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Maya enchants South India



The South India Travel Awards kicked off at Crowne Plaza Kochi on May 2, 2017. **K.C. Chandrasasan**, Vice Chairman, Kerala Travels Interserve, entered the DDP Gallery of Legends. He was felicitated by **SanJeet**, Mentor, India Travel Awards; **Dr. A. Jayathilak**, Chairman, Spices Board of India; and **Arni Sapkal**, Gladrags Mrs. India-Mumbai 2017.

Rashmi Verma becomes new Tourism Secretary



Rashmi Verma (IAS), of 1982 batch from Bihar Cadre, has joined as the new Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Before this, Verma was serving as the Secretary in Ministry of Textiles. Not new to tourism, she earlier served as the Chairman & MD of Bihar Tourism Department as well as Additional Director in Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. She will be replacing N. K. Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, who had taken up the additional charge as Secretary Tourism after Vinod Zutshi retired from the position.

ME key to flatten seasonality

Peak summer is the time when tourists from the Middle East flock to India to enjoy the rains and experience Ayurveda, leading to the steady increase of visitors year after year. Indian travel professionals explain why the region has emerged as a significant source market and also has a high demand for technology.



AHANA GURUNG FROM DUBAI

“India has welcomed growing number of tourists from the Middle East and we would like this to increase. Medical tourism along with wellness are some aspects where India is a forerunner and we would like more visitors to benefit from these facilities. We have high-quality medical services with world-class doctors and medical assistance at an economical rate—if you compare the services offered in the US and Europe, the cost of medical care in India is reasonable. Additionally, with yoga being accepted globally, what better place than India for a first-hand experience of yoga and Ayurveda. These are some aspects to attract more tourists from the Middle East.”



Gyan Bhushan
Economic Advisor
Ministry of Tourism
Government of India

“For Kerala, the Middle East is an ever-growing market. The reasons are simple—the relationship between the two countries as well as the proximity. Employment is another reason why there is strong incoming and outgoing traffic. This time, Kerala is looking forward to promoting medical and wellness tourism as we have such good hospitals and services. Ayurveda is another product that is popular among the Middle East tourists and several flock to Kerala for this. June onwards is usually when most people travel to India to experience monsoon, a good time to enjoy the region. It’s a great opportunity for Kerala because it is usually off-season and this helps to even out the response. From other markets such as Oman and Saudi Arabia, we have seen a noticeable growth.”



E.M. Najeeb
Managing Director,
Air Travel Enterprises,
India Travel Award Winner

“The Middle East and GCC market is very important for us. Compared to some years ago, there are more travellers from the region coming to India, and while there has been a slight slowdown from places like Saudi Arabia, mainly due to the oil price issue, the traffic is still quite steady. In addition, the e-visa is available for several GCC countries which is another encouraging reason for them to visit India. We have been participating at ATM since the very beginning and for us, this year was as successful. However, the promotions for Incredible India were not up to the mark which lead to less visitors around the pavilion. The trade show was good, but our participation could have been much better had there been more preparations in store.”



Pronab Sarkar
MD, Swagalam Tours, &
President, IATO

Contd. on page 8 ▶

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Rustom Irani
Filmmaker, writer, wanderer. Wheelchair vagabond, online advisor, offline creative, all-round enabler and enthusiastic traveller.



Dr. Alim Chandani
Mumbai born and deaf, he is AVP at Centum-GRO initiative. Has a Doctorate Degree in Special Education Management from Gallaudet University in Washington DC.



Divyanshu Ganatra
Visually impaired, with a hunger for learning, loves climbing mountains, meditating under water, cycling to the highest point in the world, and flying in beautiful skies.



Former Group Captain – Prabal Malaker
Wheelchair bound ever since he was afflicted with multiple sclerosis, remains a high flier, inspiring other disabled travellers to take to the skies.



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Houseful show at Turkey EduCon

Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) conducted its EduCon in Turkey from May 3-7 to familiarise its members with newer regions in Turkey. The association plans to conduct three more EduCons abroad this year.

 ANKITA SAXENA FROM TURKEY

As many as 45 travel Agents participated in the familiarisation trip conducted by OTOAI in association with Turkish Indian Tourism Council (TITC) and Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Turkey. According to **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI, a need was felt to explore newer destinations to meet the rising demand among Indian travellers. "The purpose of this EduCon was to experience a new region in Turkey apart from the usually travelled areas and get first-hand information so that travel agents can go back and promote these in their itineraries. The quality standard of services and value for money is the USP of the Muğla region. In terms of safety, we can guarantee our guests that it is safe, full of fun and enjoyment," he said.



Guldeep Singh Sahni
DDP Trailblazer 2016 &
President, OTOAI

The educational trip covered the south-western region of Turkey on the Aegean Sea-Muğla province along with destinations like Dalyan, Köyceğiz, Marmaris, Akyaka, İçmeler, Fethiye, Kayaköy, Ölüdeniz and Göcek.

Sahni further informed that OTOAI plans to conduct three more EduCons this year with the next one slated for July and the rest to follow

subsequently. He said that the Muğla region can be promoted for segments like FIT, leisure, weddings, luxury, adventure, honeymooners and film tourism. Meetings and Incentives can also be boosted in this region from India. "We are planning to conduct a joint roadshow with the tourism department of Turkey to feature various regions of the country. Their low season upto June end and our high season of travel from April-July are a perfect match. I'd want the tour operators to come out with various itineraries for this region and experiment with customer satisfaction. I also request Turkey to propose advertisement projects in India."

Azar A. H. Khan, Consulate General of India to Istanbul, commented that this EduCon is the first step towards promoting Turkey in India. "In

2016, tourism from India to Turkey had slowed down due to various incidents, but I believe this trip will be instrumental in restarting Indian tourist traffic to Turkey. We are also promoting tourism from Turkey to India. We issue almost 60 visas everyday to India and hope that this two-way traffic grows."

Gülara Alkaçır, Culture and Tourism Expert, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Turkey, informed that in 2016 approximately 20 DMCs from Turkey participated in OTM, SATTE and IITT in India to showcase various products. "India is an emerging market and we have set aside a considerable budget for marketing and promotional activities. We want to promote unexplored regions in Turkey. This year we hope to receive a million Indian tourists and this EduCon is the first step in that direction." 

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The digital-human balance

Digital first, the slogan that was once confined to tech companies and a few start ups is slowly becoming an anthem for every industry. The mantra today is get online, not in line. Gone are the days when you had to be physically present to complete chores, now all you need is a phone, a laptop and a working internet connection. With this digital invasion rapidly taking over, the travel industry, like every other industry, is also reinventing itself to cater to everybody's digital needs. You will find apps for every query relating to travel and hospitality. As technological innovation gains ground in the travel and hospitality industry, social media has become another powerful medium. But digital innovation does not mean that we discount brick and mortar business. Although online plays an important role, the human connect brings a brand to life, quite literally. It would be shortsighted to dismiss the importance of brick and mortar businesses, but one should also keep in mind that digital channels are here to stay.

The Arabian tales

At this year's ATM, the India pavilion, although comprising just 24 participants, was abuzz with talks of business and almost every stand had visitors swarming in by the minute. Feedback on Middle Eastern travellers' trends from Indian travel suppliers at the mart revealed that Mumbai and Kerala are the two main cities that are frequented usually for business, wellness or medical tourism, along with the Golden Triangle being the next most popular tourism circuit.

Apart from these two areas, the North East region was also brought in focus at the biggest trade show in the ME region to showcase the diversity of the country. But any travel professional would be able to point out that the North East, while extremely beautiful and untouched, is more appropriate for a seasoned traveller. If the lack of ample five-star properties (which are currently in pipeline) and dearth of halal-certified eateries are taken care of it might help to bridge the gap between the product and the target audience. If the industry is aiming to up the numbers from Middle East market, it needs a more focused approach on promoting the right destinations to the right audience.

SKYNOTES

SECONDARY GATEWAYS

- In this column, TravTalk analysed why there was a need to develop secondary gateways apart from already existing principal entry points. These secondary gateways, according to the column, would have looked after not only charters but also those aircraft which wanted to avoid congestion or bad weather. The article says that these airports could contribute feed to the hub airports, as the pace of growth of traffic to and from such centres was bound to increase.
- Today, with the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam NagriK) regional connectivity scheme, the Tier II, III airports are in full swing with new flights connecting them to major airports



Welcomgroup Picks Up Additional Stars

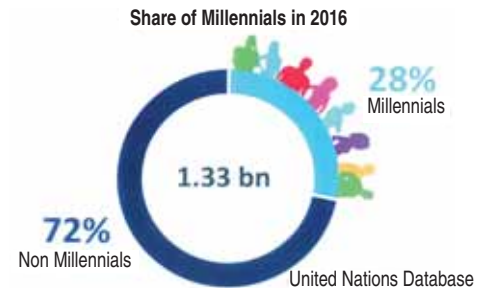
In 1992, WelcomGroup-managed Umaid Bhawan Palace in Udaipur was reclassified as 5-star deluxe by the hotel classification committee. WelcomGroup Vadodara was given a five star status and WelcomGroup Royal Castle, Khimsar was declared a heritage star hotel.

Identifying travel trends in India

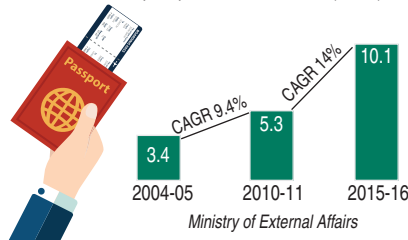
The travel and hospitality industry in India is changing drastically owing to technological advances. We bring you some recent trends that impact travel bookings.

❖ Rise of the millennials

Indians under 35 years (millennials) represent 28 per cent of the population. An emerging trend of younger population taking on leisure and adventure travel has been observed in the recent past. The millennials segment is extensively using online portals and apps while planning and transacting. Social media also plays a key role while prioritising travel choices.



Number of passports issued in India (in mn)

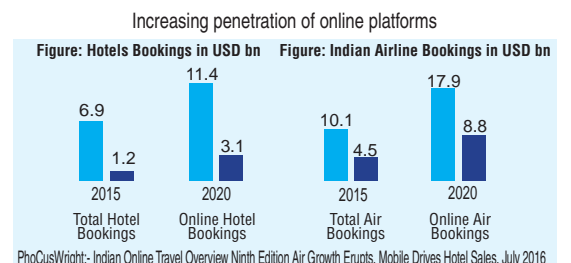


❖ Increasing penetration of online booking platforms

The share of online bookings for domestic air travel and hotel reservations account for 44% and 17% of their respective markets. The integration and availability of these services by OTAs on a single platform has given a major boost to the industry.

❖ Digitalisation streamlines documentation process

The Passport Seva Project was launched in 2010 by the Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with Tata Consultancy Services with a view to make the process of passport applications and issuance seamless and standardised. As many as 10.1 million passports were issued in 2015-16 as compared to 5.3 million passports in 2010-11 and 3.4 million in 2004-05.



Source: Travel 2.0- The next generation of travel: A FICCI-Avalon Publication

India woos tourists from ME

The e-Tourist Visa regime and lure of the year-round destination will propel the numbers from Middle East, say India Tourism officials at ATM 2017.



Travel marts have been key in promotion of any destination and India has been a regular participant at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) since its inception 24 years ago. This year, the Incredible India delegation comprising 24 participants was led by **H.E. Vipul**, Consul General of India Dubai and **Gyan Bhushan**, Economic Advisor, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, who also inaugurated the Indian pavilion. The pavilion brought the spotlight on the ancient art of yoga which was demonstrated by a yoga practitioner in real time.

Commenting on India's participation at ATM 2017, Vipul stated, "A total of 24 participants from India are here at ATM, including government agencies like IRCTC, ITDC, as well as a number of private tour operators. Two state governments Jammu and Kashmir, and Kerala have put up stalls while officials from Madhya Pradesh are also participating. There has been a consistent and positive growth of tourists from this region to India over the last three years with 2016 having registered an overall growth of around 17 per cent over the previous year." He elaborated that the simplification of e-Visa will encourage more tourists to travel to India and will be instrumental in driving the growth to greater heights.

Highlighting the country's developments in the travel and tourism world, Bhushan said, "India registered a growth of 10.6 per cent in 2016, which is higher than the global average of about 4.3 per cent. Tourists can visit India whenever they like as it is an all-year-round destination. We have also climbed up 12 spots, from 52 to 40 this year in World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Global Competitiveness report which goes to show the development that is currently taking place."

Bhushan also threw light on the world-class and economical medical facilities available in the country which range from state-of-the-art hospitals with latest technology; highly skilled Indian physicians and surgeons; cost-effective treatment; quality of care and nursing; less waiting time for availing of medical services; traditional healthcare



(L-R) Gyan Bhushan, H.E. Vipul, IRV Rao, E.M. Najeeb

therapies like Ayurveda and yoga combined with allopathic treatment providing a holistic wellness destination.

12% rise in Indian arrivals

Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) claims they are developing new products specifically for the India market.



Throwing light on their new initiatives, **Hamad Mohammed Bin Mejren**, Senior Vice President, Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism), said that India is a traditional market for them. "Some of the leading additions are the theme parks, as we mainly focus on family, which is one

of the main pillars for us and makes for 70 per cent of the visitors to Dubai," he informed. Mejren revealed they recorded a total of 1.8 million Indian arrivals in 2016. "It was a 12 per cent increase from previous year. We are confident of seeing growth with our efforts," he added. Talking of the MICE prospects in the region, he said that they have a special division of Dubai

Business Events, which is the official convention bureau of Dubai. "Business visitors compared to leisure visitors are 20 per cent to 80 per cent, but it is very important as the spend is more with them. There are several business events taking place in Dubai and many of them are Indian meetings and incentive groups. We even host event organisers free of charge for site inspections," he said.

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UAE: A promising source market

► Contd. from page 3

“The Middle East and Africa have come up in a huge way when it comes to travel and tourism. Even for us, the GCC is one of the emerging markets where we have seen good business opportunities and thanks to the excellent connectivity, UAE remains our biggest source market for outbound travel. We hope to see a growth of 45 per cent this year and the prospects look strong. Additionally, the opening of Dubai Parks and Resorts’ Bollywood Parks has been a huge drawing factor, and with hospitality players like EMAAR Group of Hotels, The Address Hotels, etc. that present state-of-the-art services, more Indians are increasingly opting to travel to the area.”



Ankush Nijhawan
Co-founder, TBO Group, and MD, Nijhawan Group, India Travel Award winner

“For TBI, the Middle East is a growing market and is among our top five source markets for tourists travelling to India. The tourists we get are a mixed crowd – a majority of them travel to either Mumbai or Kerala for leisure as well as business. The corporate travel side is huge with big numbers travelling every year and since the months from June onwards are extremely hot in ME, monsoon in India provides respite for them and is when they flock to India. Wellness tourism has great demand among them with several tourists flocking to Kerala year after year. Although we are not very active on the medical tourism front, tourists have shown encouraging response and more growth in this segment is anticipated. This year, ATM has been very beneficial as always and is a good platform to connect with buyers from the region.”



