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SPECIAL ISSUE

OT&AI

Ras Al Khaimah

September 13-16, 2017

PATA

Macau

September 13-15, 2017

TravTalkIndia.com

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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# OTOAI all set for RAK

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Convention of Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) will be held from September 13-16, at Waldorf Astoria, Ras Al Khaimah, where the Indian travel trade will get to explore a new destination.

ANKITA SAXENA

The convention will bring together 160-170 delegates from the outbound tourism industry, where 95 per cent of the delegates will be the active members of OTOAI and a few will be the allied members, informs **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI. "The delegates can expect a wide spectrum of insights to enhance their knowledge and efficiency and gain a competitive advantage. As we navigate in an ever-changing environment, the convention is designed to understand the future vision of the travel industry and what we can do in light of these rapid developments. Apart from this, the delegates will get an opportunity to explore a new destination that they can add to their portfolio of products," says Sahni.



Guldeep Singh Sahni  
DDP Trailblazer and President,  
OTOAI

The convention will introduce new markets to the tour operators which will add value to the existing markets

The theme of the convention is 'Changing Times-Creating Opportunities' and



Riaz Munshi  
Vice President and Chairman Convention  
OTOAI

RAK will gain exposure from branding in the Indian outbound which in turn will increase their visibility

business sessions will focus on issues that the tourism industry is grappling with on

a daily basis and will also deliberate on the opportunities that lie ahead, points out **Riaz Munshi**, Vice President and Chairman Convention, OTOAI. "This year's convention is looking to address the most important issues impacting travel business today. It is a platform for constructive networking, strengthening relationships among members and reinforcing OTOAI's aim to foster an environment of collaboration with various stakeholders through our ideology of collective ambition," says Munshi.

He further elaborates that the convention will be very different this year as compared to its last edition. Tourism dynamics are changing rapidly and today's environment presents real opportunities and chal-

Contd. on page 18 ►

## Ashwani Lohani to head Railway Board, Rajiv Bansal is new Air India CMD

**Ashwani Lohani** has been appointed as Chairman, Railway Board, Ministry of Railways, and ex-officio Principal Secretary to Government of India vice A.K. Mital. He assumed charge of his new assignment on August 24. Prior to this assignment, Lohani was serving as Chairman and Managing Director, Air India. The government has appointed senior IAS officer **Rajiv Bansal** as the Chairman and Managing Director of Air India for three months. Bansal is additional secretary and financial advisor at the petroleum ministry.

A 1988 batch officer of Nagaland cadre, Bansal takes over this post at a time when the government is working on the modalities for the disinvestment of the loss-making national carrier. He had served at the civil aviation ministry between 2006 and 2008.

Lohani's transfer to Railway Board came in the



Ashwani Lohani  
Chairman, Railway Board  
Ministry of Railways

wake of A.K. Mittal's resignation from the position owing moral responsibility of the Puri-Haridwar Utkal Express derailment in Uttar Pradesh. Lohani has worked in various capacities in Ministry of Railways, Union Ministry of Tourism and in Government of Madhya Pradesh. Within the railways he has worked on the South Central, Eastern and Northern Railways besides the Diesel Locomotive Works at Varanasi and the Integral Coach Factory, at Chennai.

# PTM: Spotlight on new destinations

Slated to be held from September 13-15, 2017, in Macau, this edition marks PATA Travel Mart's 40<sup>th</sup> year of fostering business in APAC's travel and tourism industry.

AHANA GURUNG

Asia's premier trade show, PATA Travel Mart (PTM) has been instrumental in gathering industry professionals together to learn about new developments, attractions and activities, as well as interact and expand business networks since its inception 40 years ago. The edition will take place in the Venetian Macao Resort Hotel where B2B meetings, complimentary tours, seminars, networking dinners and an awards ceremony will be held over three days.

Throwing some light on the participation numbers,

**Mario Hardy**, CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), reveals, "We are expecting more than 1,000 delegates for PTM 2017. From South Asia, there are more than 45 organisations which have registered for the event with 20 from India." While Hardy asserts the trade show is not the only one that stems from the region, and its modest size is quite incomparable, he emphasises its ability to draw the spotlight to newer destinations.

He explains, "The reality is that PTM is not the only travel trade show in the region, as many have developed over the years. However, PTM is still the



"From South Asia, there are more than 45 organisations which have registered for the event with 20 from India."

Mario Hardy  
CEO, Pacific Asia Travel  
Association (PATA)

only one that is hosted in a new location every year. There are still many destinations that are

waiting to be discovered and we believe that we can help by bringing PATA Travel Mart

to them. We know that PTM is not the largest travel trade show in the region, but we sincerely believe that a human size event offers far greater opportunities for businesses to network and build genuine relationship." This strategy could also be looked upon as an effective tool for even dispersal of tourists to avoid overcrowding, something Hardy had highlighted during his interaction with Indian trade professionals in New Delhi last year.

This year, two half-day forums will be held on Wednesday, September 13, with the first one focusing on the travel

experience in Asia. Aptly termed "Travolution Forum Asia: Redefining the Travel Experience, this forum will look at strategies, business models and current technologies that encourage customer loyalty and repeat bookings throughout the complete cycle of the customer journey. The second forum, the Influencer Marketing Forum: The Most Effective Influencer Marketing Strategies in Travel in 2017 provides an overview of the influencer marketing landscape in 2017, a breakdown of the most effective strategies, and a list of best practices for maximising the results with influencers. ↓

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# 1<sup>st</sup> Odisha Travel Bazaar in mid Oct

FICCI, along with Department of Tourism, Govt. of Odisha, is organising the first Odisha Travel Bazaar (OTB) from October 15-17, 2017, in Bhubaneswar, to drive investment in the state for tourism development.

TT BUREAU

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha recently organised a roadshow in Delhi to apprise the travel trade about the various achievements of the state on the tourism front and update them about the investment opportunities during the first OTB.

Dr. Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee and Chairperson and Managing Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, informed that as many as 40 foreign tour operators from 19 countries; 10 top of the line inbound operators and wedding planners and 20 leading domestic tour operators from across India will be participating as hosted buyers at the event. The tourism fraternity of Odisha comprising hotels and



tour operators will be promoting the tourism products of Odisha as sellers, she added. Suri said, "Odisha Travel Bazaar is modelled on the lines of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB). Now that so many delegates will be travelling to Odisha for OTB, the state will be able to get the necessary exposure and also post show familiarisation trips will enable the state to showcase its untapped tourism potential."

There will be an inaugural session on October 15 at Mayfair Convention, Bhubaneswar, while the exhibition and pre-scheduled B2B and B2G meetings will be held

from October 16-17, at Swosti Premium, Bhubaneswar.

Ashok Chandra Panda, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of Odisha, said, "I invite all travel trade associations to host their conventions and other events in Odisha and to market and promote it as a favourable destination for inbound and domestic tourism."

Dr. Nitin Bhanudas Jawale, Director and Additional Secretary, Department of Tourism, Govt. of Odisha, informed that the state has doubled its marketing budget for tourism. "Last year, we received 77,000

foreign tourists in Odisha, while the domestic tourist arrivals were 1.28 crore. By the end of 2017, we believe that domestic tourism to the state will increase by 15 per cent while our target for foreign tourist arrivals is to grow the segment by almost 30 per cent," says Jawale. Other dignitaries present at the roadshow included J. K. Mohanty, Chairman-Tourism Panel, FICCI Odisha State Council and CMD, Swosti Group; Dr. A Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI, and Rahul Chakravarty, Consultant, FICCI. Representatives of leading travel trade associations like ADTOI, ATOAI and IATO were also present.

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## The great outbound dilemma

A great summer, despite taxation woes and demonetisation struggle, has made the outbound industry in India hopeful and look positively towards the upcoming holiday season once again. Come December, and Indians would all be set with their passports ready to be stamped. And they have a plethora of long haul and short haul destinations to choose from. Agents are coming up with interesting itineraries, but are concerned with the ever-growing online war. Indian travellers are price sensitive and would always go for the best bargain, and since GST might make the packages of tour operators expensive, the OTAs may come up to offer the best value for money. This is irking the traditional operators, but it is now up to travellers if they will opt for personalised travel itineraries through operators or go for what they see on their screens.

## Liquor ban clarity

The latest clarification by the Supreme Court, regarding the highway liquor ban for liquor vends alongside 500 metres of a highway, has brought some relief for hotels, restaurants and pubs in the cities. After relaxing the ban for Andaman and Nicobar Islands as well as nine districts in Uttarakhand, the Supreme Court has explained that this ban, which had been in force from April 1, 2017, is not valid for liquor vends on roads within city limits, but was only meant for selling of alcohol along roads that “provide connectivity between cities, towns and villages.” The hospitality industry which had been affected since the announcement of the ban has now welcomed the clarification as this had affected business in a big way for them, especially for MICE and weddings. The associations have welcomed the move saying that this would save many jobs and the tourism business of the country at large. This brings relief to about 70 per cent of the affected hotels, and we can expect good weddings and inbound season for these properties ahead.

