-time video support to passengers and helps them get their bearings more quickly and allows them to request individual directions," points out Born. In April 2016, the Airport opened Europe's most modern airport facility-a satellite terminal. "It is a mid-field terminal connecting T2-the Starline servicing terminal through an underground people mover. It increased Munich Airport's capacity by 11 million passengers, making Munich Airport an even more attractive transit hub," adds Born.



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Sun, sea & sand beckon Indian tourists

Come summer or winter, Indian travellers are seaward bound. Travel industry experts throw light on which beach spots are doing well with discerning Indian travellers as they love discovering new destinations.

T BUREAU

Indians love beaches and have been frequenting destinations like Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Travellers from India prefer these destinations for the simple reason that air connectivity is seamless from the country and getting a visa is easy. Even when it comes to accomodation, the hotels and resorts options are aplenty, which gives value to the Indian traveller.



Director, Click2Travel.in and Sapphire Ventures

This is exactly what the Indian customer is looking for-new destinations and value for money.

Mauritius has

been а very popular beach destination among Indian tourists for a very long time. One of the recent favourites among Indian travellers is Seychelles, especially with direct flights on Air Seychelles. Even Maldives is very popular because of direct connectivity to the island nation. Apart from that, there are many other islands and countries, which people are travelling to, not just for beaches, but for other

experiences as well. Beach destinations are mostly popular with honeymooners, who prefer exploring new places and gain unique experiences. 77



Proprietor, Sun and Sand Tours and Travels

In my opinion, the number one

beach destination for Indian cus-

tomers is the Republic of Maldives.

Our company has been promoting

this destination a lot with excit-

ing offers and packages. Another

popular destination among Indian

travellers seeking a unique beach

experience is Seychelles. Other

than that, every travel company has

been promoting Mauritius in the

Indian market for a very long time.

For beach tourism, people are travelling both outside as well as within India. Many outbound destinations are doing very well in this segment. The affluent or luxury travellers prefer destinations like Bora Bora and Tahiti in the French Polynesia, as well as Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean, while travellers on a budget prefer exploring beaches in Thailand. Other beach destinations such as Maldives, Mauritius, and Hawaii are also gaining



QUICKBYTES

President Ad-Voyage Travels

popularity among Indians. I think we need to catch up and develop our beaches, as we lack right infrastructure in India.



Traditionally, popular beach destinations among Indian travellers have been Phuket, Langkawi and Penang for their hospitality and services. However, now some upcoming exotic destinations such as Maldives, Bali, Bora Bora, Tahiti and others have caught the fancy of the Indian traveller. Earlier there were a lot of air connectivity issues from India. Now, with different international airlines plying to these places,

Managing Director Capital Tours

Indian travellers have shifted their interests to more exotic sites such as Seychelles and other locations with great hotel and resort options.



Director Lets Travel

There are queries for these destinations as they offer great connectivity and hospitality at various hotels and resorts.



Director Arrivals Air Services

For beach tourism, internationally I always prefer the South of France-Monte Carlo, Cannes, St. Tropez, etc. I think that place has the best of beaches. In Spain there are some of the best beaches, which are easily accessible from India. While there are good beaches in South America and other places as well. but connectivity and travel cost is very high. Also, closer to India, Thailand has some of the best islands, and now even Sri Lanka is coming

up very well, as they are trying to promote their beaches and other tourism products to Indians.

Agents: Wind beneath Air India's wings

Air India celebrated its trade partners and hosted an evening of entertainment and dinner for them at the Pride Plaza Hotel, Aerocity, which saw in attendance the bigwigs from the travel fraternity as well as some of the top professionals from Air India under one roof.



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HOTELS

Lemon Tree Hotels operated Sandal Suites opens doors

The launch of Sandal Suites, operated by Lemon Tree Hotels, marked the opening of Noida's first upscale serviced suites. Sandal Suites features 195 suites, extensive banqueting facilities, numerous dining options, and an array of recreational facilities, in a contemporary setting. These serviced apartments, situated just off the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway, are located within Assotech Business Cresterra, the LEED Gold Certified office complex in the IT hub of Sector 135, Noida.

Speaking at the launch, Rattan Keswani, Deputy Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels and Director,

Carnation Hotels Pvt. Ltd., said, "This occasion marks a few 'firsts' for Lemon Tree Hotels - it is the first property Lemon Tree Hotels (through our management arm, Carnation Hotels) will be operating in Noida, and our first foray into the upscale serviced suites space. This is also our first partnership with Sandal Suites Pvt. Ltd., one that we hope to see grow in strength in the coming years.

"The launch of Sandal Suites is in response to the growing demand for comfortable and convenient extended stav accommodation options for business and IT professionals in our vicinity." he added.

116 ASI monuments under MOT, open to PPP model

The Ministry of Culture has offered a total of 116 ASI monuments to the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), which would then be open to Public Private Partnership model. This was revealed by Rashmi Verma, Secretary of Tourism, in

a meeting with Federation of Associations in Indian Travel and Hospitality (FAITH) recently. Under the PPP model, these monuments will be taken over by private players for the upkeep, maintenance and to be illuminated for night tourism as well.

Plaza Premium aims 200 by 2018

Song Hoi-See, Founder & CEO, Plaza Premium Group, in an exclusive interview with RWAK revealed the company's growth plans for India and the world. He talks about branching out to Tier-II cities in India.

TT BUREAU

QWhat is your growth Strategy for India and rest of the world?

While our business has huge potential, this is a business where I can't create another branch in the same city because there's only one main airport in general. After that. I have to go crosscountry. According to Airports Council International (ACI), there are about 2,000 airports around the world and 1.000 of which would work well for us. Now our network only covers about 35 international airports or in other words just three per cent of this market. We will continue to focus on global network expansion in Premium Airport Services to travellers. Our target is to achieve a total of 200 locations by 2018 from our existing over 140 locations, encompassing development and enhancement of the quality of our four pillars of core business, namely management and operation of independent airport and airline lounges,

airport transit hotels, airport meet and greet service locations, and airport dining facilities. We will be investing over \$100 million by 2018 to fuel our expansion plans including new airport lounge development in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australia.

QWhat initiatives have you taken to promote the brand?

Given the nature of the business, we do extensive BTL marketing i.e. promotional campaigns, PR, sales promotions, exhibitions and various events worldwide. We do ATL marketing as well, as it is a tool which cannot be ignored. In addition, with the boost of online industry, we are heavily concentrating on digital marketing for the coming year. Currently, we are active on social media and other digital platforms to converse and engage our followers.

Do you also engage with travel agents?

We have B2B tie-ups with numerous travel agents



and they contribute a sub-

stantial amount of business.

We can customise pack-

ages as per the require-

ment of travel agents to

accommodate their needs.

Since we do not only of-

fer lounges but also have a bouquet of other premium

Apart from credit card companies, what kind

of other tie-ups are you

individual banks and other

We are also looking at

airport services.

looking at?

fuel our expansion plans including new airport lounge development in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australia. 🍤

> Song Hoi-See Founder & CEO Plaza Premium Group

corporates. Of course, our major business comes from our airline partners and that will only continue to grow with the expansion of the global aviation market.

QWhich are the other cities in India you are considering opening your lounges at?

We are looking at all major airports as well as Tier-II airports in the country for expansion. Hopefully, we will share some good news soon.

MoCA takes flight with UDAN scheme

Ministry of Civil Aviation hosted a dinner to celebrate its ambitious Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme in Delhi, which was attended by not only the ministry officials, but also stakeholders in aviation. Union Civil Aviation Minister P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju, along with Jayant Sinha, MoS Civil Aviation, as well as R.N. Choubey, Secretary Civil Aviation welcomed the guests and thanked them for their support.



INTERVIEW

C&K plans 300 franchises in 2 years

Extremely satisfied with the way its franchisee model is working in India, Group CEO, Peter Kerkar, says that Cox & Kings (C&K) now plans to expand this model to 300 more outlets in the country.

HAZEL JAIN

Peter Kerkar Group Chief Executive

> When we first started

franchises

of Cox & Kings.

in 2017-18?

Cox & Kings?

accounted for

How is the franchise Qmodel working for Cox & Kinas?

We chose to take the franchise route because each franchisee acts like an entrepreneur-the dedication they have in selling our holidays and the way they get to the grassroot level. We have chosen people who are high on taking initiatives and then give them an advertising and a marketing platform that allows them to use their entretinue to roll out our projects both abroad and hopefully India in the next 24 months.

C&K has also Que. focusing on reducing debt. What's the current status?

We continue to focus on reducing debt. When we did our leverage buyout, we were at approximately `6,000 crore of debt. Today it is at 3,400 crore and we have

committed to the market and our shareholders that we will bring it down by `300-500 crore every year because we generate that kind of cash in the business.

Your comments on Uthe impending GST.

Anything that formalises the economy and captures trade and traction helps organised players like us. We want people to be in the

formal economy because we don't deal with that side of business. GST is another way of bringing people from informal economy to the formal economy and that is always beneficial to organised players.

Q^{What} is your take on traditional operators v/s OTAs?

As of today, every offline player has an online element.

We ourselves have close to 5,000 crore of turnover that comes through the net. India is unique in that and our specialisation is to deal with complex, dynamic packaging and itineraries which today are delivered not just by Indian OTAs but by big OTAs worldwide. So I think we are in a very strong position. Also, the customers love interacting and where there is a human element, where they

know they can hold the company responsible, they need visa, foreign exchange, etc. and we provide full service to them and we do not abandon our clients ever.

Social bond

Ļ

Cox & Kings set up a school in Pune and is sponsoring over 200 underprivileged children.



Trade gives a thumbs-up to Shandong

Select agents from India were taken on a Fam recently by Shandong Airlines to experience the Chinese province. While all of them appreciated the friendly service, language barrier and food remained an issue for many.

Nisha Verma

Shandong, for Chinese nationals, is a major tourist destination with five million plus domestic and ethnic Chinese tourists. However, it is still a virgin territory for Indian nationals. Shandong as a province is a tourists' delight being blessed with nature in abundance and untouched environs. The icing on the cake is the breathtaking visit to Mount Tai, which is a must do. The visit to Qufu, the home- Managing Partner town of Confucius, is truly experien- Ambe World Travels tial. Shandong can sure be a part of a



Anil Kalsi

holiday itinerary of China. Flying Shandong airlines is the most convenient way to cover this beautiful province of China.

The Shandong region is bestowed with magnificent and varied scenery and beautiful landscape. A stroll through Qufu means walking in the footsteps of one of China's greatest philosophers- Confucius. There's something for everyone to do in Shandong Province-activities to explore and learn, relaxing activities for business travellers on the move, as well as adventures. From an Indian perspective there could be one or two issues, especially language and food. Once taken

care, it will be an ideal destination, not only for tourists but for business events as well. Of course, I must make a mention of the personalised, detail-oriented, and friendly services.



Director Wish Bone India India Travel Award winner

Shandong Province is a mustvisit destination in any China itinerary. The beautiful city of Qingdao is the Germany of Far East, especially for beer lovers, as it is the hometown of world famous Tsingdao Beer. Qufu is the hometown of Confucius, and is amazing for history lovers. During this trip we also explored the beautiful city of Tai'an, which is the base town to visit the beautiful Mount Tai. Jinan is known



QUICKBYTES

Head-Outbound High Flye

for its many natural springs, most prominent being the parkenclosed Baotu Spring. The connectivity to this region has been made easier with direct connectivity from India (ex-Delhi) by Shandong Airlines.



Travelling in Shandong Airlines was simply an outstanding experience, both in terms of comfort and client-oriented service. With both business class and economy class product, it would certainly appeal to the Indian market. As far as the destination is concerned, it has lot of potential to appeal to the Indian market. All the cities have something to offer, whether

Executive Director Paras Holidays

it is Qingdao, Qufu, Tai'an or Jinan. The beauty as well as friendliness of Shandong citizens would definitely attract Indians.



Manpreet Kaur Sabharwal Marketing Head- Online Sales, Weldon Travels

temple. Shandong Airlines offers great connections to all the major destinations in Shandong from Delhi, which could really appeal to Indians.

offering a full day visit to the Confucius



Manager-Sales Travel Boutique Online India Travel Award winner

The Shandong Airlines' flight had great leg space and comfortable seats. In terms of flight experience, the onboard entertainment was not very good, and also the crew was not fluent in English. Shandong as a region was very good and would appeal to Indians. Shandong Tourism has to extend assistance regarding food, especially for vegetarians. Weather is good and pollution-free. The properties we stayed in throughout the trip were very good. Also, the experience at the Tsingtao Beer Museum was very good.

Agents discover the Balkan region

Indo European Travels, a DMC specialised in European travel for the Indian market collaborated with Indo Asia Holidays to conduct roadshows in New Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata to promote Slovenia, Central Europe and the Balkan region.