Homa Mistry
India Travel Award winner, CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India (TBI)

“To Mystifly, ATM has always been highly productive and beneficial. This year was exciting and the diversity of participants and visitors was incredible. The way the event was organised, the thoroughness and attention to detail in all aspects was impressive. ATM helps us comprehensively cover middle and central east regions which are strategic markets for Mystifly. It is a Greenfield market from a technology adoption perspective where every other day someone is entering the online world. UAE is open to adopt tech value propositions and as a tech-enabler, this opens an array of new opportunities to us. An interesting thing that we have noticed at the event is how the industry is embracing change. Be it companies moving away from traditional transaction methods or how today’s travellers prefer experiences/activities over destinations – giving birth to new experience-oriented DMCs, change seems to be in the air.”



Rajeev Kumar G
Founder, Managing Director & CEO, Mystifly, India Travel Award Winner



Deepak Bhatnagar
Managing Director, Aamantaran Travel

“The Middle East is a very important market for India because a major chunk of the business comes during the lean season which is during July, August, and September. It has good potential to grow because of its proximity to India and the well-established air accessibility that connects most of the major Indian cities. Earlier, not many were keen to travel to India but that is changing and acknowledging this change, we have been participating at ATM since the past four years.

Even though the market has considerably slowed down due to various unforeseen reasons, it still holds huge potential for us and we are still aggressively in the market. We are here to launch a few new products like Kashmir, some luxury products etc. and to show that India is much more than the Golden Triangle and Kerala.”



Rajneesh Sabharwal
COO, The Ultimate Travelling Camp, India Travel Award winner

“The GCC market is an emerging one for us. Currently, we do not see much traffic for Ladakh but with our camps coming up in the region in a big way, we’ve seen a very enthusiastic response to the idea of luxury camping in Ladakh. We expect exponential growth from this region since it has great potential for luxury and through our promotions and participation at trade marts such as ATM, I see this trend picking up in a big way. We have seen buy-out situations happening from this market so coming closer to the time when Ramadan sets in-when they look to travel and should be the prime time for travelling to India. The two Ladakh camps will fit this market perfectly as the one in Nagaland is more for travellers who have been to India a couple of times and want to see the other side of it.”



Abhishek Jangid
Vice President-Product Sales, Quadlabs

“The Middle East region has always been a good source market for us, especially since it is our largest one. We get to meet every decision maker here and we’ve been participating in ATM since the last seven years and it has been a very helpful platform for us. For tech, the response has been very stable and we’ve been networking, building relations and creating new opportunities to enhance our presence here.

The response has always been good here. We target the travel agents, tour operators and TMCs and almost always manage to find a good base of customers and several chances that turn into good business deals.”

“We have been attending Arabian Travel Market since the past eight years now and it has always worked out very well for us. We have a strong presence in the GCC region along with other markets like Asia, and we aim to strengthen this through our participation at ATM. We get to meet the key decision-makers here which is an advantage as a lot of potential business could take place. This year, we have a bigger booth and we’re looking forward to a double-digit growth from the Middle East region. Among some of our latest initiatives, we launched RezRewards for our partners which is like a loyalty program—they can collect points with every booking and several deals are offered on this basis. It’s a good strategy to retain a client and keep him coming back for more business.”



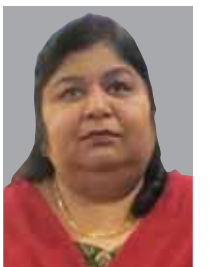
Jaal Shah
Group MD, Travel Designer Group & Founder – RezLive.com, India Travel Award winner

“Since we are mainly a technology company, the GCC region is a valuable one for us. Travel technology has taken a prominent place in this market and has provided several opportunities for players as most clients have a tech-first mindset. They understand why we need to evolve. It is not that easy for business to take off, however, but those who can manage to overcome the hurdles will surely benefit. Zillious has been participating at ATM since the past four years and it is a very good platform to keep in touch with our partners. It helps us more in the networking front rather than for new business deals but it provides great visibility so it is a must-attend event for those who target the Middle East region.”



B. Rajan
Director, Sales, Zillious Solutions, India Travel Award winner

“The GCC countries have huge potential and are an important source market for us. Travel is currently booming in the region and with so many players tapping the market, it is definitely a market to watch out for, especially those who are in the travel technology segment and its global prominence is growing through the years. ATM is quite a good platform for us to showcase our products and is the annual trade show for travel and tourism in the region, but this year has not been as great. In my opinion, there was a decent footfall but many did not show up for the pre-scheduled meetings so the whole idea of pre-scheduling has lost its value. However, we did get several walk-in clients so it was not a complete let-down.”



Meenu Sachdeva
Managing Director and Co-founder, TI Infotech, India Travel Award winner



Suneet Goenka
Group Managing Director, Red Apple Travel

“When it comes to travel, there is a lot of it going on in the Middle East and people are keen on travelling to places like India. Although our main source of business comes from Asia, the GCC market is constantly proving to be a strong contender as the years go by and as the concept of travel gains a stronger foothold in the region. We have been active in the GCC market for over three years and have a sales team of about six people selling across the market. We transact a large amount

of business from this market so ATM is home territory for us. It’s a great time for us to meet partners from the region, discuss new product requirements and general to understand what is going on in the market.”



BA Rahim
Group Director & CEO, Akquasun

“Our second biggest source market after India is the Middle East and therefore, ATM is a crucial event for us. We have been participating since the past seven or eight years and this year, we were present in various national tourism office stands like Sri Lanka, Mauritius, South Africa, Morocco and Dubai. Business went well as usual and the event provides a very good platform to catch up with industry professionals. These days, tourists from the Middle East have been travelling actively and to a lot of destinations all over the world. They have been going to Central Europe, South East Asia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and its mainly because of the connectivity factor. The Middle East is extremely accessible thanks to the vast number of international and low cost carriers that ply to and from the region.”



Tasneem Udaipurwala
Director, Wingspan Group

“We had a good experience at ATM where we participate more to meet our clients and network, rather than bag new business deals. The region is a very important one for us as not only does a lot of travelling take place from the Middle East, but it is also the midpoint for long-haul destinations like Europe and the U.S. In my experience, the Middle Eastern tourists are exploring more and going to different destinations globally. They are looking at a variety of destinations in India, apart from the Golden Triangle, like some of the hill stations. The most common time for their travels is June-July during the summer months, which is a relatively lean season here in India so it kind of helps balance out the business throughout the year.”

Soulful Seoul

Seoul is a perfect amalgamation of history and contemporary, Korean traditions and the new age culture. Here are the top five must-visit tourist spots in the city that entertain everyone.



Myeong-dong

Myeong-dong is one of the primary shopping districts in Seoul. The two main streets meet in the center of the block with one beginning from Myeong-dong Subway Station (Seoul Subway Line No. 4) and the other from Lotte Department Store at Euljiro. Many brand name shops and department stores line the streets and alleys. Several major department stores carrying premium labels and fashion brands have branches here, including Lotte Department Store, Shinsegae Department Store, Myeong-dong Migliore, Noon Square and M Plaza.

Lotte World Tower

The tallest tower in South Korea and the fifth highest in the world, Lotte World Tower, is a destination in itself, featuring galleries, cafés, as well as a super luxury hotel—all inside this magnum structure. There is also a skywalk and a glass bottom observatory for visitors to get breathtaking views of the Seoul skyline, and that too after reaching to the 121st floor in just a minute (at 10m/s) via Sky Shuttle—the world's tallest and fastest double-decker elevator.



Bukchon Hanok Village

Surrounded by Gyeongbokgung Palace, Changdeokgung Palace and Jongmyo Shrine, Bukchon Hanok Village is home to hundreds of traditional houses, called hanok, that date back to the Joseon Dynasty. The name Bukchon, which literally translates to “northern village,” came about as the neighborhood lies north of two significant Seoul landmarks, Cheonggyecheon Stream and Jongno. Today, many of these hanoks operate as cultural centers, guesthouses, and tea houses, providing visitors with an opportunity to experience Korean culture.



Namsan Seoul Tower


Namsan Seoul Tower was the first tower-type tourism spot in Korea. The top of the tower is at almost 480m above sea level, including Namsan Mountain (243m) and the tower's own height (236.7m), making it one of the tallest towers in the Orient. It comprises Seoul Tower Plaza, recently opened to public access after 40 years, and N Seoul Tower, operated by CJ Foodville since 2005. The tower was first established as a broadcast tower to send out TV and radio signals in 1969. As of now, it has become one of the representative landmarks and multi-cultural venues in Seoul.




Gangnam

Korean artist Psy took inspiration from this area in Seoul for his song, and made it popular worldwide. A melting pot for those living south of the Hangang River, the area around Gangnam Subway Station sees many social gatherings, events and personal meetings. Home to the popular City Theatre, fashion malls and bookstores, Gangnam is frequented by people of all ages. The area offers great hotel options for every type of tourist, including The Ritz-Carlton, Seoul and Novotel Ambassador Gangnam.

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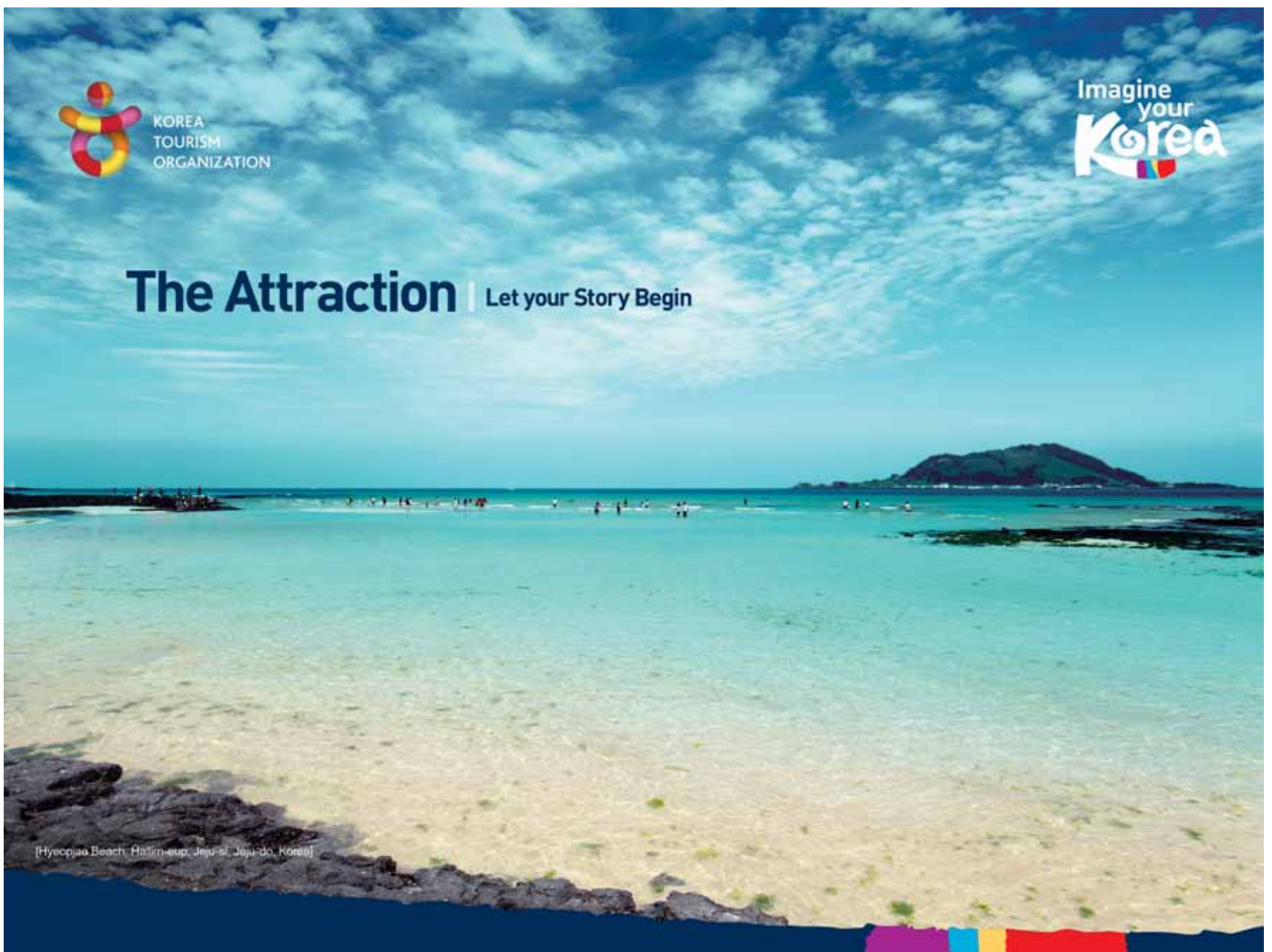


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Manipur set for Shirui Lily Festival

Manipur will celebrate its State Flower– Shirui Lily at the Shirui Lily Festival from May 16-20, 2017, in Ukhrul district. **Dr. Sapam Ranjan Singh**, Parliamentary Secretary (Tourism), Govt. of Manipur, explains why the flower is revered in the state.



Live music, cultural shows, beauty pageants, exhibits, folk songs, traditional dances and indigenous games and sports competitions like the Shirui Lily Grand Prix will be a part of the celebration this year.

The festival is being sponsored by the Department of Tourism, Manipur, and organised by the Shirui Lily Festival Organising Committee.

It is being will be organised at the state level for

the first time under Manipur Tourism informs **Dr. Sapam Ranjan Singh**, Parliamentary Secretary (Tourism), Govt. of Manipur. "We recognise the importance of Shirui Lily as the State Flower of Manipur and the celebration is a part of our endeavour to develop and implement sustainable and responsible tourism in the State and save the endangered Shirui Lily. We are therefore concentrating on increasing the awareness levels of travellers through promotional campaigns targeted at specific markets."



Dr. Sapam Ranjan Singh
Parliamentary Secretary (Tourism)
Govt. of Manipur

To promote the festival, the department is focusing its promotional activities on advertisements, dissemination of

information about Ukhrul district supported by heightened public relations activities. Social media platforms are also being actively used to engage potential visitors to the festival.

Manipur's other annual events like the Manipur Sangai Festival attract a large number of visitors every year and a surge in tourist activities is observed every year during these celebrations. Commenting on the anticipated footfall Singh adds, "Looking forward, we expect the Shirui Lily Festival to be a huge success and pull a huge number of visitors from within and outside the state."