# 25 years

## Trav Talk

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

### REDISCOVERING THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN



Inder Sharma  
President  
PATA International

Post the Gulf War and major economic reforms in India, had come the National Action Plan on tourism. **Inder Sharma**, President, PATA International, spoke regarding his expectations from the ambitious plan. Here are the salient points of his views:

- The National Action Plan is a very bold and ambitious plan that needed undivided attention of MOT, as well as utmost cooperation from the industry, states and other ministries.
- Tourism, not being a federal subject, has to depend on the responses and policies of the state governments, which is a reason of frustration as well.
- At the centre, minister of home affairs, commerce, finance and external affairs, have in the past not fully recognised the economic potential of tourism and its impact on foreign exchange earnings, employment, revenue and tax generator. These are the causes of industry's frustration.
- The most important part of this action plan is that it was evolved after a great amount of debate with the industry giving it an opportunity to make its contribution.
- Coupled with this initiative, the process of economic liberalisation would have a tremendous impact on the growth of tourism.

### ITDC HEAD AT LAST



Anil Bhandari  
Managing Director of Hotel  
Corporation of India (HCI)

Then (1992)

**Anil Bhandari**, who was the Managing Director of Hotel Corporation of India (HCI) in 1992, became the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Indian Tourism Development Corporation Limited (ITDC) that year. His appointment was seen as saving grace for ITDC, which was facing the challenge of disinvestment during the time.

Now (2017)



Ravneet Kaur  
CMD  
ITDC

**Ravneet Kaur** recently took over as the CMD of ITDC, at a time when the government yet again announced disinvestment of ITDC properties in March 2017. She is the first woman to be appointed at the position.

## India leads S. Asia in foreign arrivals

South Asia recorded an 8 per cent increase in international tourist arrivals in 2016, driven by India (+10%), the sub-region's top destination.

### International tourist arrivals

Destinations	Series	(1000)				Change (%)			Share (%) 2016*
		2010	2014	2015	2016*	14/13	15/14	16*/15	
Asia and the Pacific		208,108	269,489	284,028	308,409	6.1	5.4	8.6	100
South Asia		14,741	22,918	23,446	25,273	12.9	2.3	7.8	8.2
Afghanistan		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bangladesh	TF	303	125	-	-	-15.5	-	-	-
Bhutan	TF	41	133	155	210	14.9	16.2	35.1	0.1
India	TF	5,776	13,107	13,284	14,569	88.1	1.4	9.7	4.7
Iran	VF	2,938	4,967	5,237	4,942	4.2	5.4	-5.6	1.6
Maldives	TF	792	1,205	1,234	1,286	7.1	2.4	4.2	0.4
Nepal	TF	603	790	539	753	-0.9	-31.8	39.7	0.2
Pakistan	TF	907	965	-	-	70.8	-	-	-
Sri Lanka	TF	654	1,527	1,798	2,051	19.8	17.8	14.0	0.7

Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2017 edition



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TRAVTALK is printed, published and edited by Sanjeet on behalf of DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd., printed at Super Cassettes Industries Ltd., C-85, 86, 94, Sector-4, Noida, Dist.: Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh - 201301 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001  
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# Israel aggressively marketing in India

Israel's Ministry of Tourism organised its second roadshow in 2017 in India and travelled to six cities across the country, where they showcased their products through B2B workshops.

**NISHA VERMA**

**Hassan Madah**, Director, Israel Ministry of Tourism India, led the delegation for the roadshow and revealed their growth story in India. "We opened our office a couple of years back in India and saw a potential here as it was the number one market in Asia. Asia particularly has not been a big source of arrivals to Israel. However, Indians

Israel received around 35,000 Indian tourists from January to July this year, which marks a growth of 37 per cent. "Growth is happening from India, and we are expecting more Indians to come to Israel, especially after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country," he said. In fact, there are more Israelis coming to India. With a population of 8 million, around 59,000 Israelis came to India last year.

Madah revealed that getting Israeli visa is easy, and will get better in the times to come. "Indians do not have much of a problem in getting visa to Israel. They can get group visa for 10 and more people through travel agents, who will get it done from the ministry. The group visa is hassle-free. We also want to make it easier for groups of more than five people to get the visa in five days, and visa on arrival or online visa for individuals who have a valid Schengen visa. For that, we are in talks with the concerned Ministry, and we hope it would be done very soon," he informed.

There is good connectivity to Israel as well. El Al connects Mumbai with Tel Aviv 3-4 times a week, depending on the season. Even Turkish Airlines offers flight services from Mumbai and Delhi to Tel Aviv (via Istanbul), Ethiopian Airlines from Mumbai and Delhi to Tel Aviv (via Addis Ababa) and Aeroflot Russian Airlines from Delhi to Tel Aviv (via Moscow), as well as a few other European carriers.

Madah insisted that the launch of Air India flight from Delhi to Israel would prove to be a gamechanger for them. "Prime Minister Modi announced on his visit to Israel that he wants Air India to fly from Delhi, and I hope this happens very soon. We are in talks with Air India for the same. They are currently figuring out the route they will be taking to Israel. Once these things are finalised, the flight shall start."



Hassan Madah  
Director  
Israel Ministry of Tourism India

We also want to make it easier for groups of more than five people to get the visa in five days, and visa on arrival or online visa for individuals who have a valid Schengen visa

have been travelling abroad, and we have launched our campaigns here to increase their numbers to Israel," he revealed.

## DID YOU Know?

### Tourism soars

- Tourism is a major category of international trade in services. International tourism generated \$ 216 billion in exports through international passenger transport services rendered to non-residents in 2016, bringing the total value of tourism exports up to \$ 1.4 trillion, or \$ 4 billion a day on average.
- International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) in 2016 grew by 3.9% to reach a total of 1235 million worldwide, an increase of 46 million over the previous year.



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# Tier-II & III cities drive outbound market

Outbound tourism industry stakeholders identify emerging trends among Indian travellers: their changing choice of holiday destinations; new outbound market hubs in Tier-II and Tier-III cities; and the various reasons that are leading to these changes.



ANKITA SAXENA

“European destinations were extremely popular among Indians this summer. Greece, Croatia and the UK were the most popular destinations where Indians went to holiday for at least 8-15 nights. The reason for this increase is the ease of obtaining visas for these countries and also reduction in air fares to these destinations due to early-bird offers by airlines. Indians are also increasingly asking for shopping destinations and under this category, Florence, Milan and London remained popular. For the upcoming season, we have received a large number of queries for Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and upcoming destinations like Reunion Island and Fiji. Turkey is likely to pick up among Indians in the following months.”



**Shravan Bhalla**  
General Secretary  
OTOAI and CEO, High Flyer

“Though we saw high demand for destinations like Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Bali and UAE, it was heartening to record a growth in queries for our new destinations in Eastern Europe including Hungary, Czech Republic, Austria, Bulgaria and Greece. Seychelles too remained in demand along with Mauritius. Bollywood movies have had a big role to play in increasing popularity of destinations like Abu Dhabi and Spain. We see Eastern Europe picking up among Indians as it is more affordable compared to the rest of Europe. We expect demand for Sri Lanka and Maldives to grow with introduction of direct flights from Delhi. Almaty is another destination that we see growing in the coming months.”



**Pankaj Nagpal**  
Managing Director, Travstarz  
Global Group  
India Travel Award winner

“The outbound tourism industry has grown at a rapid pace despite demonetisation and implementation of GST, and there is a positive sentiment in the market towards travel which is very encouraging. I believe the upcoming season during Navratri and Diwali is very promising. In 2017 summers, Canada was very popular, especially for its Northern Lights. Though Europe remained popular, we witnessed a significant shift in destinations, where Scandinavian countries and Iceland were more popular than the usual European destinations. For the upcoming season, short-haul travel to destinations like Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Thailand and the Maldives will pick up. Ahmedabad, Pune and Chandigarh are the leading hubs for outbound travel among Tier-II and III cities.”



**Ankush Nijhawan**  
Managing Director, Nijhawan  
Group, India Travel Award winner



**Sujit Nair**  
Founder & Group Managing  
Director, Akquasun Group

“Bali has drawn interest among Indians this year owing to the direct flights and enhanced connectivity from other Indian cities. Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia have emerged as favourite destinations among Indian families and honeymoon couples owing to low exchange rates. Experiential travel is fast gaining popularity and this segment notches a growth of 15-20 per cent. Rather than visiting the run of the mill places, clients are creating their own, personal, emotion-based memories and destinations like Morocco, South Africa and Eastern Europe are gaining popularity in this segment. Self-drive is now opted by various travellers in destinations like Africa, Australia. Nagpur, Jaipur, Lucknow, Guwahati, Shillong and Tripura are some of the emerging hubs for outbound.”



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

“We have noticed that destinations in Eastern Europe like Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Croatia are doing well among Indian travellers because they are more affordable as compared to other parts of Europe especially the regular itineraries of London, Paris and Switzerland. Some upcoming destinations that we are really excited about are Mauritius, Reunion Island, the Maldives, Greece, Ireland, Spain, New Zealand, French Riviera, Mexico, Peru and Kenya. Indian tourists' spending power has been estimated to be four times than that of the Chinese or Japanese travellers. The average Indian travellers spends \$1,200 per visit as compared to the American or British traveller. Smaller cities like Jaipur, Ahmedabad and Amritsar are emerging as important source markets for outbound travel.”

“Europe has been popular as always, but the reach is extending to East Europe (Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria), further to the Baltics and Caucasus. Other specific destinations in Europe like Iceland, Ireland, Portugal, Denmark and Germany have gained interest in past few years and continue to grow. Destination accessibility due to increase in airline connections; easier visa procedures; destination awareness are some of the reason leading to the increased interest. For the upcoming months, South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia are expected to do well. Some other emerging destinations include Central Asia, Morocco, Patagonia (Chile, Argentina), Mexico, Arctic regions for Northern Lights, Antarctica Cruise, Abu Dhabi, Oman, Israel, and Jordan.”



