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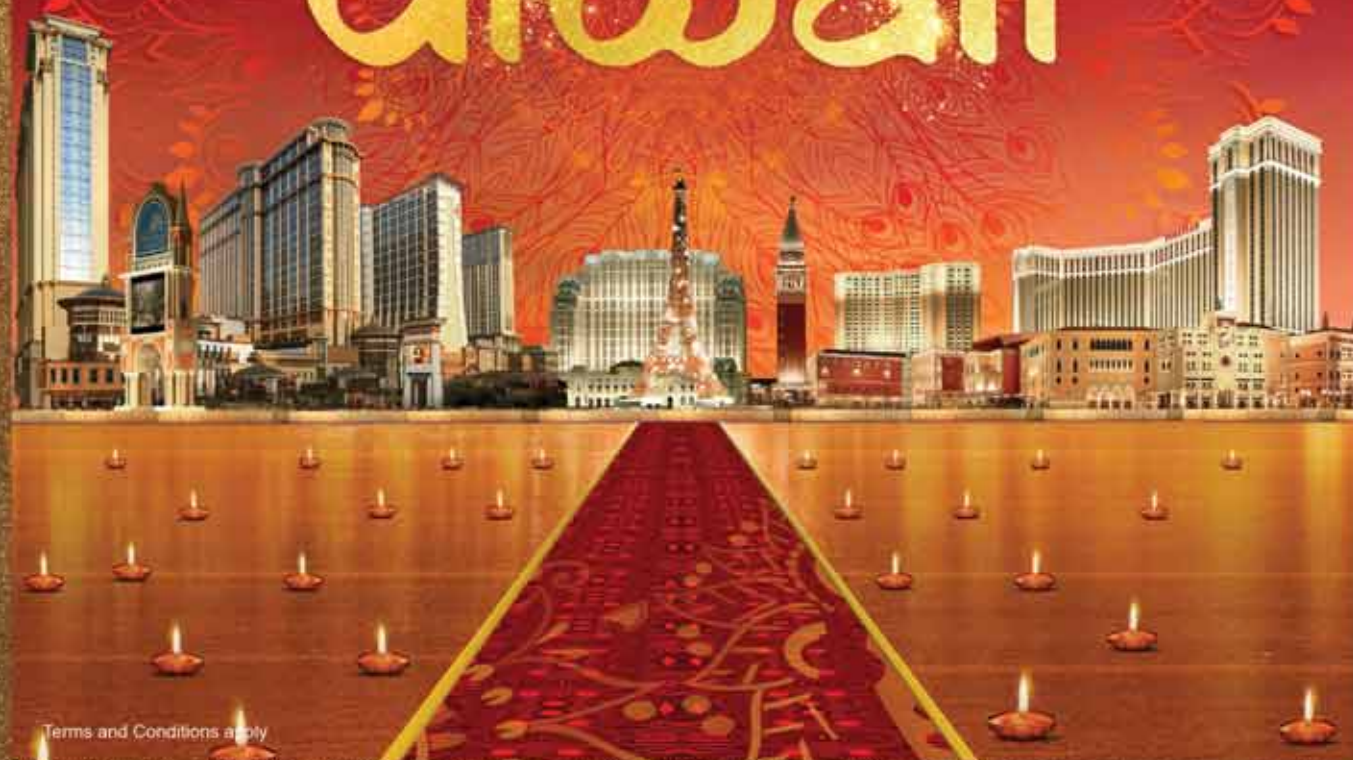
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MOT envisages a 'Swachh' India

Lack of cleanliness is a major deterrent for foreign tourists coming into India. With renewed optimism, the Ministry of Tourism has taken the initiative for a clean India, making sure the country sheds this image.



NIKHIL ANAND

Cleanliness and hygiene have always been major deterrents for foreign tourists coming into India. In lieu of the 'Swachhta hi Sewa' (Cleanliness is service) campaign initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Tourism organised a nationwide campaign called 'Swachhta Pakhwada' from September 16 to October 2, 2017. Under this campaign, MOT organised cleanliness drives at various tourist and pilgrimage destinations across the country through its India Tourism offices. All educational institutes under the Ministry of Tourism adopted at least one tourist place to maintain cleanliness in a sustainable way.

K.J. Alphons, Minister of State (IC) for Tourism led from the front in this initiative by cleaning various sites to send out a more resonant

message to the entire nation. Speaking about the need for this initiative, he expressed, "The holiest thing any Indian can do is to keep their neighbourhood clean for themselves and help present India in a better light to the world. This is the message we are trying to advocate which requires an effort on a daily basis by not only the government but each and every person."

The Minister volunteered for various cleanliness activities at India Gate on September 17, at Janpath market on the World Tourism Day (September 27) and at Smith Village, Shillong, Meghalaya on September 30. Officers of the Ministry of Tourism as well as students from the Institutes of Hotel Management (IHM) were also present. The minister interacted with the visitors as well as shopkeepers and

urged everyone to contribute to make the country clean and welcoming for tourists. He also administered a

all over the country during the period which was kick-started at Mumbai's Juhu beach on September 15.

"The holiest thing any Indian can do is to keep their neighbourhood clean for themselves and help present India in a better light to the world."

K.J. Alphons

Minister of State (IC) for Tourism

'Swachhta' pledge to all participants at these places.

Apart from major clean-up activities across India, the campaign also witnessed pledge swearing, awareness activities, essay competition, street theatre and the release of a film on 'Swachhta', to instil cleanliness in the public. The campaign had been organised at more than 80 places

The cleanliness drive also laid foundation for the 'Adopt a Heritage' project whereby the tourism industry will help make monuments and surrounding areas more tourist habitable. The Minister informed that MOT, in close collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India, envisages developing heritage sites and making them tourist friendly to enhance



Tourism Minister K.J. Alphons lending a helping hand at Janpath market in New Delhi on World Tourism Day

their cultural importance, in a planned and phased manner. The project focuses on providing basic amenities such as cleanliness, public conveniences, drinking water, ease

of access for tourists, signage, etc. and advanced amenities like cafeterias, surveillance system, tourist facilitation centre, illumination in and around the monuments.

Bringing laurels to the travel trade

The National Tourism Awards, held on September 27, 2017, acknowledged the importance of tourism in the country and honoured those who strive hard to make India travel experiences truly incredible. **TRAVTALK** finds out from winners how this accolade inspires them to ensure inclusive tourism as well as economic development.



TT BUREAU



Suresh Periwal
India Travel Award winner and MD, Clubside Tours & Travels

"Receiving the National Award is the greatest recognition. It is rather humbling to join the list of awardees who have in the past been recipients of this award. Being a regional operator, we rely on the support from our partner agents and it is that confidence in us which has led to this. Over the years we have been working on tapping the potential of adventure tourism which is now bearing fruits. The National Awards are the ultimate recognition of these efforts and it has renewed our faith in what we do."



Vikram Madhok
India Travel Award winner and MD, Abercrombie & Kent

of our source markets to add another layer to the type of markets we catered to. This award helps us to get recognised for our work and is an added advantage on a global platform."

"We have received the National Tourism Award for the fourth time now, but it's the first time we got the first prize under Category I. To be recognised by the highest body in tourism is another feather in our cap. We went back to the basics in terms of showcasing incredible India to the world. We rekindled partnerships with our existing partners and refreshed our packages to offer more experiential products. We tried to plug the gaps in the demographic



Nilesh Cabral
Chairman, Goa Tourism Development Corporation

"I am honoured to receive such a huge recognition from the President of India for the Corporation's innovative initiative. GTDC has worked in the right direction and has given a new face to Goa Tourism. The 'Most Innovative Use of Information Technology' award was for a campaign for the tourists and by the tourists which aimed at building the longest running digital testimonial campaign for a travel brand. The Best State/UT Award recognises Goa as a dream destination for all tourists and highlights Goa as a beach destination along with other tourism facets."

Contd. on page 9 ▶

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MPTM 2017 set to foster tourism

The fourth edition of Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart is all set to host buyers and exhibitors in constructive B2B sessions from October 27-29, 2017, that will help showcase the state as a year-round tourism destination.

TRIPTI MEHTA

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board (MPTB), a nodal body formed for undertaking all tourism promotion activities for the state of Madhya Pradesh and representing the interests of all stakeholders, is organising Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart 2017 (MPTM) from October 27-29 at Hotel Lake View, Bhopal. The fourth edition of the mart seeks to portray the state as a year-round tourism destination, with a focus on both domestic and inbound tourism.

Madhya Pradesh is soaked in heritage that few are aware of. This central Indian state has always brought to the fore innovative concepts such as Jal Mahotsav that has only gained popularity since its commencement. MPTM 2017 will further

the state's presence on the tourism map of the country and the world, as the event is looking to receive a large number of attendees.

This year's event will see in attendance over 200 national and international buyers and close to 100 domestic exhibitors. With B2B sessions scheduled over two days, that is, October 28 and 29, participants will have the opportunity to form successful collaborations and network with industry players that would include airlines, accommodation providers, destination management companies, heritage hotels, wildlife resorts, etc.

Keeping in line with the theme for the convention, 'Discover-Seek-Explore', MPTB will also organise post-convention tours to showcase a world of innovative products and un-

“This year, the government has formed an advisory committee that will manage the entire event, a model ideated on the lines of Kerala Travel Mart.”



Hari Ranjan Rao
Secretary-Tourism
Government of Madhya Pradesh

explored destinations that the state has to offer.

Hari Ranjan Rao, Secretary-Tourism, Government of Madhya Pradesh, states that this year, the government has formed an advisory committee that will manage the entire event, a model ideated on the lines of Kerala Travel Mart.

Supported by various trade organisations that include ADTOI, ATTOI, IATO, FAITH, TAAI and TAFI, this year's mart will see participation from international players from European countries of Spain, Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Poland, Austria and Southeast Asian countries of Singapore and Thailand among many others.

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Small destinations pack a big punch

India and China are considered booming markets currently, and international tourism boards are making sure that they get the share of the pie as well. Indians are travelling to all the major destinations around the world, and most of the popular countries already have a tourism office in India to take care of promotions, marketing and sales. However, even smaller standalone destinations, as well as individual regional tourism boards, are making their presence felt in the country. Whether it's long haul destinations like Peru or Eastern European countries like Georgia and even Azerbaijan, everyone is meeting the trade, reaching out to the media and making efforts to offer Indians exclusive experiences that they excel in. Alternatively, these countries fill the gap for travel agents looking for new destinations to reach out to the well-travelled client, who has already been to the popular tourist destinations. Another advantage with travelling to such countries is the fact that they offer unique, virgin spots, which suit the seasoned travellers and the millennials, who are looking for new experiences without burning a hole in the pocket.

Festivities galore

The Ministry of Tourism is celebrating a 20-day Paryatan Parv with an array of events planned at monuments across the country. Officials from MOT are making efforts to involve the common people as well as the trade to be a part of the celebrations. It is certainly an innovative way to promote and emphasise on the tourism products in the country. By offering the monuments for adoption to corporates, MOT has taken a new step forward towards maintenance of our heritage and culture. With programmes like Swachhta Pakhwada, the Ministry is trying to spruce up India's image. Despite these efforts, it was disheartening to know that the Army was reportedly asked to clear the garbage on mountains leading to the Everest and other pilgrimage sites in the Himalayas. While the debate is on whether it is the army's job to clean the garbage left behind by pilgrims or not, there is a need to sensitise the citizenry of being responsible and civilised first, be it in India or abroad.

The rise of cruising in India

With an increase in desire to cruise, Indians are also looking at it as a venue for events. **Peter Kollar**, Head of International Training & Development, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), outlines the evolving cruise market.

Last month we released our CLIA Asia Cruise Trends report for 2017 which outlined important cruise data extracted from the Asian market from 2016, including a sub-section on Indian cruise statistics. Although most front-line retail travel agents don't really engage in statistics, graphs, and numbers, it can provide valuable insight. Let us have a closer look at the findings and what they mean.

India will host 128 cruise calls in 2017, which is up by one-third from last year. This is great for the local economy as more passengers visiting means more spending ashore. But when we take a deeper look into this figure, it tells us that India only hosted 12 turnaround calls this year – definitely a number that is too low considering India has five major ports. Having cruise lines use a local port as the start and end of the cruise is much more attractive to locals, and an increase in this number would mean more Indians are cruising. If more Indians cruise, then cruise lines start looking at India further as an option to place more ships in the area as a turnaround option, and this again results in an increase of local people

cruising, and an upward spiral begins which historically can be seen in other strong markets like Australia which currently has one in 20 cruising, unlike a decade earlier when it was in a similar position to India today.

Fly-cruise still popular

Of course, fly-cruise is still a popular option for Indians, and the increase of Indians using the major cruise hub of Singapore is a positive story. About 1,20,596 Indians cruised last year, and though an increase from first research conducted in 2012 (49,442 pax) has a 25 per cent compound annual growth rate, over the last three years, these numbers have only increased by less than 10,000 passengers (including 2,000 pax increase from 2015 to 2016). Considering the vast amount of potential India has, it is progressive, but the potential is immense.

When these figures first came out, I approached some of the leading cruise lines in Asia to ask about the Indian market and whether the stagnant figures have continued into 2017. The response was a positive one. They indicated that sales of Indian cruise

passengers have increased quite dramatically this year.

The cruise industry has come to Asia stronger than ever before, and 2017 is another record year of deployment in the area. 66 ships are based in Asia this year for six months or more, calling into 293 destinations over 18 countries. Given that Indians are more likely to utilise the hub of Singapore over options in Beijing and Shanghai, the news is also positive in that Singapore is also hosting more itineraries and ships in 2017, meaning your client has never had so many choices than before, whether it is about their budget, type of cruising, itinerary and brand options.

As cruise lines come, they also bring advertising, so more exposure to the public will also become evident in this market over the next few years. So if you haven't started your education around this sector you could be behind the standard very quickly. Also, your client will be quite young – India has one of the lowest average age of passengers (36) than any other region in the world, though this should not be taken on a per person ba-

sis, rather it seems that families (which would lower the average age because of the children included) are popular groups wanting to cruise.

It is an exciting time for cruising in Asia, and the potential of India is tremendous – we are right at the point where an increased volume and interest of cruising is about to take off, but not all business falls into your lap just because it is at your doorstep – you must actively work to get this business and it starts with education.

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



Peter Kollar
Head of International Training & Development, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)

Making India Incredible once more

Even as India's global ranking (World Economic Forum) has improved, the country has a huge scope for enhancing its tourism products. Incredible India 2.0 campaign brings a new zeal among the trade as MOT aims to engage the millennials through social media.

Most improved countries in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2017

Rank	Country	Global Rank	Change in performance score (%) since 2015
1	Japan	4	6.18
2	Azerbaijan	71	5.98
3	Tajikistan	107	5.01
4	Vietnam	67	4.80
5	Israel	61	4.79
6	Algeria	118	4.68
7	Bhutan	78	4.52
8	Gabon	119	4.47

Rank	Country	Global Rank	Change in performance score (%) since 2015
9	Korea, Rep. of	19	4.33
10	Egypt	74	4.32
11	Peru	51	3.93
12	India	40	3.86
13	Mexico	22	3.86
14	Chad	135	3.83
15	Albania	98	3.81

Source: World Economic Forum, The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017

Millennials to bring change in tourism

Thomas Cook India recently held the second edition of its India Travel Summit in New Delhi, which according to **Madhavan Menon**, Chairman and Managing Director, Thomas Cook India (TCI), is the perfect platform to discuss and deliberate on issues affecting the travel and tourism industry.



TT BUREAU

QWhat are your thoughts on the second edition of India Travel Summit?

We wanted to build a platform where stakeholders in the travel industry could come and use it to discuss various issues. We thought this space which existed in the market didn't get addressed. Thus, we

QWhat are the new developments taking place at Thomas Cook India Group and what are your plans for the future?

TCI started a journey four years ago when we became a holding company for Fairfax. We have since done five acquisitions, the latest being the acquisition of TATA Capital's two subsidiaries- TC

forex and TC travel. We are a holding company and wherever we see an opportunity, we will acquire companies as we go forward.

QHow have things changed for Thomas Cook India after the acquisition of Kuoni?

We took over Kuoni's India and Hong Kong op-

erations and early this year, we acquired their destination management businesses in 18 countries. As a policy, we never merge companies and retain existing managements, and we keep these companies as separate because we believe that managements are good and they are sustainable.

QWhat are your thoughts on tourism in and out of India currently?

Both inbound and outbound tourism in India have seen spectacular growth. Also, our airport infrastructure and the infrastructure within the country is improving. The income levels are growing, so that people can travel abroad. With all these things happen-

ing, I think this is the time that the industry is going to see a lot more growth. One of the key drivers of this growth is the e-visa that was instituted three years ago. It has evolved and we are seeing the benefits today with more tourists coming in the country. As the millennials become increasingly aspirational and inquisitive, we will see tourism only growing.



Madhavan Menon
Chairman and Managing Director
Thomas Cook India (TCI)

We went houseful before we even started the summit. Such a response reflects two things- acceptance that TCI is a large player in this space and that this as a platform where important issues are discussed

did it last year in Mumbai and this year, we have done it in Delhi. We hope that we will be able to do this as an annual event with a focus on travel-related issues. The theme of the second instalment of India Travel Summit is Challenges of New Age Travel. The focus is on outbound and inbound business, visa protocols as well as the new age technology and the way it was impacting business. Thus, we've chosen and curated subjects that are important to us.

QWhat has changed in the second version from what you did last year?

Firstly, the attendance has grown. We had a houseful, half-an-hour before we even started the summit. Such a response reflects two things—acceptance that TCI Group is a large player in this space and can be seen as a sponsor and creator of such incredible events. Secondly, people also see this as a platform where issues that challenge the industry are being discussed as well as new trends are being examined and analysed.



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Is India all set to play host to MICE?

The industry needs to look at why India hasn't been able to reverse the MICE traffic and bring in more and more events to India. Six stakeholders speak their mind on this issue and suggest ways to improve the same.



HAZEL JAIN

“MICE in India is going to be the next big thing as convention centres, exhibition venues and on-ground expos are generating a high degree of response. Currently, India is ready for MICE at select destinations only. However, for smaller groups of around 250-300, we have adequate facilities across the country to suffice the basic requirements. Of course, India lacks world-class facility in terms of space, project facilities, and logistics, etc. Only a few cities have noteworthy convention facilities like Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Greater Noida. A friendly tax structure is key to grow MICE.”



Sandeep Ramakrishnan
Director
Consumer Links Marketing

“India is most certainly MICE-ready but conditions do apply - as long as the MICE movement is not a large number of people, within some repetitive cities and in a handful of cities that are well connected by air. These are, however, limited and technological infrastructure is yet not state-of-the-art. All infrastructural upgrades require huge investments with payback periods ranging beyond a decade. Hence, corporate partnerships with government are the need of the hour. This along with some attractive incentives may help the next level of MICE infra boom.”



Birju Gariba
CEO and Executive Director
Platinum World Group

“Yes, India is definitely ready for MICE! Our excellent connectivity from major international hubs, presence of hotel brands and unparalleled hospitality makes us a good candidate for MICE. But our MICE infrastructure has a long way to go if we compare it with other contenders. India's location and connectivity with all major international hubs is our main strength. But lack of options for large venues. The government needs to create a MICE-specific campaign, ease permissions to make things easier for organisers and create convention venues which can host big events.”



Mukesh Makhijani
Director
Stimulus Hospitality



Mubashar Ahmed
Regional Category Manager
(Travel & Meetings Procurement), Capgemini India

“India is partially ready for MICE. We definitely see a large number of room nights in bigger cities to support MICE. However, larger convention centres and market maturity in usage and responsiveness on MICE tools for RFP evaluation needs improvement. The ministry and the government need to forge joint ventures with private investors to build large conventions and market India as a destination for MICE at global forums.”