Shirui Lily, also called 'Siroy Lily' or 'Lilium Macklinae' is a rare pinkish-white flower found only in the Shirui Hill range in the Ukhrul district of Manipur, approximately 83 kilometres away from Imphal. The flower was named after Jean Macklin, the wife of Dr. Frank Kingdon Ward who spotted the flower in 1946 while collecting botanical specimens. The Roy-



al Horticultural Society, one of the world's leading horticultural organisations, honoured the Shirui Lily with its prestigious merit award at its Flower Show in London in 1948.

The Shirui Lily plant is about a foot tall and its flower resembles the shape of a bell. It blooms only during

the months of April to June every year. The hills of Shirui commands a panoramic view of the district of Ukhrul and during flowering seasons the bright lilies cover the stretch of the Shirui Hill range. The scenic view of the hill range covered with lilies makes it a wonderful picture perfect location.



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Plans for direct flights to India: PAL

Philippine Airlines is mulling to re-enter the India market with a direct flight. Currently engaged in fleet expansion, the airline aims to be ranked as a 5-star airline by Skytrax by 2020 and is improving flight experience for this.

ANKITA SAXENA

In 2016, the Philippines received a record arrival of 90,000 Indian tourists, registering a 21 per cent growth over 2015. During January-February, 2017, the destination registered 27.99 per cent growth over the same period in 2016. The destination is aiming to cross the one million mark from India.

Ryan Uy, Vice President-Sales, Philippine Airlines (PAL), believes that once PAL enters the India market with a direct flight, this growth will be further stimulated. He elaborates, "We are assessing the possibility of Philippine Airlines entering the India market again. We are receiving a brand new aircraft that can ably serve the India market and once its delivery



Ryan Uy
Vice President-Sales
Philippine Airlines (PAL)

We are receiving a brand new aircraft that can ably serve the India market and once its delivery is completed we are hopeful that we will enter the India market next year

we are hopeful that we will enter the India market next year. Philippines witnessed a double digit growth in the last five years in Indian arrivals to Philippines and we are hoping to welcome 125,000 Indians to the Philippines in 2017. In 2016, the record arrival of 90,000 Indian tourists to the destination means on an average 246 passengers per day, which is a great figure for us."

Currently, PAL is into a fleet expansion. Uy informed that last year, the airline embarked on a 5-star in five years program. He explains, "We are reflecting on and improving our service and are hoping that this year we will receive the 4-star rank-

ing from Skytrax. We look forward to Philippine Airlines becoming a five-star airline by 2020. We have invested a lot in terms of our fleet. We ordered six brand new A350, A321neo, both long range and we are receiving two brand new 777 by the end of this year, taking the total number of wide body aircrafts to 31. The average age of the fleet is only four years

which is one of the youngest in Asia."

The airline is targeting both leisure and business travellers from India. Uy points out that PAL is the only airline in the Philippines that offers business class service which caters to high-end MICE and business travellers alike. Currently PAL does not operate any codeshare flights but is

considering approaching India's national carrier — Air India and other Indian carriers for strong partnership and collaboration. Its transit hubs at Bangkok and Singapore have seen maximum load factor as the airline has more frequencies from these hubs and these transit hubs also offer attractive two-country travel option to Indian travellers.

Philippines will host 6th UNWTO Conference on Tourism Statistics

Policy leaders, statisticians, academicians and private sector will convene in Manila, The Philippines, from June 21-24, 2017, to discuss new methodologies to measure the full impacts of tourism. The 6th edition of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) International Conference on Statistics, an official event of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, will address the topic of 'Measuring Sustainable Tourism'. Supported by the United Nations Statistics Division, the UNWTO initiative 'To-

wards a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism' (MST) underlines the need to measure the full effects of the tourism sector. The UNWTO International Conference to be held in Manila will serve as a platform to discuss the first draft of the MST framework and its future implementation.

The Philippines has become a reference in the region with regard to tourism measurement and a role model in the development of effective inter-institutional collaboration to develop tourism statistics.

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While in France be like the French

The Rendez-vous en France Travel Market was held from March 28-29, 2017, in Rouen. This flagship event organised by Atout France and its partners gathered over 2,100 tourism operators and enabled French destinations to give visitors a first-hand, 'live' experience of what they have on offer.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI FROM FRANCE

The Rendez-vous en France Travel Market is part of a drive to market global destination brands to international professionals, who travel from 67 countries to visit this trade fair. As **Christian Mantei**, Chief Executive, Atout France, points out, "After some difficult

are flocking to the fair and ask for nothing better than to resume their tours to France, which is a key market for their business."

The fair was a golden opportunity for French professionals to promote their

Travel Market will be back in Paris from March 27-28.

Talking about Rendez-vous en France Travel Market, **Heena Munshaw**, Managing Director, Beacon Holidays, says, "I came to Rendez-vous en France Travel Market after a gap of six years and I think they are much more receptive



Christian Mantei
Chief Executive
Atout France



Heena Munshaw
Managing Director
Beacon Holidays



Neil Patil
Founder & Director
Veena World

months, business is picking up and just has to be consolidated. Rendez-vous en France is perfectly timed: European and Asian tour operators

product to a panel of buyers hand-picked by the teams in the Atout France network abroad. In 2018, the Rendez-vous in France

to the Indian market now. In this edition I found a big change as a lot of tourism bodies run regular tours in the Bordeaux region and the Champagne

region. They also provide services for your specific requirements, they work with the local guides and you can customise your itinerary. France can have lot of regional tourism with this attitude."

Neil Patil, Founder & Director, Veena World, says, "It's one of the most spectacularly organised events in comparison to the other travel markets that happen all around the world. The way appointments were scheduled, the way people approach you was quite organised. Also, today it's very easy to find information over the in-



ternet and one might see why do one need to attend this but our industry, as much as its going online, it's about service as well. You want the best services from the best people. Over the internet, you

might start doing business with them but you realise lot of intricacies when you actually sit in front of them across the table as to how much quality experience they are going to deliver." ↴





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RAK rakes in interest from trade

Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) held a roadshow in Mumbai recently which saw more than 100 travel agents and tour operators come together to meet 17 sellers including DMCs, airlines, hotels and attractions. Here's what the attendees had to say and how the roadshow has helped them gain insight on the destination.



HAZEL JAIN

“Ras Al Khaimah is an upcoming destination and we promote new destinations to our clients. The good thing about this roadshow is that they have a good number of suppliers. Overall, Ras Al Khaimah is picking up as a destination for Indian travellers as it's quite accessible and more so because it is new. It is good to see more and more hoteliers come down for the roadshow. It's only a matter of time before RAK picks up and gives other destinations a run for their money. We foresee growth in couple travellers and weddings in Ras Al Khaimah.”



Nagsri Prasad Sashidhar
Senior Consultant-Leisure
Mercury Travels, India Travel Awards Winner

“We are glad to have partnered with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Authority. Since it is a part of the UAE, Ras Al Khaimah is two and a half hours away from most of the cities in India. This geographical proximity also helps travellers enjoy another emirate. What particularly is of interest to us is seasonality when it comes to the shoulder season. We can generate extra demand from India as the emirate boasts of world-class facilities and resorts. We strongly believe that India at some point will be in the top three source markets for Ras Al Khaimah. It has the potential to appeal to all segments of travellers in India.”



Karan Anand
Head-Relationships
Cox & Kings, India Travel Awards Winner

“Through this roadshow, we got a lot of new ideas to sell the destination. I didn't know that Ras Al Khaimah has a lot of potential in terms of adventure and beaches. It is a wholesome destination and the roadshow makes it easier for us to promote it. FITs and MICE will grow in Ras Al Khaimah along with the wedding segment. The difference between Dubai and RAK is that while Dubai is more about glamour, RAK is about peace and serenity. The destination has good connectivity to India and with the UAE visa becoming easier, the destination has an edge. We have long-term plans for RAK as most people are looking for something new.”



Gaurav Seth
Vice President
Leisure Travel (Outbound),
Thomas Cook (India)



Mehernosh Colombowalla
Director, Beyond Borders
Travel Management

“Ras Al Khaimah is a good destination and it is just 40 minutes away from Dubai. There are a number of resorts there with different price categories. We just concluded a big group in Ras Al Khaimah. The destination has huge potential for MICE as it has spacious hotels. One can spend three nights there and explore the entire property. We see MICE traffic from India moving to Ras Al Khaimah as compared to Dubai as a lot of people have already experienced that destination. Ras Al Khaimah has a freshness to it, so most travellers looking at visiting UAE now have the option of looking beyond Dubai and Abu Dhabi.”



Vyoma Bhatt
Managing Partner
Aspen Vacations

“The roadshow was great with good number of quality suppliers. Ras Al Khaimah as a destination is suitable for families as the connectivity is good. It is an upcoming destination for Indians as not many people are aware of it. It has a lot of versatility to offer like a beach resort experience where you are away from the hustle and bustle of cities like Dubai or Abu Dhabi. One can simply go there and be cut off from the daily routine. We have also taken some FITs to RAK in the past and we have a couple of ongoing queries as we are pushing it for Diwali holidays since people prefer short-haul destinations.”



Rajinder Singh
Director
The Wanderers

“Last year we had some corporate groups visiting RAK. What I like about it is it's not another Dubai. Ras Al Khaimah is charming with no high-rises, it has a lot of open spaces and top-class hotels. It has good attractions and with the addition of new activities like zip-lining, it will attract more people. They also have a new cruise ship coming in with a capacity of 300 pax. We had done a team building activity on a beach there. If the activity increases we could have people staying there for more number of nights. We need to have more roadshows and activities in Mumbai to rake in more numbers.”




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Ni Hao! Shandong entices Indian agents

Shandong Airlines recently took Indian agents to the Shandong province in China to showcase its tourism products, chart a growth path and strengthen relations between the two countries.

 NISHA VERMA FROM SHANDONG

For Wang Shuai, General Representative-India, Shandong Airlines, India remains a crucial market since there are a lot of trade relations between the two countries. "Shandong Airlines opened its India-China flight from November 2015, operating four flights per week from Shandong via Kunming to Delhi. Now, Shandong Airlines has more than 100 aircraft, with its majority market being the domestic market in China," he said.

However, now they are expanding in other markets as well, including India. In order to make itself more visible, the airline organised a Fam trip of Indian agents to the region recently. "This is the first trip of Indian agents to Shandong. While many agents have travelled to other parts of China like Beijing

growing economies. While there are not many people travelling between these two countries, but in the near future, we'd have more communication channels open between India and China," he added.

Explaining the demographics on Shandong Airlines, Shuai revealed that

on their Delhi-Shandong flights, 60 per cent passengers are Chinese while the rest are Indians. "Not many Indians come to visit China for leisure, because there are only a few promotions in the Indian market and not many Indians know Shandong," he said.

Talking of the growth plan, Shuai revealed that owing to limited bilaterals, they

cannot have more flights in India. However, he said, "We have cooperation with Vistara in India, which would allow passengers on Shandong Airlines to go to Mumbai and Bengaluru from Delhi and vice versa. Those travelling from Delhi to Jinan can also take further connections to Shanghai or Beijing on our domestic network. Also, we are booking two wide-bodied aircraft, which we can get on

the Delhi route, depending on the market."

Shuai said that Shandong Airlines do most of their promotions with Air China group. "Also, we have very good relations with China National Tourist Office in New Delhi, which gives us necessary help to promote the country together and support each other in making new packages," he claimed.

Connections

-  Shandong Airlines opened its India-China flight from November 2015
-  It connects Delhi to Shandong via Kunming
-  The airline has cooperation with Vistara in India, which would allow passengers on Shandong Airlines to go to Mumbai and Bengaluru from Delhi



Wang Shuai
General Representative-India
Shandong Airlines

Those travelling from Delhi to Jinan can also take further connections to Shanghai or Beijing on our domestic network. Also, we are booking two wide-bodied aircraft, which we can get on the Delhi route, depending on the market

and Shanghai, they do not know much about Shandong province. Hence, we want to introduce more beautiful destinations for Indian people, especially when we have great connectivity flights to Shandong," he added.

He insisted that the Indian market is important for them. "It is the fifth important country we operate international flights to, especially when China and India are world's biggest countries in terms of population and



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All eyes on India's dynamic inbound

The Great Indian Travel Bazaar, was held at the JECC Jaipur, from April 24-25, 2017. A major facilitator to Indian exhibitors, the FICCI-backed event witnessed over 10,500 transacting business opportunities that helped put India on the itineraries of global travellers. But did this year's edition match up to its hype? We find out...



NIKHIL ANAND FROM JAIPUR



Bharat Aggarwal
Managing Director
Mansingh Hotels & Resorts

“GITB provides great opportunities to smaller, upcoming individual hotels which don't really get a chance to visit big international trade exhibitions like WTM, FITUR or ITB. They can experience the concept, network and become informed about the demands and requirements of the foreign buyers. This year at GITB we showcased Mansingh Palace in Agra, Hotel Mansingh in Jaipur, Mansingh Tower in Jaipur, Mansingh Palace in Ajmer and our latest addition WelcomHotel in Jodhpur. We received a good response from FTOs and it is encouraging to take back some important leads to work on further from this platform.”

“GITB has really evolved as a platform and it's a great opportunity for the industry to come together and showcase different products. The set of buyers that came this year was really good and a lot of them wanted to explore India. It's a great platform for the industry to connect as a whole and along with that it's a good networking exercise overall. The infrastructure and the set up too has seen great improvements over the years. Our offerings have always focused on the overall experience that we want to give out to our clients and every year we develop new ideas and try to offer something unique and out of the ordinary. Private yoga lessons, engagement of the foreign tourists with the local Indian families are some of the experiences that we had to offer this year.”



Vikas Abbott
MD, Vasco Travel, India
Travel Award winner



Nikhil Vahi
Senior Vice President -
Hospitality Operations &
Development, DS Group
Hospitality

“This was our fourth year at GITB and for us, the fair has always been very beneficial. There were a lot of FTOs present here which kept us really busy, to the extent that we had at times had two meetings scheduled together. We are hopeful for the interactions we've had to transcend into business for us. Like the previous years, we exhibited our four hotels namely - our boutique brand in Jim Corbett Park, Namah, Manu Maharani in Nainital, Crowne Plaza, Jaipur and Radisson in Guwahati. Our fifth hotel at the Kolkata airport is in project stage and hopefully we will add that to the list soon. GITB has always been really very positive and strong.”

“GITB is a great platform for us wherein we were able to showcase our hotel. The last three GITBs have taken place at JECC, which is right next to our hotel. We were able to showcase to all the foreign tour operators and the DMCs our hotel, our services and its facilities. It gave us the opportunity to personally meet up with them and let them know about IHG. I think each year the number of buyers are only increasing and the good part about how FICCI is organising it is that they are getting fresh set of buyers every year. Also, the list of the buyers they shared with us, had representation from them and not of the deputies that they had sent, which shows they share the same seriousness as us in transacting business.”