**Amit Kalsi**  
Founder and CEO, Experiential  
Travel Journeys  
India Travel Award winner

“Europe always tops the chart for Indian outbound. This year lots of people showed interest in Central and Eastern Europe with Prague, Vienna and Budapest recording the maximum growth. Iceland has emerged as the most sought-after high-end destination. Unexplored parts of Europe like Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia are generating a buzz among FIT travellers. This is mainly an influence from Bollywood films that are shot in these locations. Cities like Indore, Bhubaneswar Guwahati, Coimbatore, Vizag and Mangalore are some of the cities in Tier-II and Tier-III markets that are doing very good numbers for us.”



**Sriram Rajmohan**  
CEO and MD, Club7 Holidays  
India Travel Award winner

“Europe saw maximum growth in 2017 due to value for money air fares and new flight connections, particularly on Air India. New DMCs have opened up which are more flexible on working on more reasonable margins. They are willing to work on service-wise rates, hence, an increased number of outbound players are entering the market as compared to earlier times when the market was dominated by a few DMCs. Europe will continue to generate interest among people and other than that, Maldives and Sri Lanka are other emerging destinations among Indian travellers. From East India, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati are doing great. We are also contemplating to set up an office in Raipur, another growing market.”



**Sanjay Kothari**  
Director & CEO,  
Just Holidays  
India Travel Award winner

“Family travel was very popular among Indian travellers this summer. Popular destinations among Indians such as Singapore and Hong Kong topped the charts for us as these are family-friendly destinations and are also easy to reach in less time. Travel decisions these days are driven by children and thus destinations that offer sports and fun activities gain traction. With addition of various tourism products especially offering family-oriented activities, Dubai continues to be a very popular destination. We are looking at huge queries for island destinations like Bora Bora, Tahiti and Seychelles in the upcoming months.”



**Lalit Singh**  
Chief Operating Officer  
STH Group  
India Travel Award winner

Contd. on page 12 ▶

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# Taxing times not yet over for agents

The Chapter Chairmen of OTOAI share with TRAVTALK the trends, achievements and challenges that the travel agents and operators are facing in their region. They also elaborate on the various initiatives taken to address the issues of the members and their expectations from the upcoming convention.

ANKITA SAXENA

“West India is one of the highest contributors to outbound and is showing a steady growth year-on-year. We have taken up the issue of lack of clarity on transit visa rules in the Schengen countries (when final destination is not USA or Canada) with the Consulates and highlighted the challenges faced by the industry. Traditional destinations and long-haul markets like the US, Canada, Europe, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand are still very popular. Island destinations like Seychelles and Croatia are doing well. I hope that the convention will reinforce great business potential of the industry and educate the members.”



**Mahendra Vakharia**  
Chairman-Western Chapter,  
OTOAI

“Outbound market from the South has been consistent, especially with cities like Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore driving business. There is increased family travel to destinations like Bali, Dubai, Singapore and Thailand's Krabi and Koh Samui islands for short-haul whereas Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa are popular long-haul destinations. An emerging travel trend in the South is travelling for bachelor parties, wedding anniversaries, etc. The biggest challenge in outbound in this region is uncertainty of taxation policies and the confusion created by GST. The OTOAI team in the South has made efforts to connect travel agents with various tourism boards in order to grow their portfolio of business.”



**Manish Kriplani**  
Chairman-Southern Chapter,  
OTOAI

“The northern region for OTOAI has always been the most proactive regions when it comes to education, networking and strategic tie-ups. Initiatives taken so far include knowledge sessions in the form of training workshops and roadshows in collaboration with various NTOs, hotels and other valuable partners from time to time. Strategic tie-ups with government bodies, embassies, hotels and airlines have also been taken up for the betterment of the members. From demonetisation to GST, the industry had taken a setback, but we at OTOAI have tried our best to get the right resources and information for our members to overcome these challenges. Clarification on GST was one of the major issues for the industry.”



**Vineet Gopal**  
Chairman-Northern Chapter,  
OTOAI



**Sajan Kumar Gupta**  
Chairman-Eastern Chapter,  
OTOAI

“East India is highly underserved in terms of air inventory. The only major airport for this entire region is at Kolkata and the number of flights serving this region are far and few, which slows outbound travel. The association has not taken many steps to address this issue. We are hoping Turkish Airlines, Oman Airlines and Malaysian Airlines will commence service to this region. This year, New Zealand and South Africa have picked up very well from the eastern region. With

the OTOAI Convention in RAK, tour operators will be able to add a new destination to their itinerary for UAE other than Dubai.”



**Gurdeep Gujral**  
Joint Secretary, OTOAI

“Through this convention in Ras Al Khaimah, we will be able to open a new window in the UAE and till now have received a very good response from the industry in terms of participation for the convention. I feel that the 5 per cent GST on tour operators as against the 9 per cent Service Tax on tour packages is an achievement. The Government is also aiding the growth in the outbound tourism industry with the development of airport infrastructure. As a result, this year, Australia received 33 per cent more Indian visitors, and Canada too has shown a good growth in Indian arrivals.”



**Kapil Berera**  
Treasurer  
OTOAI

“Travellers are now seeking adventurous and bespoke holidays. City tours and shopping are passé, and travellers ask for yacht charters, deep sea diving etc. Cities like Kanpur, Lucknow, Punjab, Nagpur, etc. are emerging as travel hubs while the metros are now more of gateway points. The outbound tourism industry has yet not been identified as an exports industry, which has attracted unnecessary taxation. We are hoping that during this convention, we will be able to open the mindsets of the traditional travel agents towards experimenting with this segment of travel.”

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# Challenges galore, trade undeterred

In the past one year, outbound tourism sector has witnessed quite a few blows — from demonetisation to doubling of service tax and finally Goods and Services Tax. However, industry insiders say that they have survived these jolts and are going strong, with new vigour to keep their business as usual.

TT BUREAU

“Issues like demonetisation, and recent taxation issues only had a short term effect on outbound tourism. In the beginning, people were not able to understand the tax-related issues properly and got a little bit confused but when they did understand the nitty-gritties, things came back on track. We are getting good numbers of outbound queries and most of the queries are getting confirmed. More than 50 per cent travellers are going abroad first time but there has been no problem in making the payment due to demonetisation, which happened last year.”



**Jitender Sharma**  
Director  
All Right Holidays

“During demonetisation last year, we were hit by a short-term jolt. For most of our consumers, travel then seemed to be not an immediate requirement. Unfortunately, soon after we were hit with increased taxation, we realised that the sentiments in terms of consumer uptake was a bit dampened. That was when we smartly and strategically created something like Amazon's Black Friday Sales, as well as The Grand Indian Holiday Sale, to catalyse demand and inspire consumer. Then we did another campaign—Thomas Cook goes local. After that there was no stopping us and our growth trajectory increased.”



**Suzanne Pereira**  
Senior Vice President Trade Relationships & Communications  
Thomas Cook

“The year has been quite tough and has affected outbound tourism. Customers are becoming more wary and are probably trying to do online transactions because then the tax issue does not come into play and the price becomes cheaper. However, some of the clients feel that they would still like the services of a travel agent and are willing to pay the tax and go with it. Thus, for us it has been not so bad. Business has come, but not as much as expected. A lot of people have decided that they will hold back their holidays till things stabilise.”



**Chitra Bhatia**  
Managing Director  
Aashman Air Travels



**Sunita Amarnani**  
Head of Products  
Contracting & Operations  
Strawberi Holidays, a Division of Kesari Tours

“Demonetisation and new taxation rules have affected outbound tourism, but somehow, I believe our clients who have to travel, do travel. They may compromise on the inclusions and hotel categories; or instead of taking two holidays a year, they would take one such holiday; but they definitely travel. Sadly, they do not put in the money down immediately and instead wait for a long time before taking any decision. The market has changed and the travel agents and tour operators have to innovate to deal with the current situation.”



**Ritesh Mundhra**  
Director  
Choice Holidays

“While the taxation is a little hard for us, international tours are going much better than last year. There was no breakdown and no effect of demonetisation on our business. However, the change in taxation has certainly impacted the market, especially with tax on packages and hotel bookings. There are people who book the package but they want to pay the supplier directly. Some of them are directly contacting the suppliers to save the increased tax. We are losing business. This is the main issue we are facing these days.”



**Siddharth Jain**  
Director, Click2Travel & Sapphire Ventures

“Demonetisation did not really affect us much. It was only for the initial 15 days. However, the new taxes have made a lot of difference and clients are moving towards the online medium to book and save these taxes. It is not an encouragement for tour operators. The government is not realising but they are discouraging passengers booking through tour operators by which they get employment as well as some income tax benefit. While these things have made a difference, the outbound season did not change much, as people still need tour operators for long-haul destinations.”



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# Eastern Europe finds favour with India

► Contd. from page 8



**Himanshu Patil**  
Director, Kesari Tours  
India Travel Award winner

“We have seen South America as an emerging destination among Indian travellers. Destinations like Chile, Peru, Argentina and Brazil have started to create a buzz in the market as Indians are now done with the run-of-the-mill destinations in South-East Asia and are seeking newer places for a holiday. Pune has emerged as a top source market for outbound travel from the western region, with other cities like Satara, Nashik and Aurangabad following in its stride. In 2017, Eastern European destinations remained a popular choice, like Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovenia, etc.”