Manish Raj
Board Member, Membership Committee, The Infrastructure, Facility, HR & Realty Association (INFHRA)

“India is certainly ready for MICE and some of the major cities have venues to meet the needs like Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Goa. During my interactions with organisers in other countries, one of the major concerns is the traffic and local infrastructure. The Ministry of Tourism needs to look at promoting these venues, especially some of the key cities at MICE forums. India needs to improve the infrastructure to give a better experience to delegates. We must involve industry leaders to promote India as a MICE destination.”



Rishabh Shah
Managing Partner
The Grand Vacationist

“India is MICE-ready in a few metros or boutique resorts in popular destinations like Kerala and Rajasthan. India has the hotel inventory to cater to MICE. However, we lack sound road infrastructure and connectivity in many places that can be considered exotic or bespoke beyond Rajasthan and Kerala. The Tourism Ministry along with MoEA and other relevant ministries should come together and look at promoting each state as a global MICE-friendly destination with respect to the facilities, beauty and cultural heritage the way Europeans market themselves, whilst also improving connectivity and road infrastructure.”

Knotty affair @Radisson Blu Udaipur

Radisson Blu Udaipur Hotel Palace and Resort expects to witness an approximately 15 per cent year-on-year revenue growth by the end of 2017.



TT BUREAU

An inventory of 245 rooms and suites, the largest in Udaipur, is also one of the USPs of the property, believes **Poonam Nair**, Director of Sales, Radisson Blu Udaipur Hotel, Palace and Resort. “Though the list of our USPs is huge, a few of them are our grand palatial structure, location, largest inventory in the city and room size, various indoor and outdoor banqueting spaces and

most importantly, our people,” she says.

Nair informs that in 2017, the hotel hosted 65 destination weddings and many MICE events which allowed the property to achieve newer heights of ARR and occupancy. She explains, “We recorded an overall occupancy of about 75 per cent at the property out of which 40 per cent was contributed by the weddings segment and approximately 15 per cent by the inbound guests. The major contributors for inbound travellers have been the UK, Italy and the Far East market among other markets. The other segment of guests at the hotel includes MICE, leisure and FIT and corporate FITs.”

She believes that MICE has been a big contributor and the demand is only increasing especially from markets like Gujarat, Mumbai, etc. The flight connectivity to Mumbai and Delhi has also been a blessing, opening more doors for business for the hotel. Nair adds,

“We offer a ballroom, meeting rooms and open spaces for the MICE segment. We can accommodate 600 pax in the closed spaces while 1000 pax can be accommodated in the open spaces for various MICE activities. We also offer the city's only all-day dining facility which can accommodate 200 pax.”

The hotel plans to focus more on developing its prime segment of destination weddings as apart from

contributing 40 per cent to the occupancy and revenue of the hotel, it also serves as a marketing platform to cater to the hotel's largest target group. Besides this, participation in various trade fairs, weddings shows and exhibitions keeps the management abreast of market trends. The hotel works hand in glove with its travel partners and has joined hands with a few big online partners to cope with the changing trends of travel shifting from offline to online. Nair further adds,



Poonam Nair
Director of Sales, Radisson Blu Udaipur

“We offer a good commission to our offline and online travel partners based on the value generated for the hotel.”

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The crowning glory for travel agents

► Contd. from page 3

“We are immensely proud of the team and the award itself is a great and resounding acknowledgment of our collective efforts. At the same time, the recognition is a motivation for us to pursue and reach new heights. We are committed to delivering to our clients a journey of a lifetime and we are going to aim to ensure we win many more awards in the future too. At LPTI, we have a proven track record and service delivery which has won us this award in the same category six times of which three were for consecutive years. We really appreciate that the Ministry recognised this remarkable achievement and inducted us into the Hall of Fame.”



Arjun Sharma
India Travel Award winner and
Chairman, Le Passage to India

“It feels good when hard work is recognised and I feel happier for my team whose efforts have made this achievement possible. This is the 10th National Tourism Award for the company and the fourth time we have been awarded the first prize. The reason for being awarded is the consistency of the company in providing the highest standards of service and venturing into the new areas to successfully showcase the incredible India experience to foreign tourists. Prestigious awards like this one put a seal of trust on the company which is important in the long run for its brand value and the morale of the team. The foreign tour operators from far and wide feel secure when dealing with an award-winning organisation.”



Harvinder Singh Duggal
MD, Minar Travels,
India Travel Award winner

“Gujarat Tourism has been undertaking several innovative initiatives to put Gujarat on the national and global tourist map. Every year, the tourism department organises a variety of fairs and festivals that showcase the beautiful mosaic of the state's culture, traditions, practices, cuisines, dressing styles, art and craft, etc. While the state constantly focused on new innovations, ideas and initiatives, the tourism department has also concentrated on the livelihood and skill development through sustainable tourism initiatives. The award symbolises its endeavours in promotion of sustainable development through tourism.”



Jenu Devan
Managing Director
Gujarat Tourism



B. Venkatesham
Secretary, Youth Advancement,
Tourism & Culture Department,
Government of Telangana

“For Telangana Tourism, it was a big win with four awards in different categories. I am extremely happy with the win and we're adopting a different direction in terms of development of tourism products. Everyone is following the beaten track, and we are going in a different direction, including having niche sector as well as festival of our own. We don't want to compete with other states, but we are planning to complement them, by working with them and offering extended stay for tourists visiting those destinations. Apart from that we will be focusing on Health Tourism as well.”

ing with them and offering extended stay for tourists visiting those destinations. Apart from that we will be focusing on Health Tourism as well.”



Hari Ranjan Rao
Secretary, Tourism, Madhya
Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation

“This year Madhya Pradesh got 10 awards including the Hall of Fame award as the Best State for Comprehensive Development of Tourism, which we have been winning for three years in a row. I am really delighted on this achievement and the entire credit for this goes to our team which has been working tirelessly to make Madhya Pradesh one of the best destinations in the country and we look forward to build upon this and keep getting awards like this. We are set to inaugurate the Jal Mahotsav in October which is going to be an 80-day affair this time. Also, we recently held a heritage run in Orchha and there will soon be a cycling expedition in Panchmari, called 'Tour de Satpura'.”



Kadakampally Surendran
Minister for Tourism
Government of Kerala

“Kerala Tourism was awarded a total of six National Tourism Awards including Hall of Fame Award for Most Innovative Use of Information Technology - Social Media / Mobile App and was also the second runner-up in the category for Best State for Comprehensive Development of Tourism. It gives us immense pleasure to be lauded with the prestigious National Tourism Awards in six different categories. Kerala Tourism has been focused on promoting the concept of 'Responsible Tourism' for protecting environment and conserving cultural heritage. And, receiving award for this significant initiative of the state emboldens the tourism department to keep up the positive momentum.”



Manish Saini
Director, Worldwide Rail Journeys,
India Travel Award winner

“I am delighted to have received national recognition after years of perseverance and dedication in the tourism industry. Within three years of the company's inception, we became the largest General Sales Agent (GSA) of leading luxury trains in India, overtaking all the established players in the tourism industry. I achieved this due to the goodwill I created among the trade partners through my ethical and honest dealings and generated foreign exchange in this segment. This award will inspire me to cross new milestones and at the same time, offer my trade partners another reason to repose their trust on me.”

“It gives us immense pleasure to be a recipient of the National Tourism Award for the fourth time. Receiving this prestigious award, of course, has its PR value in terms of new customers that we try to pitch to, but other than that, it is also a huge motivation for our team. Through relentless efforts, we have been achieving significant year-on-year growth, both in terms of passenger numbers and overall foreign exchange earnings and it is both these parameters that helped us achieve a virtual Six Sigma quality in regards to customer satisfaction and also the national award.”



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



Dhruv Shringi
Co-founder & CEO
Yatra.com


“We are honoured on being conferred with the tourism industry's highest accolade, the National Tourism Award. This is our third consecutive win in the Best Domestic Tour Operator (Rest of India) category in the 10 years of the National Tourism Awards' existence. Our continuous efforts at consumer engagement, overall user experience coupled with consistent delivery of services on ground have helped us achieve this milestone. This significant national recognition further inspires us to work tirelessly towards delivering best in class service to our customers.”



Sanjay Jain
Director
Special Holiday Travel

“To receive the award of the highest repute in our industry, that too for the second time gives us great pride and honour. We are humbled that the efforts we have been tirelessly putting in to provide a holistic experience coupled with complete satisfaction to all our associates and clients, have been given recognition by the President and the Minister of Tourism directly. We would like to credit this honour to our extremely dedicated team, the passion that drives us in our daily operations and collative support of all our longstanding associations and guests from across the world. We intend to grow from strength to strength, giving testimony to this award for the Best Inbound Tour Operator/Travel Agent.”


Contd. on page 10 ►




2018
Madrid,
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And the winning streak continues...

► Contd. from page 9



Sanjay Basu
Managing Director
Far Horizon Tours

“Naturally, it gives us great joy and pride to receive this commendation. It is a great recognition for the company's pioneering efforts which is bound to get noticed by the prospective markets, giving our experiential and soft adventure products, tours and activities greater publicity and growth potential. Through the last two decades, our company has invested over `50 crores in development of camps, eco-lodges and river cruise boats and ships in remote regions which has opened up a vast market that is seeing a strong growth both for us and the country's overall tourism.”



Sarab Jit Singh
India Travel Award winner and
MD, Travelite (India)

“It is an exhilarating feeling to witness Travelite (India) being conferred with the National Hall of Fame Tourism Award for consistently doing well in the inbound tourism sector. Ultimately, it is the hard work put in by the dedicated team working at Travelite (India) that is showing consistent results. The National Tourism Award certainly gives Travelite (India) recognition and places confidence in the foreign tour operators, who may be dealing with us for the first time, while, the existing tour operators feel better to be working with such reputed and recognised organisation.”



Aditya Loomba
Jt. Managing Director, ECOS
(India) Mobility & Hospitality

“We are thrilled to have won the first prize for Best Tourist Transport Operator at National Tourism Awards yet again. This is our third win in a row, so we have been able to manage a hat-trick at the National Awards! This win is purely because of our team's committed dedication to their work, combined with our clients' and partners' faith in ECOS (India) Mobility & Hospitality. And if the fact that winning a National Award wasn't enough, receiving it from the President of India also boosts the morale of the entire company and also validates our stakeholder's trust in the company.”

“It was a proud moment for us at the Alpcord network to be felicitated with a national award for the third time. The fact that it comes straight from the Government of India makes it all the more special. The recognition will definitely help us when we pitch for future conferences. Bringing with it a sense of responsibility towards the industry and duty to maintain and supersede our performance. As an award winning company, the onus will fall on us to create a different brand for ourselves and take things to a higher level of service.”



Chander Mansharamani
Managing Director, Alpcord
Network Travel & Conferences
Management Company

“ITC Maurya received National Tourism Award for Best Eco-Friendly Hotel recently. ITC Maurya is a manifestation of ITC Hotels' more than three-decade old sustainable development initiatives. It is an amalgamation of world class green best practices with contemporary design elements, providing the best in luxury, in the greenest possible manner with eco-embedded products, eco-easy services and eco-sensitised associates. A role model for the global hospitality industry, ITC Maurya, is an epitome of the Responsible Luxury ethos and is the World's largest LEED Platinum rated hotel in the EB Category (Existing Building).”



Zubin Songadwala
General Manager
ITC Maurya

“Samode Group of Hotels has been in the hospitality industry for the past 30 years and it is an honour to receive such a prestigious award on behalf of the organisation. The Samode Haveli is a 200-year-old heritage property and it has been beautifully restored according to modern standards. It is the people of Samode Haveli who make this experience special with their discreet and personalised service for the guests. Awards like the National Tourism Award motivate the team to do well and at the same time, they help us in striving harder to achieve the high standards and goals of the organisation.”



Malavika Kumar
Assistant Operations
Manager, Samode Hotels

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the hotel's complimentary in-room movie platform.

Bespoke amenities await guests of the *Meritus Club* - from the personalised service of Meritus Ambassadors, to all-day refreshments served in the exclusive environment of the *Meritus Club Lounge @ Top of the M*.

Mandarin Orchard Singapore offers over 30,000 square feet of versatile meeting and function spaces, backed by the dedicated assistance of Meeting and Event Specialists.

Starring in the hotel's vibrant lineup of restaurants is the all-time favourite *Chatterbox*, home of the legendary *Mandarin Chicken Rice*; *Triple Three*, a Japanese-inspired international

buffet restaurant; and *Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro*, the highest Michelin-rated Chinese restaurant in Singapore for two years running.

For some well-deserved retail therapy, right on the doorstep of Mandarin Orchard Singapore is *Mandarin Gallery*, an intimate shopping destination comprising high-end international fashion brands and boutique eateries.

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Visit www.meritus-hotels.com/orchard to plan your Meritus experience.



Ras Al Khaimah spellbinds travel trade

Ras Al Khaimah hosted the 3rd OTOAI Annual Convention where the travel trade discussed new opportunities and efficient use of technology in tourism to allow its members to implement it to grow business. Attendees at the convention share their experiences of the destination with TRAVTALK.



ANKITA SAXENA FROM RAS AL KHAIMAH

“The convention has been a congregation of quality travel agents and tour operators from across the country, discussing new opportunities for travel professionals. I feel that with changing times, the regular itineraries will not do well as today everything is available online; anyone and everyone can package their own tours. The key is to tap into newer, unexplored destinations, where the travel agent holds monopoly and also diversify the segment of travel. One has to create customised, niche itineraries and venture into segments like events and weddings where hand holding and physical presence of the agents is required to grow business.”



Shravan Bhalla
General Secretary
OTOAI, and CEO, High Flyers

“The biggest achievement of the convention has been the theme. The intention was to deliberate and educate the association members on the new opportunities available to them in the market and how they can make the most of it in order to grow their business. The convention was also instrumental in allowing the members to explore a new destination like Ras Al Khaimah, which they can now learn about and add to their list of products.”



Rajeev Sabharwal
CEO, Gaurav Travels
and Head-Finance and
Events, OTOAI

“We received a very positive feedback for the convention. We hosted participants from across India including the four major metros and Tier-II cities of Nagpur, Jamshedpur, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram. The reason we chose Ras Al Khaimah as our convention venue is because this is the third emirate which has high tourism potential apart from Dubai and Abu Dhabi, which are frequented by Indian travellers. The pristine coastline, high-value tourism products along with new upcoming projects, Ras Al Khaimah certainly offers good value to travellers. With the changing times, it is very important for the outbound tour operators to explore newer sectors and create opportunities which will be beneficial for business in the long run.”



Gurdeep Singh Gujral
Joint Secretary, OTOAI and
Co-chairman, OTOAI Convention



Sujit Nair
Founder and Group Managing
Director, Akquasun Group

“OTOAI conventions have always been very good. This is one of the serious conventions that takes place every year in the tourism and hospitality industry. This year, I feel every participant has got an update about the current trends in outbound market. The convention touched upon all the challenges faced by the travel agents from across the country and have also managed to deliberate on the solutions and way forward, which has been very helpful. In the times to come, mobile applications will be the future for travel.”



Anjum Lokhandwala
Founder and Director
Outbound Konnections

“The convention was very well organised as well as well attended. We had the opportunity to network with our existing partners and fellow travel agents but more importantly we were able to meet members of OTOAI from across the country. I loved the session on technology as it was an eye opener. I have learnt how to work with a database and make use of social media. We have been active on Facebook and Instagram for personal purposes but the sessions gave us information on how we can make use of these platforms for the benefit of our business and grow them further.”



Tejbir Singh Anand
Founder and Managing
Director, Holiday Moods
Adventures

“I felt that this year's convention has been unique not only because of the informative sessions conducted through the day, but also because of the destination. Earlier, when the convention was proposed, we were not convinced as to what Ras Al Khaimah can offer us. However, after visiting the destination and listening to the destination presentation at the convention, we are happily surprised. I feel if the right months are chosen to travel here, this destination will be a bestseller.”

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- Kintamani & Ubud Full Day Tour incl. Barong Dance

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- Night Safari ticket
- Kintamani & Ubud Full Day Tour incl. Barong Dance

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Departure Date 28th & 29th Dec 2017



Gursahib Singh Sethi
Chief Operating Officer,
Sahitji Travels and Tours,
India Travel Award winner

“The convention has been an informative platform to gather knowledge about the various trends in the industry. The highlight for me was the fact that the convention deliberated on solutions more than on problems. The most important part is that we could listen and discuss with senior players of the industry what can be done to overcome the challenges in business. The destination chosen for the convention has been excellent and will surely become more popular among Indian clientele.”



Mahendra Vakharia
Managing Director, Pathfinders
Holidays & Chairman-Western
Chapter, OTOAI

“The highlight of OTOAI convention is that it is focused, compact and we do not believe in numbers but in targeting the right audience. Even the sessions have to be interesting, appropriate and interactive for the participants. Presently, we are going through interesting times in the outbound tourism industry. With the new regime of GST, all of us will have to be ready to change our business model and adapt. I feel this will be a good change as it will create a level playing field for all and it will ensure a long run for those who want to do ethical business. Not only the Tier-II and Tier-III markets, I feel even the Tier-I market is not ready to accept technology or embrace it into the system. We should have adapted to technology a few years ago but we can still catch up as it is the only way forward.”



Adil Karim
Director, Creative
Tours and Travels (India)

“The convention was very informative and offered a good platform to meet and greet fellow travel industry peers and colleagues. Since the convention is organised in a different country every year, especially an emerging destination for outbound travel, we get to learn about a new destination which can be tapped for business. We could enlighten ourselves with the current industry trends and products as well.”



Vineet Gopal
Chairman-Northern
Chapter, OTOAI

“The convention was awe-inspiring! The key focus of the convention was to address the insecurities of the industry members regarding the future of travel business. Various speakers during the sessions highlighted the challenges especially after demonetisation and GST and also deliberated on the way forward and how to create newer avenues for business. Ras Al Khaimah is a new and unexplored emirate and given the fact that tourism between India and the UAE is thriving, RAK can easily be an added product to the itineraries.”

Contd. on page 14 ►



Non-sponsored tourist visas for Indian, Chinese & Russian citizens

We are pleased to notify you of the below terms and conditions issued by the authorities facilitating of non-sponsored tourist visa for the Citizens of (India/China/Russia) to enter the Sultanate of Oman:

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3. The visa applicant shall have a return ticket and a confirmed hotel reservation in order to be granted the visa
4. The visa can be availed by the spouse and/or children of the visa holder as long as they are accompanying him/her even if they do not hold a visa from these countries
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7. Any person who avails of such visa facilitation and breaches the regulations will be blacklisted and prohibited from entering the Sultanate of Oman and will be compelled to pay fines in accordance with the terms and provisions of the Foreigners' Residence Law and the Executive Regulations thereof



Explore Ras Al Khaimah with OTOAI

► Contd. from page 12



Sajjan K Gupta
CEO, Vayu Seva Tours and
Travels & Chairman-Eastern
Chapter, OTOAI

“The convention for me was an incredible experience. It is a known fact that the outbound travel market from India is booming and travellers are looking at new destinations for their holidays. In such a scenario, I feel Ras Al Khaimah will definitely change the landscape for Indians who are travelling abroad. It will soon become a must-do destination for the clients who visit Dubai.”



Dhruv Raj Gupta
Co-founder and CEO
Tripshelf

“This is my first time at OTOAI convention. For me, this is a concentrated platform where I can meet all my industry partners in one shot. It is a three-day affair which is very convenient. The accommodation and venue for the convention, Waldorf Astoria, has been phenomenal with its luxury offerings. The highlight of the convention for me is that it is a one-stop-shop where we get to network and interact with the industry. It definitely fulfilled my agenda and purpose of attending a convention.”