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DATE	TRAVEL	SESSION
Thursday-06-Jul-2017	Mumbai	10:00 - 16:30
Friday-07-Jul-2017	Rajkot	09:30 - 13:30
Saturday-08-Jul-2017	Baroda	10:00 - 16:30
Monday-10-Jul-2017	Ahmedabad	10:00 - 16:30
Tuesday-11-Jul-2017	Jaipur	10:00 - 16:30
Wednesday-12-Jul-2017	Delhi	10:00 - 16:30
Thursday-13-Jul-2017	Chandigarh	10:00 - 16:30
Friday-14-Jul-2017	Delhi	10:00 - 16:30
Monday-17-Jul-2017	Lucknow	09:30 - 13:30
Tuesday-18-Jul-2017	Kolkata	10:00 - 16:30
Wednesday-19-Jul-2017	Hyderabad	09:30 - 13:30
Thursday-20-Jul-2017	Chennai	10:00 - 16:30
Friday-21-Jul-2017	Bangalore	10:00 - 16:30
Saturday-22-Jul-2017	Coimbatore	10:00 - 16:30
Monday-24-Jul-2017	Mumbai	10:00 - 16:30
Tuesday-25-Jul-2017	Indore	09:30 - 13:30
Wednesday-26-Jul-2017	Nagpur	10:00 - 16:30
Thursday-27-Jul-2017	Pune	10:00 - 16:30
Saturday-29-Jul-2017	Goa	09:30 - 13:30

RSVP: Mr. Trushant Phone: 022 4083 6790 Email: learnsouthafrica@southafrica.net



TECHNOLOGY

ADTOI holds by-elections

■ The Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) held its by-elections recently and has elected a new Treasurer and Joint Secretary for the team. **Rajesh Arya**, Director, India International Tours & Travels, is the new Treasurer of ADTOI and **Dalip Gupta**,



Rajesh Arya Director India International Tours & Travals

Director, DGS Travel House has been elected as the Joint Secretary. The by-elections were held after the resignation of Kamal Gandhi and Debashis Dey from the above posts, respectively.

Speaking on his appointment, Arya said, "It's a challenge, at the same time there are a lot of things to do and many things we need to change. We have to do our convention and some events from time to time. Also, we are planning to host events and exhibitions twice or thrice a month in various states." Gupta, on the other hand,

said, "Recently our membership had gone down. We'd like to increase our membership and want to work for our members. We met the Secretary-Tourism recently and dis-



Dalip Gupta Director DGS Travel House

cussed about the challenges we face to get Department of Tourism (DOT) recognition for domestic tour operators. The guidelines which have been finalised are a bit tough for us because we all are medium or small-scale agents and we do not have much staff as per their requirements. Thus, we have requested them to amend the guidelines so that maximum of our members become DOT approved. They have approved the same and we are giving them a complete proposal from our end."

Nucore all set for India log in

Nucore Software Solutions has set its eyes on India and by 2018, they plan to cater to the region with the launch of a SaaS-based programme, along with several other products.

TT BUREAU

Nucore Software Solutions mainly caters to the Middle East and African markets, where they boast of a presence in 11 countries across these two regions. Proclaiming themselves to be a solution provider for various types of businesses and not just a vanilla tech company, Nucore's products look at every aspect of business management, from finance and accounting to business analytics.

Suhail V P, Chief Executive Officer, Nucore, says that although they have strong presence in Qatar, KSA, UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Africa, plans to cater to the Indian market are afoot. He reveals, "India is our home ground and we have to come back, albeit slowly and steadily by 2018. For India, we need to have a different strategy and will be releasing a completely SaaS-based programme, which will have less depend-



Chief Executive Officer Nucore

For India, we need to have a different strategy and will be releasing a completely SaaSbased programme, which will have less dependency on the implementation and support

ency on the implementation and support. On the same lines, we have already signed agreements with hotel consolidators and travel franchisee."

Nucore does not just apply automation to reduce human effort but also increases efficiency, productivity and profitability. Suhail explains, "Our main targets are the travel agencies and travel management companies (TMCs) where we handle, manage and bring transparency in the business. Managing accounting, finance, business intelligence data etc. are a few things that we look in to add value to a business. That is why we are not just a typical technology company. "

They also provide direct profit generating solutions through their services where the user can defend their revenue leakage and increase their revenue, which, according to Suhail, is not what every technology company can do. "A technology provider cannot technically impact the revenue. It can only head a business to do their booking or accounting perfectly, but we can connect with the various business ideas of an organisation and give an integration to see if any better options are available."

Through Nucore, a business owner is also able to view the progress at every level and make the most of hidden and unused data. Seeing that data analytics is currently one of the biggest trends, information that can be used to personalise services to another level, like which airline is the most profitable in a certain region or which passenger spends the most, and other details which help in decisionmaking can be determined. Traacs is Nucore Software Solutions' flagship product, which can be analysed in multiple ways and are graphic oriented and easy to understand. Other Nucore products include GDS Mate, Travtics, Traise, HR Mate and Credit Control System among others.



CRUISES

Celebrity Edge woos Indians

Celebrity Cruises is eyeing the high-end Indian cruise market for its newly introduced ship - Celebrity Edge, which will begin sailing from Fort Lauderdale, Florida to Eastern and Western Caribbean regions in December 2018.



The very popular cruise line — Celebrity Cruises — has opened early bird bookings for its newly introduced vessel, Celebrity Edge, and is luring the ultraluxury market in India. Represented by TIRUN Travel Marketing in India, the cruise is offering 7-night sailings from December 2018 to March Commenting on the Indian cruise market, Chadha feels that cruising has not been high up on the consideration set amongst Indian travellers because of various reasons. She says, "The cruising market in India is still immature; there is lack of exposure to the products and a dearth of cruise brands in India; many myths plague cruising as people assume it is expensive or that

they may get seasickness, and the landlocked part of India has not yet opened up to the idea to cruise holidays." According to her, the knowledge quotient regarding cruise products in the Indian market is very limited and it is important for the distribution channels in the country to be more proactive and pitch cruises to their customers. The company works closely with travel trade partners.

"We engage with travel partners in unique formats. Almost 76 travel agents registered for the online training programme; as many as 101 people registered for the webinar, which included a presentation on the product and live interaction. We also conduct one-to-one meetings in a road show format in key cities," informs Chadha.

Air India mulls Guwahati-Bangkok flight

Air India has a market share of 17 per cent in the North East, which seemingly is a profitable sector for the airline. Ashwani Lohani, Chairman & Managing Director, Air India informed that while some sectors are not profitable in the North East, overall the operations remain gainful as they get a viability gap funding from North Eastern Council (NEC). He also informed that they are considering to operate a direct flight between Guwahati and Bangkok or between Guwahati and Kunming thrice a week. He informed that they

Travelport

Redefining travel commerce

are planning to start a new flight between New Delhi and Guwahati from June 28, taking the number of flights on this route to two. Also the Guwahati-Kolkata flight is most definitely on the cards. The airline is also start ing new flights under UDAN to Pathankot and Ludhiana. They will be starting new flights from Lucknow from June 25 to Jaipur, Dehradun and Bhopal routes. "In South India, we will be putting an airplane in Bengaluru this month, which would be flying to Coimbatore, Chennai and Madurai." he added.



Ratna Chadha Chief Executive TIRUN Travel Marketing

2019. **Ratna Chadha**, Chief Executive, TIRUN Travel Marketing, says, "We are not looking for the masses. It is those customers who see value in our offering and are



Apple Woo Head - Sales and Marketing Celebrity Cruises

looking for an experience that only we can offer them. The industry in general and our distribution partners in particular are required to break the myths surrounding cruising in India. It is only then will people see the value in this segment, which is definitely not a niche product."

"Celebrity Edge has introduced a new concept of Infinite Staterooms that takes an entire room right to the vast sea's edge," informs Apple Woo, Head, Sales and Marketing, Celebrity Cruises. The ship offers 1467 staterooms, with double occupancy capacity of 2918. Out of these staterooms. 918 are Edge Staterooms with Infinitive verandas. The ship also has 176 suites, 7 per cent more than those on Celebrity's other ships, adds Woo. For the new ship, the company is targeting markets in Mumbai, Delhi, Gujarat, Punjab and Kolkata.





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Leisure Inn Shrey, Jodhpur opens doors

Australian hotel management company, StayWell Hospitality Group has extended its international footprint with the opening of its fifth property in Rajasthan, the Leisure Inn Shrey in Jodhpur. Rohit Vig, Managing Director for StayWell Hospitality Group in India, said that the opening of the new property solidifies the brand's presence in the region. "We have signed 12 hotels under the Park Regis and Leisure Inn Brands, which will result in the opening of properties in Hyderabad, Goa, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Gurgaon–Sohna Road and Greater Noida," he said.

The opening of Leisure Inn Shrey in partnership with Hukam Constructions & Hotels Pvt. Ltd will deliver a roof-top restaurant and conference facilities along with well-appointed rooms and international service standards that the Leisure Inn brand is famous for. Additionally, the hotel will house the famous vegetarian restaurant 'Grand Chanakya' which has a sister restaurant under the same name in Jaipur at the Leisure Inn Grand Chanakya.

MMT scouts for more hotels

Having identified hotels and international airlines as big growth areas for itself, MakeMyTrip is scouting for more acquisitions after Goibibo. **Deep Kalra**, Founder and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip, speaks to WAK about the growth areas for the company.

HAZEL JAIN

After the recent merger with Goibibo, MakeMyTrip Ltd. is looking to acquire technologyoriented hotel solution providers. Revealing this is Deep Ka-Ira, Founder and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip. He says, "For us, growth will continue on the hotel side. We have been growing very fast in this area with high double-digit growth, even reported triple-digit growth. We have identified international air and hotels as big growth areas for us."

Speaking about the integration with Goibibo, Kalra says, "We have to appreciate that it's not just a merger on paper but of people. There are a large number of people on both sides. We have 1500 members and Goibibo has about 1200 people plus red-Bus. Ever since we got our approval from the Competition Commission of India in January, we have been working on a pretty intensive plan." This started with the leadership team on both sides with 18 people and slowly involved more people. The idea behind this, Kalra adds, was to appreciate skills and strengths on both sides and get to know each other. The company, which will soon get a new name too, has moved into a new office with everyone.

INTERVIEW



Deep Kalra Founder and Group CEO MakeMyTrip

> We have 1500 members and Goibibo has about 1200 people. Ever since we got our approval from CCI in January, we have been working on a pretty intensive plan

MakeMyTrip now also has about 600 agents-all women-working from home under its Holiday Experts Program that was launched five years ago. "We had been trying to get experienced people for a long time. After a lot of research, we realised a lot of the experienced people had fallen off the grid because of maternity issues and such. We wanted to harness this talent so we support them with our technology and hardware," Kalra adds.

The 'experts' logged-in from home after training and tackled leads and gueries shared by the company. It has over the course of time about 1,000 people working under this program. Extrapolating on this, Kalra adds, "The time is not too far when everything will move online. Air ticketing today is 60 per cent online. Hotel booking is also 15 per cent and moving online rapidly. Holidays are the final frontier. However, I must add that customised holidays and bespoke vacations will continue to stay offline."

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INDIA TRAVEL AWARDS

Industry awaits clarity on GST

South India Travel Award 2017 winners deliberate on challenges ahead owing to the 28 per cent GST slab for hotels with per day tariff of `5000 and above. As many factors weigh on the minds of these industry stalwarts, TAVTALK finds out roads that can be taken to improve India's tourism competitiveness.

ANKITA SAXENA

Best Metropolitan Hotel – Ramada Chennai Egmore

Reconsider a single tax slab for hotels

The industry was severely impacted by the liquor ban and GST rates have come as another speed breaker to the industry's growth, believes **Animesh Kumar**, Corporate General Manager, Ramada Chennai Egmore. "Before GST, the luxury and service tax was at about 19 per cent and this has now gone up to 28 per cent. While GST is a gross tax and there is going to be input credit, the cost for hotel companies



goes up by almost 10 per cent. At best there should be one or two slabs of either 12 per cent or 18 per cent to create a level playing field for hotels," says Kumar. He further elaborates that banqueting will gain the most under GST. As of today banquet taxes are 23-25 per cent and GST at a lower rate of 17-19 per cent will be a shot in the arm for this segment. "Another worry of the hotel industry is the non-inclusion of electricity and alcohol tax in GST," adds Kumar.

Best Airport –Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru Air travel to become costlier under GST

With 18 per cent GST for aviation sector as against the 15

per cent currently, air travel is expected to become costlier, explains **Girish K**, General Manager-Taxation, Finance & Accounts, Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru. "The airport sector was seeking exemption or full in-



put credit for taxes on infrastructure development which has been denied under GST and the 18 per cent tax cap is a considerable financial burden," he says. Though Girish welcomes the GST regime, he also points out that for the high-end hotels, capping GST rate at 18 per cent would've been better than levying 28 per cent tax on them.

Best Hotel and Resort Management Company – Tatva Hospitality Implementation of GST is key

tourism The and hospitality is still recovering from the effects of demonetisation and GST is the second blow in a row for the stakeholders, informs Manoj Kunisseri, Chief Executive Officer, Tatva Hospitality. Kunisseri though applauds GST as a move to bring in uniformity of taxes, he points that the success of GST depends on how it is implemented. "I



feel the hospitality industry will be hit because of the high percentage tax slabs announced. We deal with majorly leisure properties and 28 per cent on the published rate is a steep jump for us. Luxury tax in Tamil Nadu is only 21 per cent but with GST the tax amount increases by 7 per cent. I don't think that ` 5000 is luxury; we call it mid-budget and levying high percentage of tax on these properties will have a negative impact on tourism," says Kunisseri. He urges the government to reconsider capping hotels with per-day tariff of ` 5000 as luxury properties or lower the tax rate from 28 per cent.

Best Debut Hotel – Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway

Segmentation of hospitality products to become a challenge

GST comes with an aim to simplify tax structure and the hospitality sector will also reap the benefits of standardised and uniform tax rates, opines **Shipra Sumbly Kaul**, General Manager, Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway. Kaul feels that it is a mixed bag of simple tax structure, easier rules, and increased costs and compliances. "The hotel industry



is a complex business with multiple levels of selling, products and different types of services such as MICE, restaurants and rooms with various price brackets. We are waiting to get a clear picture on the terms as it might get complicated for hotels to bifurcate their offerings," she says. Hotels also directly impact the economy and the industry is yet to see the impact of GST and how it is implemented, adds Kaul.