**Rajeev Sabharwal**  
CEO  
Gaurav Travels

“Outbound tourism is being driven by smaller cities like Bhopal, Meerut, Lucknow and Ghaziabad for leisure travel, while Amritsar and Muzaffarpur are driving MICE and incentive business. Indian travellers are seeking new destinations, but the most popular ones still remain short-haul destinations like Thailand, Macau, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Dubai. Almaty saw an increased demand for celebrations like bachelorettes, anniversaries and birthdays. Eastern Europe also saw many Indian travellers this year, with Croatia, Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, Slovakia being the highlight. Wine tours and gourmet trails are becoming popular in Italy. Ibiza in Spain is also coming up among party-goers while Seychelles and Maldives are gaining interest amongst beach lovers and honeymooners.”

“We have seen a growing interest towards CIS countries like Tajikistan, Georgia and Armenia this year. This increase in interest is mainly because people are now looking for new destinations and also, the CIS region offers short-duration flights, consequently serving as quick getaways from the usual destinations. Seychelles has done well as a beach destination while Thailand and Maldives have continued to charm Indians. Sri Lanka and Almaty have picked up for both MICE and leisure segments. East Africa is also a destination that Indians are now shifting to. In terms of Tier-II and Tier-III markets, cities like Surat, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Indore, Kanpur, Jaipur and Udaipur have become hubs for outbound travel. The trend is growing demand for experiential travel.”



**Rohit Shorey**  
Director  
Destination Travel Services



**Siddharth Khanna**  
Partner  
Khanna Enterprises

“Europe continues to remain as the most popular travel destination amongst Indian travellers and also sold the maximum due to high demand. However, there is a shift in the destinations that travellers are now seeking within Europe. We observed that people travelled to the lesser explored regions in Italy like Amalfi Coast, Capri and Monte Carlo. Croatia and Montenegro have also done well this year. For the upcoming season, Almaty has gained interest and the usually popular destinations will grow further. One important trend this year has been cruise tourism. In terms of Tier-II and III cities, Ludhiana, Jalandhar and other cities in Punjab are driving the outbound travel segment from India.”

“CIS countries like Kazakhstan, Armenia, Baku, Almaty, Tashkent and Kyrgyzstan have picked up the most for us in 2017. These destinations are doing well because they're value for money and have proven to be good in business. This summer season Mauritius topped the charts for us followed by Dubai. There are multiple attractions that have opened in Dubai which continue to attract Indians coupled with cheap promotional air fares. In the coming season, we are hoping for increase in traffic to Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Reunion Island. Smaller cities are also picking up, like Bhopal, Agra, Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Kanpur, and more cities are expected to emerge.”



**Rishi Khandelwal**  
Director, Wishbone India  
India Travel Award winner



**Ashwani K. Gupta**  
Managing Partner  
Dove Travels

“This summer, Indians mostly visited Dubai, destinations in the Far East, the UK, US, Canada and Europe. The dominant reason for this trend was noted to be cheap air fares offered by various airlines. South America is also picking up for clients who want something new. The upcoming months will witness wedding travel season. Given the growing interest for destination weddings, we have some projects for Turkey, Mexico, Italy and Spain, etc. Thailand, Cancún in Mexico and Antalya in Turkey are also very popular destination for Indian weddings. For the honeymooners, Mauritius, Maldives and Bali are first choices.”



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# Spain promotes Canary Islands

Encouraged by crossing the 100,000 arrival mark from India, the Tourism Office of Spain, along with Pullmantur Cruises, is expanding its product base, with a focus on Canary Islands, to appeal to a larger outbound market.



HAZEL JAIN

The Tourism Office of Spain in Mumbai recently conducted a workshop on Canary Islands in association with Pullmantur Cruises for the travel agents in Mumbai. A stand-alone workshop focused on this exotic destination indicates the NTO's desire to expand its product base and appeal to a larger

Ibiza. Now, there is some interest in new destinations as well, such as Bilbao, Mallorca and Canary Islands."

Speaking about Canary Islands, Ducasse adds, "We have always included Canary Islands in our presentations and will continue to do so in similar workshops that we plan in Hyderabad and many other cities in India." Spain Tourism will bring a big

delegation of suppliers from Spain to Delhi, Ahmedabad and Chennai from October 4-6, 2017.

Canary Islands is a group of seven islands located in the South of Spain, about 2.5 hours from Madrid. All islands have airports and are connected by sea as well. They enjoy special tax status, with least duty and VAT in Spain. ↴

## Horizon at Canary calling India

"This winter, Pullmantur Cruises' Horizon will be stationed at Canary Islands from November 25, 2017 to March-end 2018. There is no extra charge for alcohol, entertainment, etc. We are promoting multiple itineraries including the seven-nighter that includes five islands but also the four- and six-nights as well as the special New Year sailings. These itineraries are new for the Indian market so we are offering special rates to the trade starting from under ₹40,000 per person for seven nights. We are targeting the wedding as well as the conferences and events segments. All cruises on Pullmantur are commissionable at 10 per cent for FITs while groups will get a special rate and pricing depending on the size and the activities."



**Vivek Jain**  
Managing Director  
Griffon



**Ignacio Ducasse**  
Director and Tourism Counsellor  
Tourism Office of Spain, Mumbai

The main destinations that these Indian travellers visited were Barcelona, Madrid, Andalusia, Valencia and Ibiza. However, there is some interest in new destinations such as Bilbao, Mallorca and Canary Islands

audience who may be looking to explore Spain in a more offbeat way.

This is perhaps spurred by the encouraging response Spain has received from India last year as Indian tourist arrivals crossed the 100,000 mark. **Ignacio Ducasse**, Director and Tourism Counsellor, Tourism Office of Spain, Mumbai, says, "Spain registered 105,646 Indian arrivals in 2016, an increment of almost 18 per cent over the previous year. For the first time, it has witnessed more than 100,000 tourists coming from India. Our latest data indicates that their average stay was seven to eight nights, which makes it a total of approximately 780,000 nights. Year 2017 has been even better. We have figures till May and the increase is over 40 per cent as compared to the same period last year. The main destinations that these Indian travellers visited were Barcelona, Madrid, Andalusia, Valencia and



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# Aussies roll out red carpet for Indians

ITM 2017 witnessed a record 200 delegates congregating in Pune, Maharashtra, over 4 days of business meetings. **Brent Anderson**, Regional General Manager, South/South East Asia, Tourism Australia, shares why this year's ITM Pune was bigger and how Tourism Australia has been driving growth from the Indian market.



SHAHZAD BAGWAN

## How different is this year's ITM from the previous ones?

This year's India Travel Mission (ITM) is special for us for three reasons—we are celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this is the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of ITM and lastly, we have a record number of delegates this ITM with 84 seller delegates and 110 buyer delegates. Also, this year we have had 275,000 visitor arrivals from India to Australia, growth being at 15.3 per cent. There were 31,000 visitors from India during the month of May 2017, a 13 per cent increase over May 2016. This was the highest ever visitation in any given month from India to Australia. This is the fourth consecutive year we have witnessed double digit growth in the arrivals. For the year ending March 2017, Indian visitors spent AUD 1.34 billion (₹ 6,400 crore) on their Australian trips, an increase of 18 per cent over the previous year.

## How are you working with airlines to increase capacity from India market?

Aviation access is very critical for any destination and we have got eight airlines to

fly into Australia and work with us, offering some great fares. We have achieved phenomenal success by having 10,200 bookings in the first phase and 18,100 bookings in the second phase, in a span of three weeks. Some of our broadcast projects with Indian television channels like Star Plus, Sun TV, Zee Marathi etc. have helped us increase awareness and attract tourists from India. The growth we have been recording is the result of these

Lumpur but from Singapore to Australia and Kuala Lumpur to Australia. Our campaigns help the airlines to increase their load factors which help them to drive yield and get more profits and once you have profitable routes, you increase capacity out of those markets.

## How do you see introduction of e-visa for Indian visitors?

We have recently announced the launch of e-

be in one of our top 5 markets by 2025.

As far as visa facilitation is concerned, the Australian immigrations system is always considered as a benchmark by other immigrations departments. We are the first ones to announce the preferred breaking programme which provided visa processing to 105 top agents in India. Then we launched the electronic al-

## How has the share of travellers increased to Australia?

Business travellers account for 12 per cent of our total arrivals from India market into Australia. Holiday purpose visitation share has increased from almost 19 per cent to 27 per cent over the last 4-5 years. Holiday spend over the last three years has gone up to 18 per cent. Per capita spend on holidays has gone up from AUD 3,000 to AUD 4,000. Repeat visitation on holidays has gone up from 22 per cent to 33 per cent. We would like to target 300,000 Indian visitor arrivals this year.

To achieve this, we have been following an integrated brand approach. We have been using the digital mediums and have seen a significant increase in our digital spend. We work closely with our distribution and airline partners. Working with the travel trade will also be an important aspect of our strategy. Currently, our focus is on eight markets and for B2C markets our focus is on three markets namely Maharashtra, Delhi and Karnataka. When it comes to our PR and distribution activities, we focus on other five markets, making it six metros

and then adding Ahmedabad and Pune to it. These are our geographical focus markets as they contribute to 80 per cent of our total arrivals.

## How has the response been for Aussie Specialist programme this year?

Under the Aussie Specialist programme, almost 7400 Indian agents have enrolled, a 24 per cent increase over the previous year. Out of these 7400 agents, there are 3400 agents who are qualified Aussie Specialists in the country. Apart from this programme, we have also trained 1200 travel agents across the country.