“In today's time, the world has become a much smaller place and with technology this phenomenon is taking place at lightning speed. In terms of creating opportunities with the fast paced times, I feel we are networking a lot more. Now there are many shows of similar nature like the convention where we get a chance to meet the right kind of people for business which is a major advantage.”



Manish Kriplani
CEO, Baywatch Travels and
Chairman-Southern Chapter,
OTOAI

“This is the first time I'm attending an OTOAI convention and it has been a learning experience. We had abundant interactive sessions and networking opportunities with fellow travel agents. It has been a very well-managed event and the location chosen for the convention—Ras Al Khaimah—has given us an opportunity to explore a new destination which can be easily combined with Dubai, a favourite with the Indian clientele for a weekend holiday. Also, the ease of visa from India will add to the popularity of this destination in the Indian market.”



Farida Attarwala
Director
Butterflyers Holidays

“Despite 20 years of experience in the travel industry, this is the first time I have travelled for a convention. The destination chosen is new and in its nascent stage. Thus, it is the right time to visit it and understand it before offering it to the clients. In three nights we could explore Ras Al Khaimah and absorb the essence and also look at it from various facets as clients, honeymooners, MICE, holidays, etc. apart from being travel agents. I could gather good product knowledge and the sessions and exchange of ideas was the need of the hour.”




Sangeeta Berera
Founder
World of Astral

“This year's convention has been very different from its last edition in Bali. I have been to the UAE multiple times but this is my first time to Ras Al Khaimah. Bali is a destination that we have been selling from Lucknow to the Uttar Pradesh market for a long time but Ras Al Khaimah has come up as a new, unexplored destination. Today, the clients demand off-beat locations for their holidays as they have already travelled to South East Asia and European countries and I feel Ras Al Khaimah can be that next spot. We could see that this destination serves as an apt location for Indian weddings, FIT travel as well as honeymooners.”



S. M. A. Sheeraz
Director
Sheeraz Tours



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GST deliberations power up conference

Over 300 UNIGLOBE travel professionals from across South Asia gathered at Imagica, Mumbai, to Feel the Power of valuable insights, networking and celebration of individual and collective achievements.



The recently concluded 12th Annual UNIGLOBE Regional Conference and Excellence Awards, was hosted at Imagica in Mumbai. Themed 'Feel the Power', the conference attracted over 300 UNIGLOBE travel professionals from South Asia. The conference saw two days of deliberations over GST and stimulating educational sessions on leadership, besides the unveiling of two ground-breaking technology solutions from UNIGLOBE.

The highlight of the conference was the launch of UKonnect, an end-to-end, networking and collaboration tool that brings over 1500 UNIGLOBE professionals on a single platform to exchange ideas, share knowledge and discuss the latest trends. Also, unveiled at the conference was an improved version of the company's flagship agent booking tool, Complete Access Online, and a preview of upcoming products, including

"The annual UNIGLOBE conference is a great platform to support inter-agency networking, professional development and to strengthen relationships with each other and with key suppliers of the South Asian region."

Raja Natesan
CEO

UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia)



the 'what' and 'how' of the developments on GST.

An interactive and thought-provoking session by **Raja Natesan**, CEO, UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia), shed light on how UNIGLOBE professionals can recognise new opportunities to turn them into stepping stones of success for clients. In other sessions, Raja, revealed what it takes to arrive at the most favourable outcome when faced with tough business dilemmas and perform the ultimate bal-

ancing act in acquiring power and learning how to use it more effectively as leaders.

"Our theme for this year, 'Feel the Power', was chosen to inspire UNIGLOBE travel professionals to feel the power to conquer industry challenges and find new ways of adding value to client relationships through transparency, new-age tools and better use of travel content to tailor options and experiences for travellers," says **Ritika Modi**, Regional President, UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia).

A part of this year's star attraction was the keynote session, where actor Rohit Roy let the attendees in on his 'mantra for success.' Over 40 suppliers from different categories including leisure, technology, insurance, banks, hotels, airlines and destination management companies came together for 'The Supplier Showcase' that served as a platform for participants to establish, renew and build successful partnerships with their preferred suppliers and gain a better understanding of their offerings.

"Individually it can be difficult to accomplish one's objectives, but together we can move mountains. The annual UNIGLOBE conference is a great platform to support inter-agency networking, professional development and to strengthen relationships with each other and with key suppliers of the South Asian region," says Natesan.

Top performing agencies were rewarded for achieving the organisation's highest standards of growth through.

"Our theme for this year, 'Feel the Power', was chosen to inspire UNIGLOBE travel professionals to feel the power to conquer industry challenges and find new ways of adding value to client relationships through transparency, new-age tools and better use of travel content."

Ritika Modi
Regional President, UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia)



Awards for top-level sales and revenue growth achievements were given to the owners of UNIGLOBE member agencies from across the South Asia region. The 12th Annual Excellence Awards felicitated top individual performers across 11 award categories. The awards included recognition for Counsellors, Managers, Sales, Accounts, Leisure and Facilitation personnel at various levels of performance assessment.

"As every year, it was great to bond, interact and

learn with our fellow UNIGLOBE family members around South Asia at the conference. The rides and experiences at Imagica Theme and Snow Parks, along with the 'Dress as a Toon' and 'Pirates' themed dinners on Days 1 and 2 of the conference, only added the much welcome fun element to the rendezvous," concludes **Ch. Uma**, President, UNIGLOBE Franchise Owners Association.

See pictures on page 24 ▶

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Exploring the hidden gems of N. France

Even as Northern France is catching up in popularity with Indian tourists, **Lucie Rousseau**, Business Manager India, Northern France Tourism, says they are working towards attracting MICE groups as well as FITs from India to the region.

 NISHA VERMA FROM FRANCE

Northern France Tourism along with Atout France—India recently organised a familiarisation trip to showcase the region's myriad offerings. "Northern France is not a famous touristic destination, but since we are at the crossroads from Paris to London, many tourists cross

well as FITs in India, because people who are well travelled are ready to explore a little more because right now India is still stuck to Paris and Nice. We did receive a few groups from India a couple of years back and had around 5000-6000 Indian arrivals, but that stopped and now we have more individual travellers. Currently, the number

of Indians visiting Northern France should be roughly between 500-1000. Our aim is not to just develop Chantilly and Paris, but also places like Bay of Somme, which is more niche and is ready to have new markets," she shares.

Rousseau is working in close proximity with the Indian travel fraternity as well.

"I try to go to India at least three times a year to meet the travel agents and to take part in some events. We also work closely with Atout France in India for promotions, campaigns, supplements that showcase our destination. We also invite agents to explore the region. The recent Bollywood film 'Befikre' was shot in the region last year, and

we believe that cinema is a great medium to attract Indians to the destination," adds Rousseau.

Chantilly has been a popular destination for groups and also had a huge Indian wedding recently. "I would like to recommend MICE groups to come for a day trip to Chantilly and have lunch

here, visit the castle and indulge in a few team building activities. We try and do personalised meals as well. The biggest USP for Chantilly is that it's only 30 minutes from CDG airport in Paris and can become the last stop for people visiting France, after which they can directly fly back to India."




Lucie Rousseau
Business Manager India
Northern France Tourism

We want to develop the Indian market because it is an emerging market and there are more Indians travelling out of India. With 5 lakh tourists coming to France every year, we want to capture a chunk of that

our region. Thus, it's easy for them to stop on the way and explore beauties like Chantilly, for example. As the regional tourism board, we have a strategy to access emerging markets and hence we started with China five years ago and now we have 25,000 Chinese coming every year in the region. We want to develop the Indian market because it is an emerging market and there are more Indians travelling out of India. With 5 lakh tourists coming to France every year, we want to capture a chunk of that number for this region as well," says Lucie Rousseau.

Apart from targeting the Indian market, Rousseau is also working closely with the local tourism stakeholders, so that they boost their business and make it easy for them to manage Indian clients, as she thinks it's a different market. "From China we have a lot of groups, but from India we get a lot of FIT business, which does not exist with the Chinese so far. Hence, we are trying to develop both groups as



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Alitalia returns on Delhi-Rome route from Oct 30

■ Alitalia is all set to return to India after it stopped operating into the country in 2008. The Italian airline will start a new direct flight between Delhi and Rome from October 30, 2017. The new daily New Delhi-Rome service will operate for the whole winter season until March 24, 2018. The new connection was launched to meet the increasing demand for flights between the two countries. Italy, is the second European country, after Great Britain, for arrivals from India. The new connection would be Alitalia's second new intercontinental destination of 2017, after Male, Maldives (from October 31), and the extension of direct flights to Los Angeles, USA, for the upcoming winter season.

The flight will be on Airbus A330, which is equipped with exclusive Made in Italy amenities. Business Class guests can relax in luxurious Italian brand Poltrona Frau leather seats that fully recline to a comfortable flatbed position, and enjoy award-winning onboard dining featuring the best of Italian regional food and wine. All classes feature newly renovated cabins and include Wi-Fi connec-

tivity for phone calls, internet and e-mail.

Passengers arriving at Rome Fiumicino airport from New Delhi will get easy connections to 39 cities in Italy, Europe, North Africa and the Americas served by Alitalia including cultural capitals (such as Florence, Pisa, Venice, Paris) and many more (such as four US destinations, New York, Boston, Los Angeles and Miami, as well as Havana). Departures from New Delhi operate every day at 4.40 am, and arrive in Rome at 9.00 am local time. Guests arriving at Rome Fiumicino airport from New Delhi with connections to other cities will have a Transit Team to assist them and ensure they reach their next departure gate on time. Departures from Rome Fiumicino operate every day at 2.40 pm local time, and arrive in New Delhi at 2.40 am local time the next day. This schedule is ideal for Alitalia passengers to connect to many other cities across India, such as Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Jaipur and Bangalore thanks to special agreements between Alitalia and Jet Airways, as well as with other major Indian airlines.

SriLankan to up frequencies

Owing to increase in demand, SriLankan Airlines is all set to increase its frequencies to Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad, shares **Dimuthu Tennakoon**, Head-Worldwide Sales & Distribution, SriLankan Airlines.



TT BUREAU

With the recent launch of services to three new destinations, SriLankan Airlines is expanding its reach in India making itself the biggest foreign airline from the country. **Dimuthu Tennakoon**, says, "India has been a vital route in our network from the early days. Along the years, SriLankan Airlines has established a strong market presence and lasting relationship with the travel partners and industry stakeholders of India. SriLankan Airlines hold the widest coverage in India, and India is Sri Lanka's number one source of inbound tourist traffic. Today, we directly operate to 14 Indian destinations with a total of 126 flights a week. The three new destinations introduced in 2017, Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad and Coimbatore commenced operations with four frequencies a week, and made us the foreign carrier that operates out of the most number of cities in India. However, due to



Dimuthu Tennakoon
Head-Worldwide Sales & Distribution
SriLankan Airlines

SriLankan Airlines holds the widest coverage in India, and India is Sri Lanka's number one source of inbound tourist traffic

the passenger demand and favourable business associations, the Hyderabad frequency will be increased up to five flights per week from November 2017. India is a strong contributor to our network revenue with a current

contribution of about 15-20 per cent. Hence, our Indian routes are operated with both A330 and A320 aircraft in accordance with the passenger demand and favourable operating conditions."

Apart from increasing frequencies to Hyderabad, the airline is also going to expand its network in Delhi and Mumbai. "SriLankan Airlines Commercial Planning is constantly studying the dynamic market conditions and passenger demand fluctuations to capture and implement potentially lucrative Indian routes, since SriLankan holds the largest market share. However, aligning with our corporate objective of being the most preferred Airline in Asia, our pivotal objective is to optimise the current route network and attain the leadership as a regional carrier. We increased the Delhi-Northern India flight frequency to 11 flights a week from daily frequencies in July 2017. Subsequently, due to the high market demand we

will further increase the Delhi frequencies to 13 flights per week this December and Mumbai frequencies to 14 per week in November 2017," informs Tennakoon.

Currently, in terms of global operations, SriLankan Airlines directly operates to 40 destinations in 21 countries serving key capital cities in Europe, the Middle-East, the Far-East and the Indian subcontinent. However, there is global expansion on cards as well. "Further, through code-share operations, passengers have access to 64 additional destinations in 27 countries. Being the flagship carrier of Sri Lanka, SriLankan Airlines has augmented the operating structure in order to best serve the passenger demand in our key destinations. SriLankan Airlines will commence Melbourne operations on October 29, 2017. Our key focus is to develop strong connections for South Asian, Middle Eastern and European passengers into Australasian region," he adds.

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Air Arabia promotes Baku flight

Air Arabia recently conducted a three-city roadshow in Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad to promote new flight services from Sharjah to Baku with connections from India.



TT BUREAU

Air Arabia hosted a three-city roadshow starting with Mumbai on September 18, Delhi on September 19 and concluded in Ahmedabad on September 20. A delegation of four DMCs and three hotels from Baku, Azerbaijan, attended the roadshow where they interacted with the Indian travel trade.



Sachin Nene
Regional General Manager- India
Air Arabia

Next year, we will be approaching Azerbaijan Tourism Authority along with the Ambassador of Azerbaijan and plan to conduct a six-city roadshow covering the major cities of India

The roadshow, a closed door event organised by Air Arabia, recorded at least 40 travel agents in attendance in each city. Air Arabia launched their flight from Sharjah to Baku, Azerbaijan, on March 18, 2017, with connections to Sharjah from 13 cities in India.

During April-August this year, Air Arabia carried 850 passengers to Baku, Azerbaijan. Speaking on the sidelines of the roadshow, Sachin Nene, Regional General Manager- India, Air Arabia, said, "The roadshow was very well received and we had a healthy gathering of travel agents in all the three cities. Next year we plan to do more roadshow and increase traffic between India and Azerbaijan. We will be approaching Azerbaijan Tourism Authority along with the Ambassador of Azerbaijan and plan to conduct a six-city roadshow covering the major cities of India." Apart from Air Arabia the delegation present

Fiji Airways big on India market

With a 19 per cent increase in air traffic from India in 2015-16, Fiji Airways is planning to appoint a full-time dedicated Country Sales Manager.



SHAHZAD BAGWAN

With the recent codeshare with Jet Airways running successfully, Fiji Airways is looking to expand its network in India. The airline has announced that it will be appointing a Country Sales Manager for the India market. It is also looking to expand its GSA network presence in India. Speaking on its plans to extend the codeshare to more cities, Marc S. Cavaliere, Chief Marketing Officer, Fiji Airways,

commented, "Currently, we look to offer the best connectivity from Singapore or Hong Kong and that is where our limitations are right now. We certainly look at further working with Jet Airways as far as making connections over any of these cities to connect to Singapore or Hong Kong. However, the limitations are set by exactly where the flights connect at."

Fiji Airways recorded a 19 per cent growth in air traf-

fic from 2015-16 and looks to maintain the same growth trajectory with another 20 per cent growth this year. Speaking on the new appointment, he added, "As a sign of our commitment to the India market, we will soon be announcing a full-time Country Sales Manager based in Mumbai. He will not only be working with the travel trade, tour operators and online travel agents but also as tri partner with Tourism Fiji. We will be doing



Marc S. Cavaliere
Chief Marketing Officer, Fiji Airways

more of marketing campaigns jointly with Tourism Fiji."

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'Tech' all the way to WTM

This year, WTM London and Digital Tourism Think Tank (DTTT) will explore a key technology topic, 'How to Build a Dream Content Team' during the show slated from November 6-8.



TT BUREAU

In the last 18 months, many leading destinations and travel players have quickly changed their approach to prioritise strong content marketing so as to gain traction online and engage effectively with potential visitors. **Nick Hall**, Founder, DTTT, will moderate the session and look to understand how teams are reinventing themselves to be more content ready and how they're pulling together creative talent, putting an emphasis on editorial workflow to be able to engage wherever and whenever it's relevant to do so.

Hall explains, "We'll look at what skills are needed, how long it's likely to take, what should and shouldn't be considered in this journey and how a great content team should function on a day-to-day basis." WTM Portfolio Conference and Seminar Manager, **Charlotte Sutton** said, "The Digital Tourism Think Tank sessions

at WTM have always been an extremely popular choice for delegates, with the hottest trends and leading speakers all sharing their knowledge and best practice." DTTT will also be running a session on 'The Era of Intelligent Tech' in Travel during WTM.

Responsible Tourism leaders

For the first time in 2017, WTM will also host the Responsible Tourism Awards, taking over from responsible-



travel.com after 13 successful years. Kumarakom and Village Ways from India are among the 12 finalists announced for these awards. This year, in the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the Awards have focused on the UN Sustainable Development Goals reflecting

the Awards' position as the leading scheme for responsible tourism in the world. WTM London, Senior Exhibition Director, and fellow judge **Simon Press** said, "Once again the World Responsible Tourism Awards will be a key part of the opening of World Responsible Tourism Day at WTM London. The stories of the winners and their achievements act as a benchmark and inspiration for what the global travel and tourism industry can achieve in responsible tourism practice."

Be Responsible

Kumarakom and Village Ways from India are among the 12 finalists announced for the Responsible Tourism Awards to be hosted by WTM

DTTT will be running a session on 'The Era of Intelligent Tech in Travel' during WTM

Spain eyes Tier-II cities

Spain recorded over 50 per cent growth in Indian arrivals in 2017. The board organised a 3-city roadshow in Delhi, Ahmedabad and Chennai from October 4-6, to interact with travel agents.



TT BUREAU

In 2017, up until August, Spain recorded as many as 86,000 Indian tourists, registering an approximate growth of about 50 per cent over the same period in 2016, informed **Ignacio Ducasse Gutierrez**, Director, Tourism Office of Spain – Mumbai, during the Spanish Travel Show. "We have seen a huge increase in the number of Indian tourists travelling to Spain in 2017 and we hope to increase this number further. Since our roadshows are an annual affair, we try to cover different cities every year. Next year, we will reach out to other cities like Nagpur and Jaipur. Though our main markets are Delhi and Mumbai, I feel other markets also contribute to the numbers," said Gutierrez.

Madrid and Barcelona remain the most popular cities visited by Indians. Spain is trying to promote other cities and region like Malaga, Granada, Cordoba, Valencia, Andalusia, etc. Family travel is the dominant segment of travel



Ignacio Ducasse Gutierrez
Director, Tourism Office of Spain, Mumbai

to Spain from India with MICE travel catching up gradually. Gutierrez points out, "MICE travel contributes almost 30 per cent of the total number of Indian guests to Spain. We also receive small groups of friends, youngsters looking for party and nightlife. We are exploring other segments of travel like solo women travel and honeymooners. The average length of stay of Indians in Spain is 7-8 nights with an average spend of €2400 per person per trip. We are very happy that Spain is increasingly gaining as a mono-destination and we are encouraging re-

peat visitors to experience the destination in its full spirit."

At present, 1000 travel agents and tour operators are enrolled under Spain Experts 360, the specialist programme of Spain. An updated version of the programme was launched in October which would accredit agents as Spain Experts if they qualified 7 out of 9 modules. Spain is also exploring projects for film tourism after the success of 'Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara'. "A major part of Season 6 and 7 of Game of Thrones has been shot in Spain and we feel this has also had a positive impact on the number of Indian arrivals to the destination."

According to Gutierrez, the only direct flight from India to Spain operated by Air India from Delhi to Madrid has been a healthy route. "However, Emirates contributes the largest share of Indian tourists into Spain accompanied by other airlines like Lufthansa, Qatar Airways and Turkish Airlines," he says.