Best Executive Hotel – Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal Stand-alone hotel brands to suffer under GST

GST was introduced to ease administrative work (as it eliminates other taxes levied by hotels) and in turn, was aimed at streamlining the taxation process. It will be interesting to see how different hospitality brands respond to it in the long run, believes **Rishi Neoge**, General Manager, Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal. "While reviewing the rates, we realised that we may have to bear the higher costs, which in turn could disap-



point our patrons. Travel plans are going to change for the general audience as well as the corporates in the long run," says Neoge. He further points out that in Karnataka, all growing hotel brands that have been paying VAT so far will now have to pay 12 per cent GST which would definitely be an issue for them, and moreover, stand-alone hotel brands in the South will also be impacted.

Most Enterprising General Manager – Shuvendu Banerjee Clarity needed on GST implementation

Implementation of GST will transform the tax regime in the country and do away with multiple taxation structure, feels, **Shuvendu Banerjee**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi. He says, "Unfortunately tourism and star hotels are viewed as a luxury segment by the authorities and have been put under the highest tax bracket of 28 per cent under GST. This would further make holidays to India and travel in general



costlier." Banerjee further explains that as far as procurement of hotels is concerned, GST would positively impact with the abolition of multiple taxes, excise duty, especially for a consumer state like Kerala. "We need to establish clarity on the application of GST in hospitality domain, primarily on the treatment of the same for room rents. Currently our understanding is that GST will be levied on the actual transaction value of rooms and not on the published or declared tariff," he adds.

AVIATION SriLankan flies to Melbourne | Lean is very much in

Melbourne joins SriLankan Airline's network from October 29, offering connectivity between Colombo and Australia for the tour-based market from India.



SriLankan Airlines, the national carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of the oneworld alliance, will be establishing its presence in Australia with daily non-stop services to Melbourne from October 29 this year. The non-stop services will also facilitate passengers from the Middle East and South Asia seeking onward connectivity via Colombo to/ from Australia.

The airline will be operating Airbus 330-200 aircraft on the route. Siva Ramachandran, Chief Commercial Officer, SriLankan Airlines, said, "We witnessed a steady increase in passengers travelling between Colombo and Melbourne via various Asian connecting points such as Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. SriLankan is the only carrier that offers connectivity of this nature at this time. We also offer onward connections beyond Colombo to destinations in the Indian Subcontinent and



Chief Commercial Office SriLankan Airlines

Middle East. SriLankan Airlines' passengers will also have the choice of flying to other Australian cities such as Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide as well as Auckland, New Zealand."

Chinthaka Weerasinghe, Manager - Northern and Eastern India, SriLankan Airlines, says, "We are excited by the commencement of our flight to Melbourne considering the large ethnic market in North India especially from the Punjab region. In addition, there is a growing



Chinthaka Weerasinghe Manager – Northern and Eastern India, SriLankan Airlines

tour-based market to Australia from India which we will be catering to through this flight." For travellers seeking onward connectivity from its Colombo hub. SriLankan currently connects over 10 Indian points with over 100 flights a week, which includes services to/from Chennai. Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata. Trivandrum. Tiruchirappalli, Cochin, Mumbai and New Delhi. SriLankan will be adding Visakhapatnam, Coimbatore and Hyderabad to its route network in July this year. 🖊

Contd. from page 3

GThe summer trap has been debated over the years with no concrete action to address the lean season. We have been promoting September-October through to April as the best time to travel to India and until we as an industry do not change the mindset that India is a 365-day destination, it will be difficult to increase footfalls. We have to open up newer source markets and move beyond the primary source markets like the UK, USA and Europe. So many European travellers undertake travel during summers and we have to focus on the high points of India, consolidate them and sell them even if it takes to go an extra mile. We also need to open up to international media so that India is known across the world as a year-round destination.



Vice President-Inbound Tours, Yatra Exotic Routes



Unfortunately, negative publicity is rampant in our industry and we, the travel agents, hotels and DMCs, need to focus on qualitative additions to our offerings rather than marketing three months as lean season. Sightseeing can be done early morning or late in the evening, and during the day, various activities can be organised to keep the clients engaged. The major issue is that the industry is not united on this front and any marketing campaign needs 8-9 months to show results. We need to target travellers across the globe who travel during the summer season and can come to India. Also, all travel shows should be held during the lean period in India as this is the time we need business, unlike during the winter months when we have to refuse foreign business as we are already booked during that time.

Indian Legends Holidays

FI believe that as a country and as a tourist destination, we need to have several programmes in place which specifically target attracting foreign tourists who travel during the summer months. There is a need to understand what other global destinations offer and maybe create recreational zones like amusement parks, water parks and upscale infrastructure in order to diversify our tourism product portfolio. This I think is the only way we can counter the lean season in inbound tourism.



ani Goela General Manager, Crowne Plaza Jaipur, Tonk Road India Travel Award winner

via Tehra

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Of Pyrenean memories

The Toulouse Pyrénées in South-West France is hallmarked for its versatility and offers a range of exciting experiences for visitors. **TAVTALK** showcases some must-visit tourist spots in this scenic region.

treasures of the eleventh and twelfth centuries as well as the underground chambers which hold treasure relics. Also in Toulouse is the **Jacobins Convent** – a large brick building whose construction started in 1230, and whose architecture influenced the development of the Gothique méridional style.

What would the 'Pink City' be without the **Place du Capitole**? If there is one building in Toulouse not to be

ASOB

Aeroscopia ©Manatour

missed and completely worth visiting, this is it. The Capitole complex hosts the City Hall as well as the National Theatre of Toulouse. This is, in fact, the heart of the historic city – the municipal administration of the French city of Toulouse. The town's hôtel de ville, if you please.

The Victor Hugo Market is the epicenter for all things

commences in the 'Telemetry Room' with an insightful and interesting presentation.

food in Toulouse, having cel-

ebrated its 120th anniversary

recently. Marché Victor Hugo

is the largest covered market

in town. It has gourmet stores

which offer delicacies such

as deli and sausages, chees-

es, ice-creams, chocolates,

Aviation enthusiasts are

in for a treat at Toulouse as

it has on offer the enthralling

world of the Airbus that was

established in Toulouse. It

wines, fish and seafood.

AVIATION

Aeroscopia, the aeronautics museum in the Airbus premises, is sure to appeal to all visitors as it straddles aviation's past, present and future and presents a fascinating array of the main aircraft models on display. Tours to the cabin and cockpit areas

Lourdes ©Sanctuaires ND

of prototype models as well as view of the aircraft system enthuses travellers.

Opened in 1997, **The Cité de l'espace** is a theme park focused on space. This park has an array of 250 interactive exhibits as well as an outdoor park with the MIR space station and other exhibits which are particularly emblematic of the conquest of space.

GOING BEYOND

'The Hundred Foot Journey' trail will enthrall visitors to relive the moments of the film with a trip to the very charming medieval village of Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val. The movie was extensively shot at scenic locales of Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val.

The Pic du Midi is a mountain in the French Pyrenees famous for its Pic du Midi Observatory that can host up to 100,000 visitors. Visit a castle in the sky via a thrilling ride on a cable car, where the panoramic landscape envelopes you on your ascent.

Lourdes in southwestern France, in the foothills of the Pyrenees mountains, is the resplendent sanctuary of the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. It defines the legend of the young girl Bernadette, who saw visions of the Virgin Mary come alive.

Cauterets is a spa town, a ski resort and a commune in the Hautes-Pyrénées department and the region of Occitanie in South-West France. Experience a completely therapeutic and relaxing experience at a thermal spa namely the Les Bains Du Rocher, with its rich lighting, damask curtains and floor of jade and embellished with mosaics and glass beads.

Harshal Ashar

The capital of the Occitanie region, Toulouse is known for its varsity, aerospace industry, and the Romanesque St. Sernin Basilica, which is part of a pilgrimage route. History and heritage are reminiscent of Toulouse,

HERITAGE The Saint-Sernin Basilica is a magnificent structure and awes viewers with its sheer size and beauty. Dedicated to the martyred bishop

Saint Saturnin, it houses the

which has been aptly dubbed

the 'Pink City'.



Toulouse – Place du Capitole

19,000 B2B meetings at 43rd GTM

The 43rd Germany Travel Mart (GTM) took place from May 7-9, 2017, in Nuremberg, Bavaria and was hosted by Bavaria Tourism and the Nuremberg Convention and Tourist Office. Around 350 suppliers–representing the hotel business, inbound tourism, the entertainment sector, the transport industry and tourism organisations–showcased their entire range of products related to Destination Germany.



ATTRACTIONS

Switzerland Webinar Lake Geneva Region

30th June, 2017 at 3:00PM IST www.travelgyaan.com/webinar/lakegenevaregion





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Combo deal from Bonton on the cards

Bonton Group of Companies is offering a variety of combinations for international destinations, like Dubai with Mauritius, Seychelles and the Maldives. The company will also offer group departures to Eastern Europe in 2017. Bonton Online, the online travel portal of the Group, also adds to serve its trade partners efficiently, explains Arun Hattangadi, Group Head, Bonton Group of Companies. He says that even though the B2B space gets more competitive every day the company has managed to hold its space and grow steadily. "We had witnessed an increasing demand to club

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various international destinations with Dubai like Mauritius, Seychelles and the Maldives. Thus, the industry can expect quite a few interesting combination deals with Dubai this year. Travellers are becoming more adventurous for Mauritius and asking for more activities than the regular North and South Island tours, which we are planning to bring up in 2017. Also, since our Europe group departure clients have shown interest in exploring Eastern Europe, this segment of travel is also on the cards," says Hattangadi. In 2016, the company serviced 50,000 guests through its DMC



Arun Hattangadi Group Head Bonton Group of Companies

in Dubai; over a thousand guests within a year's launch of its own office in Mauritius and nearly 1100 guests for Europe Departures. The company has also increased its presence in India, particularly in Gujarat with the opening of two new offices in Rajkot and Surat. The franchise network of the Group has also added quite a few prominent travel agents from Maharashtra and Gujarat, he informs.

"Apart from regular promotions and offers on mail for our travel partners, this year we wish to ensure that we meet our trade partners at least once every quarter. This will allow us to push our offerings and educate their teams on how to go about it," adds Hattangadi.

Ark's training for Mumbai agents

Ark Travels and United Travel Agents organised a training workshop for agents in Mumbai. It plans to take this workshop across India.

TT BUREAU

Ark Travels, a B2B travel and luxury resort vacations, recently organised a training workshop for travel agents in Mumbai. The event was organised in collaboration with United Travel Agents (UTA) and witnessed participation of over 100 travel agents. It also announced Singapore Airlines as its official airline partner for the second edition of its 'The Big Bang Nautical Fiesta'

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Kishan Biyani Managing Director, Ark Travels India Travel Award winner

that involves charter cruises specially targeting corporate companies. **Kishan Biyani**, Managing Director, Ark Travels, says, "Today, training has become immensely important as the industry is witnessing



David Lim General Manager-India Singapore Airlines

a tremendous demand and supply gap. Travel agents are aware about cruise tourism as a segment, but are unable to encash on such a booming travel niche. We, therefore, intend to start pan-India training workshops from June 1 5, 2017, and will touch cities Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Ludhiana, Indore or Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, and Jaipur."

Also delighted with the partnership, **David Lim**, GM-India, Singapore Airlines, says, Travellers interested in cruise vacations can avail a value package, with special, Singapore Airlines fares from five Indian cities: Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad, along with a complimentary stay in Singapore. Offering a seamless experience through air, ground and sea, we aim to provide a comprehensive itinerary."





ASSOCIATIONTALK

EVENT TALK

JUNE 2017

International Travel Expo (ITE)	HKCEC, Hong Kong 15-18
Connections Meetings	Quito, Ecuador 18-21
Beijing international Tourism Expo (BITE)	China National 23-25 Convention Centre Beijing, China
Digital Travel Summit	London 27-28

JULY 2017

Arabian Travel Awards	Dubai	4
Learn South Africa workshop	Mumbai	6
Learn South Africa workshop	Rajkot	7
Learn South Africa workshop	Baroda	8
Travel Wedding Show	Jaipur	8-9
Learn South Africa workshop	Ahmedabad	10
Learn South Africa workshop	Jaipur	11
Learn South Africa workshop	Delhi	12
Annual Kiwi Link	New Delhi	12-14
Learn South Africa workshop	Chandigarh	13
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Ahmedabad	13-15
Learn South Africa workshop	Delhi	14
IITM	Chennai	15-17
GBTA Convention	Boston, USA	15-19
Learn South Africa workshop	Lucknow	17
Learn South Africa workshop	Kolkata	18
Learn South Africa workshop	Hyderabad	19
Learn South Africa workshop	Chennai	20
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Chandigarh	20-22
IITM	Bengaluru	21-23
Learn South Africa workshop	Bengaluru	21
Learn South Africa workshop	Coimbatore	22
Learn South Africa workshop	Mumbai	24
Learn South Africa workshop	Indore	25
Learn South Africa workshop	Nagpur	26
Learn South Africa workshop	Pune	27
Learn South Africa workshop	Goa	29
India Travel Awards East	Guwahati	26
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kolkata	27-29

AUGUST 2017

Indonesia B2B meeting	Ahmedabad	1
Indonesia B2B meeting	Pune	3
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kochi	3-5
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Kochi	7
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Bengaluru	8
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Chandigarh	9
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Pune	10-12
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Lucknow	11
ACTE Conference	Tokyo, Japan	22-23

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

Romania calls on TAAI-NR agents

Travel Agents Association of India-Northern Region (TAAI-NR) invited **Cristina Lonela Tarteata**, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Romania, to showcase the country's tourism offerings to the trade.