Ashwani K. Goela
GM, Crowne Plaza Jaipur
Tonk Road, India Travel
Award winner



Kapil Goswamy
MD, Trans India Holidays,
India Travel Award winner

“This was the 9th time that we participated at the GITB out of the 10 editions since its inception, which obviously goes to show that we hold it in high regards. What GITB manages to do differently is that unlike other marts, they do not invite the same set of people or people from the same companies again, thereby ensuring that the people who come here, come with fresh ideas which is just what all the exhibitors are looking for to extend their reach. Also in terms of value to the Indian destinations, this is probably the best fair that India has on offer currently. This year at GITB we showcased more of experiential products such as heritage walks, cooking tours, things which are slightly different that the usual average Delhi, Jaipur and Agra.”

“We have actively participated at GITB for the last 5-6 years now and all along we've been convinced of it being a very rewarding platform thanks to the engagement opportunities that it provides our industry. More so with the event ensuring the presence of the foreign travel agents along with the local DMCs, it enables swift clearing of any prevailing doubts of the parties. As always we got a very opportunistic platform this year to showcase our products and offerings across all our three brands to the foreign travel agents directly and we're hopeful of it converting into meaningful business transactions for us in the near future.”



Rohit Arora
Area General Manager
The Park New Delhi



Sanjeev Ticku
Vice President-Inbound
Tours, Yatra Exotic Routes

“It's a great platform for the travel industry to showcase their products and I feel year after year GITB is growing. We had a captive audience of close to 275-300 buyers to transact business over two days. It was an intense schedule where we saw nearly 36-40 appointments a day, which on any given day is a great opportunity for all of us to conduct business. This year, we had around 150 meeting here. Nowadays there is little scope for all of us with the limited monuments and places we can take our tourist to. So our prime focus this year was on transforming business into experiences so that foreign tourist remember more than just the monuments, they remember the culture and the people, they see things that are relevant and real and all of this then would help us in bringing more and more people.”

“GITB this year was a lot more organised than its previous editions. We found more flexibility coming in from the organisers at FICCI and had excellent appointments over the course of the entire GITB. We saw a lot of buyers coming in from newer markets that we did not get a chance or opportunity to interact with last year. I think the show has also grown in size by the number of hotels, DMCs and trade partners that participated at GITB this year. We showcased our hotels that formulate the Golden Triangle which is always a hot selling itinerary for India as a destination along with which we are selling 2 other leisure destination hotels, one in Goa and one in the Western Ghats. Overall we witnessed a very good response.”



Pariva Rustagi
Regional Director of Sales
- India, Hilton Hotels &
Resorts



Shoba Mohan
Founder Partner
Rare Destinations &
Experiences

“Our association with GITB dates back to its inaugural year. One of the things that make us really excited to participate each year is that they actually tap into new markets. This year we've heard Cyprus, we've heard Turkey, we've heard Lithuania to name a few, so there are a lot of new markets that are being approached and accessed. This not only puts a huge spotlight on India but also presents a very welcoming image of us to the world. The good thing about GITB for us is the buzz that it creates. Everybody is here; it is also the end of the season so it kind of gives us the ability to gauge how the year has been and how the next year is shaping up. Hence, it is kind of a travel barometer.”

“We've been associated with GITB for the last 7-8 years now, and this serves us more like a networking platform to engage with the FTOs and the industry alike. Being a part of this trade industry, we do not look at this as a business opportunity that we have but rather as one of the healthiest platforms to be a part of and a total marketing exercise considering the kind of people that come here and have been coming here since its inception. One of its biggest plus points is the fact that the entire fair is strictly B2B and this makes it unlike any other fair where consumers are also invited. This year we exhibited our two properties, Ananta Udaipur and Ananta Pushkar.”



Anshul Bhargava
Corporate General Manager,
Ananta Udaipur



Girdhar Pratap Singh
Director
Khandela Haveli

“GITB is the only fair that we've been participating in India especially and much like before, we've gotten a very positive response from event this year. I feel that GITB provides such an excellent opportunity to all of us that, if we sincerely do our B2B meetings and finish them, I do not think we need too many fairs to sell our small properties. This year at GITB we showcased both our properties, Castle Khandela and Khandela Haveli and in doing so, we tried to inform all the buyers and interested parties about not just our product but also the kind of services we can provide them. This year's edition was more organised and it had a good variety of buyers from the corporate sector to the heritage sector, buyers that cater only to FITs etc. All in all it was a very good outing for us.”

“GITB is the only brand which is promoting India as an inbound destination and one can compare it to ITB Berlin or WTM. The platform has evolved and is moving in the right direction, most of the efforts are put in by FICCI. Credit has to be given to the Ministry of Tourism and also to the Government of Rajasthan for their initiatives to boost inbound tourism. We can organise this show more professionally and we should invite not only the tour operators but also foreign travel writers. GITB has always been a much awaited event of the inbound tourism sector and it helps put India on the world tourism map.”



Rajan Sehgal
Chairman-Northern region,
Travel Agents Association of
India (TAAI)



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OUTBOUND DMC ● AIRLINE & HOTEL CONSOLIDATORS ● GLOBAL B2B RESERVATION SYSTEM ● REPRESENTATIONS



India takes center stage @ATM '17

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2017, held from April 24-27 in Dubai witnessed sizeable participation from the Indian tourism and hospitality sector, along with travel technology companies that contributed largely to the buzz. With yoga and wellness as the theme of the pavilion, an informative session on experiential travel in India was also in focus this year.



The Balkans come calling

In 2016, Slovenia recorded 20,000 Indian overnights. Indo European Travels in collaboration with Indo Asia Holidays is working hard to introduce the destination to the Indian market to increase this number.



In collaboration with Indo Asia Holidays, Air India and CIL from India—under the aegis of the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenian Tourist Organisation (STO)—Indo European Travels, a DMC specialised in European travel for the Indian market, is promoting Slovenia, Central Europe and the Balkan region. The organisation conducted its roadshows in New Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

Dragan Ljusic, Business Owner, Indo European Travels, notes that when compared to 11 million overnights derived from more



Dragan Ljusic
Business Owner
Indo European Travels

than 4 million tourists in 2016 in Slovenia, the Indian arrivals of 20,000 is a very small figure. Elaborating on the destination's tourism assets, Ljusic says, "There is no



Sudesh Behal
Director
Indo Asia Tours

dearth of tourism products for MICE, FIT and leisure travellers. Products such as thermal spa resorts, casinos, golf tourism, activities like hiking, skiing, kayaking, adventure parks, adrenaline parks, mountain biking, zip lining, paragliding, scenic flights or special experiences like tours through wine regions, food tasting, cycling through abandoned underground mines etc. are on offer."

Slovenia offers accommodations ranging from deluxe to luxurious 5-star hotels while an increased number of luxurious boutique hotels are also opening up. Slovenia is

also a cost effective destination and can be combined with neighbouring destinations like Austria, Italy and Croatia, claims Ljusic.

Sudesh Behal, Director, Indo Asia Tours, elaborates, "India is a maturing market and an increased number of people are looking at exploring new desti-

nations. I believe Slovenia and the neighbouring countries offer this opportunity and we are geared up to handle all queries for this region. It is also interesting to note that Slovenia has the biggest casino in Europe and there is a segment of travellers in India that may be interested in exploring this product."

Experiential stay with Rockstays

Rockstays, a social and dynamic website which offers direct connection between room owners, travel enthusiasts, experience providers (hosts) and travellers, aims to be a global experience and room reservation platform by the end of this year.

Functioning on automated travel technology, the core value proposition of Rockstays is to make travel transparent and support travellers' decision with the help of local hosts. **Dhruva Acharya**, Venture Head, Rockstays, says, "It is a very useful technologically advanced tool which has evolved to aid any traveller."

On Rockstays owners of

guest houses, boutique hotels, homestays, etc. who cannot afford expensive booking software, payment gateway or website can easily create an account and list their property for free. Local experts can list unique experi-



ences and conduct secure business online. These experiences can be sold independently or can be bundled with stays. Customers get to directly interact with hosts, get authentic information, discuss plans and finalise

special packages or offers etc.

Randhir Narayan, Founder, Rockstays, explains, "Rockstays is developed for the traveller and the host. Go on it, use it and be good to your business and the business of travel. If you like what you see buy it, if not let the local hosts know what you need and get the most authentic local advice before you travel." The company provides customers with a wide range of options for booking rooms and experiences. The platform has Traditional Rooms (hotels); Non-Traditional Stays and Unique Propositions (homestays, luxury villas, bungalows, private apartments, campsites).

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India's tales from the Arabian mart



Student of the Year: Platform for talent

The contest organised by InterGlobe Technology Quotient aims to provide a much-needed kickstart to careers of travel and tourism students who have the potential to evolve into the leaders of tomorrow.



InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ) is synonymous with the global distribution system (GDS) in India and has powered numerous clients with hospitality, aviation and various other travel related services. But apart from being a leader in its domain, the technology giant is also big on skill development and shaping leaders of tomorrow.

ty Minister – Tourism, Government of Romania, along with His Excellency Radu Octavian Dobre, Chargé d’Affairs, Romanian Embassy in New Delhi, India. CSR has always been of great priority for ITQ and the company has organised a number of activities, including the refurbishment of Rahim Khan’s tomb in New Delhi, and launching a skill development with CAP Foundation for 300 underprivileged students.



In an attempt to hone budding talent from tourism institutes and launch dream careers for the best candidates, the fourth edition of Student of the Year contest was held at Ibis New Delhi Aerocity recently amongst five

The contest has been growing every year and this time, a total of 160 colleges participated in this out of which five reached the finals

Anil Parashar
President and CEO, ITO

finalists. The Galileo-trained participants spoke on a tourism-related topic, and were judged by a panel consisting of Ashish Kumar, Managing Partner, Agnitio Consulting; Geeta Jain, CEO, Carlson Wagonlit Travel India; and Dr. Prof. M. Sajani, Dean, Faculty of Hospitality & Tourism and Director, Amity Institute of Travel and Tourism.

Anil Parashar, President and CEO, ITO, said, “The contest has been growing every year and this time, a total of 160 colleges participated out of which five reached the finals. Student of the Year aims to give the best talent from tourism universities a chance to acquire the ideal skill-set for a technology-first future, and ensures a win-win situation for the student, as well as the industry.”

Elaborating on the same, Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Commercial Officer, ITO, stated, “Our idea is to give students a platform to showcase their talent and fast-forward their career. This is our annual event and since several of the participants are from different corners of the country, we would like to make it regional in the future so that more students get a chance to participate.” Also present were Cristina Ionela Tarteata, Depu-

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Indian inbound looks buoyant @ ATM



Big steps for wildlife conservation

The Corbett Foundation, spearheaded by Infinity Resorts, strives to work towards the cause of wildlife conservation.



Infinity Resorts boasts a total of five resorts in tiger reserves and areas well-known for wildlife such as Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Corbett, Kaziranga and Rann of Kutch. The anchor lodge of the group—Infinity Resorts Corbett—has been in operation for the past 26 years and has been actively contributing to the cause of wildlife conservation.



Rina Khatau
Vice Chairman, The Corbett Foundation India, Conservation Corporation of India, Infinity Resorts India

As business in the leisure segment has been very competitive, and Rina Khatau, Vice Chairman, The Corbett Foundation India, Conservation Corporation of India, Infinity Resorts India, says the management has to continuously think of new ways and means to attract new customers, while retaining their regular clientele. "We strive to provide the most affordable price to cater to a group of wildlife-oriented 'green warriors' who will be able to identify without losing the group's vision and mission statements. We provide hard-core wildlife conservation resorts with luxury in mind," she explains. Apart from this, the group is in the process of installing more key features at all the resorts, to give them a distinctive look.

However, what's unique about the group is their NGO called The Corbett Foundation (www.corbettfoundation.org) which was founded by Khatau and her husband Dilip Khatau in 1994. Today, it operates in all five locations where Infinity Resorts are situated.

She elaborates, "We run capacity building, interim relief for livestock killed by tigers, veterinary care, medical outreach, vocational training, Women Self-Help and many other programs for villagers living in close proximity to tiger reserves and wildlife area. The human-wildlife conflicts are mitigated through our Awareness and Education programs. We also work with the Forest

Departments whenever possible." This is the same reason why the resorts target wildlife and conservation-minded people. "We intend to cater to the specific groups who are wildlife oriented and use the opportunity during their stay to convert them into a member of our band of 'hard-core conservationists'," she adds.

Harvey India & MtoM join hands

Harvey India is now planning to enter the Delhi market with its new office and has collaborated with Milestones to Memories, a wedding and event space specialist, for long term business success. Harvey India, a MICE and corporate travel specialist in Mumbai, which caters to individuals, families and honeymooners. It offers hotel accommodations, transportation, sight-seeing, excursions, visas, international and domestic airline ticketing, etc. In its expansion mode, the company is looking at the Delhi market and has entered into a strategic alliance with Milestones to Memories.

Joe Rajan, Founder and CEO, Harvey India, said, "Our teams are thrilled and look forward to bring in the required synergies to strengthen the purchasing and distribution network. We are happy that we are the first ones in the Indian travel industry to get into a strategic alliance of this sort, wherein both companies expand and grow as individual brands in their goals and objectives and yet would come together as a team to strategise the growth and way forward as a joint effort." Talking about the idea behind this collaboration, Aarti Manocha, Founder,



Joe Rajan
Founder and CEO
Harvey India



Aarti Manocha
Founder
Milestones to Memories

Milestones to Memories said, "This strategic alliance between Harvey India and MtoM is to ensure that both companies bring together the smartest teams

and capabilities on the table, to combine their efforts in order to create new projects, growth and sustainable wealth for both the companies."



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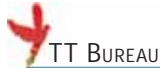
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Oneworld looks at US market

Oneworld Destination aims to expand its network in South East Asia and plans to launch experiential products targeting travellers in the US market.



Oneworld Destination Corporation offers a full range of destination management services and is also involved in understanding the causes of disruptions, as well as experiential travel. The company has established citywide partnerships and relationships with an extensive list of top suppliers who are vital in presenting a one-stop experience with unique encounters in extraordinary services.

With big plans for the future, **Varun Kumar**, Co-founder, Oneworld Destination Corporation says that team expansion is necessary to handle the wide expansion the company has seen in recent years. "We aim to maintain our client base, but increase our international scope in South East Asia. We are now focusing on marketing our products and services to further strengthen our business volume and reach out to more B2B partners. We will shortly be launching products featuring adventure tourism, educational tourism and experiential travel for the US market, which we consider



Varun Kumar
Co-founder
Oneworld Destination Corporation

We will shortly be launching products featuring adventure tourism, educational tourism and experiential travel for the US market, which we consider is missing from the market

has been missing from this market," he adds.

Kumar mentions that they are also looking at handling tech and medical congress accommodations and land arrangements throughout the US with sales offices

in India and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia to cover representations in the Asian region.