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Dubai Parks & Resorts smile on agents

The Nijhawan Group, which represents Dubai Parks & Resorts in India, organised a dinner and roadshow to thank their travel partners in Delhi on behalf of the latest theme park and attraction in Dubai. **Ankush Nijhawan**, MD, Nijhawan Group, welcomed the agents, while **Lisa Goswell**, Director-International Market Development, Dubai Parks and Resorts, who came for the event, gave a brief presentation for those in attendance and interacted with everyone as they enjoyed the cocktails and sumptuous food.



REGISTER FOR WTM LONDON 2017

WTM London, the leading global event for the travel industry, has opened registration to WTM 2017.

ENIT – The Italian National Tourist Board is the Premier Partner for WTM London, which takes place between Monday 6 – Wednesday 8 November.

WTM London 2017 is poised to be the most successful yet. The leading global event for the travel industry will again be a three-day event following the overwhelming success of last year's WTM London. WTM London 2016 was three days for the first time and attracted a record 51,500 attendance, including an all-time high of buyers (9,900). A record £2.8 billion of business will be conducted due to last year's event.

It is expected WTM London 2017 will be the catalyst for an even greater amount of business, as an extra speed networking event has been added to the second day of the event, meaning all three days will host a speed networking event.

Monday 6 November will see 200 buyers seated based on the geography they purchase.

Tuesday 7 November will see the buyers seated by sector, including responsible tourism, gastronomy, adventure tourism and weddings and honeymoons.

Wednesday 8 November will see the re-named Digital Influencers' Speed Networking (formerly called Bloggers' Speed Networking) take place. The event, sponsored by Whalar, has been renamed to reflect the increase in vloggers and instagrammers attending WTM London.

Speaker already confirmed include Travelocity founder Terry Jones. Jones helped launch Travelocity and turned Kayak into a \$1.8 billion company.

The WTM Inspire Theatre – a 300-seater amphitheatre – returns to the exhibition floor following last year's successful introduction.

Around 80 conference seminars will take place throughout the three days covering all the key sectors including aviation, hotels, gastronomy, wedding and honeymoon, responsible tourism, blogging, social media and travel technology.

Monday 6 November will remain an

exhibitor invite-only day, allowing exhibitors to conduct business meetings with key suppliers.

Tuesday 7 November is the new day for the UNWTO & WTM Ministers' Summit.

Wednesday 8 November is the new day for World Responsible Tourism Day, keeping sustainability at the heart of the event. WTM London 2017 will conclude with the WTM Festivals, which will see a number of exhibitors hosting parties showcasing their culture, music and cuisine.

WTM London, Senior Director, Simon Press said: "WTM London continues to improve every year, with 2017 poised to be the most successful yet."

"With 5,000 exhibitors from 182 countries and regions conducting business deals with almost 10,000 buyers from the WTM Buyers' Club, we expect business deals to reach £3 billion."

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A Spanish brand and a family-run business, Meliá Hotels International is represented by Outbound Marketing in India. By 2020, Meliá plans to have about 30 hotels in South East Asia.



TT BUREAU

The Hotels' USP is the brand in itself, believes **Tonia Sehan**, Director of Sales, Meliá Hotels International. "The hospitality and service which we provide is unique. We also have all-inclusive resorts. Being in existence for over 60 years, we have 375 hotels in 42 countries. By 2020, Meliá will have about 30 hotels in South East Asia. We do not have any plans to open a hotel in India as yet," says Sehan.



Tonia Sehan
Director of Sales
Meliá Hotels International

Indian guests contribute 5 per cent of the total guests across the world for Meliá Hotels International and the company is working hard to increase this percentage share

Meliá Hotels International has seven brands under its portfolio ranging from luxury hotels to budget ones. "When we started the representation for Meliá in India, the brand was not known in the market. However, in two years' time, we have started witnessing a good response. In terms of occupancy, we have grown by 30 per cent in 2017 over 2016," informs Sehan.

Indian guests contribute five per cent of the total guests across the world for Meliá Hotels International and the company is working hard to increase this percentage share. The company participates in roadshows and other travel trade shows to interact with travel agents and tour operators across the country. The company also conducts its own roadshows to inform the trade about various products and deals for the India market. Sehan elaborates, "Many times we are frustrated as we are unable to offer availability of dates

or the rates as desired by the partners and this leads to loss of business. We target all segments of travellers. We have seen Indian guests from all four metros-Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata along with other Tier-II cities."

The company offers an online portal Meliá Pro for the travel agents and tour operators. Sehan feels that this is

a beneficial tool for the trade as it gives discounts and loyalty membership points to the agents. "I think we are the only ones who offer membership points to customers as well as the travel agents, which is a double dip. We have also had two Indian weddings in our hotels, Ibiza and Bali and have a few projects under consideration," adds Sehan.

Fairfield by Marriott, Vizag, opens doors

■ Marriott International has announced the opening of Fairfield by Marriott, Visakhapatnam. The 121-room Fairfield by Marriott Visakhapatnam offers a Business Centre and meeting rooms equipped with audio-visual facilities. All public areas and guest rooms have high-speed Wi-Fi. It is located in the heart of Visakhapatnam city and about 2 km from the Visakhapatnam International Airport.

It is the latest addition to the brand's footprint in South Asia with four hotels in India currently open, including Fairfield by Marriott Bengaluru Rajajinagar,

Fairfield by Marriott Bengaluru Outer Ring Road, Fairfield by Marriott Lucknow and Fairfield by Marriott Belagavi. **Neeraj Govil**, Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International Inc, says, "Recognised as one of the 'smart cities' in India, Visakhapatnam holds tremendous potential for high economic growth, infrastructure development and further evolution of the services sector, we are excited to open our 5th Fairfield by Marriott in India. With our hospitality expertise, in conjunction with our owners **K. Subba Raju**, CMD, KSR Developers, we are confident in delivering a seamless hotel experience at great value."

perience at great value."

"Adorning a contemporary style and pastel hues, Fairfield by Marriott Visakhapatnam is the newest addition to the port city of Andhra Pradesh. The property and staff aim to provide a comfortable and convenient stay to both business and leisure travellers," said **Sudhanshu Singh**, General Manager, Fairfield by Marriott Visakhapatnam. "There is a lot of excitement and enthusiasm as we launch the Fairfield by Marriott brand in Visakhapatnam. As a Marriott International brand we strive to set the standards of delivering a great experience through consistent service."

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President honours tourism industry

The National Tourism Awards 2015-16 acknowledged the achievers in the travel and tourism industry at a ceremony in Vigyan Bhawan on September 27, 2017. President of India **Ram Nath Kovind** alongside **K.J. Alphons**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism, and Tourism Secretary **Rashmi Verma** presented the award. The President also launched three big initiatives of MOT, namely Incredible India 2.0 Campaign, Adopt a Heritage project and the new Incredible India website.



ITB Asia to focus on future of travel

Having cemented its status as 'Asia's Leading Travel Trade Show', the 10th ITB Asia 2017 will focus on artificial intelligence and OTAs as well as dedicated days for corporate and MICE participants.



TT BUREAU

ITB Asia 2017 is expected to top the success of last year's ITB Asia, where almost 900 buyers attended the show, leading to a 1:1 ratio between exhibitors and buyers. Whilst over 50 per cent of buyers signed deals with exhibitors after the event, 43 per cent of the attending buyers had purchasing power of \$500K – \$1m. Also, 85.7 per cent of the attending buyers were direct decision makers in ITB Asia 2016.



Katrina Leung
Executive Director, Messe Berlin
(Singapore), the organiser of ITB Asia

We believe everyone attending this year's show will enjoy and benefit from engaging with the influential and exciting speakers on the most current and pressing topics in the industry

In 2017, under the conference theme 'The Future of Travel', ITB Asia will showcase an extensive programme of key presentations and discussions by industry heavyweights from the travel and tourism sector which would include global brand names as well as promising travel start-ups. "We are proud to have put together such a rich and diverse conference programme, which is only possible with the continued support from the global travel industry. This is testament to the show's expanding role as an important platform to bring all the different stakeholders in the travel and tourism sector together. We believe everyone attending this year's show will enjoy and benefit from engaging with the influential and exciting speakers on the most current and pressing topics in the industry," said Katrina Leung, Executive Director, Messe Berlin (Singapore), the organiser of ITB Asia.

Artificial Intelligence and how Online Travel Agents (OTAs) are transforming travel through technology, particularly in Korea, Japan and India will be the focus of ITB Asia 2017. This year, the show will feature its first cruise panel. The line-up of panellists would include companies such as SkySea Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, Princess Cruis-

es, Carnival Asia and Royal Caribbean Cruises who will discuss the rise of cruise in Asia Pacific and the growing market and opportunities. ITB Asia will also for the first time, launch an innovation travel tech track hosted by Israeli start-up InnoVel that will connect travel companies with cutting-edge start-ups. The cross haring is designed to ad-

dress concrete pains in areas such as revenue management, customer engagement, online marketing and more. To reflect the strong support for Corporate and MICE participants at ITB Asia, the show will see its first-ever Corporate Day on October 26. Following the success and launch in 2016, MICE Day will return for the second edition in 2017 on October 25.

Lemon Tree Hotels expands presence in Patna and Alwar

■ Lemon Tree Hotels announced the opening of its two hotels, Lemon Tree Premier, Patna and Lemon Tree Hotel, Alwar. Signalling the group's focus on Bihar, **Rattan Keswani**, Deputy Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels and Director, Carnation Hotels, said, "We are delighted to bring the Lemon Tree brand to Patna and Alwar. These hotels are a first for us and present an exciting branded alternative to the city residents as well as our existing customer base. Both cities imbibe a rich cultural heritage and attract busi-

ness and leisure travelers alike." Together with 105 rooms and suites, a 24x7 multi-cuisine coffee shop, a fully equipped gym, a rooftop swimming pool and a soon-to-open Indian restaurant, the hotel also offers 20,000 sq. ft. of banquet and meeting spaces, an exquisite board room and a business centre. Lemon Tree Hotel, Alwar is located close to the industrial belts of Bhiwadi and Alwar. It has 40 rooms and suites. With the opening of these new properties, Lemon Tree Hotels now owns and operates 42 hotels in 26 cities with 4434 rooms.



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Big ticket winners stand tall



Aviation Academy gets a new campus

In a bid to offer a wholesome training facility for the aviation industry, IAA's new campus was inaugurated in Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, recently by **P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju**, Union Minister for Civil Aviation.



NISHA VERMA

Union civil aviation minister **P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju** inaugurated a new campus of Indian Aviation Institute (IAA) in New Delhi's Vasant Kunj area. Also present at the event was **R. N. Choubey**, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA); **Dr. Guruprasad Mohapatra**, Chairman, Airports Authority of India (AAI) and NIAMAR Society and **Kumar Rajesh Chandra**, Director General, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS). The academy is a joint venture by BCAS,

problem creators. In order for the research to be done, it has to be translated into actionable points and given out in time so that the security can adhere to it. The same thing is needed for ensuring safety in this sector. Also for keeping airports modern and infrastructure going, we need continuous updation. For research regarding all of this, training and this kind of facility is required."

Congratulating the academy, Choubey said, "I compliment the wisdom and the foresight of the three wings of Civil Aviation—IAA, DGCA and BCAS—who thought and conceptualised this particular initiative. The kind of growth that our aviation sector is undergoing—20 per cent plus every year—it means we need 20 per cent more manpower every year. Now that's a huge skilling

demand which is there and is still unmet. And I hope this institution will provide that. I would urge to the Director of this academy to constantly interact with the various sectors of civil aviation and find out what it is that they need and what kind of skill manpower development they have."

The academy runs regular training programmes in

areas of Airport Operations and Aviation Safety, Airport Engineering and Planning, Air Cargo Management, Environmental concerns in Aviation, Regulatory trainings through DGCA, Security Trainings through BCAS, Information Technology, Project Management, Material Management, Airport Commercials, Finance and Human Resource Management. In addition, IAA

offers internationally recognised aviation accredited programmes to participants from across the globe in cooperation with partners like International Civil Aviation Organisation, IATA and Airports Council International. IAA acquired the full membership of ICAO TRAINAIR PLUS programme in 2016 and has developed and validated two Standard Training Packages (STPs).



P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju
Union Minister
for Civil Aviation

AAI and Directorate General of Civil Aviation. The new campus is spread over 5.33 acres with state-of-the-art green infrastructure and facilities. Raju congratulated the faculty for the new campus and informed that around 110 crore rupees have been invested in the facility, taking around three years to put it up. "Now, we expect it to function. Equal amount of money has been put through BICAS, DGCA and AAI each. I hope the new institution would pick up the old one," he said.

Dr. Guruprasad Mohapatra, Chairman, Airports Authority of India and NIAMAR Society, while addressing the gathering, informed that Indian Aviation Academy was a premier training institute of Airports Authority of India, Directorate General of Civil Aviation and Bureau of Civil Aviation. Prior to IAA, the institute was known as the National Institute of Aviation Management and Research (NIAMAR) and has been a premier institute involved in imparting quality training in aviation sector since 1988.

He added that civil aviation industry required constant upgradation in every regard. "BCAS is a security architecture, and any incident or happening in the world needs to be researched here and they have to be one step ahead of the

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Mahan Air's 15 years in India

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Setbacks of East India tourism

Tourism and hospitality industry in East India has thrived significantly over the past few years but the region still suffers from poor air connectivity and shortage of rooms which is dampening the growth of this industry. East India Travel Award winners discuss challenges and way forward to boost tourism.



ANKITA SAXENA

► Best Destination Management Company-Domestic-Mountain Edge Tours and Holidays

High airfare dampens tourism to Andaman

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, though a part of the tourism map under East India are completely cut-off to explore a different side of India, points out **Prakash Kumar**, Director, Mountain Edge Tours and Holidays. "Though development of tourism has been good on the Islands in terms of hotels, cruises and transport facilities, the region suffers majorly due to high airfares. The government has to look into the cost of flights to Andamans as the current tariffs are unjustified and discourage both domestic and international tourist arrivals." He further laments that under GST regime, the already expensive tourism products have become even more costly. "There are no advantages to the Union Territories under GST as in effect, taxes have only increased. The government has to work on controlling the prices of tourism products in order to grow tourism to this destination."



► Best Adventure Destination-South African Tourism

South Africa as popular choice for East Indians

Kolkata has been one of the most rapidly growing source markets driving tourist traffic to South Africa, informs **Hanneli Slabber**, India Country Manager, South African Tourism. Indian leisure visitors to South Africa surged 21.7 per cent during 2016 with 95,377 Indian visitors. Slabber points out that since Indians are last minute bookers, they tend to face a lack of availability and seasonally high rates for hotel rooms in top tourist areas. To counter this, SA has made efforts to drive awareness around its picturesque smaller towns that are relatively unexplored and continue to have hotel rooms during the peak season. "We've made great strides in positioning ourselves as a world-class adventure and honeymoon destination," she adds.



► Best Debut Hotel-Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport

Assam takes lead in the East

The northeastern region of India has immense resource potential to develop tourism, feels **Debashis Brahma**, Director-Sales and Marketing, Holiday Inn, Kolkata Airport. "Assam is the leading state in terms of overall inflow of tourists, followed by Arunachal Pradesh. While Sikkim has proved to be a preferred destination among foreign tourists, West Bengal and Odisha have also become key tourist attractions for both domestic and international travellers," says Brahma. He further elaborates that MOT is positioning India in the tourism generating markets as a preferred destination through an integrated marketing and promotional strategy and a synergised campaign in association with the travel trade, state governments and Indian Missions abroad. Brahma adds, "The cumulative efforts of the centre and state will effectively help boost tourism in East India."



► Best Tour Operator-Eastern Meadows Tours

Political turmoil hampering tourism in the East

Tourism has been one of the pioneer industries in eastern India and also remains one of the major forms of livelihood for people. In the last few years, the number of tourists to this region has increased, thus registering positive growth, feels **Sandipan Ghosh**, Chief Executive Officer, Eastern Meadows Tours. Identifying the challenges in the industry in the East, Ghosh says, "One of the major problems we face is the political turmoil that engulfs this region every 2-3 years which needs to settle down for tourists to come here and feel safe. The situation can get really tense when the agitation, especially at Darjeeling takes place. That has been a major stumbling block. There are other minor issues that need to be settled like basic infrastructure in terms of roads and roadside amenities for tourists so as to make the destination more tourist friendly."



► Best Foreign Exchange Company-CentrumDirect

East India - a price sensitive market

The eastern region including the metropolis of Kolkata is a price sensitive market as far as the leisure travel market is concerned and hence, value for money deals and discount offers on holiday packages is a big draw among travellers, explains **Debopam Ghosh**, Regional Head - East, CentrumDirect. He says, "The lack of connectivity of flights from Kolkata and visa processing which takes place in Delhi and/or Mumbai results in travellers making travel plans well in advance. Also, over the recent years, domestic tourism boards have upped the ante in terms of promotion to attract foreign visitors to their respective states. Some of the prominent tourism boards who stand out are Rajasthan, Kerala and Gujarat. While West Bengal has recently started promotions, there is a lot of scope for 360 degree marketing to attract both foreign and domestic travellers to the state."



► Best Luxury Hotel-JW Marriott

Low room rate parameters plague hotels

Though the hospitality industry has fared very well in East India, the region faces constraints in terms of rates for various hotels, informs **Ipsita Ganguli**, Director of Sales & Marketing, JW Marriott Kolkata. She says, "Kolkata as a city falls under a specific reach and thus, there are constraints in terms of rates that can be offered by hotels. Even though the luxury segment commands a specific range of rates, it is a challenge to offer that in the East. Additionally, we aren't a corporate centric city, so our hotel is heavily dependent on MICE, events and weddings." Ganguli feels that connectivity, both internationally and domestically is a big issue in the East. "We have more flights for the Middle East than to the West. Domestically too, there are lesser flights for Kolkata as compared to Delhi and Mumbai. West Bengal is being projected as a great MICE destination and inventory is also being expanded. We need the industry to expand and connectivity needs to be increased to grow tourism in the region," adds Ganguli.



The Residence expands portfolio

The Cenizaro group will make its first foray into Indonesia with a beautiful new opening in Bintan in February next year. It will offer guests a real flavour of Indonesia in a luxurious setting.



TT BUREAU

Having established successful properties in the Indian Ocean and North Africa, 2018 will see the Cenizaro group make its first foray into Indonesia with a new opening in Bintan. Located on the east coast of Bintan Island, a short boat-ride from Singapore, The Residence Bintan will open in February 2018. It will be set amongst tropical greenery and breathtaking views of the South China Sea. The hotel will be the fifth resort by The Residence by Cenizaro brand – joining properties in the Maldives, Mauritius, Zanzibar and Tunisia.

The 127-villa property has been built in harmony with the natural landscape, blending seamlessly into the tropical surroundings and incorporating local materials throughout. All villas and terraces are spread along the coastline. Guests can choose from Beachfront Villas, each with their own pool and direct beach access. The Estate Villas are fringed by partial sea views and coconut palms. The property will also have the Vista and Garden Terraces, which is ideal for families with interconnecting rooms and open-plan layout.