TT BUREAU

iscerning Indian travel-Discerning makes yond the regular European destinations for vacations. Rajan Sehgal, Chairman-Northern Region (TAAI), says, "In the last few years, Eastern Europe has come up in a big way with countries like Budapest, Czech, Romania, Bucharest, catching the fancy of Indians. These destinations are very economical, safe and offer views of scenic landscapes. In fact, the travel cost is 30 per cent less than that in normal European countries."

Cashing in on Cristina Lonela Tarteata's recent visit to the national capital, Sehgal requested the Romanian ambassador to invite her for TAAI members' meet. "Indians are looking for new outbound desti-



nations and Romania could be a great option," he adds.

The purpose behind **Cristina Lonela Tarteata's** visit to India was to analyse the Indian travellers and know more about their preferences. "I wanted to understand what Indian tourists are looking for in a potential travel destination and use the information to attract more tourists to Romania.



Cristina Lonela Tarteata's Deputy Minister of Tourism Romania

Over the years, the number of Indian tourists has increased to Romania, but we are always looking to attract more," she says.

Speaking on what Indians can expect on a visit to Romania, she says, "Romania has a lot to offer tourists and boasts various attractions. We have many similarities with India as well. People visit Romania for various purposes such as adventure tourism, wilderness tourism, as well as for nightlife and city breaks. One can go to the Danube Delta in the summer and skiing in the winter. We have shopping as well as golf, which Indians like a lot."

However, there are no direct flights between India and Romania. Tarteata says, "We are working on it and direct flight could be a possibility in the future if there is a steady increase in the number of tourists from India. However, at the same time Romania is very accessible for Indian tourists as there are various connecting flights to Romania from a host of major European cities." In terms of competitive pricing. Tarteata said that they have hotels of all kinds, and hence the destination is fit for anyone from a backpacker to luxury connoisseur.

Leveraging MICE in India

ITDC and ICPB co-hosted a roadshow to promote the MICE segment, providing an opportunity to stakeholders to network and interact with professional suppliers, conference organisers, DMCs, travel agents, etc.

TT BUREAU

Keeping in mind India's progress as one of the fastest-growing destinations for conventions and meetings of all sizes and hues, the roadshow was an exclusive, participative platform open to associations and interested consumers who are decision-makers in their respective domains. Professional suppliers from the MICE industry including conference organisers, destination management companies, travel agents, fabricators, etc. interacted with conference planners from the medical, education. corporate and other sectors. The participating members included IRCTC, Thomas Cook (India), Cox & Kings, Tourism Corporation of Guiarat, RMB Events, Madhya Pradesh Tourism, The Leela, Wizard Events, STIC Travels and The Taj Group. The event saw as many as 130 attendees, informed Chander Mansharamani. Vice Chairman, Indian Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB). Other distinguished guests included Piyush Tiwari, Officiating Chairman and MD and Director (Commercial & Marketing), Indian



Chander Mansharamani Vice Chairman, Indian Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB)

We have very few centres in India that can cater exclusively to MICE segment apart from HICC in Hyderabad and ITPO in New Delhi

Tourism Development Corporation; **Amaresh Tiwari**, Honorary Secretary, ICPB; **Vijay Dutt**, General Manager, The Ashok; **Rajiv Anand**, General Manager, Corporate Marketing & Sales, ITDC among others.

Addressing the show, **Piyush Tiwari**, said, "India



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

India is working at macro and micro levels towards significantly increasing the market share of the global conventions business by 2025

is working at both macro and micro levels towards significantly increasing the market share of the global conventions business by 2025, from its current share of less than one per cent, as per ICCA statistics. Needless to say, ITDC properties will contribute their might in augmenting the numbers. The Ashok is best suited for the MICE segment as it has its genesis in UNESCO conference in New Delhi in 1950s and was designed keeping in mind big conferences."

Mansharamani further elaborated that such roadshows are an important part of the ICPB mandate in order to bring together conference organisers and ICPB members on a common platform. "We organised similar roadshows in Bengaluru, Mumbai and Hyderabad earlier. We have very few centres in India that can cater exclusively to MICE segment apart from HICC in Hyderabad and ITPO in New Delhi which is more of an exhibition ground. I strongly believe that The Ashok can be focused on for international conferences and we hope to work closely with ITDC on this regard. We are getting members on board from different sectors to help them gain exposure and exclusive benefits from being an ICPB member. We are pleased that state tourism boards also joining as are lifetime members of ICPB to promote conventions in their respective states." said Mansharamani. 🖊

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JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar

Mumbai

Dietmar Kielnhofer has been appointed as General Manager at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. Prior to joining JW Marriott Mumbai



Sahar, Dietmar was serving as the Complex General Manager at Starwood Hyderabad. He holds an MBA from the University of Leicester, England and a Ph.D in Business Management from the American University of London. He also did a specialised course in the field of Hotel Administration and Real Estate at Cornell University, Ithaca, USA. With over 30 years of industry exposure across Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, Kielnhofer brings to the table expertise that includes delivering above average financial performance.

International Travel House

New Delhi

Vicky Soin, a travel specialist with over two decades of experience, has joined International Travel House as National-Head (Market Development)-MICE. He was previously

associated with Abercrombie & Kent India for over six years as Vice President-Outbound. He has also worked with Dream Horizons as Country Head and SOTC Corporate Tours as Regional Manager. Besides these, Soin has worked with Rosenbluth INT (Later American Express) and SITA World Travel (Later BTI/Kuoni India). He is an alumnus of Delhi University and All India Institute of Management Studies.

JW Marriott Pune

Pune

Abhishek Malik has been appointed as the Director of Operations at JW Marriott Pune. During his 17 years in the hospitality industry,

he has worked with The Oberoi, New Delhi, The Oberoi Rajvilas Jaipur, The Leela Palace New Delhi, Fortis Memorial Research Institute Gurgaon and St. Regis, Mumbai. In his most recent role, he was General Manager Hospitality at Mustafa Sultan Enterprises LLC, Oman. Malik studied at The Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development, New Delhi and gained specialised and technical training at various Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. He is an alumnus

Institute of Hotel of Management Chennai.

Sarovar Hotels

Delhi

Sarovar Hotels has appointed Vijay Jaiswal as Sr. Vice President-Sales & Marketing. Jaiswal brings with him over 29 years in the hospitality industry. At Sarovar Hotels, he will be



responsible for overseeing the planning and implementation of sales, marketing and product development programmes for each brand targeted towards existing and new markets. Prior to joining Sarovar Hotels, Jaiswal was associated with ITC Hotels as Head of Sales & Marketing for Fortune Hotels. He has held several positions at ITC Hotels.

Radisson Blu Atria

Bengaluru

Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru has appointed Nischal Ayanna as the Director of Sales and Marketing. Ayanna comes with 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry

Sanjay Singh has been appointed as Senior Vice President-All India

Global Sales for Harvey India. Singh has a varied background of

and has in-depth knowledge in areas of sales, business development, strategic planning, MICE and team management having worked in India and the Middle East. Prior to joining Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru, he was associated with leading luxury hotel brands such as Starwood, Hyatt, The Lalit and The Leela.

Hyatt Amritsar

Amritsar

Hyatt Amritsar has appointed Suman Dutta Sharma as General Manager. With over two decades of work experience, Sharma started his career with Choice Hotels International

and worked in various capacities in India and abroad with hospitality majors like Starwood, Hyatt International, The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts and Taj Group of Hotels with his last assignment as General Manager of Taj Malabar- Cochin, followed by a stint with Columbia Asia responsible for entire support function operations in India as Vice President Support

Services.

MOVEMENTS

Outbound Marketing

Mumbai

Outbound Marketing has appointed Rakesh Bhandari as Associate Director Sales, India for SunLux Collection by Sun International. Bhandari has been

with Outbound Marketing handling AccorHotels sales distribution for four years. A graduate in Hotel Management and a post-graduate in Business Administration, Bhandari is a hard-core sales person with a track record of achieving high sales targets.

Outbound Marketing has appointed Puneet Kahlon as Senior Manager PR & Marketing. A graduate in Economics and a post-



graduate in English, she has over 10 years of experience in content development and human resource management. She will be responsible for conceptualising and executing marketing

20 years in the hospitality and travel industry with long experience at Yatra.com, SOTC and Mercury Travel. He brings with him international experience in the field of tourism. specialising in outbound, inbound and domestic travel, ticketing and MICE. He has worked at different levels and handled different sales and products related to tourism industry. In his new role, Singh will be responsible for expanding the

Harvey India

Mumbai

international market for MICE and leisure. Aditya Shamsher Malla, General Manager, Four Points by Sheraton, unwinds with a round of golf and cycling with his son. "These are the two best stress-busters

business across India and

for me. I also enjoy travelling and one of my most memorable holiday moments is being ferried on a fisherman's boat nine nautical miles off the coast of India to an uninhabited island and treated to fresh prawns and fish while sipping on feni! Nevertheless, my favourite holiday destination in India has to be Leh. For international holidays I prefer London," he says. He loves food and his favourite cuisine is Rajasthani.

Maharaja Ganga Singhji Trust (owners of the The Lallgarh Palace) is an ardent reader. "I am fortunate enough to have access to the wonderful libraries of my grandfather and great grandfather." She feels fortunate to have been able to travel since an early age. Her favourite cities are Bangkok, London and Munich. "Within India it would definitely be Jaipur in my

Princess Rajyashree Kumari Bikaner, Chairperson of

own home state of Rajasthan, it's a vibrant city with an ever changing personality that never ceases to surprise me."

abroad. coastal

Saurabh Bakshi, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway, says while it is difficult to peg in one favorite travel destination, he has always enjoyed his visits to New Delhi. "New Delhi, in my opinion, is the food capital

an amalgamation of the whole country into one city." From his travels he loves destinations, Florida and Sri Lanka being among his favourites. "I personally am a great admirer of art and love collecting paintings and sculptures," he adds.

of the nation and is like



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IndiGo gears up for UDAN

IndiGo will be looking at participating in the second round of bids for Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme, reveals **Aditya Ghosh**, President & Whole Time Director, IndiGo. He shares plans for new routes in an exclusive interaction with **RWAK**.

Nisha Verma

Quexpansion,

your strategy?

Q^{Which new routes will IndiGo be launching?}

We have a bunch of new routes coming up. We get airplanes every month, which means that we are flying to new routes almost every month. In July, we are looking at more flights to Doha from Kerala. We also have flights from Bengaluru to Singapore. Then we have a bunch of domestic routes which we would be opening in time.

In terms of international

We will look to connect more points

within India to the international destinations that we are already flying to. This

would mean more flights from Doha to

Kerala, and may be later, we could start

flights to Hyderabad as well as Delhi from

Doha. After that, we are looking at Dhaka

as a possible new destination. However, I would like to state that India and the do-

QWould you be participating in the UDAN scheme as well?

We are very interested in it and are

keenly considering it. This is the reason why we actively participated in the

consultation round that we had with the

ministry recently, where we were present

throughout and presented our ideas. The

target of the ministry is to finalise the

bid document by the end of this month

for the second round of bidding under

the UDAN scheme. Once we look at the

routes and the entire document, we'd

decide whether we'd like to participate in

up for bidding and what kind of competi-

tion and traffic there is in that route. We

will also look at the fares which are ex-

pected to be on these routes and what

others are bidding at. There are many

things involved and it is way too early to

QlndiGo has been synonymous with On Time Performance

(OTP), but for the last one year, it

has been lagging, according to the

airline and has been synonymous with

IndiGo continues to be a leading

know how it would pan out.

data. Whv?

We need to see which routes come

the scheme or not.

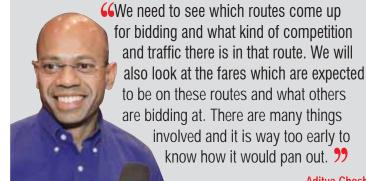
mestic market here remains our focus.

what would be

OTP. However, what has become very clear in the last few months is that certain airlines have been fudging data. Evidence has been given to DGCA, and they have also found truth in it, as a result of which two people have been fired from the Mumbai airport, because they were assisting a particular airline in fudging data. We are the only airline that uses ACARS, which is an electronic form of capturing data, whereas

What would be your strategy looking forward?

Currently, we are focused on bringing in the narrow body aircraft to our A-320 operations. We've got around 36 airplanes coming before March next year, which will take us to about 170 A-320s, which would provide a lot more network and options to customers. At the same time, we've made this pathbreaking order for ATRs, which



Aditya Ghosh President & Whole Time Director, IndiGo, India Travel Award winner

everybody else is going the manual way. Manual data is open to tampering. Now we are looking for DGCA to come up with an investigation report at one level, but more importantly, to come up with a system which is tamper proof and cannot be manipulated. This would mean that everybody would give the data as per one system rather than being open to manipulation. Indi-Go provides the take-off data electronically, the moment the door closes and the plane starts moving. Thus, in some ways we are strangely disadvantaged because we were using technology so much. However, at the end of the day, what is clear is that customers fly every day and they know which airline is on time, and that is IndiGo.

QINDER CONTRACT OF CONTRACT.

It is gradually taking off. We have

back. How has the response been?

got a lot of travel agents connected on

the platform and we are rolling it out

internationally as well, and taking gradual

steps for that.

aviation history. We are going to start getting these planes by the end of this year and by December next year, we will have 20 such planes. This would basically mean that in

is the largest ATR order ever in civil

This would basically mean that in a different market segment, which has not seen much air travel, and certainly hasn't seen quality air travel, we should be able to bring in the IndiGo product with the same OTP, same reliability, least number of cancellations, cleanest airplanes and the service consistency that people like about IndiGo. Thus, it would be a new exciting chapter in our lives.