As frequent disruptions continue to cause paradigm shifts in the industry, Kumar aims to delve into the causes of some of these trends and understand how four specific catalysts of change — the economy, consumer mindsets, enabling technology, and platforms — are disrupting the travel and hospitality industry. "Through this, companies will be able to understand what will be impacted in the near future and it will also help them to remain competitive," he states.

In addition, Oneworld Destination is also prepping to deliver an independent study on the rise of experiential travel. Kumar reveals, "We focus on the growth of experiential travel and what it means to operators, retailers and travel industry players. This report examines how top travel brands are developing their services to answer that demand and how this is further driving the evolution of adventure, active travel and rampant interest in local cultural immersion from travellers."

Oman Air ups frequency to India

Oman Air can now be the airline of choice for travellers in India, UK and Africa, as the national carrier of Oman has improved its flight connectivity to these countries.



The premium luxury airline has increased its weekly frequency from 126 to 161 flights per week between Oman and its 11 destinations in India. With this development, Oman Air's frequency has increased from two to three flights per day to Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad, from one flight to three flights per day to Calicut and from 11 flights to 14 flights per week to Lucknow.

Speaking regarding the frequency increase from Goa, where they had a business meet, **Ihab A. Sorial**, Senior Vice President-International Sales, Oman Air, observes, "India has huge potential for Oman Air. The potential is not just between Oman and India, but also beyond, as we have a lot of traffic and business with Europe, Gulf and Africa as well. Through us, Indian travellers can travel to all these destinations." The Goa meet of the airline also saw in presence **Sunil V.A.**, Senior Manager Sales-Indian Subcontinent, and **Bhanu Kaila**, Country Manager-India.



Ihab A. Sorial
Senior Vice President-International Sales,
Oman Air

The potential is not just between Oman and India, but also beyond, as we have a lot of traffic and business with Europe, Gulf and Africa as well.

The increased connectivity comes in line with the recently signed agreement between the governments of Oman and India, where both the countries have agreed to increase the weekly seats.

On the other hand, Oman Air launched its inaugural flight to Nairobi in

Kenya on March 28. The four times in a week flight offers great connectivity to Africa for travellers from India. Similarly, the airline has launched a new daily flight between Muscat and Manchester on May 1, 2017. The daily service from Oman Air is in addition to the double daily flight from London Heathrow. This would further aid Indian travellers. Thanks to this, Indian travellers would now be able to fly to Manchester via Muscat as well. Besides, Oman Air has a daily flight between Oman and Goa.

Flying High

- ✦ Oman Air launched its inaugural flight to Nairobi in Kenya on March 28
- ✦ The flight offers great connectivity to Africa for travellers from India
- ✦ The airline has launched a new daily flight between Muscat and Manchester on May 1, 2017
- ✦ The daily service from Oman Air is in addition to the double daily flight from London Heathrow

B2B forex platform for agents

BuyForexOnline has launched a new B2B forex platform. The Total Agent Module (TAM) allows them to place forex and remittance orders for their clients.



A new platform launched by Bengaluru-based BuyForexOnline is targeted purely at travel agents that will enable them to place forex and remittance orders for their clients offering online payment option free of charge through net-banking. Sales, payment, delivery, escalations and customer support is then completely handled by the BuyForexOnline team, leaving the agent free to focus on business. A pilot launch in Bengaluru saw more than 250 agents register for the platform. BuyForexOnline, on the other hand, is a B2C platform where clients can transact themselves.

The platform called the Total Agent Module (TAM) will now be rolled out across India to primarily target SME travel agents and student consultancies specialising in overseas education. **Ananth Reddy**,



Ananth Reddy
Founder and Managing Director
BuyForexOnline

Founder and Managing Director, BuyForexOnline, says, "Forex in the B2B space is a largely disorganised sector with agents ordering forex for their clients through multiple offline channels, often requiring additional resources both in time and manpower for coordinating the transaction. This becomes challenging, especially when it comes to determining rates, arranging for delivery, and collecting payments. TAM was launched to address these challenges and to streamline the process. It is an easy lead-

generation tool, and once the lead is triggered, the BuyForexOnline team then takes over and contacts the client to close the lead."

The key advantage of TAM is that since all clients are mapped to the agent in the system, their commission is automatically captured by the system even for all subsequent transactions by that client. "This is unique and provides a steady revenue stream for agents. Our rates are the lowest in the market, and travel agents are free to add-on a further margin for their clients," added Reddy.

TAM has already been launched in 70 locations pan-India including Tier-I, Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Some of the key locations are NCR, Chandigarh, Bhopal, Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Kochi, Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore.

Connectivity brings business

With Emirates and Turkish Airlines flying to Florida (USA), the destination has seen a remarkable growth in traveller numbers from India and across the world.



The India market has tremendous potential and there has been a steady increase in tourist visits from here to Florida in the past three years, observes **Seldon Tenzing**, Account Director India, Visit Florida.

In order to promote themselves, Tenzing has stuck to the conventional method of wooing the travel agents. "Our travel trade partners have been a strong source in driving visitation to Florida. Our prime focus has involved reaching out to the travel trade through educational seminars, missions, trade shows, and sales calls. We also do Fam tours and invite potential agents to participate in and meet our Florida suppliers," she added. She also said that Indian agents are always eager to learn more about Florida.



Seldon Tenzing
Account Director India
Visit Florida

"Therefore, we developed the e-learning program, www.visitfloridaspecialist.com, which provides in-depth knowledge about the state. With our efforts, Florida is now being included in group packages and we even receive occasional MICE group inquiries," she claimed.

One of the reasons behind this growth has been increased connectivity to the destination. "In 2016, two airlines, Emirates and Turkish Airlines, added flights to

Florida. Visitation from India to Florida rose as well. We are looking forward to 2017 because it has been recognised as the Indo-US tourism year," revealed Tenzing.

Promotions make for a major strategy to fuel this growth, and Tenzing informed, "We participate in major shows around the globe. Our Fam trips are also a good way to build relationships and showcase the product. Two years ago, we began working with travel companies to participate in a Visit Florida signature event called Florida Huddle, which has brought the Indian agents and the Florida suppliers together."

The focus, apart from trade will now also be on strategy planning to grow the Free Independent Traveller (FIT) Groups and the MICE segment, revealed Tenzing.

Holistic holidays in Munnar

Fog Munnar offers a balanced holiday to its guests with a slew of adventure and spa experiences.



TT BUREAU

Fog Munnar Resort and Spa is a 40-room property which blends luxury with nature. The property is only two years old but has managed to attract a fair share of inbound and domestic tourists visiting Munnar. "At Fog Munnar, we offer high quality service. We offer 1:3 guest ratio which leads to a 100 per cent guest satisfaction. Earlier we had 26 rooms but last year we added another 14 rooms," says **Jolly Antony**, Chief Executive Officer, The Fog Munnar Resorts and Spa.

The property recorded overall occupancy of 80 per cent out of which 40 per cent



Jolly Antony
Chief Executive Officer
The Fog Munnar Resorts and Spa

was from inbound guests while the rest 60 per cent was constituted by domestic tourists. Middle East is the largest source market for Fog Munnar among other European destinations. The property is frequented by families, honeymooners and leisure travellers. "We witnessed a healthy growth last year over our debut year and looking at the business, we can expect 5 per cent growth in 2017 over 2016," adds Antony.

The traditional travel agents form the largest source of bookings for Fog Munnar. Over 50 per cent of the bookings were converted through travel agents, 18 per cent contributed by online travel agents while only 24 per cent direct bookings were received through the property's website.

Antony explains that Fog Munnar has a different approach towards marketing and promoting the property. "We believe that inviting guests to see the property is an attractive way to showcase its various facilities, its ambience and the high standards of service that we offer. The familiarisation trips offer an experience to the guests and they can

then promote the property as its ambassadors. Also, the marketing and sales team of the property is the backbone for all promotions and marketing strategies that are undertaken. Given the influence of social media in today's time, we are also aggressively shifting focus to digital platforms," says Antony.

Air Asia takes off Bhubaneswar-Kuala Lumpur



AirAsia's Bhubaneswar-Kuala Lumpur flight launch event was held at Mayfair Lagoon Bhubaneswar on April 27, 2017. AirAsia Berhad is the first international airline to start operations to Bhubaneswar connecting Odisha to 120 destinations in Asia Pacific. On this historic occasion, Minister for Tourism and Culture, Government of Odisha, **Ashok Chandra Panda** presented a memento to **Suresh Nair**, General Manager-India, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh AirAsia Berhad, in recognition of his contribution to bringing AirAsia flights to Bhubaneswar. He is accompanied by **Aireen Omar**, CEO, AirAsia Berhad.

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Image courtesy: Jaipur Marriott Hotel

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Minar rings in 25 years of success

On occasion of its silver jubilee, Minar Travels hosted travel partners to an evening of revelry over cocktails and dinner at the Le Méridien New Delhi where the crème-de-la-crème of the industry descended to celebrate the milestone.



Skål gears up for elections

Arun Raghavan, Secretary for Asian Area at Skål International, will contest for another term at the annual Congress and General Assembly from May 12-15.

TT BUREAU

The upcoming 46th Skål Asian Area Annual Congress and General Assembly that will be held at the Gulf Hotel in Bahrain from May 12 to 15 will also include the association's elections that take place every two years. **Arun Raghavan**, who is currently serving as the Secretary for Asian Area, Skål International, will be contesting for the same position. The elections will be held on May 14, 2017. Raghavan says, "For the past two years I have been the secretary for the Asian Area for Skål International and I'm contest-

contract business with Indian delegates. Bahrain's national carrier Gulf Air offered a 30 per cent discount on airfares for all delegates. Visa charges were also waived for delegates who registered before April 30. **Sunil Mathapati**, Country Manager, Bahrain Tourism & Exhibition Authority, says, "We are thrilled to organise the Skål West Asia Congress in Bahrain. Bahrain Tourism & Ex-

hibition Authority as a gesture had the visa charges waived off for all members who applied before 30 April. This is the first year of Bahrain Tourism's presence in India and we would like to reach out to all segments that can help in creating visibility for the destination. The Skål Congress is a good platform and the members' experience of the Kingdom will help in promoting the destination."



Arun Raghavan
Current Secretary
for Asian Area at Skål International

ing for the same position for another term of two years. I think I would need four years to do a better job for the Asian region because it is a huge area."

Skål currently has 40 clubs in the Asian Area starting from Guam, Japan right up



Sunil Mathapati
Country Manager, Bahrain Tourism & Exhibition Authority

to Mauritius. India has 10 Skål clubs and another 30 clubs in Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Colombo, Nepal, etc. There are about 1,700 Skål members in the Asia area. Skål had called for nominations from local members who were willing to serve on the executive committee. All members in good standing of Skål clubs throughout the region are eligible to serve on the executive committee of Skål Asian Area for up to four years.

The programme includes a B2B marketplace where Bahrain operators will get an opportunity to network and market their products, and

New travel book on the block



Veteran travel journalist Inder Raj Ahluwalia's latest book on his international travels and adventures in some 50 countries, titled, 'Travels with my Turban' has just hit the stands. Ahluwalia released the book among travel industry professionals over coffee, snacks and networking recently in New Delhi.

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EVENT TALK

MAY 2017

Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)	Sydney, Australia	14-18
IMEX	Frankfurt, Germany	16-18
Phocuswright Europe	Amsterdam, Netherlands	16-18
INDABA	Durban, South Africa	16-18
WTM Connect Asia	Penang, Malaysia	17-19
PATA Annual Summit 2017	Negombo, Sri Lanka	18-21
Connections Luxury	Ireland	21-24
FICCI Wedding Tourism Summit	New Delhi	25-26
IATA Business Travel Summit	Geneva	30-31
CINZ Meetings 2017	Auckland New Zealand	31 May-1-June

JUNE 2017

Korea World Travel Fair (KOFTA)	Seoul	1-4
IATA AGM 2017	Cancun, Mexico	4-6
ILTM Asia	Shanghai, China	5-8
The Meetings Show	Olympia Grand London, UK	13-15
International Travel Expo (ITE)	HKCEC, Hong Kong	15-18
Connections Meetings	Quito, Ecuador	18-21
Beijing international Tourism Expo (BITE)	China National Convention Centre Beijing, China	23-25
Digital Travel Summit	London	27-28

JULY 2017

Arabian Travel Awards	Dubai	4
Travel Wedding Show	Jaipur	8-9
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Ahmedabad	13-15
IITM	Chennai	14-16
GBTA Convention	Boston, USA	15-19
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Chandigarh	20-22
IITM	Bengaluru	21-23
India Travel Awards East	Guwahati	26
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kolkata	27-29

AUGUST 2017

Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kochi	3-5
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Pune	10-12
ACTE Conference	Tokyo, Japan	22-23
La Cita	Florida, USA	29-31

SEPTEMBER 2017

Travel Technology Show	New Delhi	2-3
Busan International Travel Fair	Busan, South Korea	8-11
PATA Travel Mart 2017	Macau	13-15
JATA Tourism Expo	Tokyo, Japan	21-24
IITM	Mumbai	22-24

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Novotel Lucknow

Gomti Nagar

AccorHotels has appointed **Raj Singh** as the General Manager of Lucknow's very first Novotel Lucknow Gomti Nagar. In his new role, Singh spearheads the business operations, overall implementation and business development at the newly launched 106-room hotel. With over two decades of experience, Singh holds specialisation in hotel operations, having spent over eight years as General Manager for leading hospitality brands such as Ramada, Fortune Hotels, Choice Hotels, and Siesta Hospitality. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Hotel Management from IHM Lucknow.



Marriott International

Hyderabad

Shrikant Wakhakar joins Marriott International as the Complex General Manager for Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre and Courtyard Hyderabad. Prior to taking on this position, Wakhakar has worked as the Complex General Manager for the Westin Chennai Velachery and Le Méridien in Kochi. With a career spanning over 27 years in the hospitality sector, Wakhakar has held key leadership positions in various brands like Taj, InterContinental Hotel Group and Hyatt.



Hyatt Regency Chennai

Chennai

Sohaib Kidwai has joined Hyatt Regency Chennai as the new Director of Sales and Marketing. With over 11 years' experience, Kidwai brings with him a sound understanding and a wealth of expertise in the sales and marketing function. Kidwai has previously worked with properties like Goa Marriott, Renaissance Mumbai, Grand Hyatt Mumbai, Park Hyatt Chennai to name a few. He holds a MBA in Marketing Management from Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning and a B.A. in Hotel Management from the Huddersfield University, U.K. He also holds a diploma in Hotel Management from the Institute of Hotel Management, Aurangabad.



Eros Hotel, New Delhi, Nehru Place

New Delhi

Eros Hotel, New Delhi, Nehru Place announces the appointment of **Amanpreet Singh Sandhu** as Director of Sales and Marketing. Graduated from ESSEC Business School, France, he has an experience of over 13 years in Revenue Management, Sales & Marketing and Hotel Operations. He will be responsible for charting out strategies towards enhancing business volumes by cementing healthy relationship with key clients and leading workforce in accomplishing business goals.