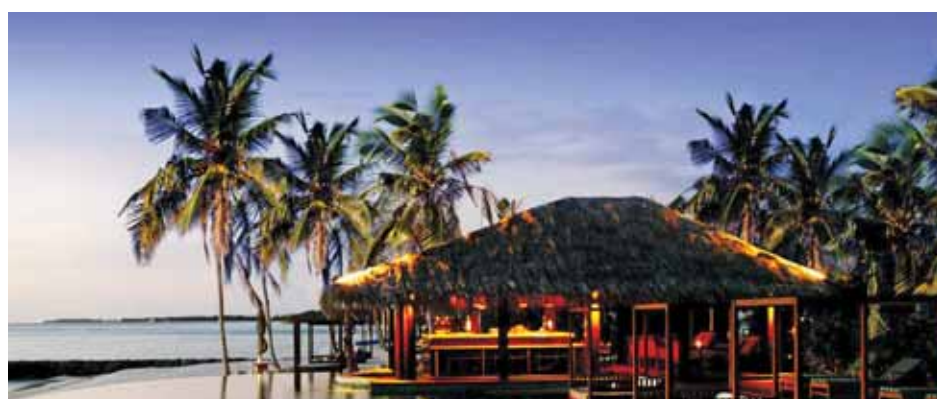
Meeting facilities

The interiors reflect Javanese influences with locally-carved, dark timber furniture. Three meeting rooms will also be available for those looking for an idyllic destination for their corporate retreat. Featuring flexible capacities and configurations from an intimate board meeting for 10 to larger events/parties for more than 30 persons within the two interconnecting rooms – a spacious design has also been considered, along with the

latest technology and conference facilities.

The Residence Bintan will also offer spa treatments and wellness programmes created exclusively for The Residence from award-winning spa-brand 'ila' which is known for using indigenous ingredients as well as drawing on local techniques. **Andy Xie**, Director of Operations, says, "The Residence

Bintan is a very exciting new opening for us as it is our first step into Indonesia. We are delighted to be able to provide guests with an authentic experience alongside the personalised and discreet service for which The Residence is renowned." The Residence Bintan will also provide a multitude of activities, from wake-boarding and diving, to boat making and temple visits.



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- ➔ The 127-villa property has been built in harmony with the natural landscape, blending seamlessly into the tropical surroundings and incorporating local materials throughout
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ANA takes flight with agents

All Nippon Airways invited its travel trade partners for a seminar on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Mumbai-Tokyo route and the 5th anniversary of the Delhi-Tokyo route. The event, held in Mumbai on September 26, was graced by **Tsuneya Katagiri**, General Manager, All Nippon Airways, Mumbai.



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New age travellers create a buzz

Thomas Cook India (TCI) recently held the second edition of its India Travel Summit in New Delhi after the roaring success of the first one. The event witnessed the who's who of the travel fraternity come together to deliberate on pressing issues pertaining to the travel industry, such as role of the new age travellers and the travelling trends of millennials.



On-board security in radar

The Swiss-based MSC Cruises has now deployed a new intelligent video surveillance system that offers even greater on-board security for passengers and crew alike.



MSC Cruises has announced the launch of a new vanguard video surveillance system offering even greater on-board security. In another industry-first, MSC Cruises has developed this highly-sophisticated advanced system in collaboration with global leaders in security technology, Bosch and Hewlett Packard Enterprise. The system is now operational on MSC Meraviglia and is a first of its kind in the industry. Over time, similar integrated systems will be developed and deployed across MSC Cruises' global fleet.

The integrated system is part of a bigger MSC Cruises operation to further optimise security monitoring on board the ship and will allow, among other features, for the speediest intervention in the unlikely event a person or object falls overboard.

The new intelligent video capturing and analysis system consists of a comprehensive shield of intelligent optical and thermal video cameras which provide non-stop comprehensive surveillance alongside the relevant exterior parts of the ship. All captured video images are streamed in real-time to a Central Security Room where the video stream is monitored together with all other inputs from the 1,200 HD CCTV cameras on board the ship.

MSC Cruises Security Department and experts from Bosch and Hewlett Packard Enterprise have worked over 14 months to create the setup. This double security system has allowed to significantly lower the error margin for false alerts— typically caused by natural movements such as waves, reflection of sun or moon, or a bird triggering the alarm. These ordinary interferences usually pose significant challenges for current shipboard CCTV technology. Through over 25,000 hours of video analysis, extensive software testing and continuous algorithmic updates, the system has now reached a confirmed accuracy level of 97 per cent.

In case of alarm, an acoustic signal and light will alert the ship's Security Officer in the Central Security Room who can immediately connect to the system and acquire all images and data and, if necessary, retrieve or review the relevant video images. The



Security Officer has direct access to the ship command at the Bridge to allow for immediate action.

Jet introduces 3 international services

Jet Airways will introduce three new international services this winter, besides reinforcing six existing routes with additional frequencies. The carrier will introduce its first non-stop service between New Delhi and Riyadh. It will also deploy additional frequencies on the Mumbai-Riyadh, Mumbai-Kuwait, Delhi-Doha and Delhi-Dammam sectors. Effective October 29, new non-stop flights will commence connecting Bengaluru and Chennai to the airline's gateways in Amsterdam and Paris, respectively, as part of the carrier's strategy to connect more cities, especially in the south of the country to des-

tinations in Europe and North America.

The airline is the first to operate flights on these routes which, along with a third daily flight on the increasingly popular Mumbai-London sector, will give guests a greater choice of convenient connections to other European cities and destinations in North America. Jet Airways will deploy its Airbus A330 aircraft on the Chennai-Paris and Bengaluru-Amsterdam routes.

The new intercontinental services to Amsterdam and Paris will operate in codeshare with KLM, Air France and Delta Air Lines. Guests who are members

of Frequent Flyer programmes of the codeshare partners – Jet-Privilege (JP), Flying Blue and SkyMiles will also be able to easily accrue and redeem points on each other.

Jet Airways is also adding new frequencies on certain select routes, including the extremely popular Mumbai-London Heathrow as well as Delhi-Singapore, further enhancing connectivity and choice for guests travelling between North India, United Kingdom and South East Asia.

The new non-stop services will also cater to the growing international traffic from/to Bengaluru and Chennai.

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EVENT TALK

OCTOBER 2017

CITM	Kunming	20-22
ITB Asia	Singapore	25-27
Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart	Bhopal	27-29
Promote Iceland roadshow	Mumbai	31

NOVEMBER 2017

Promote Iceland roadshow	Ahmedabad	1
Promote Iceland roadshow	Delhi NCR	3
South Australia roadshow	Bengaluru	6-7
WTM	London	6-8
South Australia roadshow	Mumbai	8-10
South Australia roadshow	Delhi NCR	11-12
Scandinavian Tourism board roadshow	Delhi NCR	14
Scandinavian Tourism board roadshow	Chennai	15
Scandinavian Tourism board roadshow	Mumbai	16
Swiss Tourism roadshow	Mumbai	17
ADTOI Convention	Visakhapatnam	17-19
Travel East	Kolkata	23-26
IITM	Pune	24-26
India Hospitality Awards	Delhi NCR	27
Chengdu International Tourism Expo (CITE)	China	30- Dec 2

DECEMBER 2017

IITM	Hyderabad	1-3
Travel Business Show	New Delhi	2-3
International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM)	France	4-7
India Travel Awards (North)	New Delhi	21

JANUARY 2018

IITM	Kochi	11-13
Fitur	Madrid, Spain	17-21
GPS	Nagpur	18-20
B2B Workshop-Tourism & Events Queensland, Destination New South Wales, Visit Victoria and South Australia	Chennai	30
B2B Workshop-Tourism & Events Queensland, Destination New South Wales, Visit Victoria and South Australia	Bengaluru	31

FEBRUARY 2018

ANTO Roadshow	Mumbai	6
ANTO Roadshow	Bengaluru	7
ANTO Roadshow	New Delhi	8
South African Tourism Roadshow	Colombo	9
South African Tourism Roadshow	Mumbai	12-13
South African Tourism Roadshow	Kolkata	14
South African Tourism Roadshow	Bengaluru	15
South African Tourism Roadshow	New Delhi	16
South African Tourism Roadshow	Ahmedabad	19

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

Biz travel needs representation

Concluding its conference in Mumbai this October, The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has already planned to conduct three annual conferences in 2018. **Gaurav Sundaram**, Regional Director, India, GBTA, reveals more.



HAZEL JAIN

What have you planned for 2018?

We intend to conduct three large annual conferences next year – in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, which are the three primary hubs for business travel. We are not likely to replicate the workshop series that we did this year. We are also looking at introducing professional education and development in business travel through the GBTA programmes of corporate travel experts and advancements in global travel professional certification in India. Here, we intend to customise the content for India through our national network of both offline training centres as well as online self-learning programme. We are also planning to look at strategic meeting management as an area of activity.

Is there a lack of education on business travel in India?

Yes, there is. Firstly, there is no industry body in India



Gaurav Sundaram
Regional Director
India, GBTA

yet that represents business travel apart from GBTA. TAAI and TAFI associations don't focus on business travel at all. There is no advocacy on business travel issues with the government. There are similar challenges with airlines and various other operators. There is clearly a need for education and a need for representing the interests of corporate travel buyer and industry.

What did this GBTA Conference 2017 in Mumbai focus on?

We had research presenters, a CXO round-table

which was very well-received last year, as well as a panel on GST, among other things. We conducted a session on GST even in Delhi this August but it focussed more on the logic behind GST, the overarching principals and values and what the industry should be preparing for. In Mumbai, the session focussed on the operational aspect of GST and how it impacts business travel.

Is there a little more clarity on GST now as far as business travel is concerned?

Yes and no. There are certain stakeholders in the industry who are not willing to come forward and verbalise, like airlines for instance. They seem to be very reticent on sharing anything to do with GST. We invited a travel management company as well as mature business travel buyers in Mumbai who shared insights on the topic during the conference. However, GST is still a work in progress.

How strong is your membership base?

Currently, we have about 110 members in India. When we started last year, we had just about 20.

The Indian market is used to getting complementary items. We don't offer free memberships. It is based on an annual fee and it is individual; that initially posed a challenge but we tell them that we offer them a lot of value. We charge the same fee as we do in the US.

Has 2017 been fruitful for you so far?

Most definitely. In the first half of 2017, we conducted five GBTA workshops – Mumbai, Bengaluru, Noida, Gurgaon and Hyderabad – that were attended by about 400 people in total. Of this, about 60 per cent were corporate buyers. We then held our first annual conference in Delhi in August 2017 which was attended by 225 delegates. This was followed by one in Mumbai in October 2017 that welcomed more than 250 attendees.

Marketing challenges for the state

Maharashtra Chapter Chairman of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), **Himanshu Agashiwala** speaks passionately about the challenges in marketing Maharashtra to inbound clients.



TT BUREAU

Everyone is talking about the challenges of marketing India as a destination to the rest of the world. Perhaps what would also help is if we zoomed in to look at the problem at hand state-wise. The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Maharashtra Chapter has done exactly that. **Himanshu Agashiwala**, Chairman, IATO-Maharashtra, speaks strongly about four main challenges that the inbound tour operators and members of IATO face when they service their overseas clients.

He says that Maharashtra has a beautiful coastline with destinations like Tarkarli, Harihareshwar and Srivardhan. "It even boasts of the best wildlife in Tadoba and surrounding places. However, marketing of this destination has proved to be very challenging for us due to poor infrastructure that is unsuitable to inbound tourists and lack of initiative from the state



Himanshu Agashiwala
Chairman
IATO-Maharashtra

After two years of negotiating with MTDC and the state government, they have now announced guide course to be conducted by the state

government despite repeated dialogue with them."

Clean toilets

He underlines the following issues that need im-

mediate attention by the state government. "A very basic need of clean public toilets in Mumbai is still lacking despite our Swacch Bharat Abhiyaan. Once we take them out on city tours, there are no facilities available except 'Sulabh' which is not suitable for foreign tourists. We especially handle a huge number of cruise passengers and they are disappointed by the facilities available," Agashiwala adds.

Lack of guides

By far, the tour operators' biggest woe has been the lack of government-recognised guides. There are only a handful of guides since most of them are non-operative. There is also a huge demand for foreign language guides as well as English-speaking guides. This has spiked up the rates that often go up to Rs 15,000–20,000 per day, per guide. "After two years of negotiating with MTDC and the state government, they have now announced guide course to be conducted by the state. We need at least 200 more guides in Mumbai alone," he says.

Bulk tickets at Elephanta

The biggest selling point of Maharashtra is the Elephanta caves. Agashiwala adds, it is impossible to buy tickets in bulk even though they handle around 1,000 tourists arriving by cruise on a single day. The online ticket facility is possible only if we have names and passport numbers which is impossible to know in advance. "We also have to carry huge amount in cash to buy the tickets. We have suggested to sell bulk tickets in advance with a three-month validity but the ASI management has done nothing so far. Apart from this, there are innumerable problems we face at the Mumbai Port, starting from multiple checks of guests by CISF, inadequacy of Immigration officials for embarkation, no permission to park coaches near the Green Gate, and so on," Agashiwala adds.

Area of Concern

The tour operators' biggest woe has been the lack of government-recognised guides

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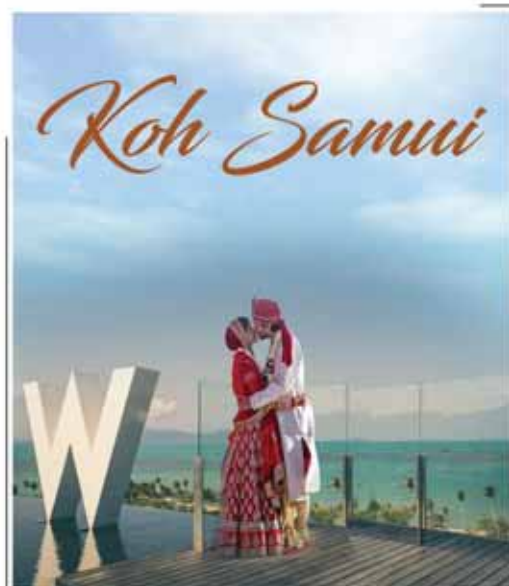
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- Experience selling enterprise software Industry (a plus but not a necessity)
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Engadin St Moritz Tourism Office

St Moritz

Gerhard Walter has been appointed as the CEO of Engadin St Moritz Tourism Office. He replaces Ariane Ehrat in the role. Walter has a long standing experience in strategic and operative management having covered several positions in the tourism and travel industry, most recently with Kitzbühel Tourism. In his new job, Gerhard Walter and his team of 60 employees will be responsible for operational management of the tourism organisation for St. Moritz and the Engadin Valley across 17 markets.



Double Tree by Hilton Chinchwad

Pune

Aditya Shamsher Malla has been appointed as General Manager, Double Tree by Hilton Pune – Chinchwad. An industry veteran with more than two decades in the business, Malla has been a part of some of the best global brands such as Marriott, Hyatt, Oberoi Hotels and Resorts, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, Shangri La International and Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces. In his new role, Malla will be responsible for curating strategic initiatives. He hails from Army background and is a keen golfer.



Renaissance Lucknow Hotel

Lucknow

Pankaj Gupta has been appointed as the General Manager at Renaissance Lucknow Hotel. An alumnus of the Graduate School of Business and Administration, Ghaziabad, Gupta completed his diploma in Hospitality Management in 1999, accredited by the prestigious Institute of American Hotel & Motel Association, USA. He holds 17 years of experience in hospitality operations and has worked at hotels like Lemon Tree, Indore; Holiday Inn, Agra; Sarovar Hotel, Kolkata; Royal Orchid Hotels and Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield.



Tourism Authority of Thailand

Bangkok

Santi Chudintra, Deputy Governor for Policy and Planning, has become Deputy Governor for International Marketing (Asia and the South Pacific). The position oversees the marketing and promotion of Thai tourism products and services, and the cooperation with potential partners in Asia and the South Pacific, to attract tourists from these markets. He replaces Srisuda Wanapinyosak, who has been given the post of Deputy Governor for International Marketing (Europe, Africa, Middle East and Americas).



Schenker India

Bengaluru

Schenker India, a part of DB Schenker, the transport and logistics division of the Deutsche Bahn Group, has appointed **Paul George** as the new Director Sales. He has 35 years' of experience in logistics, supply chain management, quality control, planning, BPM, manufacturing, global purchasing and setting up plants at Bengaluru, Pune, USA. George is a Mechanical Engineer and a certified City and Guilds of London Institute (UK) with separate Post Graduate qualifications in Business Management, Materials Management and Foreign Trade Management from Indian Institute of Materials Management–Bengaluru.



Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre

Ahmedabad

Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre, part of the InterContinental Hotels Group, has appointed **Gayatri Bist** as its new Hotel Manager. Bist comes with an experience of over 16 years and has acquired proficiency over guest relations to revenue to sales. She commenced her hospitality career with InterContinental Eros and has also worked with Shangri La Hotels. Her last assignment was as Director of Sales & Marketing at Holiday Inn Aerocity, New Delhi.



Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel and the Novotel Goa Resort & Spa

Goa

AccorHotels has appointed **Allwyn Rodrigues** as The Director of Engineering for their upscale hotels in the entertainment hub of Goa, Candolim to manage Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel and the Novotel Goa Resort & Spa as a complex. He brings more than 16 years of experience in hospitality industry and has been with Accor for over three years. Before joining AccorHotels, he was associated with IHG Goa and Goa Marriott.



JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu

Mumbai

JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu has appointed **Shanta Kamath** as the Director of Sales. She brings forth her expertise and knowledge in the hospitality industry with over 11 years of experience in sales, marketing and business development. Kamath has previously worked with Grand Hyatt, Mumbai where she was responsible for managing a dynamic team, developing various pricing strategies and maximising business. Kamath holds an Executive MBA degree from Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai (NMIMS) and has also acquired a B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration from IHM, Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition, Bengaluru.



Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport

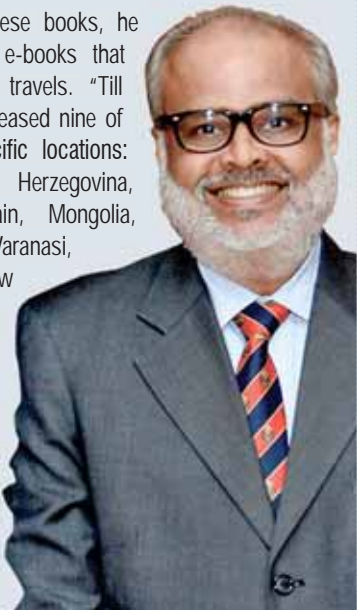
Mumbai

Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport, part of the InterContinental Hotels Group announced the appointment of **Subhajit Mitra** as Executive Housekeeper. Mitra brings aboard over 12 years of extensive experience in his field. He began his career in 2005 with the Taj Group of Hotels and has also worked with the Hyatt Group. Most recently, he was associated with the Taj President, Mumbai as Deputy Housekeeper. Previously, he has worked in the housekeeping department at Taj Bengal, Hyatt Regency Kolkata, and Hyatt Raipur.



TALKing People

As a child, **Prakash Bang**, Founder & Executive Chairman, roomsXML Solutions, loved to read 'Sindbad's Travel Adventures'. Things haven't changed much today and he continues to look forward to the adventures of Tintin and Asterix. Inspired by these books, he has authored e-books that document his travels. "Till date I have released nine of them on specific locations: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal, Spain, Mongolia, Namibia, Varanasi, Iceland, New England and Kailash Mansarovar. These books are available for free downloads.



Vivek Yagnik, General Manager, Samode Hotels, is an avid volleyball player and music lover. Yagnik believes that he is an open book and the hospitality industry is well aware of that. As an hotelier, Yagnik hardly gets time off from work, he says, "Whenever I get any free time, I love to spend it with my family and my dog. I would love to travel to Switzerland for my 25th wedding anniversary and would love to visit Dubai again and again," he says.



Since childhood, she was in love with flying, and today **Fariba Bayati** is the Regional Director, Far East and India, Mahan Air. Bayati's motto in life is to fly higher. "What makes me go on in life is the country and its need. Despite having so much potential and capabilities, we have many limitations. I aspire to develop my country as much as I can and be one of the key role players in the aviation development." She loves reading and her current favourite is 'Shahnameh'. She loves travelling to South East Asia. In India she wants to visit Punjab.