## What are the market strategies to drive growth from India market?

Overall strategy for 2017-18 is to drive yield and by that we tend to increase spend per person, which is only possible by making people stay for longer durations. For this we will be adding new destinations and products for which ITM is a perfect platform. India's overnight visitor spend has the potential to reach up to AUD 1.9 billion. Since the launch of the India 2020 programme, our budgets for the India market has doubled.

“We have recently announced the launch of e-visa applications for Indian passport holders which will give a boost to the numbers. Tourism Australia has been active in 15 markets and India has been a key growing market for us. We see India growing to its potential in the next 7 to 10 years and it will be in one of our top 5 markets by 2025.”

**Brent Anderson**

Regional General Manager South/South East Asia  
Tourism Australia



initiatives. We would want the airlines to increase capacity out of the Indian market. We would want Air India to add more flights to Australian cities. We'd want Singapore Airlines and Malaysia Airlines to add more capacity not just from India to Singapore or Kuala

visa applications for Indian passport holders, which will give a boost to the numbers. Tourism Australia has been active in 15 markets and India has been a key growing market for us. We see India growing to its potential in the next 7 to 10 years and it will

lotment of visa applications for preferred agents and later on, we launched three-year multiple-entry visa for Indians having sound travel history. The introduction of e-visas will encourage corporates to choose Australia for their next business event.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> round of UDAN bid to improve connectivity to NE, J&K

■ Minister of Civil Aviation **P Ashok Gajapathi Raju** announced the commencement for bidding for the second round of the Regional Connectivity Scheme – UDAN. He said that the thrust in the second round will be on improving connectivity to priority areas like the North East, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand,

Himachal Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep by introducing more operational flexibility and promoting helicopter operations. The Minister informed that the changes in the second round of UDAN had been brought in after extensive consultations with stakeholders over the last four months.

Among the important changes that are being effected, routes with stage length less than 150 kms will now be permitted for operations as RCS Routes through fixed wing aircraft. This is aimed at providing enhanced connectivity and ease the formation of networks under the Scheme. While exclusivity of operations

will continue to be applicable for a period of 3 years, Selected Airline Operators (SAO) can issue No-Objection Certificate (NOC) to other airline operators willing to operate on the respective RCS Route. This will ensure there is no supply constraint on RCS Routes. To provide more flexibility to Selected Airline Operators

(SAO), the maximum number of flights with VGF have been increased to 14 for Priority Areas. Further, the SAOs can anytime increase the number of flights on RCS Routes to any number. Also, minimum performance specifications will no longer be applicable on Non-RCS Routes. Helicopter operations under the Scheme are

limited to Priority Areas only. To encourage this, the VGF Caps for helicopters has been increased and 10% of the estimated annual inflows in the RCF will be earmarked for helicopter operations. Further, all 13 passenger seats for helicopters will be considered as RCS Seats and VGF will be provided accordingly.

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# 75% from hotels to MMT biz by 2020

While MakeMyTrip's losses have considerably widened during the year's first quarter, **Deep Kalra**, Chairman & Group CEO, plans to accelerate growth in the hotel segment by continuing to offer deep discounts and investing in other companies.



AHANA GURUNG

**Q**What has been going on in the backdrop of the Ibibo Group acquisition?

A lot of progress has been made in the past six months (from February), and we've managed to integrate a lot of the tech platforms (consciously not all – we don't want

to boil the ocean because that's tough). We've managed to look at the best of the processes from both and managed to get one brand or another to use the other, but most importantly, we've managed to integrate the people.

The company has been growing these past few months with very little hiccups. Perhaps

**“We raised \$330 million this year and we now have about half a billion dollars on the sheet. Clearly, these are for continued investments in the hotel space.”**

**Deep Kalra**  
Chairman & Group CEO  
MakeMyTrip



This way we continue to scale up in the industry and much faster.

**Q**What are your plans for promotions since the funds allocated have increased by almost 49 per cent?

Our promotions are majorly targeted at the Indian consumer but we are focused on accelerating the growth of hotel bookings online. Most of these promotions are on television, like discounts and coupons, and as people get used to the medium and appreciate the real convenience, then even with typically smaller discounts, they don't go anywhere.

**Q**Are you still focused on budget hotels as well?

Budget hotels for us is a very important area. We have partnered with new-age budget hotel aggregators and now have our own sub-brands in the form of HomeStays, Value+ and MMT Assured Hotels and are putting a lot of focus in this too.

## MMT launches MyBusiness for SMEs

In a bid to tap into the growing corporate travel segment in India, MakeMyTrip has launched MyBusiness, a convenient, transparent and efficient self-booking tool on the MMT app. The tool will help keep control in the hands of the company while providing corporate travel benefits and savings for all. MyBusiness will not only make businesses of any size avail best corporate travel deals but will also bring down friction in the expense process. By introducing the new corporate wallet on MyBusiness, the companies will be able to reduce payment inefficiencies, liabilities and potential corporate card abuse – in turn providing employees and companies greater flexibility. This would be supported via dedicated corporate help-desks which will be operational 24x7.

by the end of the year, we'll be able to say we've achieved 95 per cent of what we've wanted to do and some major long-term projects will continue.

**Q**Tell us about MMT's Q1 2017 results?

We crossed \$1 billion gross bookings during the first quarter. In terms of revenues, we raked in over \$140 million net revenue. Hotels, which is our strategic area, contributes 57 per cent of our business. By 2020, we expect it to be 75 per cent. Not so long ago, when we went public in 2010, it was 90 per cent air travel. Now

air has come down to the 30s of our business but we also have this interesting bus business coming in from RedBus. Holistically, this is now looking like a healthier product mix which an OTA should have.

We raised \$330 million this year and we now have about half a billion dollars on the sheet. Clearly, these are for continued investments in the hotel space. But we now also have a kitty that we can use to make other strategic investments, so we're constantly looking at companies we could invest in.

**Q**Other international OTAs like Booking.com are increasingly gaining traction in the country. What's your strategy to counter competition?

Whatever the consumer pinpoints, we've found solutions for it and that has been our USP. We also study our cohorts and focus on improving tech – we are studying algorithms based on big data, analytics as well as artificial intelligence in order to serve our customers. A third of our customers are being exposed to chatbots and they love the experience.

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## Ezeego1 tackles disruptions

Ezeego1.com recorded a mid-year growth of 25 per cent in air and hotel packages. This year, Ezeego1.com is introducing Israel and New South Wales to its clientele.

TT BUREAU

Business has been good for Ezeego1.com in 2017 so far despite disruptive policy measures like demonetisation and GST, informs **Neelu Singh**, CEO and Director, Ezeego1.com. "For us, Europe, USA and Far East Asia brought in maximum business this year while business for Australia and New Zealand picked up. We have witnessed a mid-year growth of around 25 per cent in air and hotel packages. Our family holiday segment, which accounts for almost 50 percent of our business, is the strongest outbound travel segment," says Singh. Apart from summer holiday packages, the company also saw an increase in hotel bookings and packages for long weekends across cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad.

Singh points out that while popularity of destinations like Europe, Australia, Thailand, Dubai and Singapore continues to grow, the concept of experiential travel has marked



**Neelu Singh**  
CEO and Director  
Ezeego1.com

the emergence of new and offbeat destinations. "Basis our customer feedback and enquiries, we are marketing destinations like Israel, New South Wales, Austria and New Zealand this year. For instance, Austria is marketed for the culture and scenic beauty and Israel for its history," adds Singh.

Ezeego1.com enhanced its online hotel product with a target to reach out to 10,000 travel agents across India that cater to all budgets and has received an overwhelming response in the B2B market, informs Singh. "In outbound

market, we saw a 2x growth in passenger count to short-haul destinations such as Thailand, Dubai, Singapore. We have introduced packages that can cater all kinds of customer requests, be it for low-ticket/short-haul or premium-size/long-haul destinations and are also introducing a wide assortment of products that will help us to cater to a bigger consumer base. We are expecting this strategy to drive 30-40 per cent growth in outbound leisure," she adds.

Deliberating on the marketing plans for the company this year, Singh elaborates that Ezeego1.com has made marketing alliances with key international tourism boards to identify and market their offerings to the target groups in India. "Our focus in B2B market is to strengthen our relationships with associates in the trade, including agents, suppliers, tourism boards and other alliance networks. We have been working on strategic partnerships with many major tour operators and travel agencies across Tier-II and -III markets."

## B for budget & BOHO

Travel Boutique Online (TBO) along with Boho Hospitality launched its first budget hotel – Tatsa by BOHO – in Rishikesh and the next hotel will be launched in a few months in Delhi.

TT BUREAU

This new chain of budget hotels aims to serve the millennials and provide them with a comfortable, clean and chic stay at a pocket-friendly price. Commenting on the launch of BOHO Hotels, **Ankush Nijhawan**, CEO, Travel Boutique Online, says, "We are excited to flag off our budget hotels to the budget and millennial travellers and we intend to open 8-10 hotels in Tier-II and Tier-III cities in the next 12-18 months. We believe there is a lot of demand for budget hotels in the market and especially with GST being implemented, we felt the



**Akshuna Bakshi**  
CEO  
Boho Hospitality

time is right to venture into the Tier-II and Tier-III cities. To begin with, we have opened the first hotel in Rishikesh. The second hotel will be launched in a few months in Delhi." The

company will soon venture into other cities like Jaipur, Pune, Hyderabad and Cochin, adds Nijhawan.