Hyatt Pune Kalyani Nagar

Pune

Hyatt Pune Kalyani Nagar has appointed **Kamal Deep Sharma** as the Director of Sales & Marketing for the property. Sharma comes with more than 26 years of hospitality industry experience. He has previously been associated with luxury and business hotels including Taj Group of Hotels, Radisson Blu and The Park hotel. He has been part of the Hyatt family since 2013, and joins here from Hyatt Regency Ahmadabad. An alumnus of IHM, Bhopal; Sharma also holds a degree in MBA from IILM, Delhi.



Sarovar Hotels

Palampur

Sarovar Hotels has appointed **Rohit Verma** as the General Manager of RS Sarovar Portico, Palampur. With over 16 years of experience in hospitality, Verma brings with him a hands-on experience in Operation Management, Inventory Management, Quality- Customer Relationship Management and Team Management. Prior to joining here, Verma was associated with Country Inn & Suites by Carlson Jaipur, Fortune Select Metropolitan Jaipur and Amanbagh Rajasthan as F&B Manager. His other assignments include various roles in F&B at Carnival Cruise lines, Miami, USA, The Oberoi New Delhi and The Oberoi Cecil Shimla.



Eros Hotel, New Delhi, Nehru Place has recently announced the appointment of **Harpreet Kaur Bakshi** as Asst. Manager – Marketing Communications and PR. She holds a post graduate diploma in Travel and Tourism Management and has an experience of 6 years in the hospitality industry. At Eros Hotel, She will be responsible for conceptualising and executing marketing strategies, managing advertising, promotions and media relations.



Sofitel Mumbai BKC

Mumbai

Pankaj Wadhwa joins AccorHotels as the new Director of Sales and Marketing for Sofitel Mumbai BKC. Wadhwa has been in the hospitality industry for over 18 years. An alumnus from IHM Ahmedabad, he started his career with Hotel Trident Udaipur, and thereafter worked with Hyatt Regency Mumbai & Pune, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, The Park Hotels, IHG, The Grand Mumbai and Grand Hyatt Delhi. Wadhwa's deep understanding of the hospitality industry is critical to his role as the Director of Sales and Marketing at Sofitel Mumbai BKC.



Lords Hotels & Resorts

Mumbai

Anuj Srivastav joins Lords Hotels as Assistant Marketing Manager for the corporate brand Lords Hotels & Resorts. His role involves managing all the marketing activities for the hotel brand, maintaining social media presence and online marketing. His core role demands him to streamline all forms of communications and marketing to follow a strict brand guideline. In his total work experience of over eight years, he has worked with WOW Design, a brand design consultancy.



TALKING People

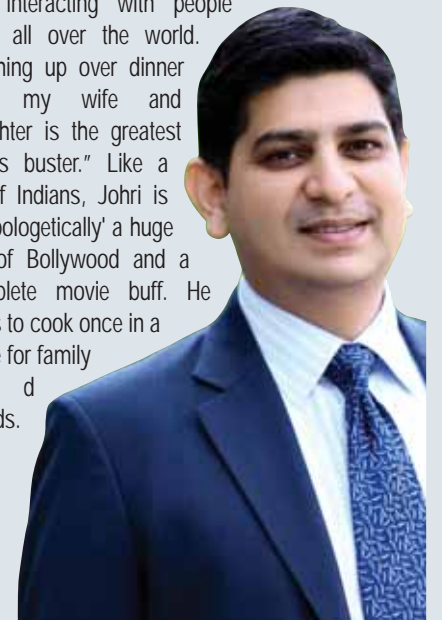
The success mantra of **Dinesh Rai**, General Manager, Mercure Hyderabad KCP, is having faith in people and commitment in his work. "I try to give due importance to both work and personal life. I love listening to music and appreciate all genres." Rai is a staunch sports enthusiast. "Sports has also always been my passion and I'd say I am a sportsperson at heart. I love playing cricket and badminton, and also try my hand at other games whenever I find time," he adds.



For **William Harber**, President, China & Asia-Pacific, Hurtigruten, it's important to take risks in life. "This is what I'd like to do myself and that's what our products represent. I think anyone who launches into something unknown and learns more about the world, actually learns more about themselves in the process as well as learns from success and failure both. This is an aspect in life that inspires me." Having travelled three times to India, he loves the food and people in the country. He claims that because of his job, he gets to explore Asia-Pacific and he really likes Chiang Mai and wishes to visit Japan soon.



Sandeep Johri, General Manager, Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences, says the only way to do good work is to love the work you do. "I get paid to do what I love the most, which is being an hotelier and interacting with people from all over the world. Catching up over dinner with my wife and daughter is the greatest stress buster." Like a lot of Indians, Johri is 'unapologetically' a huge fan of Bollywood and a complete movie buff. He loves to cook once in a while for family and friends.



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Millennials for travel trends

Matthew Powell, Managing Director–Middle East & South Asia, Travelport, reveals details of an ongoing study on millennials and shares the group's key plans for the Indian subcontinent.

AHANA GURUNG

QWhat is Travelport currently working on behind the scenes?

We're currently working on a report on millennials, particularly to see the way they book. They make up a key component of the market in India and are currently a critical part the dynamics of the industry and how it is changing. The key thing for us is to understand how the millennial is thinking and the ways in which their actions are driving behaviours outside of the bracket. We do a lot of work with suppliers like hotels, airlines etc, and people who want to travel, and giving them more assistance in building a sturdy relationship, so it is very critical for us to first understand what trends are driving the behaviour.

QWhat do the findings of this study outline?

What we've observed so far is that although millennials want instant information, more personalised trips, etc, these needs are spread across most other audience, those demands are the same whether you are a millennial or not. In India the disposable income is high, they want new experiences and they



want personalisation. We're looking at how we can integrate the right content from our suppliers into the platform to offer the relevant solutions to the travellers. It's kind of shaping how everyone acts and works.

QMillennials have been the buzzword this year for almost every industry. Why so?

In my view, the millennials drive behaviour through social media and this is impacting other age groups as well. For instance, I may not still fit into the mil-

lennial group but I use technology just like my daughter, and my parents have also adopted the same behaviour when it comes to technology. So, they're definitely a very influential category and everyone's kind of going down that road. It's a trend we're paying close attention to because if the millennials are adopting it, then its soon going to feed into other segments too.

QWhat potential does the Indian market bring for Travelport?

India is a fast-growing market globally from a travel perspective which has chiefly been driven by the millennials. It's the young population that is eager and curious about travel, which is why Travelport has put in a lot of time and investments for this segment. Recently, we've tied up with IndiGo whose fares, ancillary

QTell us about some of your focused initiatives for India?

We're focused on driving Smartpoint in the industry—we started out three years ago and we've seen very good growth on the front. And since there are several traditional agents in India, it serves as a very good base for us. We have quite a small base of online agents currently, so India is a really big market and a core focus. We also have specific offerings related to the type of agent, be it corporate or an offline agent, etc.

QLCCs have been a key target for Travelport and has been highlighted with the agreement with IndiGo. How does this partnership benefit both parties?

We've been leading in the GDS space having recently signed on IndiGo on GDS



“India is a fast-growing market globally from a travel perspective which has chiefly been driven by the millennials. It's the young population that is eager and curious about travel, which is why Travelport has put in a lot of time and investments for this segment.”

Matthew Powell
Managing Director–Middle East & South Asia, Travelport

Business Travel gains momentum

India's business travel industry has grown by 16.2 per cent over the past five years (2011-2016), according to a report by Travelport and World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). It has been predicted that Asia-Pacific will lead the way at a rate of 6.2 per cent each year to 2027, with India (7.2%) among the top five countries attributing to the growth. Over the past five years, at a global level, business travel spend has grown at an annual average of 3.6 per cent, with the strongest growth in the past 5 years having taken place in Asia, the Middle East and Sub Saharan Africa.

products and offers will be available on the Travel Commerce Platform. This distribution will enable IndiGo to provide its content via an API connection and that kind of sets us up to be the key platform in the market to give agents and online travel agents the content and information they need.

in India. We first signed RyanAir in Europe and EasyJet, then IndiGo in India, and Onur Air in Turkey and Nesma Airlines in Saudi Airlines. We are the go-to choice when it comes to LCCs and it boils down to being able to offer a choice. The LCCs in their traditional markets offer good penetration but are looking to grow globally and that's where Travelport can really provide that exposure. The distribution partnership will help the airline reach travellers in international markets. We're mainly focused on rich content and branding which allows airlines to redisplay and split their offerings. Carriers such IndiGo have base fare and then a host of add-ons to make your trip more personalised and we're good at that. We're seeing a lot of carriers come onto rich content and branding – we have around 230 carriers on it so far.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

South India is undoubtedly a perfect blend of traditional and modern, preserving its rich culture and heritage besides encouraging contemporary infrastructure development. The region is fast moving towards becoming a tourism puller and we would like to support these efforts!

As a tribute, DDP Group decided to hold India Travel Awards to recognise the achievers of the travel and tourism industry, who have worked steadfastly towards enhancing the environment to allow the growth of this business. These stalwarts need to be acknowledged, appreciated and encouraged in every region, and we have started the journey this year from South India.

Our top-most honour, the Gold Maya, is awarded to those stalwarts who have shaped the industry the way it is today and created innovative ways and products to take the industry a notch higher.

The award ceremony is brought to life by a charismatic anchor and singer, thrilling the audience. At the black-tie, silver service event, various performers enthral and amuse the audience. The guests this year were audience to a mesmerising dance performance, which they not only enjoyed watching but also became a part of. Overall, the 4th edition of South India Travel Awards was another successful chapter in the journey of long term associations.

India Travel Awards will be travelling to various other southern cities in its subsequent editions. Thus, we take upon ourselves, in our own small way, to revive and enhance tourism in the southern states of India.

SanJeet

India Travel Awards

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Maya reaches Kochi

The fourth edition of South India Travel Awards celebrated the best talent from the tourism and hospitality industry in the region, as stalwarts descended at Crowne Plaza Kochi to raise a toast to honour them.



(L-R): Hanneli Slabber, Riyaz U.C., M.P.Purushothaman, Dr A. Jayathilak, Arni Sapkal, K.C. Chandrahasan and SanJeet





The winners of South India Travel Awards 2017 with their trophies at Crowne Plaza Kochi

to enthral South India

 NISHA VERMA

Kochi played host to South India Travel Awards, held at the Crowne Plaza Kochi on May 2, 2017. Leaders and achievers from the travel and tourism industry of the region were rewarded for their hard work and sincere dedication. The gala evening saw in attendance high flyers from the tourism and hospitality industry from not just Kerala but the entire South India. Gracing the occasion with his presence as Chief Guest was **Dr. A. Jayathilak** (IAS), Chairman, Spices Board of India, Ministry of Commerce & Industry. Acknowledging how awards act as a catalyst for the industry to excel, he said, "It's a great initiative because we need to identify and encourage talents of all kinds in this vibrant sector and any award of this kind will go a long way in stimulating and encouraging more talent to develop themselves and also to contribute more to the development of this industry."

India Travel Awards recognises stalwarts from the industry in all the regions pan India. These exclusive awards are based on a unique jury judgement and a final list is made after a fair online voting process. The formal black-tie event was attended by over 150 notable personalities from the South Indian travel industry.

Welcoming the guests for the award, **Sanjeet**, Mentor, India Travel Awards, said that the awards acknowledge the consolidated efforts of the trade partners from the southern region owing to whom the travel industry has achieved a benchmark. "Every small hotel, restaurant, tourist

attraction, or tourism outlet contributes towards the growth of this country. However, are we doing enough to recognise them? We have instituted these awards for this precise reason. The regional award recognises those establishments that contribute to the overall growth of the industry. We have come a long way since the first South India Travel Awards held in Hyderabad in 2014. India Travel Awards will make a difference to the industry through recognition of regional talent and thereby raising the bar for industry players," he insisted.

The awards were divided into four different categories—Personal Awards, Business Awards, Trending Awards and Partner Awards. Talking about the voting process, Sanjeet said, "The voting

is carefully monitored to avoid duplication and ensure transparency. When the votes were finally opened for counting, we were surprised to learn that we have received votes from 12 different countries apart from India."

Adding a touch of glamour and elegance to the evening was the Guest of Honour **Arni Sapkal**, Gladrags Mrs India Mumbai, who handed over the trophies to the winners alongside Dr. Jayathilak. Awards were presented in a total of 47 categories in both travel and hospitality. **K.C. Chandrasasan**, Vice Chairman, Kerala Travels Interserve, received the coveted Gallery of Legends award, while **M.P. Purushothaman**, Chairman and Managing Director, Empee Group, was awarded the DDP Trailblazer Award.





Gallery of Legends | K.C. CHANDRAHASAN

Having served the travel industry for over four decades, **K.C. Chandrahasan**, Vice Chairman, Kerala Travels Interserve, has worked tirelessly towards outbound travel, inbound travel, events, and social projects. He believes that the benefits of tourism should trickle down to the common man, as the travel industry is showcasing them and their products only. "My projects like 'The Thekkady Tiger Trail' is aimed at poachers into the forest. We take care of more than 4,000 children in the anganwadis and work with many other schools, from where a sizeable percentage of staff in travel and tourism comes. There is a lot of vacuum here and proper training is not happening, and we are in the process of working in this particular space," he says.

He claims that the industry is changing, and with technology coming into the travel orbit, there is a lot of scope for the industry. "Today, the industry is more like working in a stock exchange, and it's no longer running a shop and selling something," he adds. On receiving the award, he says, "I feel greatly honoured to receive this award, especially on the day when I started my career in travel and tourism."

► **K.C. Chandrahasan**, Vice Chairman, Kerala Travels Interserve, received the award for **Gallery of Legends**. He is felicitated by **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group; **Dr. A Jayathilak**, Chairman Spices Board of India and **Arni Sapkal**, Gladrags Mrs. India Mumbai 2017



DDP Trailblazer | **M. P. PURUSHOTHAMAN**

Besides being at the helm of a conglomerate that includes hospitality, sugar production, property, power, and packaging across South India, **M.P. Purushothaman** has served as the President of Federation of Hotels & Restaurants Association of India (FHRAI) for three terms and President of South India Hotels & Restaurants Association (SIHRA) for 10 years.

“I am very happy that I was selected as a recipient of this prestigious award,” he says. While he insists that the industry has changed a lot in the last few years for good, he’s not in favour of the recent liquor ban on hotels on national and state highways. “So many hotels are affected because of the recent Supreme Court verdict. FHRAI is going with a review petition to the Supreme Court, after that we have to wait for that verdict,” he adds.