Quick Fact

IndiGo has the largest in-service fleet in India at 135 aircrafts, and the largest order book of any airline in the world at 458 aircrafts. Its fleet could expand by up to 46 aircrafts during this financial year, a net addition of almost one aircraft a week. (Source: CAPA)

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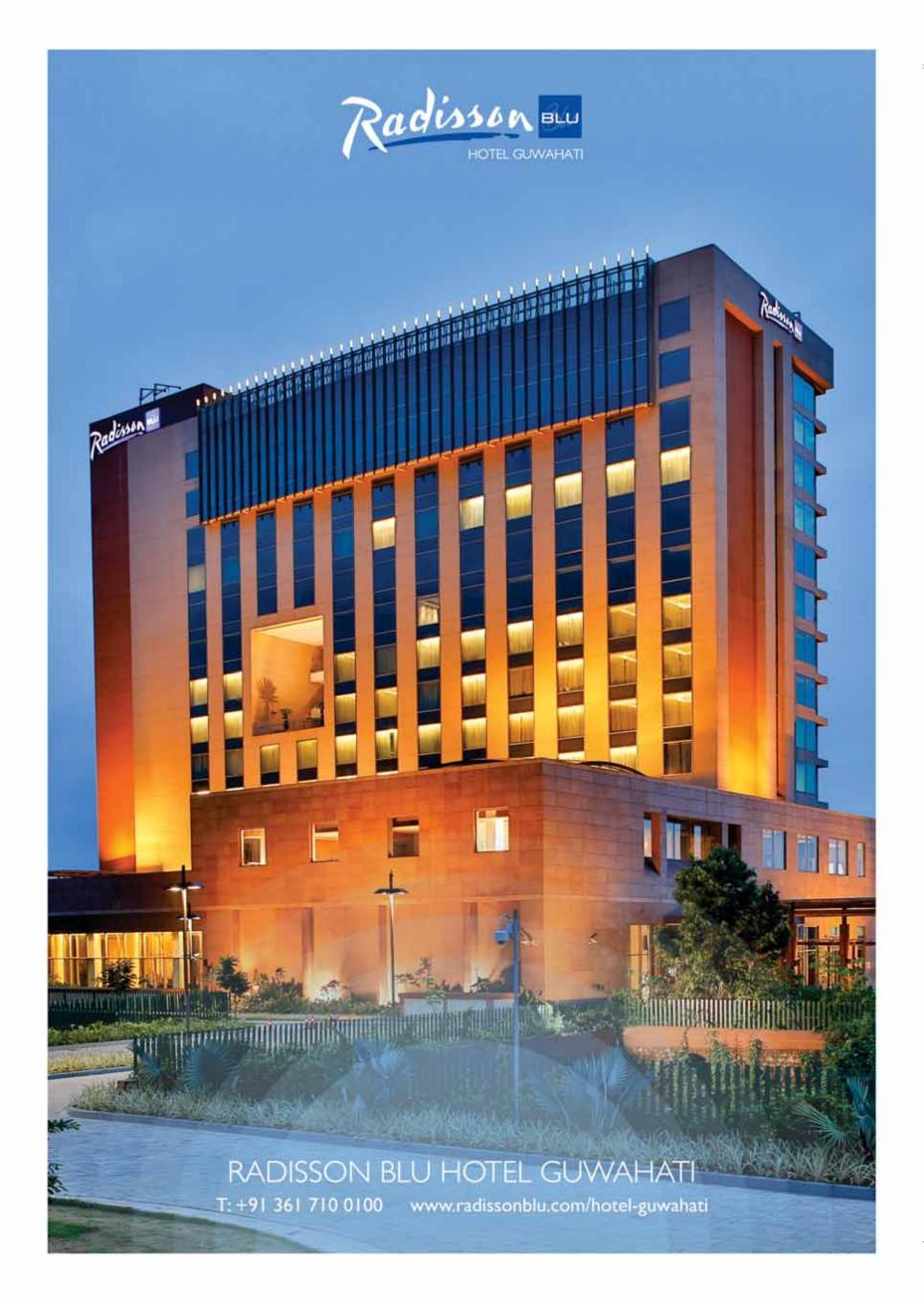
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Experies of the discerning traveller



Experiencing the land of nature, culture, cheese, countryside, and love



Experientialtalk

THE AGE OF Experiential travel

What drives evolved travellers to opt for experiential travel instead of indulging in pure relaxation or being in a state of luxury-induced numbness? What, indeed? It is possibly a primal need to make sense of everything - and in this case - to create meaning of their travels through direct experience and learning. They want their time off to also add some value to their life. They want complete immersion. They want to be part of the landscape, live like a local and reconnect with themselves. In fact, travellers voluntarily go through hardships to learn and gather experiences.

Simply seeing the sights is no longer enough for them. They want to go down the path less travelled and connect with people from other cultures and backgrounds. They want travel to be fun and interesting, not just a blur of places and faces. They want to experience cultures, languages, food and people.

This thought process is slowly gaining momentum so much so that this kind of tourism is becoming a global movement towards experiential learning. In response to this, the market is also creating offbeat and new products that fortunately don't conform to a budget type. Such products also may or may not have an element of adventure, integration with the local culture and exclusivity. Local cuisine forms a huge part of this.

The understanding of this segment has also given it strong bragging rights. Staying in a luxurious villa with a private pool in Thailand is great but have you experienced the culture by staying in a homestay there? It's less about where you've been and more about what you've done.

HAZEL JAIN

NEWS IN BRIEF

BELMOND ACQUIRES ICONIC CARIBBEAN RESORT

Belmond has acquired Cap Juluca, a 96-room luxury beach resort on the Caribbean island of Anguilla, British West Indies. It opened its doors for guests this May. Set on one of the Caribbean's most beautiful beaches, overlooking the aquamarine waters of Maundays Bay, the unspoilt setting encourages guests to unwind to the slow rhythm of Caribbean island life.



Disney magic in new resort in HK

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort has opened its Disney Explorers Lodge, a new 750- room resort hotel dedicated to the spirit of exploration. The Disney Explorers Lodge takes the experience of a hotel stay to a new level. This architectural spectacular at the waterfront of Lantau offers to guests an exploratory journey to the exotic cultures of the world, in the unique Disney style of storytelling.



Sandbar excursion at Namale Resort & Spa Fiji

Exceptional coral reefs surround the secret sandbar, offering amazing snorkeling and the chance to witness colorful tropical fish, intricate soft coral, octopus, sea snails, and even sea turtles. They can also learn to husk coconuts by hand, or cozy up under a beach umbrella. It costs \$63 FJD per person, including transportation, F&B, and snorkel gear.





Say hello to sea salt at Alila Seminyak, Bali

Seasalt opens its doors this May in Seminyak. Inspired by its spectacular oceanfront setting and the locally harvested sea salt, Seasalt is a must-go seafood destination around the Seminyak area. Seasalt marks the start of a tantalizing new seascape dining experience, with a dash of Japanese infusion, exciting palates with an enticing taste of the sea in their fresh seafood selection. Diners at Seasalt will find themselves immersed in the sensation of sailing on the ocean, thanks to its inspired design.

Christmas in July!

Catch the Gingerbread Man as he mischievously plots his escape from hungry visitors and prances his way through the Winter Wonderlights as Sovereign Hill in Australia celebrates its annual Christmas from July 1-30, 2017. The Victorian-style buildings will come alive through the magic of large-scale light projections in the dazzling 'Winter Wonderlights' show. With over 20 buildings lit up with yuletide animations, and over 10 km of fairy lights throughout Sovereign Hill's garden, this event is the largest light projection spectacle ever staged in one site anywhere in Australia. General admission for adults is AUD 59.50 and for children (5-15 years) is AUD 27.00. Concession (AUD 47.60), Family (AUD 150.00) and Single Family (AUD 107.00) passes are also available.



A train and a palace

The Al-Andalus train, considered the most luxurious and spacious in the world, takes passengers back to the Golden Age of the 'Belle Époque'. It offers beautifully decorated lounge carriages and comfortable cabins, surrounded by different landscapes every day, and constant attention of its crew. The train's four saloon cars are treasures of railway history dating from 1928 and 1930. In these charming carriages, the breakfast buffet, lunches and dinners are served. It serves rich Spanish cuisine with delicious dishes inspired by the culinary traditions of the people who have shaped its history.





Experientialtalk

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> ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNERS Vikas Mandotia / Nitin Kumar

PRODUCTION Anil Kharbanda

CIRCULATION Ashok Rana



Russian adventure with Trafalgar

Trafalgar has added a new seven-day 'Festive St Petersburg and Moscow' package starting from \$1,675 per person, based on twin sharing, excluding airfare. On this festive sojourn to visit Russia's two largest cities, travellers will discover the country's vibrant, modern culture, and hear stories of its tumultuous history. Visit the Kremlin in Moscow with a local specialist, and in St. Petersburg, see the Tsar's Winter Palace, explore the Peter and Paul Fortress and enjoy a guided tour of the Hermitage Museum, home to one of the world's largest and most valuable art collections.



Cirque Dreams on NCL

Norwegian Cruise Line is expanding the one-of-akind theatrical dining experience Cirque Dreams & Dinner to Norwegian Getaway for the summer season in Europe, as well as debuting a new dining format and must-see show elements of the popular Cirque Dreams and Dinner experiences on Norwegian Breakaway an on Norwegian Epic. All of the shows feature stunning acts, breathtaking costumes and rotating artistry throughout the year so guests can have a new entertainment experience no matter how many times they sail.

COVER PICTURE

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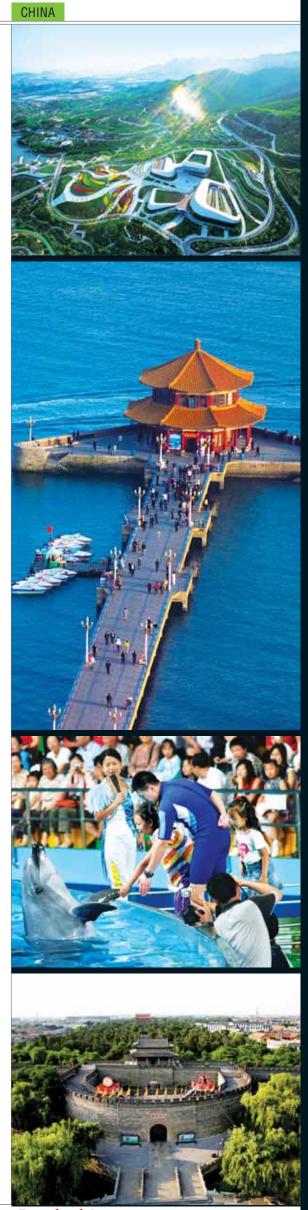
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'Friendly Shandong' is what people of the Shandong region in Eastern China call it, and quite literally, the place has a warmth not many destinations around the world can match. Here's a glimpse of the destination.





6 TRAVTALK June 2¹⁰ Fortnight Issue 2017

Experientialtalk

NISHA VERMA

trikingly different from Beijing and Shanghai, the Shandong region offers a new take on China. From scenic locales to smiling locals, the destination is truly a traveller's delight. Meant for both corporate and leisure travellers, Shandong has everything for everyone. A five-day or more itinerary to Shandong can offer insights into to the rich culture and picturesque locations, which is unlike the usual Chinese itinerary.

QUINTESSENTIAL QINGDAO

A multi-faceted city frequented by the rich and famous of China, Qingdao overlooks the East China Sea and its European architecture is reminiscent of its erstwhile German occupation. Walk past the white colonial buildings with red brick rooftops and you would forget that you are in China. Get the best panoramic view of the city as well as the beach from Xiaoyushan Hill and enjoy the multiple photo opportunities you get. A short drive from there is the Zhanqiao Pier, which is a landmark of the city. Take a long walk at this eight-pass waterfront and enjoy the changing colours of the water. Also visit the much-famed May Fourth Square, which is also one of the symbols of the city.

Another highlight of Qingdao is the popular Tsingtao Brewery Museum, a legacy of the Germans, which takes one through its origin and how ingrained it is in the culture of this city. Take a tour of the 'drunk room' at the brewery, where you feel hammered, without actually getting drunk. Don't forget to relish the fresh beer made here. Also visit the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center, which played host to the Beijing 2008 Olympics for the sailing competitions. Stay back to witness the sunset from the marina and soak in the orange hues of fire melting into water. There are many restaurants offering a range of seafood and south Asian delights here, and quite a few for vegetarians as well. In fact, Qingdao also has a couple of Indian specialty restaurants for those who can't survive without their *daal* and *roti*.

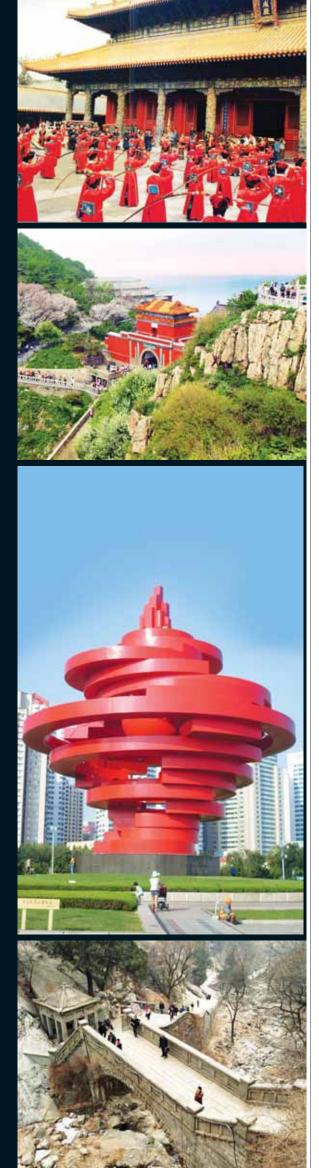
CONFUCIUS' QUFU

A five-hour long journey from Qingdao over the Qingdao Bay Bridge (or Jiaozhouu Bay Bridge), one of the longest over-water bridges in the world, would take you to Qufu city. Its home to the world-renowned philosopher Confucius.