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- Participation of different countries and states from India



Commit to development: PATA CEO

The 40th edition of the PATA Travel Mart 2017, hosted by the Macao Government Tourism Office highlighted the commitment of the organisation to broaden their tourism offerings and create diversity in visitor source markets while simultaneously stressing on the importance of education and training in improving industry standards and service quality. **Mario Hardy**, CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), lets us in on more details



PRITI KHANNA FROM MACAO

QWhat were the highlights of this year's PATA travel mart?

With every travel mart, the last couple of years we've tried to innovate and try new things. We've introduced the mobile application which was a big hit and we've also added forums over the last few years to incorporate a knowledge element as well. We added two forums this year, the Blogger and Key Opinion Leader Forum and Travolution Forum Asia. In addition to all this we even had the PTM talks during the show as well wherein people got to talk about a product or destination. With these new additions, we wanted people to be able to justify their trips, to learn, educate and engage other than just trade.

QHow was the response to this year's PATA Travel Mart?

The reception we received this year was nothing short of brilliant. We kind of knew Macao would be popular because in previous events as well we've been very successful, but it came in as a bit of a surprise to us as to how quickly we started



We purposefully don't want this show to get a whole lot bigger than what it is currently unlike other world trade shows of the likes of ITB and WTM which are both partners of PATA



getting the bookings right after we announced Macao as the destination for this year's PATA travel mart. In terms of the number of attendees, this was perhaps one of the

trade shows of the likes of ITB and WTM which are both partners of PATA. We feel a smaller intimate show is a more human size and it allows an easier opportunity for people to network and do business. In terms of

of members and also in the nature of business. We are fast expanding our business horizon with the addition of companies such as Airbnb to our network. Along with that we have tech companies that are joining, OTAs and also



“With the major challenge of visa being pretty much resolved with the start of e-visas, I still do feel that infrastructure is one area that needs major development. There needs to be a strong commitment from the state and central agencies to not only put in money for promotion but also for development of facilities and transport infrastructure.”

Mario Hardy
Chief Executive Officer
Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)

largest congregations we've had recently with over 1100 delegates in attendance from 66 countries.

QHow have you seen QPTM evolve over the years?

As I mentioned earlier about the addition of knowledge along with trade and the use of mobile application, all these initiatives pay testament to our evolution. We are adding several facets and different activities but there is more of a gradual change rather than a radical change. We will continue to innovate looking at different scenarios in the future. We want to rotate and explore new destinations along with starting to look into lesser known destinations that people can come in and explore. We purposefully don't want this show to get a whole lot bigger than what it is currently unlike other world

membership, we have now reached 100 destinations across our members, we had 178 new members last year and this year till date we have already inducted over 160 new members, so we are on track to achieve our target of 200 new members this year. We continue to grow both in the sheer size

banks that will be joining the organisation because they want to fund in the development of resorts and activities. We have always enjoyed a very diverse membership but it's getting even more so now. The next generation of tourism professionals have also rapidly come on board; we now have student chap-



The next generation of tourism professionals have also rapidly come on board; we now have student chapters in 15 universities, we have 75 universities that are members and we have students who are members as well



ters in 15 universities. We have 75 universities that are members along with thousands of students who are members as well. In India, we are most engaged with Christ University. Apart from them, there are several colleges that we are working with in India.

QHow was the participation from India this year?

The participation from India was really good this time around. Although, it is sometimes a challenge with India to reach out to the right individuals who have the ability to get customers to come out from their country, add to

that the fact that Indians are relatively late bookers with respect to other countries. However, any engagement with the Indian committee is always very strong and of immense value. India for us and the world similarly represents a huge potential and opportunity. With the major challenge of visa being pretty much resolved with the start of e-visas, still I do feel that infrastructure is one area that needs major development. There needs to be a strong commitment from the state and central agencies to not only put in money for promotion but also for development of facilities and transport infrastructure.

QHow is the PATA calendar looking for the rest of the year?

We are going to keep ourselves really busy for the remainder of the year as well. We have another five events in 2017, the very next one being just two weeks from the PTA Travel Mart in September 28-29, the PATA Global Insights Conference 2017. We have lots of activities and events lined up for next year as well and we are really looking forward to growing from strength to strength.

Hardy's term as PATA CEO extended for three years

The Executive Board of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has extended the contract of Chief Executive Officer **Dr. Mario Hardy** for a period of three years commencing January 1, 2018. Hardy joined PATA in 2012 as Chief Operating Officer and was appointed Chief Executive Officer on November 1, 2014. He is a past Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the

PATA Foundation, a non-profit organisation with a focus on the protection of the environment, the conservation of culture and heritage, and support for education. He worked for 26 years in specialised aviation businesses with a focus upon data analytics and technology, occupying leadership roles in Montreal, Vancouver, London, Beijing and Singapore.

Dr. Hardy said, "I am delighted to have an opportunity to work with our outstanding management team in building upon the PATA successes of the past three years. We still face many challenges as a membership organisation but our determination to add value to the many benefits of PATA membership is being recognised in the

public and private sectors. We shall continue with our primary mission of promoting sustainable and responsibly tourism development throughout the world as we encourage travel to, from and within the Asia Pacific region." In January 2017, he graduated from the Singularity University, Executive Program on the subject of Exponential Technologies.



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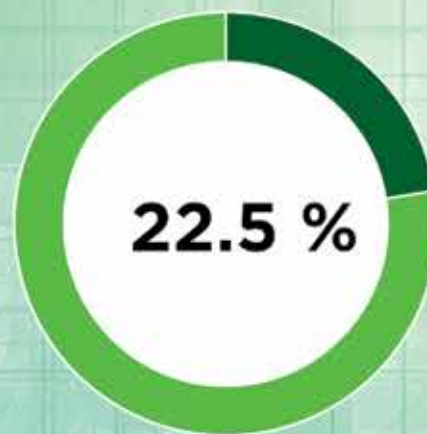


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ESCAPE THE MUNDANE

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Experiences take you away from the mundane, lift the lid off your spirits and revitalise your mind, body and soul. Today's traveller realises that ticking off attractions on a pre-prepared itinerary is not the best way to travel. Experiencing local culture, cuisine and activities is the right way. And it's not just the millennials who want to travel this way, travellers irrespective of age or gender want to travel in their own way, at their own speed and preference. In order to cater to such a clientele, even travel agents and tour operators are becoming itinerary specialists.

These travellers are aware of what they want and are increasingly searching for options on social media platforms and travel search engines. Technology companies and social media websites are also keeping a track of a traveller's activities and suggest unique results. These companies have dedicated travel departments meant to get this data and share with travel companies for offering results and feed well-matched for every individual. In a way, these companies are also catering to provide the most suitable experiences to their users.

The world of travel is changing and with the technology boom, experiential travel is certainly the buzzword!

NISHA VERMA

NEWS IN BRIEF

RUN A MAZE IN SOUTH AFRICA

While the Redberry Farm is a commercial strawberry grower and a popular family entertainment venue, one of the more exciting activities it offers is exploring the largest hedge maze in the Southern Hemisphere. Nestled in the town of George, the Garden Route is one of the most remarkable attractions in South Africa. The maze consists of seven strawberry stations, a 25 meter underground tunnel and a look-out point to be found within 10,000 meter of pathways. The hedges are grown from over 30,000 Syzygium Paniculatum plants.



Explore the longest underground river

The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park is a natural wonder that lies within the city boundaries of Palawan in the Philippines. With unique geological features, the subterranean river is said to be among the longest in the world measuring up to 8.2 km. Visitors can take an underground river tour here and explore the topography.



Winter attractions in Korea

Pyeongchang, an upcoming destination in South Korea, will host the 2018 Olympic Winter Games from February 9-25. If sports do not interest you, you can attend the Hwacheon Sancheoneo Ice Festival, featuring a variety of experiences, including mountain trout fishing on ice, a zip track stretching across the festival venue, and various snow and ice sculptures from January 14 to February 5, 2018.



Diving in Maldives

Ayada Maldives is a private island resort set in the relatively unexplored Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll in the south of the country – just a few kilometres above the equator. Ayada Maldives offers snorkelling and diving experience. Over 1,000 species of fish, coral and other marine life inhabit the waters throughout the Maldives; better yet, given the isolation of the Gaafu Dhaalu atoll, fast gaining an international reputation in being one of the most incredible places to dive and snorkel. The courses on offer are all developed by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI).

Art at Amsterdam Airport

With a mini branch at Schiphol airport, the Rijksmuseum was among the first in the world to open in an airport. The area just past security between Lounge 2 and 3, dubbed Holland Boulevard, has been converted into a museum showcasing some of Netherlands' greatest works of art. On display are 10 paintings from the Rijksmuseum collection. There is also a gift shop with souvenirs from famous Dutch museums, including the Rijksmuseum. The new exhibition makes Schiphol the only airport in the world with original 17th century artworks. Travellers flying into or out of Amsterdam will be able to transmute the base metal of slogging through airports into the purest Dutch Golden Age.



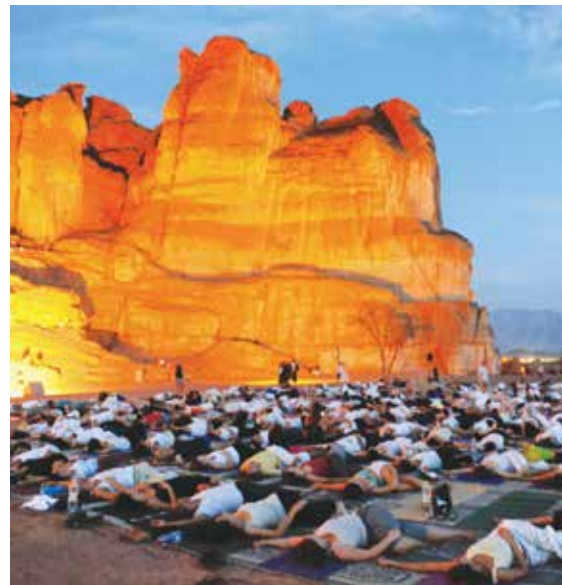
Dinner Cruise in Phuket

The Sanya Rak Dinner Cruise organised by Banyan Tree Phuket has been a remarkable success witnessing marriage proposals, valentine dates, anniversary celebration and even wedding dinners. Sanya Rak, meaning 'Promise of Love' in Thai, is a unique destination dining experience. It showcases Banyan Tree Phuket's connections to the local Phuketian culture and nature by allowing guests to not only experience exceptional Thai food but also take a romantic excursion in the traditional long-tail Thai boat. The boat sails through the Laguna Phuket's tranquil lagoons cruising past a tropical fairy-tale of palms, casuarinas, Thai-styled architecture and a soothing sunset.



Fine dining at Ayers Rock Resort

An exclusive new fine dining experience, Mayu Wiru, will commence nightly at Ayers Rock Resort from October 22 to March 24 every year. Mayu Wiru is a premium experience for a maximum of 16 guests that will combine the epitome of fine dining together with a premium Field of Light experience. The evening begins with champagne and canapés at a private lookout within the grounds of Sails in the Desert hotel, followed by a three-course table d'hôte indigenous-inspired menu with perfectly matched wines in the hotel's private dining room. After dinner, guests are transported to a dune top for a nightcap, panoramic views of the Field of Light Uluru and a star talk on the southern night sky. The evening ends with a private 30-minute escorted walk through an art exhibition.



Yoga Arava Festival in Israel

The grounds of the Arava Desert will serve as mats for the 7th Yoga Arava Festival, the biggest yoga meeting in Israel. Throughout the weekend of November 2-4, 2017, the villages of the Arava will host yoga workshops with the best teachers in Israel and special guest teachers from India in the exhilarating desert landscape. The practice areas will be placed throughout the Arava from Moshav Idan in the north to Kibbutz Elifaz in the south.

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OTTAWA 2017

Big, bold, immersive and transformative – Ottawa's 2017 signature events will be once-in-a-lifetime experiences that visitors wouldn't want to miss. Planned by the Ottawa 2017 Bureau, the year-long calendar of all-new events will continue till December 31, 2017 all the while showcasing its various tourism products that travellers can visit even later.



Canada records 37 per cent growth in Indian arrivals to Canada in April 2017.



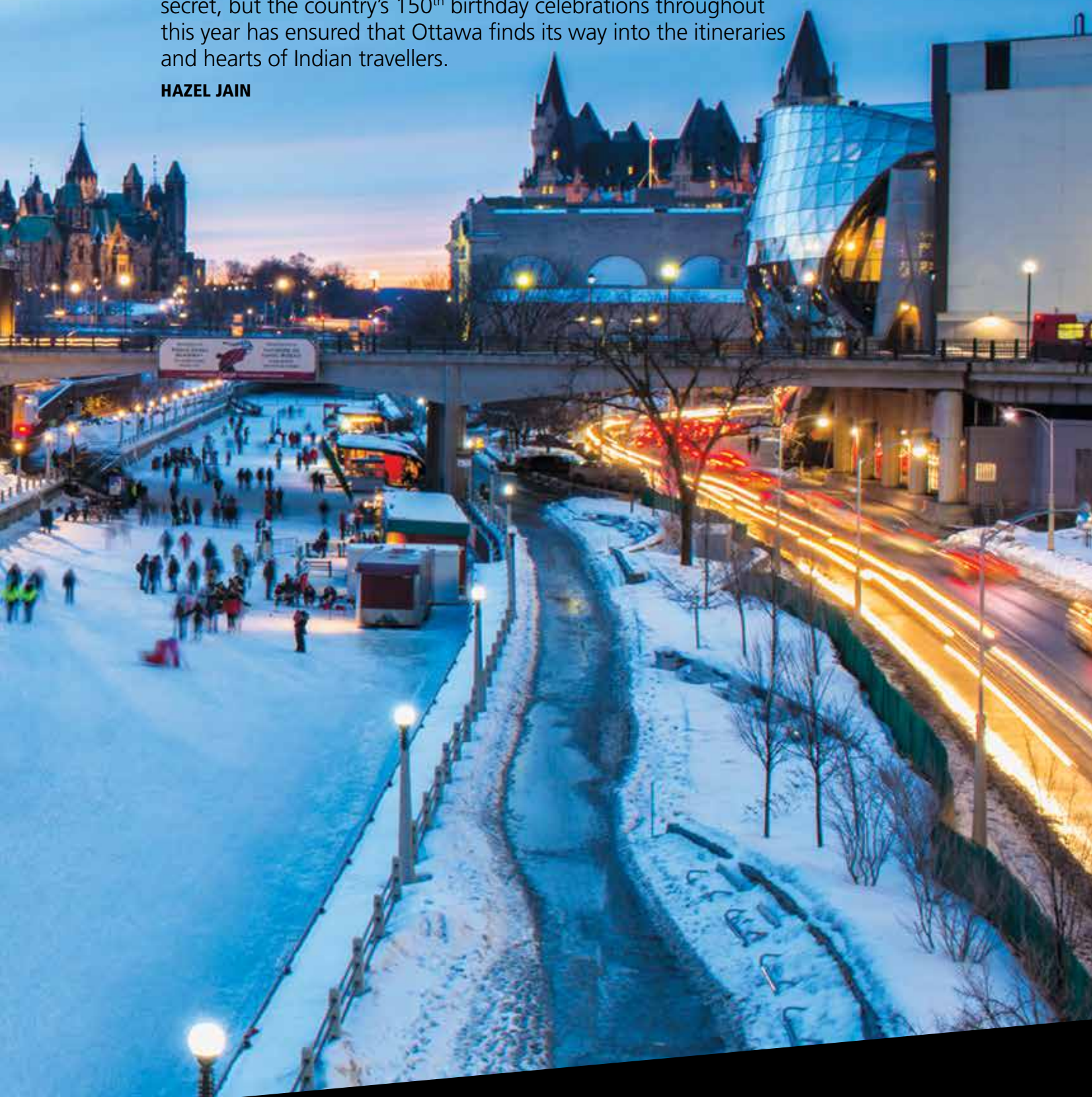
The Ottawa 2017 Bureau, in collaboration with CIBC, have launched Miwâte: Illumination of Chaudière Falls. This dynamic illumination of Chaudière Falls celebrates the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and their cultures. A rich soundscape accompanies the experience. In addition to the illumination, participants are invited to explore the Algonquin Awareness Exhibit, which shares information on the presence of Indigenous Peoples.

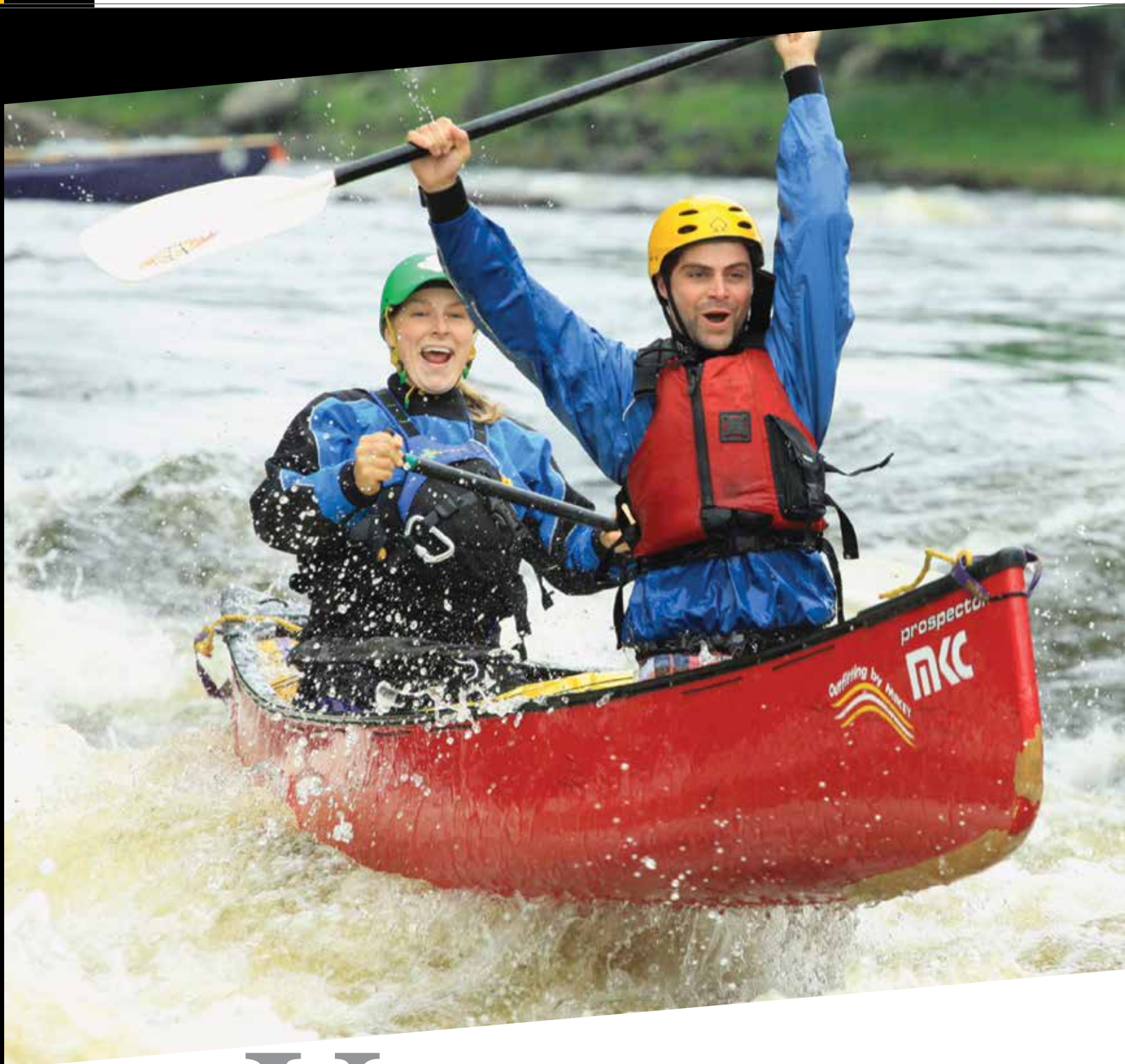


Ottawa Awe-inspiring

This quaint capital city of Canada has so far been its best-kept secret, but the country's 150th birthday celebrations throughout this year has ensured that Ottawa finds its way into the itineraries and hearts of Indian travellers.