► **M.P. Purushothaman**, Chairman & Managing Director, Empee Group, received the award for **DDP Trailblazer**. He is felicitated by **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group; **Dr. A Jayathilak**, Chairman Spices Board of India and **Arni Sapkal**, Gladrags Mrs. India Mumbai 2017





Chief Guest | DR A. JAYATHILAK

Dr. A. Jayathilak (IAS), Chairman, Spices Board, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, praises India Travel Awards, calling it a great initiative to encourage talent in the travel and tourism sector. On South India as a lucrative destination, he says, "The region is doing very well, which is propelled by Kerala and Goa. Other states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh are catching up and certainly Telangana. The potential of this region is tremendous." Since he heads the Spices Board, he says that this sector could also be accommodated in the tourism. "From Columbus to Vasco Da Gama, all left from their countries to look for spices in India. Even now, a lot of tourists in India insist on getting authentic spices from India, which is the biggest producer, consumer and exporter of spices in the world. I think spice tourism is a niche tourism product, which can be promoted."

► Dr A. Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board of India, received the award for Chief Guest. He is felicitated by SanJeet, Director, DDP Group and Arni Sapkal, Gladrags Mrs. India Mumbai 2017

Guest of Honour | ARNI SAPKAL

With the toughness of an army person and the calmness of a yogini, Arni Sapkal, Gladrags Mrs. India Mumbai 2017 is the perfect role model for all the young ladies. Married for over nine years, Arni has successfully set up her own company and is now training hundreds of clients to a life of fitness and health. A perfect combination of beauty with brains, Sapkal praises India Travel Awards for honouring the best in the travel trade.

► Arni Sapkal, Gladrags Mrs. India Mumbai 2017 being honoured with Pearl Trophy 'Maya' for her support to India Travel Awards





Entrepreneur of the year

RIYAZ U.C.

“Our company is a 14-year-old DMC based in Cochin and we have branches across India. What works for us is that while we promote the major destinations in South India, we combine Sri Lanka with these destinations. We blend some new packages, basically for the European and Arabic people. We promote some unique products,” says **Riyaz U.C.**, Managing Director, Spiceland Holidays. He says that winning this prestigious award was indeed motivational, “The event was colourful with elegant crowd. Awards like these basically motivate people and the trade.”

► **Riyaz U.C.**, Managing Director, Spiceland Holidays was given the **Entrepreneur of the year** award

Most Enterprising General Manager

SHUVENDU BANERJEE

For **Shuvendu Banerjee**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi, their property makes for the perfect venue for both tourists and business travellers alike. Talking on how the hotel has performed through the years, he said, “Year-on-year, the occupancy is growing as inbound is increasing. We also focus a lot on MICE and business events in the hotel. Last year, the occupancy grew by around seven per cent. This year, we hope to see it grow by 4 to 4.5 per cent as compared to last year. We do a lot of weddings as well.”

► **Shuvendu Banerjee**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi was given the **Most Enterprising General Manager** award



Best Sales & Marketing

Professional | RAJAN MALHOTRA

Rajan Malhotra, Director-Sales & Marketing, Shangri-La Hotel Bengaluru, says there is no bigger joy than winning at South India Travel Awards and that too among peers and colleagues in the industry. “I made a very humble beginning into the world of sales and marketing and I personally feel there could be no better world than this one. This award is special and makes me very nostalgic as I look back 14 years of my beautiful professional journey. I have been lucky to work with leaders who have imparted great knowledge and helped me pave the way through till here and prodigious brands that have added great value to my career,” he adds.

► **Rajan Malhotra**, Director Sales & Marketing, Shangri-La Hotel Bengaluru was given the **Best Sales & Marketing Professional** award and received by **Aishwarya Devaiah**, Communications Manager on his behalf



Best Hospitality Professional

PANKAJ GUPTA

A seasoned hospitality professional in Operations, Sales & Marketing, Revenue Management Finance, HR and IT; **Pankaj Gupta**, General Manager, Aloft Bengaluru, brings with him over 16 years of experience in the industry. Having worked with brands like Sarovar Hotels, InterContinental Hotels and Pride Hotels, Gupta is a team leader in every regard. He has only brought laurels to the places he has worked at and is a true asset for Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield—a property that has established itself as the perfect address for both business and leisure travellers alike.

► **Pankaj Gupta**, General Manager, Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield was given the **Best Hospitality Professional** award





Best Global Distribution System (GDS) | TRAVELPORT GALILEO

Sandeep Dwivedi, CCO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, says that winning the fourth India Travel Award in a row has reinstated the technological revolution that they are bringing in the region. "Our products manifest the advanced ideology with which our team operates to bring in ease and speed to modern day travel businesses. We are redefining the way travel is bought and sold. We have emerged as an aggregator of travel inventory through which travel agents (both offline and online) can sell well-planned, custom made, tour packages depending on their clientele's preference."

► The award was given to **Travelport Galileo** and received by **KS Ganesh**, Regional Head-South and **Kurian Thomas**, Business Manager Cochin

Best Airline - International | SILKAIR

Having won India Travel Award, once earlier, **Anjo Jose Kandathil**, Head PR & Marketing, SilkAir, India, is happy to be awarded once again. "SilkAir is known for its customer service and we have made sure that we keep the standards high, which is why we have won this award," he said. Talking about the Indian market, he says, "Currently, we have operations in about eight markets, out of which seven are in South and we have predominantly been here. We are also planning to expand in North, but for now, South is the most important market for us."

► The award was given to **SilkAir** and received by **Anjo Jose Kandathil**, Head PR & Marketing, SilkAir, India



Best Airport | KEMPEGOWDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BENGALURU

Sprawling over 4,000 acres, Kempegowda International Airport is located about 40 kilometres north of the city near the village of Devanahalli. **Shikhin Pawar**, Assistant General Manager, Airline Marketing Passenger Services, Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, expresses gratitude on receiving this award on behalf of the airport. "We are proud to win this award at the highly competitive South India Travel Awards. We want to thank the DDP Group for recognising our efforts and I want to thank everyone for the same."

► The award was given to **Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru** and received by **Shikhin Pawar**, Assistant General Manager, Airline Marketing Passenger Services



Best Travel Technology Provider | PROVAB TECHNOFT

Feeling ecstatic on winning the award, **Anand Prakash Shukla**, CEO, Provab Technosoft, says, "We are a 225 people company, one of the biggest in travel and technology domain across India. We are working with the customers in around 45 countries, and our major hubs are the Middle East, India and USA. In travel and technology, we are working on many different parameters. We have been working very hard in travel technology over the last 12 years. With the kind of innovations and service that we offer, we believe that this award belongs to us."

► The award was given to **Provab Technosoft** and received by **Anand Prakash Shukla**, CEO and **Vinay Shukla**, Senior Vice President





Best Destination Management Company | **STHI HOLIDAYS INDIA**

Since its inception in 2008, STHI Holidays has only grown through the years. The DMC has offices in 19 countries and regions, namely, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Dubai, Oman, Vietnam, Hong Kong, China, Mauritius, Maldives, Turkey, Greece, Australia, South Africa, Kenya, Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. Headed by its Director **Gagan Kumar**, the company boasts a team of skilled professionals with in-depth knowledge of travel and hospitality. Within a short span, the company has increased its foothold in the travel market by offering 24/7 support system to its customers and B2B travel agents.

► The award was given to **STHI Holidays India**

Best Wedding and MICE Hotel | **LE MÉRIDIEN, KOCHI**

A jewel in the crown of Kochi's hospitality, Le Méridien Kochi, plays host to some of the biggest weddings and MICE events in the city. **Nilay Saran**, Director- Sales & Marketing, Le Méridien Kochi, says, "We are really very excited on winning this award. Le Méridien Kochi is a 15-year-old iconic property, and with the kind of experience we have in hospitality, I think we really deserved it." With varied services and amenities for all kinds of guests, the property offers the best in hospitality.

► The award was given to **Le Méridien, Kochi** and received by **Nilay Saran**, Director Sales & Marketing



Best Destination Management Company- South East Asia | **TRAVELBULLZ**

Feeling on top of the world up on receiving the award, **Kanwer Deep Singh**, Founder and President, TravelBullz, dedicates it to his team. "This is for my team sitting in Delhi, Bangkok, and Hong Kong. We have got this recognition from our customers, who voted for us. As a company, we have only stood for quality, increasing productivity for our partners. I think these are the key parameters that have made us win today. We will be launching new destinations as well in future and we will be announcing them as they roll out," he says.

► The award was given to **TravelBullz** and received by **Kanwer Deep Singh**, Founder & President



Best Adventure Destination | **SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM**

Claiming that South India remains a major market for them, **Hanneli Slabber**, Country Head-India, South African Tourism, says, "Winning in the adventure category is a huge benchmark for us. This award is really important because the trade votes in it and trade is our sales arm in India. We do a lot of work in South India and a majority of our leisure business comes out of South India. In July this year, we will bring back our Learn South Africa programme—our classroom training programme—to 17 cities in India."

► The award was given to **South African Tourism** and received by **Hanneli Slabber**, Country Head





Best Budget Hotel Brand NANDHANA HOTELS BANGALORE

Elated to be a part of South India Travel Awards, **R. Ravichandar**, Chairman & Managing Director, Nandhana Hotels, says, “We are happy to win the award for the Best Budget Hotel. “We have been in this industry for 25 years, with a total of 200 keys across five properties. We are happy that we are focusing on the budget segment and it is reaping results for us. I dedicate this award to my team.” Talking of new hotel openings, he reveals, “We are all set to open the Nandhana Regent in Koramangala in the second week of May and are very excited for the same.”

► The award was given to **Nandhana Hotels Bangalore** and received by **R. Ravichandar**, Chairman & Managing Director

Best Corporate Hotel CROWNE PLAZA BENGALURU ELECTRONICS CITY

Citing India Travel Award as a gesture to exemplify their efforts, **Ajinkya Kulkarni**, Director of Sales, Crowne Plaza Bengaluru, says, “As a corporate hotel, it has been our endeavour to provide guests with state-of-the-art facilities, personalised amenities, spacious well-appointed rooms, flavourful restaurants, comfortable beds and choice of pillows that allows our guests to be at their best and have a productive stay. Our philosophy ‘You first’ goes a long way to say how precious our guests are to us and this award only strengthens our belief.”

► The award was given to **Crowne Plaza Bengaluru Electronics City** and received by **Raghu Nair**, Executive Assistant Manager



Best Executive Hotel HOWARD JOHNSON BENGALURU HEBBAL

Conveniently located near Manyata Embassy Business Park and Negawara Junction, Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal hotel is meant for business and offers the right amenities, service and space for the same. The central location of the property is an added advantage, as it offers affordable accommodations with easy access to the region’s most popular attractions. Only 35 minutes from Bengaluru Airport (BLR), the hotel offers free Wi-Fi, outdoor swimming pool, and an onsite spa. Guests can stay active using the fitness centre or relax in the executive club lounge.

► The award was given to **Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal** and received by **Rishi Neoge**, General Manager and **Madhusudan Nair**, Executive Assistant Manager

Best Debut Resort GLYNGARTH RESORTS OOTY

Only six months old, Glyngarth Resorts in Ooty is a labour of love for its owners. **Jyothish Kumar**, Director, Glyngarth Resort, Ooty, says, “It’s a new property and winning the Best Debut Award is all because of our hard work.” **Shahid Sait**, Director of the resort, adds, “To make a resort on a very difficult terrain in Ooty in the Nilgiris is a lot of hard work. I think, after 10 years we have got a new property, and it’s an honour to achieve an award like this. It’s a recognition that goes a long way for the kind of effort and the time we have put into making a place like this.”

► The award was given to **Glyngarth Resorts Ooty** and received by **Shahid Sait** and **Jyothish Kumar**, Directors





Best Mid-Market Business Hotel

HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS & SUITES HYDERABAD GACHIBOWLI

According to **Joyita Ghosh**, Senior Guest Service Leader, Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Hyderabad Gachibowli, they understand what the guests want when they come to a mid-market property, and deliver it to the core. “We understand the concept of ‘smart stays’ and offer comfort and the amenities that the guests expect. It’s a great feeling to receive the award of best Mid-Market Business Hotel. It was a great evening and was very well organised,” she adds, while thanking the DDP team for choosing them for the award.

► The award was given to **Holiday Inn Express & Suites Hyderabad Gachibowli** and received by **Sayani Mitra**, Guest Service Associate and **Joyita Ghosh**, Senior Guest Service Leader

Best Business Hotel

CROWNE PLAZA KOCHI

Shuvendu Banerjee, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi, reveals that the hotel and the team have been associated with the travel and tourism industry for the last five years. He adds, “We have been a part of all the trade shows and all the major events happening in the city. Over a period of time, we have shown growth, while the people at the property have got many good remarks. We have been doing a lot of MICE and business events, and being recognised by India Travel Awards is a great achievement.”

► The award was given to **Crowne Plaza Kochi** and received by **Shuvendu Banerjee**, General Manager and **Dileep P I**, Director of Sales & Marketing



Best Luxury Hotel

PARK HYATT CHENNAI

Just a 15-minute drive from Chennai International Airport, Park Hyatt Chennai offers exquisite décor, state-of-the-art amenities and unparalleled elegance. On receiving the award on behalf of the property, **Mausam Bhattacharjee**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Grand Hyatt Kochi, says, “It’s a beautiful oasis in the jungle of construction of Chennai, and it really deserves the Best Luxury Hotel award. It has a fantastic location and lovely property. It’s an honour for me to represent the hotel here.” A true epitome of luxury, Park Hyatt Chennai is the perfect location for discerning travellers.

► The award was given to **Park Hyatt Chennai** and received by **Mausam Bhattacharjee**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Grand Hyatt Kochi on their behalf



Best Tour Operator

SPICELAND HOLIDAYS

One of the largest DMCs in Kerala, Spiceland Holidays has presence in both Kerala and Sri Lanka. **Riyaz U.C.**, Managing Director, Spiceland Holidays, reveals that their innovative approach and unique products, packages and style of work is their biggest USP. Observing that the travel agencies are very important for them, he claims that they offer great technological ease for premium partners. Talking about South Indian market, he says, “These days there is not a good feedback for South India, especially with recent issues like the liquor ban, which has spoilt the market, and everybody is struggling hard to revive the issues.”

► The award was given to **Spiceland Holidays** and received by **Riyaz U.C.**, Managing Director



When extraordinary tourism



stars aligned in South India





Best City Hotel | RADISSON BLU PLAZA HOTEL HYDERABAD BANJARA HILLS

Located at the heart of the Nizami capital, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills stands amidst the bustling city centre. A perfect melange of comfort and convenience, the property is just a stone's throw away from major shopping malls, movie theatres and gourmet restaurants of the city. In the hotel, the guests are pampered to the core with incredible amenities and dedicated service. Great meeting spaces, rejuvenating spa, swimming pool and a state-of-the-art fitness centre makes it the perfect address for a relaxed stay in the city.