Take a tour of Confucius' cemetery, his temple and his mansion, which together have been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Known as San Kong (Three Confucian Sites) in Qufu, it attracts thousands of visitors every year. While the cemetery has graves of the Kong clan, or Confucius' descendants, the mansion is where one can find everything that the great saint used in his lifetime. The structure made of stone, offers a nice insight into the life of Confucius, who was also called the King of the Kings, which was the highest honour he was given.

A pilgrimage for many, streets in Qufu are lined with locals selling souvenirs dedicated not only to Confucius, but also the attractions from the entire Shandong region. One can pick up small handicrafts, keychains, engraved mirrors, miniature bone china cups, and many other trinkets from the stalls. There are also women making crispy, thin-grain pancakes on the roadside, which is a specialty in Shandong.

The next morning one can catch the opening ceremony of the ancient city, right in front of the Confucius Temple. The 20-minute performance





ZHANG MINGCHI Deputy Director General, Shandong Tourism Development Commission

Beautiful SHANDONG

Zhang Mingchi, Deputy Director General, Shandong Tourism Development Commission, shares more reasons why Indians should go and visit this destination.

HOW MANY INDIAN ARRIVALS DOES SHANDONG GET?

We received around 36,000 Indian arrivals to Shandong in 2016. While 50 per cent of this were business tourists, the remaining 50 per cent were tourists, with only a few VFR travellers.

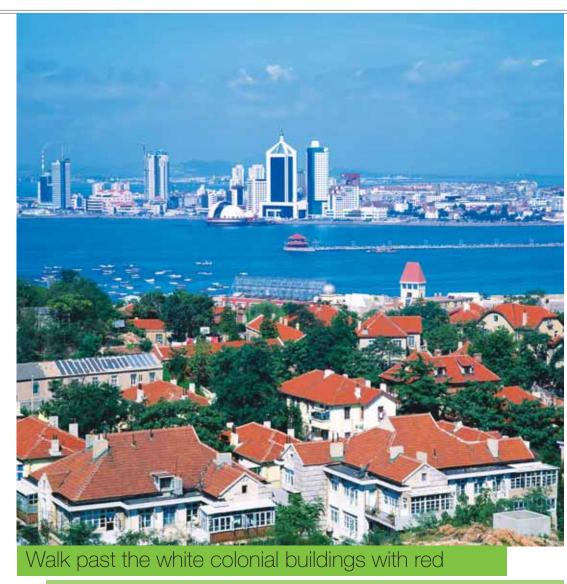


WHAT ARE THE OTHER DESTINATIONS AND EXPERIENCES THAT WOULD ATTRACT INDIANS TO SHANDONG?

There are many other places in Shandong besides Qingdao, Qufu, Mount Tai and Jinan. The element which is very important is the difference of climates between India and Shandong. We have four demarcated seasons and visitors can have different views in different seasons. Winters are snowy, which is not as cold as China's north tip. However, tourists can enjoy skiing and other activities. In Spring, we have a variety of blooms as well as flowers. We welcome friends from India to watch the blossoms. A trip to Shandong is never an empty one.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FROM INDIA IN 2017?

We are expecting double the numbers from India this year, i.e. 70,000 Indian arrivals. I am sure with agent familiarisation trips and right promotions, we will be able to reach this number very soon.



brick rooftops, and you'll forget that you are in China

ESSENTIAL FACTS

How to reach: Shandong Airlines offer direct flight from Delhi to both Qingdao and Jinan via Kunming four times in a week.

Accommodation:

- Wyndham Hotel Qingdao Xinjiang
- Shangri-La Hotel, Qufu
- Blossoms International Hotel, Tai'an
- Hyatt Regency, Jinan



is colourful, energetic and offers a glimpse into its history. Walk through the complex, which is an architectural wonder and is surrounded by trees dating back to thousands of years and 460 rooms and nine courtyards. The buildings in the courtyards have yellow tiled roofs and red walls, and are surrounded by trees dating back to thousands of years. The main temple structure follows the same architecture, but is much bigger in size and is situated on a raised platform. Called Dacheng Hall, this architectural centre of the temple is surrounded by 28 richly decorated pillars. In fact, people say that when the emperor comes here, they cover these pillars to not arouse the envy of the king.

ATOP MOUNT TAI

A one-half-hour drive from Qufu takes you to Tai'an city-home to Mount Tai, which is known as the eastern mountain of the Five Great Mountains of China. Worshipped for generations, the mountain is visited by locals and foreigners alike. As not many would be game to climb 7000 stairs leading to the top, people can take a van or bus to the Middle Heavenly Gate. After climbing



a steep set of stairs and a 10-minute walk from there, one can take the cable car, which would make you cover half the distance to the top. After that, if stamina allows, one can walk up to the summit (which is a one-half-hour journey on foot). Those taking the plunge are in for a treat of catching mesmerising views en route to the top of the mountain.

After completing the journey, one reaches the temple on top with locks tied around the peak-this is where people pray for their wishes to come true. One can stop by to take some pictures, before going down, and even stay overnight at the hotel. In the evening, catch an early dinner and head to Tianzhufeng Scenic Area for an outstanding outdoor performance of the 'Worship to the God of Mt. Tai.' It is brilliantly executed on a stage with a grand moveable staircase, which acts as a canvas for lights to weave the magic of the story, added with great performances.

JOVIAL JINAN

The capital of the Shandong region, Jinan, is also known as 'The city of springs' and is home to around 100 springs. The best amongst them is the Baotu Spring, which has a park of the same name built around it. The typical Chinese architecture of the columns and shades around spring water would certainly please the tourists. Take a boat ride from there to the Jiaxuan Memorial wharf at Daming Lake, which is one of the biggest lakes in the city. Go for a walk around Qushuiting Street in the old town, which features a number of natural springs, and relish the local life and great views.

The city has great shopping options with high street malls as well as night markets, where tourists can splurge on fashionable clothes as well as knick-knacks for home. Those who love trying different types of dried seafood and fries should also get into one of the supermarkets, as they have a huge variety of packed seafood, crispies, noodles, cakes and what not.

With pleasing weather throughout the year, Shandong offers everything, from beaches to mountains, as well as history for discerning travellers. The best part is that the region is very well connected to India through Shandong Airlines, which offers flights from Delhi to all the major cities in Shandong.

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ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

Normandy is one of the great historic regions of France and has a unique charm to it. It derives its name from the settlement of the territory by mainly Danish and Norwegian Vikings from the ninth century.

arasserie La Flèche

Experientialtalk



The Christian Dior Museum organises two temporary exhibitions each year where haute couture dresses, shoes, hats and other accessories are displayed. The panoramic view of the sea from the villa is purely breathtaking.





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rance continues to be a popular destination in Europe for Indians but travellers forget that the majestic land is not just restricted to Paris. While Paris is constantly reinvented, Normandy, on the other hand, is a land of nature and culture, beach and countryside, cheese and love.

From Mont Saint-Michel to Giverny, from Étretat to Caen, from Deauville to Rouen, from Eu to Cherbourg, Normandy is quite diverse. These iconic places in the region haven't been explored as much and visitors must experience this majestic little empire in all its glory.

MUSÉE CHRISTIAN DIOR (GRANVILLE)

Located in the Mont-Saint-Michel Bay, the most iconic part of Granville is Musee Christian Dior. Perched atop a cliff overlooking the sea, this villa stands in the middle of a garden designed by Christian Dior and his mother Madeleine. This villa was his childhood home and features two of his favourite colours – pink and grey. It is also the only museum in France devoted to a fashion designer.

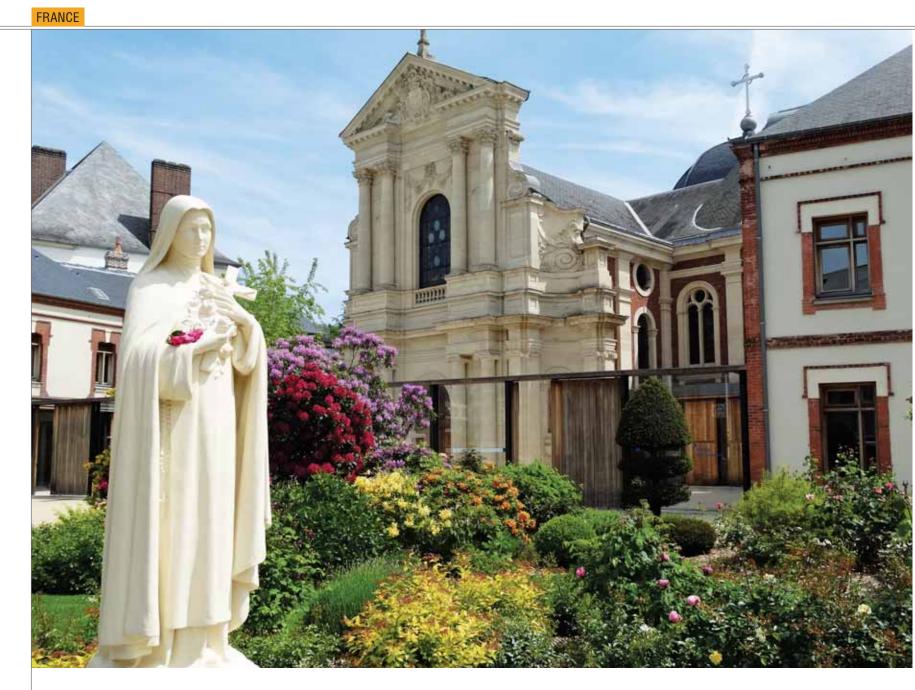
The Christian Dior museum organises two temporary exhibitions each year where haute couture dresses, shoes, hats and other accessories are displayed. The panoramic view of the sea from the villa is just breathtaking. While the building inside has gone through a renovation, few things like closets and attic have been kept intact. The grandeur of the villa, inside and out, reflects the source of Dior's inspiration. Speaking about the importance of this villa, Christian Dior once wrote, "The house of my childhood... I keep the most tender and amazing memory. My life, my style, I owe almost everything to its site and its architecture." Musée Christian Dior will indeed take visitors back in time of the biggest fashion icon's days of youth.

BAYEUX TAPESTRY (BAYEUX)

With its narrow cobbled streets and cathedral at its heart, Bayeux is a perfect example of a medieval Norman town. If you have an interest in Norman history, this place will captivate you with its old-world charm. Bayeux Tapestry, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a unique document which tells the story of the Norman conquest of England in 1066 by William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy. The Tapestry of Bayeux invites you to discover the conquest of the throne of England by William the Conqueror, from 1064 until the end of the Battle of Hastings. The Bayeux Tapestry is 70 metres long and 50 centimetres high. Visitors are given an audio tape at the beginning which is available in multiple languages. The entire story is beautifully embroidered on linen with coloured woolen yarns. The duration of the trip is about 30-40 minutes.

PANORAMA XXL (ROUEN)

The Panorama is located in Rouen on the right bank of the Seine, along avenue Pasteur. It is also next to Rouen's historic centre and its famous monuments. Panorama XXL is a unique and spectacular cultural site which offers a view of the best 360-degree artworks in the world, open to the public since December 2014. Skillfully mixing drawing, painting, photography and computer-generated images, the canvasses in the Panorama XXL combine gripping realism in stunning proportions. The audio and the visuals combined together will enchant you with its rich history. Panorama XXL that has



The Joan of Arc History Museum is one of its kinds. With beautiful, original displays using audio visuals, sound effects and 3D projections, the history plunges you in the midst of a criminal investigation of the most famous judicial investigation in Rouen's history.



Experientialtalk

14 TRAVTALK June 2¹⁰ Fortnight Issue 2017

three different venues – the auditorium, the patio and the rotunda – can also be rented out.

JOAN OF ARC HISTORICAL EXHIBITION (ROUEN)

The Joan of Arc History Museum is one of its kinds. With beautiful original displays using audio-visuals, sound effects and 3D projections, the history plunges you in the midst of a criminal investigation in the most famous judicial investigation in Rouen's history. Witnesses, reconstructions and audio-visual effects will take you on an unusual experience which dives into the heart of the fifteenth century.

From her military actions to retake the French throne to her ordeal at the stake, the epic and captivating story can be experienced through the medieval rooms of a monument previously closed to the pub. The first part of the visit consists of a film projected along the length of the six halls of the palace. This is followed by a number of multimedia displays telling how the legend came to be created and how it was subsequently politicised over the centuries. The Historial, the largest site dedicated to the memory of Joan of Arc, is located within the Rouen Archbishop's Palace.

After significant restoration work, this building – classified as a historic monument – has been open to the public since March 2015. The aim of the Historial is to not only: to present the era of Joan of Arc but also to discover the myth, using the most advanced multimedia technologies along with spectacular scenography.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH (LE HAVRE)

Le Havre is a major European port that combines the attractions of a modern, vibrant city with the charm of a seaside resort and a great nightlife with its casinos. The city was rebuilt after World War II in modernistic style and is now recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

St. Joseph Church was designed by Auguste Perret. It is a 107-metre-high tower, containing 12,768 panes of coloured glass, and is a spiritual beacon and landmark of the city. The church is often referred to as a lighthouse because of its octagonal tower, which lights up at night. This concrete Catholic Church was built as a memorial to the 5,000 people of Le Havre who died during World War II. The vibe of the city remains modern as more than 70 per cent of it has been reconstructed post the War. The city of Le Havre has sports activities, nature, history and contemporary cafes. From the party-goers to history lovers to the sport fanatics, the town is a true landmark. Le Havre has an important place in the twentieth century and post your visit, you will realise, it has a special place in your heart too.