The venture managed by Boho Hospitality is an attempt to address issues faced by tourists staying in budget hotels, such as lack of standardisation of rooms, quality service and absence of operational control by room aggregator chains in the budget hotel category. TBO, with its massive network of travel agents, would propel sales for the chain in both offline as well as online markets and help in establishing BOHO as a trusted budget hotel brand in India. **Akshuna Bakshi**, CEO, Boho Hospitality, adds, "The brand name strives to embed the elements of a Bohemian lifestyle in its hotels and provide boutique hospitality at a reasonable price to the free spirited, smart vagabonds of today. The hotel will offer all amenities, like aesthetically designed air-conditioned rooms, free Wi-Fi, TV, a trendy onsite cafe, parking and more, to its guests."



## Glimpse of China's Sanya

A group of tour operators, airlines, hoteliers from Sanya, China, held a promotional event in the capital to raise awareness about the destination and the new flight linking the two cities.

TT BUREAU

On the occasion of the launch of China Southern Airlines' flight between New Delhi and Sanya, a tropical destination in the south of China's Hainan Island, Sanya Tourism Development Organisation recently held a promotional event in New Delhi. The event was graced by the members of prominent travel trade associations, as well as various travel agents and tour operators from the region.



**Thomson Zhang**  
Vice Director, Sanya Tourism Development  
Commission, Marketing Communication Centre

Development Commission, Marketing Communication Centre, said, "With this, we're hoping to build traffic for the newly launched flight route that connects New Delhi to Sanya through China Southern Airlines. Not many Indians are aware of the destination, and we aim to change that. Sanya is a beach destination in Hainan province where tourists come to soak up the sun, sand and sea and disengage from the buzz of the city life."

Sanya has 256 hotels, with 46 international brands, and about 100 hotels on the beach. Plus there's a lot to experience: golf, snorkeling, jet skiing and rain forest hiking

**Thomson Zhang**, Vice Director, Sanya Tourism

With a 20 kilometre-long beach line, the destination is packed with a lot of activities for tourists like golf courses, water sports such as snorkelling and jet-skiing, rainforest hiking to name a few. Its natural scenic beauty is also commendable while the ethnic cultural experience of Sanya is worth a visit. Sanya has 256 hotels, with 46 international brands with as many as 100 hotels on the beach.

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## Grand Dragon roars in Leh

Located at a height of 11,562 ft. in Leh, Ladakh, The Grand Dragon is the finest stay option for those travelling to this coveted destination.



The highest level of luxury at the roof of the world' is undoubtedly the best way to describe The Grand Dragon, Ladakh. Explaining this is **Danish Din**, Director, The Grand Dragon, Ladakh, who says, "We try to maintain international standards at our hotel and of course, provide all the basic amenities. The most important requirements in Leh are clean and hygienic rooms along with hot water, as the temperature drops to -30°C. There's no other hotel in the region even open at -30°C."



Din further says, "Set up in 2007, this hotel, built despite the challenges of being located at high altitudes, redefined hospitality in Leh and set a benchmark for other establishments that came up subsequently."

One of the strongest USPs of the property is its family-oriented environment, combined with luxurious ambience. Designed and decorated in traditional Ladakhi architecture, with modern facilities like Wi-Fi, satellite Internet, in-house laundry and 24-hour power backup, the property is a class apart. "All our rooms are mountain facing and all have the view of snow peak that is, Stok Kan-

gri or the Khardung La Pass, which are on either side of the hotel," informs Din.

The hotel is best suited for both adventure and MICE travellers. Din says that the hotel takes care of all the travel needs of its guests as well. "From airport transfers, to taking care of the complete itinerary of the guest, giving personal assistance, guide, vehicle, stay in Ladakh, arranging stay at other properties in Nubra Valley or Pangong Lake, western Ladakh, etc. we arrange for it all. We also arrange for airport pick up from Srinagar to Sonamarg and we do customised package for 8 nights or 15 nights," he adds.

### Checklist before going to Ladakh

- Those suffering from blood pressure, heart problems, or other problems that are heightened at higher altitude, should consult their private doctor before travelling
- Consult local travel agents before making an itinerary

## Centara 'cosies' up to India

Centara Hotels & Resorts organised its first roadshow in India to apprise agents about the various offerings by the group and their upcoming brand 'Cosi'.



Leading a delegation of representatives from their various properties to Delhi and Mumbai was **Paul Wilson**, Vice President Sales, Centara Hotels & Resorts. Addressing the travel trade in Delhi, Wilson said, "India is a growing market, and I believe that every brand has to be India ready. While India has been a growing market for us, we still don't know everything about the Indian market and that's why we came here with the roadshow. We are here to learn and build relationships with all the key people in the India market."

Talking about Centara as a brand, he said that being a family-owned brand makes them value every guest. "We are Thai and we are infused with Thainess throughout the brand. We have six brands, which cater to everything from aspirational five-star to respectable three-star," he added.

Wilson informed that they are looking at expand-



**Paul Wilson**  
Vice President Sales  
Centara Hotels & Resorts

ing their portfolio by launching their sixth brand. "We will be opening our sixth brand 'Cosi', which is an affordable lifestyle brand, with its first property opening in Samui. We have had a very exciting year, and in the last 18 months our footprint has expanded considerably. We now have hotels in Vietnam and Maldives, which will have more from us. We recently opened in the Middle East and are opening in China in two years. We opened our first four-star hotel in Muscat (Oman), and we will be opening a property in Doha (Qatar), as well as a big themed hotel in Dubai."

Wilson said that nothing is on the cards for India in terms of new openings, but they are on the lookout. However, as a growth market, he insisted that India is very lucrative for them. "India's growth for Thailand or for Centara Hotels & Resorts has been astronomical. It has been our biggest growth market since 2014. In fact, the growth since then has been in double digits in terms of room nights and revenue into Centara," he added.

Wilson insisted that they will be working towards brand awareness. "We have to drive our brand equity. Thus, we just want to be the first choice of every agent who thinks about Thailand, Vietnam or Maldives, so that they book with us. We want to make a bigger presence in India. We are learning about this market, but we understand that food plays a major role on the choice of hotels for Indians, and a lot of our hotels have Indian chefs, and some of them even have separate Indian buffets," he claimed.

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## Oman Air's 3<sup>rd</sup> Mumbai daily

Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, has commenced a third daily flight between Muscat and Mumbai, starting this August.



Oman Air's new daily flight between Muscat and Mumbai is the latest move in the airline's ambitious plan of fleet and network expansion. The 2 hour 50 minute flight departs Muscat at 2240 hours to arrive in Mumbai at 0300 hours. The return flight leaves Mumbai at 0405 hours and reaches Muscat at 0515 hours. The new time slot might just prove to be popular

departing Muscat at 0120 hours and 0900 hours, arriving in Mumbai at 0540 hours and 1320 hours respectively. The returning flights leave Mumbai at 1615 hours and 0655 hours, reaching Muscat at 1730 hours and 0810 hours respectively.

**Abdulrahman Al-Busaidy**, Deputy CEO & Chief Commercial Officer, Oman Air, says, "The addition of this flight is part of our wider com-

to our guests, who will now be able to leave Muscat in the evening and arrive in Mumbai the following morning."

Oman Air is currently growing its weekly capacity to India with frequencies increasing on five of the airline's 11 key Indian destinations. While frequencies in Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad has increased from twice daily to three times daily, the frequency in Calicut has increased from once daily to thrice daily and for Lucknow, it has increased from once daily to twice daily. With the latest flight, the overall weekly frequency of Oman Air flights to India has increased from 154 to 161. Oman Air also launched a direct connection between Salalah and Calicut in the beginning of the year. This frequency growth is in line with the revised Air Services agreement between the Government of Oman and India in December 2016, when the number of weekly seats was increased from 21,145 to 27,405.

mitment to the Indian market. India is a key destination for Oman Air and the demand for all 11 of our Indian destinations has always been high. Increased frequencies offer yet more choice and convenience

for business travellers, allowing them to take an evening flight and reach their destination early next morning. The airline already flies twice daily on the Muscat-Mumbai route, with the outgoing flights



### OTOAI Convention

## New markets to be the focus

► Contd. from page 3

allenges that have made expertise, experience and insights indispensable. Munshi adds, "Thus, the theme and discussions are going to differ from the previous years, being more inspirational, thought provoking and relevant to the current scenario. The key

the convention is also to introduce new markets to the tour operators which will add value to the already existing markets that they sell. If one looks at the statistics, there is a huge gap between the number of Indians travelling to Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah and we are looking at utilising that for the benefit of the

Khaimah as the convention location, Munshi elaborates that OTOAI always looks for destinations that it needs to push from the Indian market. "Ras Al Khaimah is a progressive hub of culture and tourism. We chose it to showcase the magnificent landscapes, coastlines and rich history and culture to our delegates so that both, the industry and the members can benefit mutually. Ras Al Khaimah will also gain exposure from branding in the Indian outbound travel industry which in turn will increase their visibility and hopefully give them a huge leap in terms of the number of visitors from India," says Munshi.



Waldorf Astoria, Ras Al Khaimah

message that we would like to convey to our members is that there are ample opportunities in the trade and it is crucial to identify the key areas of strength and understand new prospects around them."