HAZEL JAIN





Year 2017 is Canada's 150th anniversary and the celebration lasts all year long! By virtue of being its capital city, Ottawa is where the biggest party is happening...

and everyone's invited. An estimated half a million people attended the celebrations in July in Ottawa, where the government spent approximately half a billion Canadian dollars on the festivities.

Canada's most populous province, Ontario is home to nearly 40 per cent of all Canadians. It is also home to Ottawa, Canada's capital, known for Parliament Hill's Victorian architecture and the National Gallery, featuring Canadian and indigenous art. Ottawa is not only Canada's political capital but also its cultural capital which lies 450 km away from Toronto. The city has also evolved into a technological centre of Canada while still retaining its old-world charm. According to studies, it is the

most educated city in the country and is home to a number of post-secondary, research and cultural institutions, including the National Arts Centre, the National Gallery and numerous national museums.

Ottawa has the highest standard of living in the nation and low unemployment. It has been ranked second nationally and 24th worldwide in the quality of life index and is consistently rated the best place to live in Canada. With so many bests to its name, it undoubtedly makes for a fascinating destination to visit. Winter, of course, holds special significance for Canadians and they love to make the most of the snow they get. So, a large part of the Ottawa experience lies in winter sports activities. Like they say, Canada is cool, not cold!

WINTER IN OTTAWA

Travellers can beat their winter blues when in Ottawa. From rock climbing to outdoor skiing



Winter, of course, holds special significance for Canadians and they love to make the most of the snow they get. A large part of the Ottawa experience lies in winter sports

and skating, there are many ways to enjoy winter in Canada's capital region. Canadians enjoy Winterlude, an annual celebration of winter that spans three fun-filled weekends every February. There are exciting things to see and do during this snow-covered season. A special highlight for children of all ages is Snowflake Kingdom located in Jacques-Cartier Park in Gatineau with its collection of huge snow slides.

Not to be missed either is the International Ice Carving competition where carvers from around the world descend on Confederation Park in downtown Ottawa to transform blocks of ice into spectacular works of art. Visit during the day and again at night when the sculptures are lit up, for two very different perspectives. Ice skating on the naturally frozen largest skating rink in the world is a 'must-do' on many visitors' bucket lists. The Rideau Canal Skateway is open to skaters daily from roughly

late December to February, weather permitting, at no charge and there are change huts, skate rental shacks and snack stations all along its 7.8 km (4.8 miles) length.

Skating: If ice conditions don't allow for skating on the canal, visitors can head to Ottawa City Hall where the Senators Rink of Dreams—a refrigerated outdoor skating rink—is open from November to March from 0800 hours to 2300 hours complete with LED lighting, a heated change hut, picnic tables and benches. Lansdowne's Skating Court also offers a longer skating season that stretches from roughly mid-November to mid-March. Skate rentals are not available at these sites.

Cross-country skiing: Ottawa offers cross-country trails right in the heart of the city and there are over 150 km (93 miles) of cross-country ski trails in the Greenbelt area encircling Ottawa.



The Rideau Canal Skateway is open to skaters daily from roughly late Dec-Feb, weather permitting, at no charge and there are change huts, skate rental shacks



Visitors can use the trails for free and all are suitable for beginner and family outings. Just across the Ottawa River from downtown, Gatineau Park is a mecca for cross-country skiing enthusiasts, with over 200 km (124 miles) of groomed trails and heated shelters. Pick up a ski pass (daily or seasonal) at the Visitor Centre in Chelsea, Québec. The Gatineau Loppet will take place from February 16-18, 2018, and is Canada's largest cross-country ski event, bringing some of the finest distance racers from Canada and the world to the Ottawa-Gatineau area. For super endurance, consider the Canadian Ski Marathon from February 9-11, 2018. This three-day, 160 km (99 miles) event is open to skier participants of all ages.

Downhill skiing and snowboarding: For downhill enthusiasts, Ottawa is like an urban resort, with challenging hills within easy driving distance of downtown, including Camp Fortune and Mount Pakenham.

Snowshoeing: Gatineau Park has trails reserved especially for snowshoeing; so strap on your snowshoes and go! Pick up a Snowshoe pass (daily or seasonal) at the Visitor Centre in Chelsea, Québec.

Dog-sledding: Come enjoy a memorable dog sledding experience at Escapade Eskimo

in the scenic Outaouais region, only 75 minutes from Ottawa.

Hiking: Gatineau Park offers three groomed trails for winter hiking and is a lovely place for a walk in a snow-covered forest.

Winter camping: Gatineau Park also provides adventurers with campsites, cabins, yurts and four-season tents accessible via ski and snowshoe trails. Reservations are required, so be sure to book ahead!

Indoor rock climbing: Altitude Gym brings the world of indoor rock climbing to another level and to a one-of-a-kind location.

COLD WAR MUSEUM

Ottawa's most unique historical site, the Diefenbunker (or the Cold War Museum) is a four-storey, 100,000 square foot underground bunker, built between 1959 and 1961. During the Cold War, it was intended to house 535 Canadian government officials and military officers in the event of a nuclear war. For years, it protected the Canadians from 75 feet underground and they knew virtually nothing about it. Experience how close the Canadians came to a nuclear disaster, although a lot has changed since 1961.

WHITE-WATER RAFTING

Renowned as the Whitewater Capital of Canada, the Ottawa Valley is home to more than 900 lakes and four major river systems, including the mighty Ottawa, Madawaska, Bonnechere and Petawawa rivers. These are popular spots to raft, kayak, canoe, surf and fish.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

Arachnophobes, rejoice! The National Gallery of Canada is home to more than 40,000 works of art (by over 6,000 artists), home to the most comprehensive collection of Canadian art and strong collections of indigenous, Asian, and international works.

BYWARD MARKET

The ByWard Market is where Ottawa was born. Established in 1826, the ByWard Market is one of Canada's oldest and largest public markets. Today, it is Ottawa's number one tourist attraction and residents and visitors alike visit the market for shopping, dining, arts, entertainment and professional services.

ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES

Aboriginal Experiences offer visitors a unique look at First Nations' culture in a native village, including traditional native cuisine, powwow dance performances, guided tours, and craft workshops. Programmes offer a rare opportunity to experience the rich culture, teachings and history of Canada's First People from their perspective. It is open from May 1 to October 31 for groups of 25 or more.

LE CORDON BLEU

Cordon Bleu Ottawa is housed in a historical 1877 mansion, which exudes class and old-world charm. Le Cordon Bleu's demonstration experience is interesting as it gives you an insider's look at how the institute's world-renowned chefs are trained.

Mountain Escapades

Home to the tallest mountain in the UAE – Jebel Jais, Ras Al Khaimah offers a mountain experience like no other. Zip through the picturesque landscape or take the Via Ferrata, your next emirate spot to satisfy the adrenaline rush.

ANKITA SAXENA



In its first phase of operations, the zip line will be able to accommodate 250 people a day, that's 100,000 in a year. Nothing like this exists in the world yet



The spectacular Al Hajar Mountains in the eastern part of Ras Al Khaimah were formed over 70 million years ago and stand nearly 2,000 metres above sea level. The emirate boasts of an array of archaeological sites and breathtaking natural vistas, from golden sandy beaches, awe-inspiring terracotta dunes and a green belt of date palms to Jebel Jais, the highest mountain in the United Arab Emirates which stands at 1900 meters. Jebel Jais' dramatic and beautiful landscape offers an iconic backdrop which can only be categorised as a bucket list experience for travellers around the world. This peak is a key attraction in Ras Al Khaimah, ideal for active adventurers and visitors looking for unparalleled views of the Persian Gulf. The rugged terrain plays host to extreme climbing, hiking, driving and trekking enthusiasts.

The Via Ferrata or the 'iron path' is a protected mountain-climbing method spanning the rocky facades of Jebel Jais. Ras Al Khaimah's 470m-long Via Ferrata is unique to the region as it comprises three individual start and finish points, as well as three zip lines measuring 50m, 60m and 300m. Professional instructors guide travellers along the route. Via Ferrata offers a steel cable which runs along the route and is periodically fixed to the rock. Using a kit, climbers can secure themselves to the cable which could also be used as an aid to climbing.

WATCH OUT

New attractions also include The Jebel Jais Observation Deck, which is set to open in Q4 this year, having a multi-purpose deck that boasts of a series of viewing platforms to experience the awe-inspiring vistas, bird life, flora and fauna at 1,227 metres above sea level. It will also serve as a base camp for hikers and bikers looking to test themselves of the emirate's Al Hajar mountain range. Other product developments will also include the second season of the enhanced Via Ferrata and the launch of official cycling and hiking routes across the emirate, with a focus on Jebel Jais.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The standard and easiest course, the Ledge Walk, allows a group of up to eight climbers and takes around four hours to complete. It starts with a gentle climb through sedimentary rocks, goes into a vertical stretch which leads to the 50m zip line. A gradual slope then leads to the 60m zip line before another path leads to 300m zip line for the journey back to the middle section. From here, the return to the wadi is about 225m long. The middle, technical route—the Middle Path—takes around three-and-a-half hours and comprises three vertical sections and a horizontal traverse. It rises 60m from the wadi bed to join the Ledge Walk before the first zip line. After completing the Middle Path, climbers continue on the standard route including the three zip lines and a walk out. The higher, vertical route—Julphar Scare—takes around one-and-a-half hour. This is the most direct route to the long zip line. It is a 120m ascent using ladders through five different vertical sections with adjoining horizontal sections.

ZIP THE WORLD'S LONGEST LINE

Soon, Ras Al Khaimah will be home to the world's longest and highest zip line, to be built at 1,800m, opening within the heart of Jebel Jais. The exact length of the zip line remains a closely-guarded secret until the multi-million dollar adventure tourism product's opening this December.

This zip line experience will consist of two lines, allowing friends and family to take part in the flight together. Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) has partnered with the world's leading zip line operator, Toro Verde, to develop the emirate's flagship active adventure tourism product. "In its first phase of operations, the zip line will be able to accommodate 250 people a day, that's 100,000 in a year. Nothing like this exists in the world – let alone this region – it is a true first for Ras Al Khaimah and adds another amazing attraction to the UAE's diverse tourism portfolio," says **Haitham Mattar**, Chief Executive Officer, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority.



Of Culinary Extravagance

Hotels and restaurants are making sure that travellers relish worldwide flavours at impressive settings to create a unique dining experience.



THE ARABIAN TOUCH

Not too far away from the bustling cosmopolitan city of Dubai is the Bab Al Shams Desert Resort and Spa. Nestled amidst the desert, the luxury fort property offers an equally magical culinary experience in an exclusive award-winning Arabian restaurant, Al Hadheerah. Enjoy the aroma of Arabic cuisine emanating from the live cooking stations, wood-fired ovens and spit roasts. The open-air restaurant offers everything that a guest needs for an ultimate desert dining experience. Since the luxury on offer at Bab Al Shams knows no bounds, the restaurant makes sure that guests are treated to traditional preparations from the Middle

East. With 10 live cooking stations, it pampers guests with cakes, flowers and exclusive butler service. Dine under the stars here while enjoying traditional daily performances like Arabic band, belly dancers and lively guests' interactions. Weekends (Thursday and Friday) are extra-special at Al Hadheerah with spectacular fireworks to cease the day for the guests.

LOUNGING LIKE THE BRITS

When in London, one has to experience an afternoon tea session at The Crystal Moon Lounge in Corinthia London underneath the stunning Baccarat Chandelier. The tea here is served with delectable finger sandwiches on

artisanal breads, warm scones accompanied by clotted cream and jam, along with a selection of fancies. While the property is modern, it makes sure to remain faithful to the British tea culture and has an in-house sommelier who ensures that guests are treated to teas carefully selected from Camellia's Tea House. Those who want to take the luxury quotient higher can also relish a chilled glass of champagne alongside either a traditional or delightfully themed afternoon tea in the heart of London. Sit in the inner courtyard for tea al fresco or go for exclusive private dining rooms in the restaurants for intimate afternoon tea parties.



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THE FRENCH CONN



ECT

Experience the best of Northern France, a lesser known region of the country, which packs the perfect punch for those who want to move away from the ordinary sojourn.

NISHA VERMA

A way from the heights of the Eiffel Tower, and still not too far from it, is the Hauts-de-France region in Northern France. The panoply of attractions and activities in this part of the country have not been experienced by many. After recently discovering this hidden gem by walking the lanes of its most beautiful cities and towns, I saw a different side of the country, completely unheard of.

FLY TRULY FRANCE

The French hospitality experience starts the moment you board the Air France flight from Delhi or Mumbai. Lie flat on the comfortable Business Class seats in the Boeing 777-300ER, with luxury service and delectable meals on board.



LILLE ON A 2CV

It was a trip to an era gone by when I was welcomed in Lille on a Citroen 2CV convertible. This vintage car, launched in 1948 and produced till 1988, was my ride for the day to discover this charming city. Not only is this vehicle itself a trip into history, but it also came with an equally enthusiastic guide who gave anecdotes as we traversed from one street to another. Lille is very close to France's border with Belgium and falls under the French Flanders. While the passers-by greeted us with friendly smiles (also because of the carriage we were in), I was pleasantly surprised to see the number of shops of every possible brand under the sun. The city, I was told, is thronged by tourists to just be in the cosy surroundings of a small town while being able to shop and eat in the finest way possible. The city centre has the Column of the Goddess statue standing tall overlooking the various al fresco cafes and shops full of locals and tourists alike. The 2CV cannot be driven at a very high speed, which is a blessing in disguise, as it allows a better view of the surroundings. Because of this, another notable structure caught my eye—the Art Deco Town Hall Belfry, which towers over the entire city at a height of 104 metres. The city is small but full of cultural wonders. I'd recommend to stop and visit the amazing Cathedral in Lille, a Neo-Gothic church. One can admire the sculptures and design of this structure for hours. Stop by for lunch at Le Barbue D'Anvers and relish the sumptuous local dishes while admiring the curios and decor around. Those who want to experience an extraordinary French tea experience should head to Meert, which is a famous pastry shop in Lille and is known for its classic waffles, cakes and tea. Spend the night at the beautiful L'ArbreVoyageur, a beautiful boutique property in the heart of Lille and get a taste of the French hospitality here.





WALKING IN SAINT VALÉRY SUR SOMME

Saint Valéry-sur-Somme can be any traveller's delight for its small-town charm and colourful lanes. The seaside medieval town used to be a fishing village in the earlier times. The village is just next to the Baie de Somme near the mouth of river Somme, offering picturesque views. It is divided into an upper and lower part. With most of the administrative buildings, the upper town used to be walled earlier as it belonged to the elite class. This side of Saint Valéry offers a more historical view of the town and from here, one can also look at the lovely villas lining the sea-wall. While the streets are cobbled, the buildings are characterised by typical chequered design. On the other hand, the lower town is distinguished by narrow streets and alleys with small houses decorated with colourful flowers and marine memorabilia including anchors, artificial fish, boat wheels, fishing nets, etc. Many of these houses have now become B&B facilities for tourists. Visit the cathedral and enjoy a view of Somme river.



SAND YACHTING IN LE TOUQUET

Le Touquet or Le Touquet-Paris-Plage is a favourite holiday resort of the rich and famous in Paris and Northern France. Many French celebrities and politicians have their holiday homes in this seaside town, which boasts some of the best five-star hotels and casinos. Since I visited in September, there weren't many people on the streets, as the native population here is only around 5000, which reaches 250,000 in summers. While walking on the cobbled streets of the city centre, one might just run into a celebrity, shopping at the various branded outlets here. However, since it is a seaside town, people mostly head to the beach. If you are looking for something out of ordinary, try your hand at Sand Yachting. For me, trying my hand literally meant learning from scratch with a proficient instructor by my side. We got into our oversized wet suits and headed to our yachts which looked like kayaks with sails. Our instructor made us understand how to put the sails on and start working with them. After a few trials, we were ready to roll. It might take time to understand the concept of sails, but if you have time to spend, sand yachting is not hard to learn, and it's lovely to move around in these wheeled kayaks on the beach. I'd recommended walking around the city centre and a visit to the casino. Lunch at the Spoon restaurant facing the Golf Course in Le Touquet, and experience the colonial way of living at The Westminster Hotel.



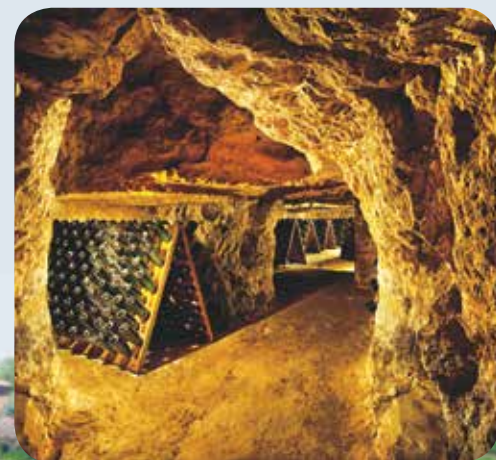
GONDOLA RIDE IN FLOATING GARDENS

The first thing I did on our visit to Amiens was getting into a Gondola for an hour-long journey through the floating gardens. Also known as Hortillages, these gardens are symbolic of the city of Amiens, because of which it is called the Venice of the North. In the past, these gardens were floating vegetable markets, from where the people of Amiens used to fulfil their grocery needs. Today, a number of tourists visit these gardens to enjoy the views around and admire live exhibitions on either side of the canals. What catches your attention from the water is the towering Cathedral of Our Lady of Amiens visible from every corner. In fact, it is the first skyscraper in France, claimed our charming guide. Walk to the cathedral after the Gondola ride and experience the city first-hand, which is also the hometown of the current President of France—Emmanuel Macron. I'd recommend Le Quai for local cuisine and great burgers.



VISIT CHAMPAGNE CELLAR IN CHÂTEAU-THIERRY

France is synonymous with champagne, and a visit to Northern France is incomplete without having visited the vineyards or a cellar of the much-coveted elixir. An hour's drive from Chantilly through lush green fields and vineyards, we were graciously welcomed into the Champagne Pannier cellar in Château-Thierry, which is also the head office of the brand. After entering the state-of-the-art facility showcasing bottles of every size and flavour, I entered the cold cellars to see how champagne is produced, fermented and stored to finally make it to our celebrations. As I walked through the meandering bricked lanes, the history of Champagne Pannier unfolded before me through our guide's informative narration and audio-visual films. The visit ended perfectly with champagne tasting.