MAISON ET JARDINS DE CLAUDE MONET (GIVERNY)

Home to Claude Monet, a leading figure in the Impressionist movement, Maison et jardins de Claude Monet is a pink house where Monet lived from 1883 to 1926. Everything has been kept the way it was when Monet used to live there. From the utensils in the kitchen, to the attic and the bed, the beauty of Monet's house has been truly maintained over the years. Visitors can admire the master's collection of Japanese prints and the Nympheas studio, which now houses the Foundation's shop. Giverny has become famous the world over, thanks to Claude Monet, who painted his series of water lilies there, among other works.

Monet's enormous house comprises the blue sitting room where Alice Hoschedé-Monet sat with the children. The next room is Monet's entrance, fitted into a small pantry. It was not heated and was therefore used to store food, especially eggs and tea. From the pantry comes Monet's first studio, that later became a room where the painter welcomed his visitors, art dealers, critics and collectors.

A very steep staircase leads from the pantry to the upper floor where one can find Monet's bedroom. He died in this room in December 1926. Then comes Alice's bedroom as Claude and his wife Alice didn't share the same bedroom. Her bedroom is decorated with Japanese woodblocks featuring female characters. Then comes the most dramatic aspect of the house, which is Monet's dining room. Painted in two tones of yellow, the walls are packed with Japanese engravings. The dining room is connected to the kitchen where all the utensils are kept the way they were during Monet's time.

Another famous aspect of the house is its garden where he used to sit, get inspired and paint. The water garden with the famous Japanese bridge, wisteria, azalea and pond and the unique combination of sky and water used to inspire the artists' water lily canvas. From admiring few original works by Monet to taking a stroll in the garden that remained his muse, a visitor will truly find the mansion to be one of the highlights of Normandy.

CHÂTEAU GUILLAUME LE CONQUÉRANT (FALAISE)

William-the conqueror was born in Falaise in 1027 and accomplished his first feat of arms at the castle. His victory was the founding act of his powerbase with Normandy. His destiny would lead him to England where he would be crowned king and the keeps of Falaise castle bear witness to this conquest, which would profoundly change the course of history of Europe. Today, the context of this long history is illustrated using new technology, with enhanced reality bringing the daily surroundings of dukes and kings back to life with the brightness of the colours and the opulence of the furnishings.

Touch tablets are handed out to visitors at the start of the visit show the interiors of the castle rooms in stunning virtual reconstructions. Apart from this, the animated scenes make the daily life of civilians and soldiers in medieval times come alive. The best part of this experience is, once you locate the tablet at a particular thing, it will show you how it looked like in the eleventh century. Climb up the top of the castle to find the entire glimpse of the city Falaise. So while the interiors of the castle have been restored, technology has made sure that the visitors don't miss the old world charm.





CRUISING is an experience

PETER KOLLAR, Head of International Training & Development, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), feels that cruising allows travellers multiple experiences, all in a single vacation.

HAZEL JAIN

WHAT ACCORDING TO YOU IS 'EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL'?

It's about immersion, having an opportunity to delve deep into a region's culture and history, mainly through direct engagement with the locals with hands-on experiences that foster a feeling of uniqueness and oneness with what is around you. It's normally in a small group

as this allows all participants to be involved and feel they are part of the experience, rather than standing at the back of a crowd.

HOW DOES CRUISING FIGURE IN THIS?

This type of tour experience has actually been around for a while in cruising. Not only is it the essence of small ship cruising, river cruising and expedition cruising, I have done these tours for years while working for Crystal Cruises over a decade ago when we would visit remote communities and partake in volunteering activities, or into homes of hill-tribes and learn

how they live. Even with small groups of 18 walking through the Sistine Chapel afterhours in the Vatican can be viewed as an immersive experience. These bespoke options have been adopted by larger cruise lines who now include a small range of these excursions with limits on group sizes. Though the 'highlights' tours of getting on busses and driving around taking photos is still a popular introduction' to a region for many passengers, more travellers are seeking these immersive opportunities that are now weaved into most cruise programmes.



CRUISING IN INDIA

- CLIA has just started to engage with the cruising market in India
- It aims to offer travel agents an education programme that results in proficiency in selling cruise
- Once the agent market grows, it will allow CLIA help cultivate cruise awareness in the region

WHY SHOULD EXPERIENCE-SEEKING TRAVELLERS OPT FOR CRUISING?

For Indians who want to engage in this type of experience, cruising is a great option, as once you select the right product and destination for your level of interest, cruising allows multiple experiences in the one vacation, whether it would be along coastlines to different communities, or from country to country that embrace a diversity of cultural experiences.

WHAT CRUISE TRENDS DO YOU SEE EMERGE IN INDIA IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS?

India already has one of the youngest cruising demographics of all world source markets, and this will continue with the new-to-cruise market being targeted along with the technological developments in connectivity that has recently evolved onboard. The real change will be in general cruising acceptance, as we've seen shifting attitudes and mindsets in emerging markets such as India eventually open up via passenger feedback, media exposure, and most of all, educated travel agents who ultimately learn about the modern cruise experience.

HOW DO YOU SEE CRUISING GROW AND EVOLVE IN INDIA?

All cruise markets are dependent on travel agent advocacy. Direct bookings to cruise lines are only completed by customers who have already decided to cruise, so it is the agent who showcases cruising as an ideal option compared to other choices such as land and coach touring and resort stays. These recommendations are only brought forward by an agent if they believe in cruising, therefore, training and Fams are critical in getting them to understand the value of this option.

Off the beaten track in the Philippines

The Philippines is known the world over for its pristine waters and white sandy beaches, but there's a lot more to the nation than its aquamarine life. Whether it's being buried under a mound of volcanic sand to soak in its properties, or learning how to create fire from bamboo, the island nation brings a variety of off-beat activities to give you a break from the beach-vacation monotony.

AHANA GURUNG

had often been a spectator to my friends gushing about their trip to the Philippines, Boracay in particular, and heard nothing but stories about how clear the beaches were, or how the nights would come alive till the wee hours of the morning. So when I chanced upon the opportunity to visit the nation, I immediately drew a picture of it in my head –the food and the beach. However, what I witnessed completely took me by surprise. A 300-year colonisation by the Spanish from the early 1500s to late 1800s, followed by the Americans and briefly by the Japanese during World War II, have left footprints that continue to shape the heritage and culture of presentday Philippines. From the names of roads and cities, to names of people, the Hispanic culture still flourishes in every nook and corner. The fusion of foreign cultures seep through the distinct architecture, and colourful jeepneys ply the roads as taxis as reminders of a war-torn country. Agriculture is the main occupation and you will notice fields of common cash crops like rice and tobacco as you drive from one province to another, although locals say it is a fading profession. But the conviction with which the nation is trying to build itself is commendable, as the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) segment drives the growth in the economy. The rising skyline of Makati, the business centre Manila, gives the of impression of a gradually developing metropolitan.

More than 7000 islands make up the Philippines, out of which Luzon is the largest. It is also home to the bustling capital Manila and for this reason, is the most important and well-visited one. The international airport in Manila is a major hub and is the gateway for frequented places like Cebu, Boracay, Bohol and Davao amongst others. The capital is like any other city – sprawling with activities and roads filled with chock-o-block traffic that never seems to slow down. But as you stray from the cityscapes towards the suburbs, the lush greenery set against the backdrop of modest mountains comes into view, and that's when you really begin to appreciate the scenic beauty.

> The country boasts several UNESCO World Heritage Sites that will leave you in awe, and soon

enough you will realise that a week is not even close to being enough to explore the archipelago. As small as it may look, the Philippines in reality is expansive, and travelling from one place to another can be slightly tedious.

If you are looking for a getaway that has world-class beaches but is not limited to it, the Philippines strikes the perfect balance. Here are five unconventional and off-beat activities that you can explore if only the beaches don't cut it for you:

PUERTO PRINCESA SUBTERRANEAN RIVER NATIONAL PARK, PALAWAN

Located on the idyllic island province of Palawan, some 74 km northwest of Puerto Princesa city, the Underground River is an astounding piece of nature's work. The 8.2 km-long Cabayugan River flows through St Paul's mountain or the Sleeping Giant, right into the sea, and within its dark and eerie ecosystem, hordes of bats and pythons thrive. Visitor boats are allowed to go in as deep as 4.5 km and as you make your way into the river, the brightness and heat of the day is replaced with a cool and unnerving surrounding that gets darker as the boat silently bobs further in.

Enormous stalagmites and stalactites come into sight, the result of acid rain trickling along the crevices and fractures of the limestone mountain, which resemble various vegetables, fruits and even scenes from the Last Supper in the section aptly termed 'The Cathedral'. Water (and bat droppings) still drips from the rocks above, indicating a ceaseless process. Visitors are warned from touching the surroundings and are advised to observe silence to avoid contamination and disturbance.





The Underground River is enclosed by a lush tropical forest which has over 800 plant species, 174 birds, 38 mammals, 28 reptiles and 12 amphibians and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and was recently included in the New 7 Wonders of Nature. Over 1500-2000 visitors throng the attraction each day so travellers are advised to pre-book their permits online. With international airport finally commencing operations, a substantial increase in the number of tourists is expected this year.

PAMULAKLAKIN FOREST TRAIL, ZAMBALES

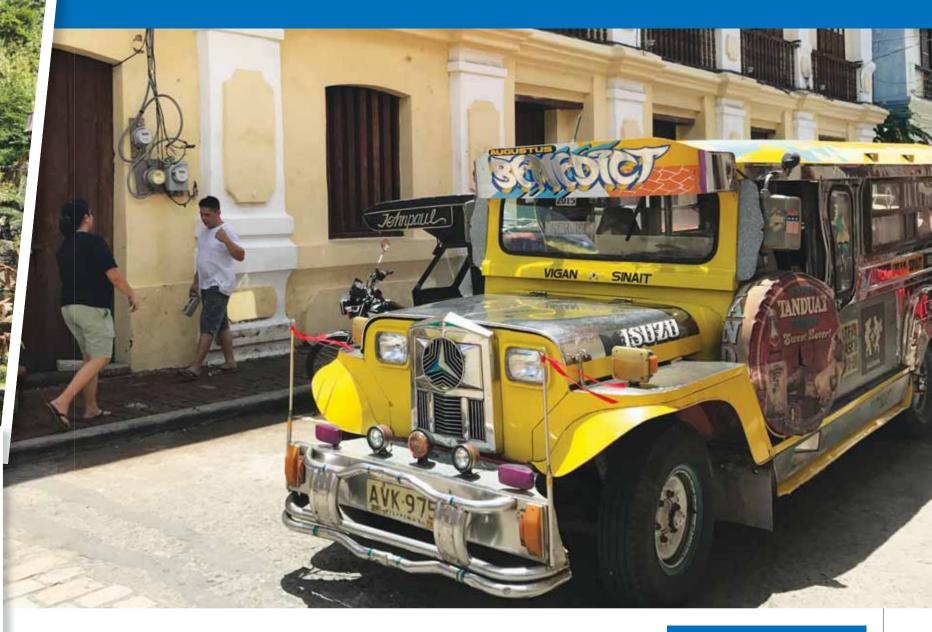
The Forest Trail in the Subic Bay area is set amidst a dense tropical forest, a threehour trek from the village of the Aetas. The Aetas are a group of indigenous people of the mountains who, despite several foreign invasions, were not colonised and live off the bounties of the forest. Nestor, who is among the few Tagalog-speaking Aetas, takes us

along the trail along with his friendly four-legged friend Whitey and points out the uses of various tree barks. The tribe obtains their daily resources from the land they live on. They use the bark of trees for medicinal purposes, to make essentials like ropes and even acquire water. We are then introduced to Tata Kasui (or 'cashew'), a 67-year-old Aeta who takes pride in his roots and gleefully shows us how the modest bamboo can be used as a weapon, as utensils and to cook his favourite chicken, and also to create fire from the shavings. Kasui makes sure to mention that every morsel cooked is always offered to the gods as a sign of respect. Since the area has been developed as a tourist attraction, several Aeta ladies try their luck at entrepreneurship and sell bottles of organic honey and small bamboo souvenirs by the road. Away from the concrete jungle and in the presence of simple inhabitants who live a humble yet fulfilling life, I sense echoes from the woods that say money can't buy happiness.

PUNING HOT SPRING AND SPA, PAMPANGAS

If you are one for unconventional wellness therapies, this is definitely a must. The thermal springs are situated in the province of Pampangas, which is approximately a four-hour drive from Manila. Hot springs are a common occurrence in

Experiential a k



areas of volcanic activity and the Philippines is replete with 23 active ones.

After a change of clothes, a 4x4 takes you on a dirt track which you later realise is a dried riverbed, and a rough 30-minute ride later, you arrive at the hot springs. While I had imagined a slightly more rustic set-up, I was pleasantly surprised at the modern infrastructure encasing the springs that were made to look like mini swimming pools complete with cabanas. After a dip in three different pools of varying temperatures, we soaked up enough minerals and headed to the spa. Little did we know what awaited us.

The exclusive treatment at the Puning Spa uses the goodness of volcanic ashes and sand to replenish the body. Buried neck-deep in the warm-to-hot sand, I began to relax and closed my eyes only to realise a man was actually walking all over me. After getting over the initial shock, we are told that the spa employs the local inhabitants of the land called Negritos or the Bushmen, who are generally small in stature and that the activity is a part of the whole wellness process. The sand is then dusted off and a mud-paste of the volcano ashes is applied, al fresco style. However strange the process may sound, the natural resources do make a huge difference to your skin and leaves you with a soft, dewy glow.