Sahni informs that the delegates will be staying at the luxurious Waldorf Astoria, a stunning beachfront resort surrounded by deserts, mountains and sea. Following the sessions, the delegates will have time to explore the key attractions in Ras Al Khaimah. "The intention of

tour operators so that they can extend their tours to this destination, with an added cost. Those travelling to Dubai are also looking for an add-on product and Ras Al Khaimah is a perfect fit. I feel a six night itinerary is perfect where travellers can explore three nights in Dubai and the rest in Ras Al Khaimah as the destination is replete with beaches, mountains, adventure activities and resorts that promise a relaxing holiday," says Sahni.

Commenting on the reasons to choose Ras Al

Sahni further adds that initially they will be marketing the destination to FIT travellers, honeymooners, families and luxury travellers in India and soon will venture into MICE and wedding segment of travel. "Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) has come forward in a big way and is supporting the trade in India. I would suggest that we should collaborate with them and help push the destination in the Indian market with our network," he says.

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## Cosmopolitan Munich

The Bavarian capital has its own charm as it promises a life that is traditional, yet modern. The city has many attractions on offer, including Frauenkirche, the Gothic cathedral that has the hallmark onion-shaped domes; Hofbräuhaus, which is the world's most famous beer hall and restaurant; Schloss Nymphenburg, the Baroque summer palace and birthplace of King Ludwig II; as well as BMW Welt, BMW Museum and BMW Munich Plant, which allow visitors to experience the famous BMW brand and its origin.

## The 5-star Munich Airport

The Munich International Airport is known as Europe's most modern airport, offering a minimum connecting time of just 30 minutes. Boasting 200 shops with downtown prices, short distances between gates, and easy tax refund procedures, it is the perfect bet for transit passengers. The airport gets over 3800 weekly flights to more than 150 destinations.

### On top of Zugspitze

The highest peak in Germany, the 2962-metre-high Zugspitze offers a 360° view of around 400 peaks in four countries—Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy. Visitors can reach the top through a cogwheel railroad and three different cable cars, and is perfect for mountaineers, hikers, families, couples, children as well as senior citizens.

## Hohenschwangau Castle and Museum of the Bavarian Kings

King Max II of Bavaria, father of King Ludwig II, acquired the dilapidated castle Schwanstein and got it rebuilt in a neogothic style. Since then, Hohenschwan-gau Castle has been one of the summer and hunting residences of the royal family, with private apartments

and some personal objects still preserved. The Museum of the Bavarian Kings has an exhibition area of 1000 sq m, and presents the age of the Bavarian kings from 1806 to 1918. It also houses one original coat of King Ludwig II.

## Tirol in the heart of the Alps

The land in the mountains—Tirol has everything for those who plan a trip with their beloved. Lofty mountains, picturesque valleys, rugged peaks, rolling Alpine pastures



and spectacular glaciers, it's all here, making this place a one-of-its-kind destination.

## Lovely Innsbruck

Having featured in record books as the only city in the world to host three Olympic Games, Innsbruck is known for its Alpine charm and warm hospitality. The 800-year-old city centre here



is the hub of cultural activities, blending seamlessly with a young, urban lifestyle.

**Dazzling Swarovski  
Kristallwelten**

Daniel Swarovski's  
brainchild, Swarovski  
Kristallwelten offers a liv-  
ing experience through  
Swarovski crystals, which is

## Scintillating Salzburg

Home to famed composer Mozart, Salzburg has also been featured extensively in Hollywood musical—*The Sound of Music*. Known for its historic city centre (listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the city is distinguished for its narrow streets and spacious square, impressive monuments and gardens, as well as the Salzburg Festival and the stunning mountain panorama.

## Prien am Chiemsee

Situated between Munich and Salzburg, Prien



at Lake Chiemsee is a preferred destination for holidays in Bavaria. Those visiting this breath-taking landscape of the Chiemgau region and the Upper Bavarian Alps can indulge in an array of sporting, leisure and cultural activities.

**Kulturaut AG**

Another amazing location in Bavaria, KulturGut offers creations of famous designers, and every product and design here is a story, offering visitors the chance to take a piece of Bavaria home. One can pick from a choice of aesthetically designed silk scarves, cushions, bags, napkins, decorative bottles and even locally made porcelain. 

## Salt Mine Berchtesgaden

Thronged by a huge number of tourists throughout the year, Salt Mine Berchtesgaden, a 500-year-old salt mine that is still active; and Old Salt Works Bad Reichenhall, with its Salt Museum, are two sights making it to every Europe itinerary.



# Marriages made in outbound heaven

The wedding market is growing at an exponential rate, estimated to grow by at least 20-25 per cent in the next 2-3 years. Indians are now travelling far and wide to celebrate their special day. Tourism industry players and wedding planners reveal the changing trends and popular destinations for this segment.



“Destination weddings are gaining in popularity with more and more people now exploring other countries to host their weddings. Not only are the weddings happening in various cities in India, a large number of them are going across shores. European destinations are the hottest at this time for destination weddings from India. Hosting an outbound wedding not only allows families to explore a new destination, but also offers a very different and unforgettable experience. However, it is a personal choice whether to host a wedding in India or abroad, and not yet a fashion trend.”



**Maitreyee Patel**  
Director  
Pathfinders Holidays

“Like the travel industry, the wedding industry in India has also become an experiential market. People are looking at newer destinations and concepts when it comes to making their D-day special. However, the planning period for any wedding in India is essentially at least six months prior to the wedding while for an outbound wedding the planning period can stretch from eight months to a year. Travel time also becomes a challenge if the wedding destination is too far. Another issue is that sometimes the boutique properties with experiential elements are smaller in terms of size to accommodate the large group travelling for the wedding.”



**Sangita Marda Agarwal**  
Business Head  
Vibrant Holiday  
Destinations

“The wedding industry has entered a new age where destination weddings are the talk of the town now. People are now focusing on the travel element for a wedding to various destinations within India and abroad and have also expanded their budgets for this grand affair. Thailand, Sri Lanka, Ras Al Khaimah, Abu Dhabi are doing extremely well for Indian weddings while Portugal, Austria and Malta are the upcoming wedding destinations. In India, Rajasthan, Kerala and Goa top the list for weddings. One needs minimum six to eight months to plan weddings abroad mostly because there are a lot of negotiations and logistical arrangements that need to be catered to.”



**Kaushal Bhuvra**  
Director  
World of Vacations



**Sarthak Sood**  
Director  
Dream Weddings

“As weddings in India are a major social event, the clients spend a hefty amount of money and one can say that there is no limit to budget for this celebration. Destination weddings are growing from across the country and the smaller cities play a major role in this segment. In India, the destinations that are very popular for weddings are Jaipur, Udaipur, Agra and Goa, whereas outbound weddings are still limited to close-by destinations like Thailand and Dubai. Since weddings are an elaborate affair, it takes us about six to eight months to plan a wedding.”



**Hardik Khanna**  
Assistant Manager- Marketing  
Rashi Entertainment

“In case of weddings, there is a lot of freedom to experiment and explore the market for newer things, destination weddings being one of them. We have been very focused on the United Arab Emirates for destination weddings from India, especially Ras Al Khaimah, Dubai and Abu Dhabi top the list of favourable destinations for this segment. Antalya in Turkey has also emerged as a friendly destination for Indian weddings. Thailand has always been popular and still continues to grow due to the advantage of proximity to India.”



**R. K. Harjai**  
Founder and CEO  
Indian Wedding Planners

“People want destination weddings whereby they combine their travel plans with the event. Usually, travellers who have seen various destinations within India opt for outbound weddings to places like Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the UAE. Vienna has also become popular in the recent times. We have categorised weddings as royal weddings, that take place in palaces, forts and castles; adventure weddings; metropolitan weddings, which are in large city hotels; Himalayan weddings; religious weddings like those on the Ghats of Varanasi; and beach weddings.”

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# Connectivity to fuel arrivals for Holland

With a target of 16 per cent growth in 2017, **Carola Muller – van Rijn**, Global Travel Trade Manager, NBTC Holland Marketing, is hopeful that the new connection of Jet Airways from Bengaluru to Amsterdam is only going to fuel this growth.



NISHA VERMA

## QWhat kind of growth have you seen from the Indian market?

The growth in visitor numbers from India was around 33 per cent last year, which went from 100,000 arrivals to 130,000 Indian visitors in 2016. This year, we forecast a 16 per cent growth to that number, which would mean around 147,000 Indian visitors. By 2020, we expect this number to reach 185,000, which is a substantial growth. The Jet Airways and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines flights on this route are mostly full and we are sure that we are going to reach that number significantly.

## QHow did the growth trajectory change after Jet Airways launched its flights to Amsterdam last year?

The stakeholders we work with in the Netherlands have confirmed there's an increase in numbers to their accommodations and we hope that

this trend keeps continuing. Last year, when Jet Airways started flying to the Amsterdam hub, we saw an opportunity to promote destination Holland, as part of that connectivity. Jet Airways is now going to launch a new route from Bengaluru to Amsterdam Airport Schiphol. Also, KLM is increasing its flight capac-

## QWhat kind of marketing activities are you carrying out in India?

Our focus group is quite broad and includes FITs, leisure groups and family groups. We focus on the leisure segment more than the MICE segment. As a tourism board, what we are doing is that apart from the iconic

the Indian traveller. Holland is a very compact country. It's easy to travel around, and thus, we promote Holland as one big metropolis of different districts, with different themes attached to them.