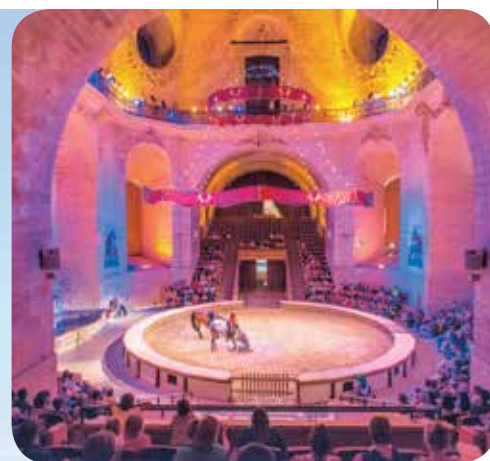
NAUSICAA

While all of us have visited a number of aquariums in many cities around the world, a visit to Nausicaa is a must for two reasons—first, it offers an experiential visit and not just seeing the marine life in glass windows with a placard mentioning its name. Second is the sustainability mission behind the project to educate people about managing the oceans so that its wealth is available to future generations. The facility stands by its motto of education which is visible right at the moment you enter, with interesting divisions of various types of sea animals. My guide told me that the basic idea of working behind Nausicaa is to explain how man's relationship with the sea had been affecting the underwater life. There were different sections on marine life from various continents. Audio-video and experiential shows ensured that visitors like us knew what lay beneath the oceans and how we behaved with that world. Admire the fish, jellyfish, sea horses, penguins, octopus and other marine creatures and spend the entire day at this impressive facility. Do watch how they train sea lions for public shows. Currently, Nausicaa is on an expansion path and with a new aquarium opening up soon, it will become the largest in Europe by 2018.



VISIT TO CHANTILLY CASTLE

The uber-luxurious and stunning Chateau de Chantilly was nothing less than a wonder when we drove towards this majestic structure. It comprises two separate buildings—the Petit Château built for Anne de Montmorency in 1560 and the Grand Château rebuilt in the 1870s. Surrounded by beautiful expansive gardens, this Chateau is a sight to behold. The castle is also home to a marvellous museum—Musée Condé named after its owner Grand Condé, cousin of Henri II. Housing the personal collection of Grand Condé, the museum is considered to be one of the most celebrated art galleries in France with art pieces and sculptures from famous artists including Raphael, Botticelli and even Piero di Cosimo. Just beside the Chateau are the grand stables, as Chantilly is home to a big equestrian industry. The gardens at the castle and the stables played host to an Indian wedding for the first time last year. Stay right next to the castle at the Auberge du Jeu de Paume, a Relais & Chateau 5-star property for an extraordinary luxury experience.



Surrender to SERENITY

ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

Anantara properties—Kalutara and Tangalle—in Sri Lanka are picture-perfect destinations to unwind and rejuvenate in blissful solitude.



ANANTARA KALUTARA RESORT

Uniquely tucked between the Indian Ocean and Kalu Ganga River, the Anantara Kalutara Resort is naturally exclusive. The resort is located at a 90-minute drive from Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport, via a scenic route of lagoons, lush waterways and rural countryside. For guests wishing to experience Sri Lanka's beautiful train journeys, the Kalutara South Railway Station is a 10-minute drive away. Anantara's luxury chauffeur service offers seamless journeys to and from the resort.

The resort is a perfect getaway from Colombo's buzz. Once inside, guests don't have to look any further to indulge. From practising yoga and meditation in the stillness of the coast to swimming in the tropical pools or water sport thrills, the resort offers activities to invigorate and rejuvenate vacationers. Kids' and teens' clubs keep youngsters creatively engaged, while you indulge at Sri Lanka's largest and most luxurious spa.

For those seeking to experience the region, the resort is just 10-minutes away from the historic Kalutara which has a rich spice trading and colonial

heritage. Travellers can explore tea plantations and mansions, sacred temples and the world's only hollow Buddhist shrine. One can also cruise on the Kalu Ganga, which twists almost 100 miles from Sri Pada - the sacred mountain believed to be the footprint of the Buddha.

With 141 rooms, suites and pool villas, the resort is a perfect blend of authentic luxury and evocative Sri Lankan accents. Balconies and terraces draw the eye to lush nature, ocean waves or river beauty. Guests can choose from interconnecting, disabled-friendly and poolside havens and relish private pool intimacy or simply share holidays in villas with interconnecting gardens.

Spice Spoons - Anantara Cooking Class

Passing settlers and traders have richly influenced Sri Lankan cuisine, resulting in dishes infused with Dutch, Portuguese, English, Arab, Malay and Indian flavours. Guests can delve into the scenes of the island's culinary roots through a trip to local farms and markets. Return to the resort to refresh with a local arrack cocktail before the step-by-step cooking class – picking up secret chef tips for extra flair.





Activities

Sundown Ceremony: Each day at the sundown, the sound of a conch shell announces the start of traditional dancers performing with flower baskets on the pool deck to usher in evening time.

Saturday Fruit Market: Every Saturday at 1600 hours, local boats cross the river, bringing the freshest organic local fruits for guests to enjoy at the swimming pool.

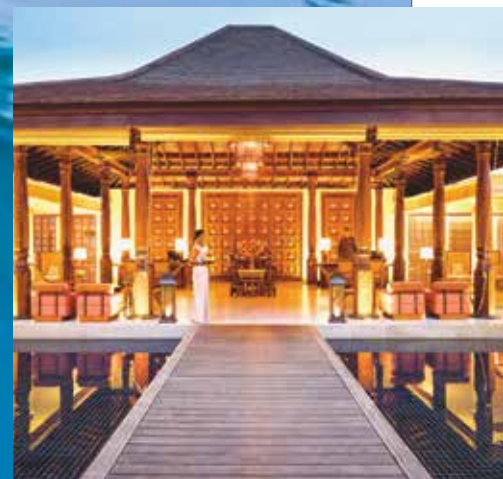
Fishing Guru: Learn local angling techniques with our Fishing Guru on a boat at the Kalu Ganga Lagoon. Then, hand over your prize catch for our chefs to prepare a delicious seafood meal.

Arts & Craft: During breakfast, local artisans demonstrate their traditional wood carving, batik printing and ratan weaving skills, and also offer their arts and crafts for sale as souvenirs. Visitors interested in wildlife conservation can meet baby turtles at the Kosgoda turtle hatchery. At a 90-minute drive away lies Mirissa Harbour, where boats set sail for Weligama. Lunuganga Estate was the country home of renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa, and features terraced gardens with sculptures and oriental urns.

ANANTARA PEACE HAVEN TANGALLE RESORT

Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort hides away on a rocky outcrop along a secluded stretch of Sri Lanka's southernmost coastline. Cinnamon Air operates a 45-minute transfer once daily between Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport and Dickwella – just 10-minutes from the resort. For those who prefer the scenic land route, Bandaranaike International Airport is a three-and-a-half-hour-long drive away, appropriate for ones who enjoy long drives. You can stop by Galle to witness Portuguese architecture and narrow streets peppered with boutiques, antique shops, art galleries, restaurants and street stalls.

Set amidst a 21-acre coconut plantation and golden crescent shores with glorious views of the Indian Ocean, the resort offers a vibe different from Anantara Kalutara. It has 152 rooms and pool villas designed for couples, families and differently-abled guests. For adventure seekers, the resort is a gateway to the island's plethora of sacred heritage sites. One of the best features of the resort is its private villas. Early risers can take a trip to Udawalawe National Park for encounters with elephants or a jeep safari with a park tracker at Yala National Park – the second largest wildlife reserve in Sri Lanka.





SALERNO

where
Italy preserved its Roman

LIFE BY THE BEACH

Salerno, the second largest of the five cities in Campania region in Southern Italy, is nothing less than a hidden gem on the Italian gulf. With just over 140,000 inhabitants, the city offers breath-taking views of the shore, dotted with yachts of all sizes, boats and cruise ships ferrying passengers to every holidaymaker's favourites—Amalfi, Capri and Ischia islands, Vietri and Positano.

The city is situated 50 kms south of Naples and two hours by road from the busy Rome Fiumicino Airport. The ride from the airport to Salerno takes you along several kilometres of hills and beautiful farmlands. But wait, the journey is just a prelude to what the destination beholds. From the hills, you enter straight into cobblestone streets lined with the trendiest brands and open cafes offering the best of Italian cuisines and a perfect glimpse into Italy's Roman history entwined with modern culture. Salerno is blessed with an incomparable landscape, ancient history and a rich cultural heritage.

The Salerno Beach is not just a part of the

reached its fame between the 11th and 13th centuries. It is known for its Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum (Salernitan Sanitary Regimen). It is considered the forerunner of modern universities of medicine in Europe.

Salerno has ancient origins, which is evident from the Arechi Castle. The 6th Century AD castle was built on Mount Bonadies and in the 16th century it became the residence of the Sanseverino princes. The castle was opened to public some years ago and houses a museum. It opens up for private functions, weddings and social gatherings. The view from the castle top is nothing short of stunning as you can view the entire crescent-shaped gulf while sipping your glass of perfect Italian wine.

Out of the myriad itineraries that one can choose from, the best is still on foot. Walking through the Villa Comunale built in 1874, one can simply relax and gaze through the variety of local, exotic and rare species of plants and trees. Close to this is the Verdi Theatre, which has witnessed many a famous artists perform here since

The view from the castle top is nothing short of

stunning as you can view the entire crescent-shaped gulf



Other than offering stunning views of the gorgeous gulf of Italy, wonderful landscapes, sunny beaches and azure waters, the city of Salerno provides great insights into Roman history and culture and the much-loved Italian cuisine.

SHIVANI KAUL

heritage

city, it is a lifestyle which engulfs people of all ages from all walks of life. A weekday does not deter locals and travellers alike to unwind on the glistening white sandy beach bracing the strong summer sun.

Starting 2006, visitors enjoy beautiful Artists' Lights, a series of illuminated decorations created by Italian artists that line the streets of Salerno and some parks and squares. Really worth visiting are those in the 'Villa Comunale' or the City Park.

Apart from this, the lesser known fact is that Salerno is also a centre of university education with an ancient tradition. The oldest school of medicine in Europe, the Salerno School of Medicine, was here and

its opening in 1872. Salerno's Bell Tower dates back to the 15th or 16th centuries and leans a bit to one side because part of it was built on solid Roman wall while the other part was built on crumbly soil. Just 100 meters from the Bell Tower is the Duomo di Salerno (Salerno Cathedral), dedicated to St. Matthew who was buried in Salerno. Inside the Cathedral, which boasts of baroque architecture, one can witness a mosaic representation of St. Matthew, probably from the 13th century.

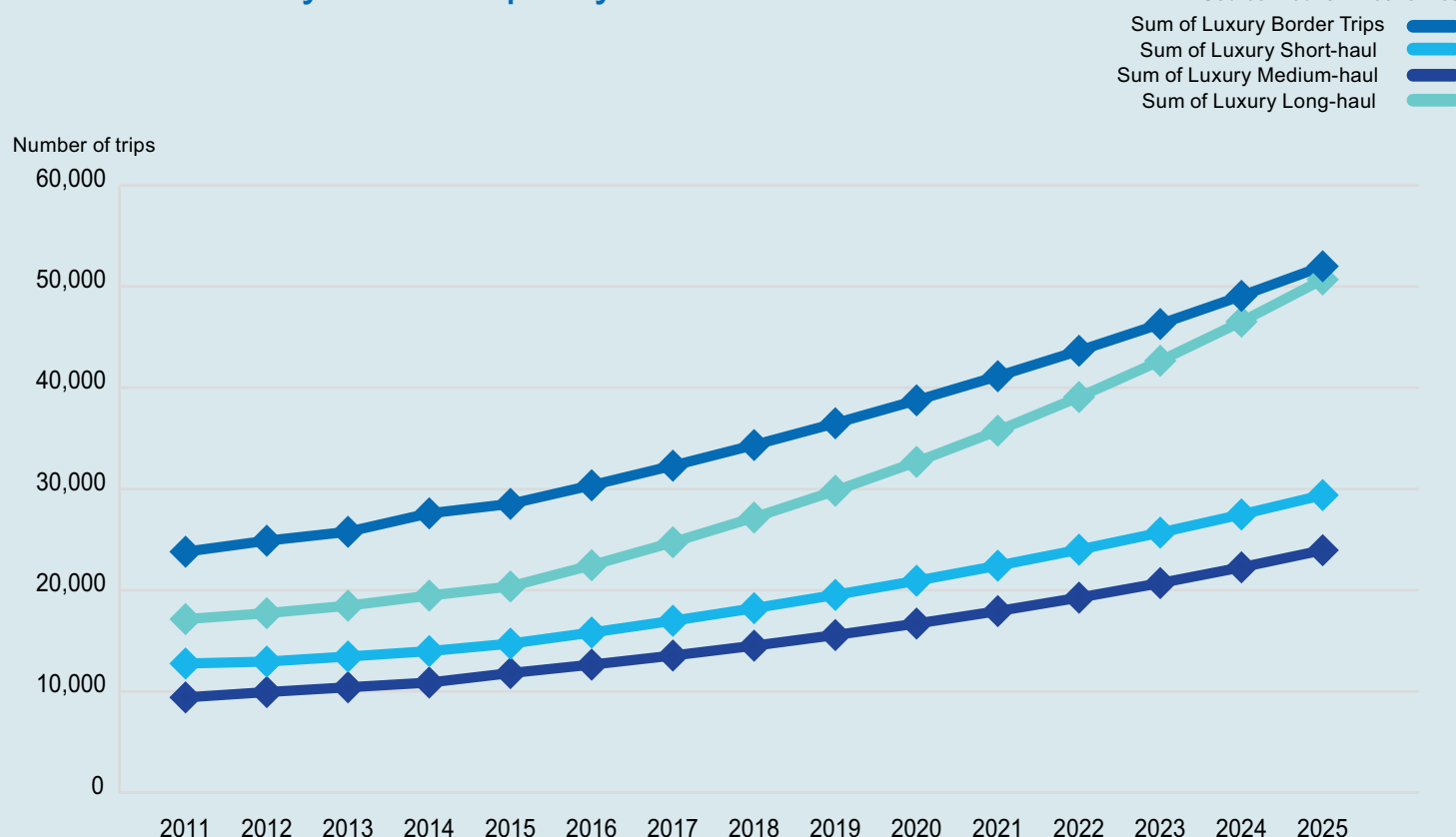
A visit to Salerno is incomplete without going to the new Zaha Hadid's Harbour Station and walk along the Lungomare in the sun. Not far from the Villa Comunale is the new Piazza della Liberta (Liberty Square) which is under construction. The square was designed by Spanish architect Ricardo Bofil and is part of the new Salerno waterfront. If weather permits, walk to the Molo Manfredi (Manfredi Wharf) and admire the new Stazione Marittima (Harbour Station) designed by renowned architect Zaha Hadid, an interesting piece of modern architecture. Boats from this harbour leave every day between April and October for Amalfi and Capri.

Luxury and budget benefit as travellers go for experiences

Luxury categories are benefiting from consumers trading up from mid-market brands to luxury. Whilst growth in budget remains popular, it doesn't bring vast returns. Moreover, budget players are faced with the challenge from travellers increasingly demanding premium services at lower prices. The trend affects every price point, which requires that luxury constantly updates to keep ahead of consumers' expectations.

Growth of luxury travel trips by distance

Source: Tourism Economics



Over the next 10 years, the growth rate in outbound luxury trips is

projected at **6.2%**, almost a third greater than overall travel (4.8%)

6.2%

projected 10-year
growth rate of
luxury travel

4.8%

projected 10-year
growth rate of
overall travel

The future of luxury travel

These statistics are a symptom of how polarised travel is becoming to reflect the wealth patterns of the world's citizens. At the other end of the spectrum, we are seeing the introduction of ultra-budget products, such as the launch of new cabin classes below economy from Delta, United and American Airlines. Luxury and budget markets will become increasingly extreme to cater to tomorrow's 'ultra'

market. Luxury long-haul travel will grow faster than any other form of travel, and will overtake border travel (travel between countries that share a border) shortly after 2025.

This is shown through Tourism Economics data that forecasts the distance of the next decade's luxury outbound trips based on current trends and growth rates.

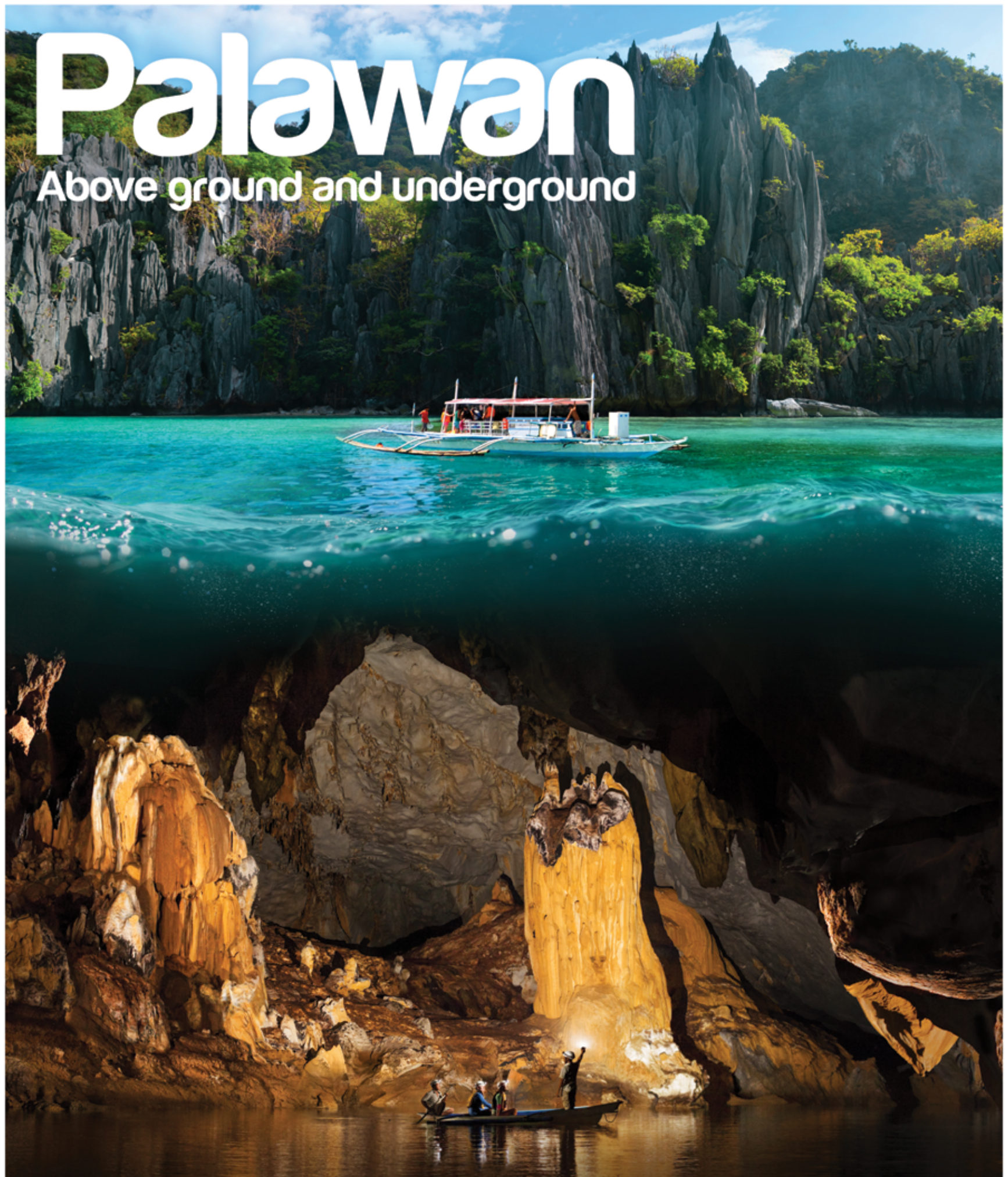
Source: Amadeus' Shaping the Future of Luxury Travel Future Traveller Tribes 2030

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