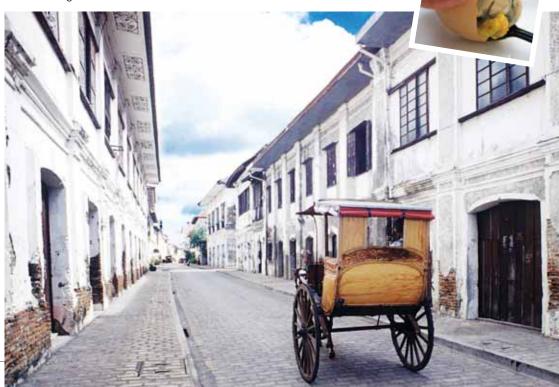
VIGAN HERITAGE TOWN, ILOCOS SUR

Imagine driving past fields of tobacco and little huts with coconut flower pots popping up by the road every now and then. You kind of get used to this sight so when a quaint vintage European town comes into the picture, the experience is nothing less than remarkable. Cobbled streets stretch out on Calle Crisologo with antique houses from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on both sides of the roads, like an ode to the Spanish-Mexican-Chinese heritage, filling the air with olden-day charm.

Here, even eating in modern franchises like McDonald's and the local McDonald's-style JolliBee will feel like a fine-dining experience while taking a trip to Watsons will take you back into the days of yore. Kalesas or horse-drawn carriages are aplenty in every nook and corner to give you a tour of the little heritage town.

TEST YOUR GAG REFLEX

Balut is a local delicacy and essentially a 14 to 21-dayold boiled duck embryo. It can be found in local markets and is eaten whole, after adding condiments like vinegar and salt. If you are truly adventurous with your food, balut will be right up your street.



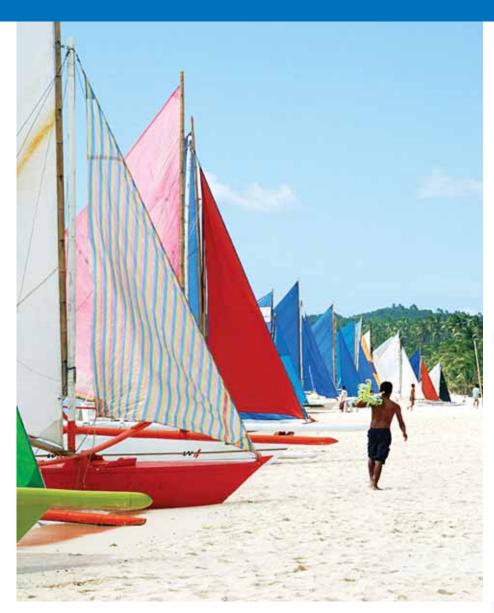


The Vigan Cathedral or St Paul's Cathedral is the biggest landmark in the area, and along with three other churches in the country, it is collectively called the Baroque Churches. These churches are known for the Earthquake Baroque style of architecture, a common style in the olden times, employed to withstand earthquakes.

The Syquia Mansion Museum on Quirino Boulevard gives you a sneak peek into the lives of the rich and famous. It belonged to the wife of the late President Elipidio Rivera Quirino, who hailed from a wealthy Chinese family, and weaves tales of not just the affluence and opulence but also the discrimination between the rich and the poor. The Vigan Heritage Village as well as the Baroque Churches are well-acclaimed attractions and are a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

HONDA BAY, PALAWAN

Of course, no trip to an island is complete without island hopping and however cliched or done-to-death it might be, not making time for water activities on one of the most beautiful islands in the world is close to blasphemy. If you are facing time crunch, Honda Bay serves as the easiest and most accessible beaches, thanks to its proximity to the city of Puerto Princesa. Four islands (Luli, Starfish, Pandan and





Cowrie) are open for hopping throughout the year and are just a 30-minute drive from the city and an additional 20 minutes by a speed boat. Most are privately owned.

Luli Island is one of the private islands and the name has been coined from 'lulibog' and 'lilytaw' which means rise and sink – it is the only island that descends and rises above the water according to the tide. Try being an early-bird and reach the island before anyone else does as the remoteness can truly give a spectacular swimming experience. Pandan Island offers more water sport options like kayaking and snorkelling. The waters are extremely clear and as it gets deeper, life underwater manifests into a parallel universe of dancing sea weed, sea urchins, starfish and fascinating corals. One benefit of shallow waters is that you can observe the marine life, unlike other places where it's just too dark and deep to see anything clearly. Honda Bay is especially a good place to make your debut snorkelling trip since a guide is present to chaperon you. A good time in the water always builds up an appetite and the restaurant on the island serves fresh abalone, crabs and clams upon order but the buffet with local sea food and fruits is a treat on its own.

Castle of sands

Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao, with its seven hotels, offers myriad experiences and entertainment options.



ENTERTAINMENT BIBAP

Blending martial arts, singing, street dance and hip-hop, **BIBAP** at The Parisian Macao was created to celebrate Bibimbap – the unofficial national dish of spicy rice, vegetables and beef – and to promote Korean food culture worldwide, incorporating a cappella singing, beatbox sounds, b-boying (breakdancing) and acrobatics. Monkey King The large-scale fantasy Chinese stage play, Monkey King, by Beijing Hua Yan Group takes place at the new Sands Cotai Theatre at Sands Cotai Central. Viewers will be enthralled by the sheer scale of the acrobatics, drama, martial arts, magic



combined with the most advanced 3D effects, LED screen projections, video mapping and full surround sound, together with creative lighting effects, choreography, music and spectacular and colourful costumes.

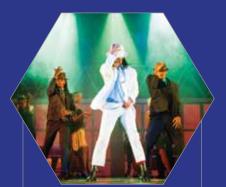
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Thriller Live The debut show at The Parisian Theatre, Thriller Live, is a stunning theatrical concert created to commemorate the world's greatest ever entertainer, Michael Jackson. A 90-minute, high-energy explosion of pop, rock, soul and disco takes the audience on a magical audio-visual journey through Michael Jackson's astonishing 45year musical legacy. Kung Fu Panda Adventure Ice World Asia's largest annual indoor frozen wonderland, Kung Fu Panda Adventure Ice World with the DreamWorks All-Stars, takes place at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo for a limited time from March 16-July 9, 2017. It includes a host of colourful new DreamWorks Animation characters from 'Kung Fu Panda', 'Madagascar', 'Shrek', 'How To Train Your Dragon', 'The Croods' and 'Trolls', vibrantly brought to life with dazzling lights and stunning sound effects.



Experientialtalk

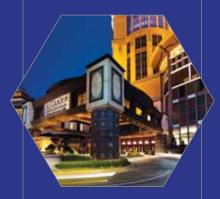


SHOPPING

With its addition of nearly 150 intimate boutiques and galleries, Shoppes at Cotai Central, as part of Shoppes, Macao's ultimate luxury duty-free shopping experience, joins Shoppes at Venetian, Shoppes at Four Seasons and Shoppes at Parisian to offer a staggering 850 stores to choose from – the most in any one single location in all of Macao! This shopper's paradise includes some exciting new first-to-market brands in Macao. Shoppes at Cotai Central caters to every shopper's needs – the luxury-minded, savvy shoppers, or those just looking for a nice day out with friends and family.

STAY

Conrad Macao, Cotai Central is a stylish hotel choice where you can relax and be energized whilst enjoying the adventure, fun and fortune of Sands Cotai Central. Offering 654 guestrooms and suites in a 40-floor tower overlooking the Cotai Strip, the hotel is part of an innovative, fully integrated resort city.



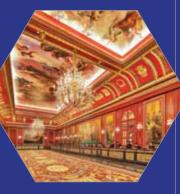
Holiday Inn Macao Cotai Central, with 1224 guestrooms, including 65 suites, is the only Holiday Inn in the world to receive an official Star Rating by Forbes for four consecutive years. It features all the benefits of an integrated resort destination at Sands Cotai Central, including an extensive array of dining, retail, leisure and entertainment options.





The Venetian® Macao – the largest integrated resort of its kind in Asia – marked the beginning of a visionary new development of luxury, leisure and entertainment

resorts, as well as B2B facilities inspired by the legendary Las Vegas Strip. The 3000-suite integrated resort features replicas of the famous canals and architectural icons of Venice.



The Parisian Macao is an integrated resort inspired by the magic and wonder of the famed "City of Light." The Parisian Macao offers a full array of integrated resort facilities, including approximately 3000 guestrooms and suites, convention and meeting space, 1200-seat theatre and entertainment. The Parisian Macao has linked walkways to The Venetian® Macao.

SPA

The Parisian Macao is complete with 12 treatment rooms, male/ female Vitality Lounge with sauna, steam room, experience showers, vitality pool, relaxation lounges, barber shop for men, hair boutique for ladies and a retail store. The spa, spread across 1264 square metres, takes its inspiration from the 'La Belle Époque', or 'beautiful era' of Paris of the elegant 1800s, and the essence of old Shanghai in a classical Chinese styled ambience.



EIFFEL TOWER

Visitors to the Cotai Strip will be mesmerised by the breath taking half-scale authentic recreation of the famed Eiffel Tower that sits majestically at the hotel's entrance. With two observation decks offering views to mainland China, as well as unparalleled panoramic views of the Cotai Strip, the Eiffel Tower is set to be Macao's must-see landmark and an ideal backdrop for visitors. The height of The Parisian Macao's Eiffel Tower is roughly equivalent to a 38-storey building and is approximately one half the height of the 324-metre-tall Paris tower. Of all the replicas, The Parisian Macao's Eiffel Tower is the tallest and most realistic.

A throwback to jung le Book

The Kipling Lodge in Ranthambore promises guests a fantastic adventure that will take them back to the beautiful world of Mowgli amidst boundless nature.



warm throwback to the colonial age and hunting lodges that inspired Rudyard Kipling to pen his magnum opus, Kipling Lodge is located on the boundary of Ranthambore's famous national park, one of India's largest tiger reserves and nature conservatories, overlooking the idyllic Aravalli hills.

The old-world charm is hard to miss. Starting with the distinctly Victorian rosewood book match furniture, hospitality that is reminiscent of the Raj, or a library bar where guests can pick up a well-loved classic and enjoy it over a glass of whisky by a fireplace. Bespoke rooms with private gardens fringed by trees, spa, swimming pool – luxury is bookmarked, whether one is a reader or not. It's not just opulence though. Exciting safari adventures, hikes to the Ranthambore fort, village excursions and a lot more awaits guests here.

Kipling Lodge is spread over five acres of land and has only 16 rooms. This makes the property exclusive. Even when the hotel is fully packed, one never gets the feeling of privacy being invaded at any point of time. It has three categories of rooms: Superior Garden Rooms, Terrace Rooms and Theme Suites. Despite having huge common spaces, each and every room has personal sit-outs, for romantic private evenings. A well-equipped library bar gives the traveller a perfect 'me time'. Kipling Lodge also boasts of one of the finest dining facility in Sawai Madhopur. Here, the chefs take extra care in preparing the dishes that match the palate of each and every guest at the hotel.

A few hours away from Delhi and Jaipur, the Kipling Lodge Ranthambore is a perfect getaway for two to three days for those who value luxury and quality time. The main attraction however remains the famed Ranthambore National Park safari. Guests can take both morning and evening safaris and be prepared to sight the magnificent Indian tiger. There are 10 trails around the park.

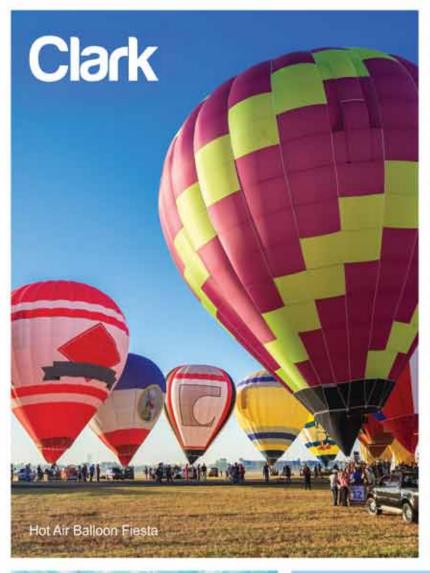
We believe we have been managing to deliver the much required personalised services and a memorable stay to our guests which is why they keep returning.

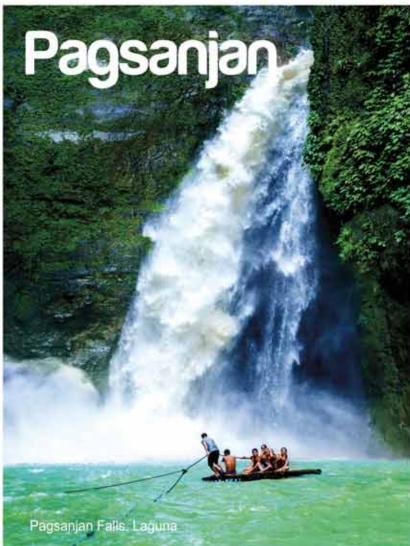
DIGVIJAY DIWAKAR Director, Diverse Hotels Marketing, that handles sales and marketing for Kipling Resort Ranthambore

Bespoke rooms with private gardens fringed by trees, spa, swimming pool – luxury is bookmarked, whether one is a reader or not. It's not just opulence though.

simply **MUNICH**

Munich Tourist Office, India minoti.gupta@buzzindia.in, +91 9650399907





Boracay







mandar.kelkar@buzzindia.in 📑 www.facebook.com/PhilippinesTourismIN