► The award was given to Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills

Best Tour Operator - Inbound | CHOLAN TOURS

Crediting his team for the award, **Pandian K.**, Director, Cholan Tours, says, "Awards are an excellent way of recognising people. Employees respond to appreciation expressed through recognition of their efforts because it confirms their work is valued. This leads to increased satisfaction and productivity. Two of my Kerala senior managers who had been with me for 14 years, received the award on our behalf and it was a nice feeling to watch my people go up the stage, face the audience with high self-esteem, holding high the award with a proud feeling."

► The award was given to **Cholan Tours** and received by **Christy Gomez**, Regional Manager, Kerala and **Ajay Kunar**, Manager, Trivandrum Branch



Best Wildlife Lodge/Resort | WATERWOODS LODGE AND RESORTS

Vivek Vinod, COO, Tatva Hospitality received the award on behalf of Waterwoods Lodge and Resorts, Kabini, which they represent. Talking about the property, he says, "It's a premium wildlife resort—an ecofriendly and CSR initiated project. I am sure the team of the property would be happy to have the Maya for them and it'd be a great journey back to Bengaluru." Adding that the property has stood the test of time, he claims, "It's a 15-year-old project and has been a very local driven product and employs a lot of local staff and community workers."

► The award was given to **Waterwoods Lodge and Resorts** and received by **Manoj Kunisseri**, CEO and **Vivek Vinod**, COO Tatva Hospitality on their behalf



Best Debut Mid-Market Hotel | HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS CHENNAI OLD MAHABALIPURAM ROAD

A smart choice for tech-savvy business travellers, Holiday Inn Express Chennai Old Mahabalipuram Road offers great access to the surrounding commercial areas for automobile plants, IT parks and dedicated Special Economic Zones (SEZ). With a total of 136 modern guest rooms, designed to allow the perfect atmosphere for both work and relaxation, the hotel offers everything one needs for a great and hassle free stay.

► The award was given to **Holiday Inn Express Chennai Old Mahabalipuram Road** and received by **Mohamed Asar**, Director of Sales





Best Metropolitan Hotel

RAMADA CHENNAI EGMORE

Incredible corporate facilities, along with warm hospitality, Ramada Chennai Egmore is everything a business traveller can ask for, that too at affordable prices. On winning as the Best Metropolitan hotel, **Animesh Kumar**, General Manager, Ramada Chennai Egmore, says, "Thanks DDPPL for honouring us. The Maya goes to the complete team of Ramada Chennai Egmore, and I want to thank my business partners, my guests who've supported us every day. An award like this really motivates us to perform constantly."

► The award was given to **Ramada Chennai Egmore** and received by **Animesh Kumar**, General Manager

Best Business Travel Agency

ARCHANA TRAVELS

Operating since 2008, Archana Travels is dedicated to offer international travel affordable to the middle class, says **Baddam Bhoja Reddy**, MD, Archana Travels. On winning the award, he says, "We are concentrating on the middle class, as travel is for everyone. We are willing to take payments on EMI basis, allowing ease for those booking with us. For a package of ₹ 30,000-40,000, we are even taking ₹ 5,000 initially. Now, we have more than 10,000 customers and holding 40 travel agents in the market."

► The award was given to **Archana Travels** and received by **Baddam Bhoja Reddy**, Proprietor and **Laxmi Kumari**



Best Luxury and MICE Hotel

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL BENGALURU

Aishwarya Devaiah, Communications Manager, Shangri-La Bengaluru, who received the award on behalf of the property, says, "Shangri-La is a beautiful hotel as well as the largest in the city of Bengaluru. We have the maximum number of F&B and have done some amazing weddings and events. We constantly innovate our services, despite being in the market only for a year. We are already changing all our menus and bringing new turns and twists in everything we do, trying to offer a discerning experience to the guests. Thus, I think we deserved an award today."

► The award was given to **Shangri-La Hotel Bengaluru** and received by **Aishwarya Devaiah**, Communications Manager



Best Corporate Incentive Tours

Operator | PARRY TRAVELS

With their expertise in MICE, leisure, corporate events, trade shows and FITs, Parry Travels has created a niche for themselves. **Laxmi Angara**, Business Unit Head, Parry Travels, says, "We are one of the largest companies in South India, as well as one of the first IATA companies from Chennai. In terms of business, we are one of the biggest companies." Future too looks bright for Parry Travels. Angara adds, "We are coming up with buyer-seller meets. We also organise expos in some countries and take people over there. We also do incoming trade shows."

► The award was given to **Parry Travels** and received by **Laxmi Angara**, Business Unit Head





Excellence in Customer Service

RADISSON HYDERABAD HITEC CITY

Krishna Kumar, General Manager, Radisson Hyderabad Hitec City, believes that an award is a recognition for the team. "When you carry back an award to your hotel, it puts a smile on the faces of the people who've been the face of the hotel. At Radisson, we believe that the team deserves all the accolades for the hard work they put in. I would also like to thank India Travel Awards team for putting up a spectacular show." He says that the hotel is embracing new technologies in different forms to stay updated and relevant to the times.

► The award was given to Radisson Hyderabad Hitec City and received by Krishna Kumar, General Manager

Best Airport Aviation

Marketing Team

BANGALORE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Known as the third busiest airport in the country after Delhi and Mumbai, Bengaluru International Airport or Kempegowda International Airport has had many feathers in its cap ever since it opened in 2008. It handled over 22.2 million passengers in 2016 with little less than 500 aircraft movements a day. The airport also handled about 314,060 tonnes (346,190 short tons) of cargo. Serving as the southern hub for many airlines, the airport boasts seamless transits and services for travellers.

► The award was given to Bangalore International Airport and received by Shikhin Pawar, Assistant General Manager, Airline Marketing Passenger Services and Nripendra Singh, Deputy Manager-Airline Marketing Passenger Services



Best Hotel & Resort Management

Company | TATVA HOSPITALITY

Bengaluru-based Tatva Hospitality is a specialised company focusing only on South India, reveals Manoj Kunisseri, CEO, Tatva Hospitality. "We only focus on resorts and probably we are the only company in South India to do that. Currently, we have 5-6 boutique resorts in our kitty. We have unique services to offer to these boutique resorts, and this could be the reason why we have won an award today," he adds. He says more boutique properties by the brand are on the cards. "Today, the scenario is moving towards boutique resorts in leisure destinations. I think that's the future of travel," he notes.

► The award was given to Tatva Hospitality and received by Manoj Kunisseri, CEO; Vivek Vinod, COO and Ranjan Mathews, Director



Best Destination Wedding Resort

ANANTYA RESORTS

Perched on the banks of Chittar Lake in the southern part of Tamil Nadu, Anantya Resorts is situated in a pristine, beautiful, unexplored and unknown destination. Lavanya Ramachandran, Director, Anantya Resorts, says, "We are a boutique property and I want to showcase it to everybody in the country as well as outside India. I think something like this will give recognition to the place and not just the property. This recognition by DDPPL and TravTalk will take us a long way towards that," she adds. She further says that they are planning to position themselves in the wellness market, as they do a lot of Ayurveda programmes, as well as yoga retreats and yoga teacher training programmes.

► The award was given to Anantya Resorts and received by Lavanya Ramachandran, Director, and Gireesh S.S., Marketing Manager





Best Debut Hotel

HOLIDAY INN CHENNAI OMR IT EXPRESSWAY

Only a month old in the Chennai hospitality market, Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway, has already won laurels for itself. **Shipra Sumbly Kaul**, General Manager, Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway, says, "It's a beautiful hotel with a very good location and the services are very promising. In the first month only, we've had record breaking sales. The hotel has got fantastic coverage and we are buzzing on social media, with the guests raving about the F&B, stay, experience and the hospitality. It totally sums up the best hospitality experience, and hence it has to be the best debut hotel."

► The award was given to **Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway** and received by **Shipra Sumbly Kaul**, General Manager

Best Boutique Resort

MOUNTAIN CLUB RESORT

Situated close to the serene Munnar, Mountain Club Resort offers comfort in the midst of pristine surroundings and offers great amenities and facilities added with warm service. Offering stay options for both families and honeymoon couples, the villas are reminiscent of British Colonial era and offer mesmerising views of the landscape. Offering a range of different experiences for guests, the property is the perfect escape from city life.

► The award was given to **Mountain Club Resort** and received by **Benny George**, General Manager



Best B2B Travel Portal

TRAVEL BOUTIQUE ONLINE

Aarish Khan, Vice-President- Sales (India), Travel Boutique Online received the award for Best B2B Travel Portal and credited it to the use of the latest technology by their company. "At Travel Boutique Online we have the best technology in the B2B space and of course our penetration is huge in comparison to others. We are amongst the top three and I would proudly say that in some verticals like hotels, technology, penetration as well as service levels and team, we are the number one," he said.

► The award was given to **Travel Boutique Online** and received by **Aarish Khan**, Vice President-Sales (India)



Best Debut MICE Hotel

HOLIDAY INN COCHIN

Holiday Inn Cochin opened its MICE facility in December, and according to its General Manager **Kunal Shanker** they have already seen a great traction as Cochin attracts a number of MICE, social functions, as well as conferences. "Being the first Holiday Inn in India with new MICE facilities, I think we deserve this kind of a recognition," he claims. He further adds that they are now planning a spa, and it will be the latest product addition to the property, which would happen in July.

► The award was given to **Holiday Inn Cochin** and received by **Kunal Shanker**, General Manager





Best Airline- Domestic

SPICEJET

Winning the award to the tremendous turnaround for SpiceJet, **Shamon Syed**, Senior Manager-South, SpiceJet, says, "It's a pleasure to be here for this occasion. We had been rolled out from the industry in 2014 and you can see what a turnaround it has been for the airline under the leadership of our Chairman Ajay Singh. We are continuously making profit, and we have won the hearts of people by continuously winning the on-time performance ratings. Also, passenger occupancy rate is high for the last nine months."

► The award was given to **SpiceJet** and received by **Shamon Syed**, Senior Manager-South and **Sudheesh Manglasseri**, Manager Sales-Kerala

Best Loyalty Programme for Travel Agents

GMR HYDERABAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Praising the awards evening for the recognition, **Alexander Sebastien (Sasha)**, Head-Destination Marketing, GMR Hyderabad International Airport, says, "It's great to have an award and I hope there are many more to come. We are unique, and the loyalty programme for Hyderabad Airport is something unique. No other airport in India has such a programme, and this is what keeps us going." The airport's loyalty programme rewards travel agents who use it as a transit point.

► The award was given to **GMR Hyderabad International Airport** and received by **Alexander Sebastien (Sasha)**, Head-Destination Marketing



Best Budget Hotel

RAMADA, BANGALORE

Sachin K.S., Director Sales, Ramada Bengaluru, says that the property is one of the oldest in the city. "The hotel has 44 years of dynamic presence in Bangalore and averaging between 85-90 per cent occupancy in the last four fiscal years makes a definite choice for this award. A minor difference between ARR and RevPAR by itself shows the loyalty base of customers the hotel has. This award makes us proud in front of all those who have supported us like corporates, travel agents, online channels and the direct guests."

► The award was given to **Ramada, Bangalore** and received by **Sachin K.S.**, Director of Sales



Best Travel Agency

NARAYANI HOLIDAYS & HOSPITALITY

Excelling in planning and executing holidays for both leisure and business clients, Narayani Holidays & Hospitality is a one-stop shop for all kinds of travel needs. **A.V. Moorthy**, Director Operations, Narayani Holidays & Hospitality, says, "I must thank India Travel Awards for honouring us at this event, and I am looking forward towards more such awards in upcoming years." He further adds, "I attribute this award to the sheer hard work by my team, because of whom I am here."

► The award was given to **Narayani Holidays & Hospitality** and received by **A. V. Moorthy**, Director Operations





Emerging Tourism Destination

REUNION ISLAND

Calling it a moment of pride, **Vineet Gopal**, Director-India, Reunion Island Tourism Board, says that the award further strengthens the fact that if you have potential, you will definitely be successful one day. "With this award, we also received bigger responsibility as there are huge expectations from the destination and we have to ensure that we meet the expectations of aspiring Indian travellers. I'm sure that we received this award because of the diversity of tourism options that Reunion Island has to offer to the discerning Indian travellers," he added.

► The award was given to **Reunion Island**

Best Green Hotel

HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS CHENNAI MAHINDRA WORLD CITY

Going green is a matter of choice, and who knows it better than **Sanket Jivangikar**, General Manager, Holiday Inn Express, Mahindra World City Chennai. On receiving the award, he says, "It's an awesome feeling. This is the first time I have received an award in my leadership role for the hotel. It feels fantastic receiving the Maya. I think we are just doing things which are right in terms of the ethos of our company. The company focuses on concern and conservation of energy and the society we operate in. In a way we need to give it back, and that's why we are a green hotel."

► The award was given to **Holiday Inn Express Chennai Mahindra World City** and received by **Sanket Jivangikar**, General Manager



Best Customised Tour Operator

SHANTI TRAVEL

Shanti Travel is a travel agency based in Delhi as well as Puducherry, which works with French travellers coming to India. **David Gaulin**, Travel Expert, Shanti Travel, says, "Because of more than 11 years in the industry, we provide customised service to the guests. What we do is different, and thus we are well known now in South India, and especially in the French market." He adds that apart from India, they are now looking at taking French tourists to other Asian countries as well.

► The award was given to **Shanti Travel** and received by **David Gaulin**, Travel Expert



Premier Partner

MYSTIFLY CONSULTING INDIA

One of the biggest B2B global airfare marketplace, **Mystifly** offers fare consolidation from 900+ airlines, multi-GDSs, and 170+ LCCs across 70+ Points of Sale countries in the Americas, EMEA and APAC. Started in 2009, the company offers perfect melange of technology and inventive thought process to create solutions that can disrupt the air travel industry. Its flagship air ticketing platform—**MyFareBox**, along with many other technology-driven products cater to more than 2,500 customers globally to service their customers better.

► The award was given to **Mystifly Consulting India**



Hospitality Partner

CROWNE PLAZA KOCHI

The ideal business location in the city, **Crowne Plaza Kochi** offers panoramic views of backwaters and exquisite cuisine combined with rejuvenation at the **Sohum Spa**. Ideally located on the new business district of city NH 47 Bypass, the hotel offers easy access to **Info Park Kakkanad**, **Cochin Special Economic Zone**, **M.G. Road**, **Cochin Port**, **Shipyards**, **Naval Base**. Leisure travellers have access to major sightseeing areas like **Fort Kochi**, **Mattancherry** and the hotel is 45 minutes away from **Cochin International Airport**. The hotel offers 269 spacious business rooms and suites with excellent views of the backwaters and the city.

► The award was given to **Crowne Plaza Kochi** and received by **Anthony George**, Food & Beverage Manager; **Annie Thomas**, H R Manager; **Dileep P I**, Director - Sales & Marketing and **Shuvendu Banerjee**, General Manager





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