We always do a mixture of consumer and trade ac-

tions, attend travel shows in India, and this sales mission is also a part of the trade activity, where we bring key Dutch stakeholders to India, who have an interest in the market or have relevance in the market and promote the destination through them. We will also do some trade shows that will be hosted locally and would be managed by our representative office in India. We will also have a familiarisation trip to the Netherlands for the travel trade in India, which will take place in October this year. Now, we are already focusing on next year.

## QApart from the metros, are you also looking at Tier-II or III markets?

It's all based on budget, because India is a big market. We are right now only focusing on Tier-I markets. By expanding in the smaller markets, we don't want the message to become too scattered and too fragmented.

## QAre you marketing Holland as part of the European itineraries or stand-alone destination?

We promote the Netherlands as a stand-alone destination. We are aware that Indians don't only travel to the Netherlands but travel to many European countries together. However, our promotion revolves around the Netherlands as a solo destination only.

## QHow was the response of Indian agents and tour operators at the sales mission?

Most of the agents I met know Holland quite well, specifically areas like Keukenhof or Amsterdam, which is a positive sign. This also fits in very well with our strategy of promoting different parts of the Netherlands to the Indian consumer by associating certain themes or by focusing on different themes. We want to make people aware that many other places are also there, and a lot of tour operators are also looking for new products.

“We are aware that Indians don't only travel to the Netherlands but travel to many European countries together. However, our promotion revolves around the Netherlands as a solo destination only.”

**Carola Muller – van Rijn**  
Global Travel Trade Manager  
NBTC Holland Marketing



ity. With Bengaluru being the new route, we are bringing it in our marketing plan for the year as well. It is also a part of this sales mission, along with Delhi and Mumbai.

destinations like Amsterdam, Zaanse Schans and Madurodam, which are must-see places, we are also promoting areas which could be lesser known to

activities. While we have some PR activities or press releases, there are some consumer activities like advertising as well as trade advertising. We do in-house training ses-

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# TCEB extends campaign for agents

After recording overwhelming response to its 'Convene in Paradise' campaign from India, the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau has extended it for another year for trade.

HAZEL JAIN

When the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) launched its campaign 'Convene in Paradise' in India to encourage MICE agents and corporate houses to send their groups to Thailand, it had planned to float it only for two years. But the response in that duration was so overwhelming that TCEB has announced

**Vichaya Soonthornsaratoon**, Director, Conventions Department, TCEB, who was in India with a huge delegation recently, said, "The convention and conference market in India is huge. It stands at number 2 for MICE in the top-10 list for international source markets for Thailand only after China. Our focus is to develop the association business from India to Thailand. On this visit to

India, I met a few associations in New Delhi where we conducted a presentation to show what TCEB and Thailand can do for them. Close to 70 associations attended, which included associations like Indian Paint and Coating Association, The Textile Association, etc."

She added that the numbers for conventions from India has dropped a bit in the

last year because of certain changes in the tax policy in India that has impacted businesses. TCEB is also promoting newer destinations in Thailand for conventions. This includes five MICE cities of Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Phuket and Khom Kaen. "Khom Kaen is an upcoming destination and a new one for India. It is the north-eastern province close to Vietnam and Cambodia. It also has a

new convention and exhibition centre which is ready. Another new mega project that we are promoting is in Bangkok called ICONSIAM. This includes a shopping mall, a resident tower, and a convention facility among others and will be completed in 2019," she adds.

Soonthornsaratoon also revealed that India will see added investment from

TCEB in its market in order to increase the volume of trade between the two countries.

**Convene in Paradise**  
 ↳ Targets events with more than 1000 people  
 ↳ TCEB supports such events with about ₹ 2 million



Vichaya Soonthornsaratoon  
 Director, Conventions Department, Thailand  
 Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB)

The convention and conference market in India is huge. It stands at number 2 for MICE in the top-10 list for the international source markets for Thailand only after China

another year's extension until 2018.

The scheme targets large-scale events with more than 1,000 people who would get financial support from TCEB to the tune of approximately ₹ 2 million (or Thai Baht 1 million).



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## 63-room Fortune Park BBD, Lucknow opens doors

■ Its first hotel in Lucknow and 46<sup>th</sup> in the country, Fortune Park BBD has been designed as an upscale, full service, contemporary hotel that offers a wide range of facilities and amenities for business and leisure travellers.

The hotel is offering inaugural room rate starting from ₹4,999 per night. Strategically located on Rana Pratap Marg, Fortune Park BBD is in close proximity to Hazratganj – the iconic commercial centre of Lucknow,

the High Court, and all other major attractions of the city. Fortune Park BBD offers a selection of 63 well-appointed rooms, two restaurants and a bar & lounge and an in-house patisserie.

The hotel also offers high-speed Wi-Fi connectivity, swimming pool, well-equipped gymnasium, board room, travel desk and airport transfers. It is equipped with state-of-the-art conference and banquet facilities that can accommodate up to 450 guests.

# Serena Hotels unravels India plan

Rosemary Mugambi, Regional Sales & Marketing Director, Serena Hotels, shares that signing Nijhawan Group as their representative would help create visibility in and boost sales from India.



TT BUREAU

Serena Hotels is a premier hotel group with 25 properties, including city hotels (members of the Leading Hotels of the World); Safari lodges in key safari locations like Kenya and Tanzania; as well as beach resorts and intimate safari camps. "We have properties in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Mozambique. We offer authentic 'African Experience', with mighty game drives, where guests can go out at night to see the wildlife, nature walks and an opportunity to interact with the local people by learning cooking or other activities," says Rosemary Mugambi, Regional Sales & Marketing Director, Serena Hotels.

can Experience', with mighty game drives, where guests can go out at night to see the wildlife, nature walks and an opportunity to interact with the local people by learning cooking or other activities," says Rosemary Mugambi, Regional Sales & Marketing Director, Serena Hotels.

Mugambi was in India recently for a roadshow, where

she noted that Indians consider Kenya and Tanzania as ideal safari destinations. "We are excited about the interest of Indians in African Safaris. I have been having engagements with travel agents in Mumbai and Delhi. We at Serena Hotels offer quality product in terms of facilities, services and experience. We have properties at some of the most stunning locations around the world. Knowing that the Indian traveller is particular

about cuisine, especially Indian food, we make sure that we meet the specific culinary requirements of the Indian traveller. Another new experience that we want to bring to the Indian market is destination weddings as we can see an increased interest in that," adds Mugambi.

To better reach the India market, Serena Hotels has now signed Nijhawan Group as its sales and marketing representative in India. "We have recently taken on board the Nijhawan group,



Rosemary Mugambi  
Regional Sales & Marketing Director  
Serena Hotels

We offer authentic 'African Experience', with mighty game drives, where guests can go out at night to see the wildlife, nature walks and an opportunity to interact with the local people by learning cooking or other activities

which shows the keenness that Serena Hotels has in growing the Indian market in East Africa. We greatly value the experience of Nijhawan Group in the hospitality and trade industry in India. We know that owing to this association, we'd be able to bring Africa closer to the Indian traveller and we are really looking forward to a very successful relationship," says Mugambi.

While a project in India is not on the cards right now, Mugambi doesn't deny a possibility in the future. "We have properties in Africa as well Asia, including Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In view of the company strategy to continue being impactful in the economies of third world countries, we will continue to look for expansion possibilities in Africa as well as in Asia," she concluded.



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# Travel trade trains its eyes Down Under

The India Travel Mission (ITM), 2017 by Tourism Australia, held at JW Marriott Pune witnessed 110 agents from across India meet 84 suppliers over four days of meetings and networking. This year, being the fourth consecutive year of double-digit growth from India to Australia, shows the potential of the Indian market.

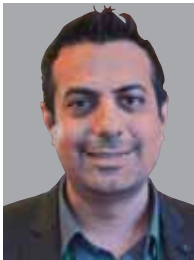
 SHAHZAD BAGWAN

“Having ITM in India is a very good system. It is not only the suppliers from Australia but people from across India come together and it is great networking. Getting information of what is happening in the market has become a necessity for a tour operator and this is a very good platform for promoting Australia. Over 4 days a buyer gets to meet 84 plus suppliers and learn about new products. Referring to the visa issues, there are some agents who have problems regarding visa while agents who are Aussie Specialist get visa in 48 hours, so for them Australia becomes a preferred destination to sell.”



**Guldeep Singh Sahni**  
DDP Trailblazer and  
President OTOAI

“This is my eighth year at ITM and it has been growing every year. We look forward to it as new products and destinations are added each year. We specialise into destinations like Australia and New Zealand so Australia is a big sector for my company. We have been experiencing good growth, especially in the honeymoon segment, which will now be on peak from October onwards. The honeymoon segment is always looking for good countries with unexplored cities for which Australia is a perfect destination. Demand for self drive options in Australia is increasing along with a lot of adventure sports like hot air ballooning, Great Barrier Reef adventures, adventure quad biking. Besides sightseeing, beaches also remain a big attraction for tourists.”



**Shravan Bhalla**  
Chief Executive Officer  
High Flyer

“I have been attending ITM since 2002, making this my 14<sup>th</sup> visit. This year, being the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Tourism Australia, the quality and number of sellers has been really good. The format of the travel mission has been very efficient and buyers are able to drive deep knowledge on how to sell Australia. Australia is a very nice market for the Indian travellers, given the ease of visa and immigration. They have made it very easy for agents and if you are an Aussie Specialist, they provide you with a login ID and password to issue the visa from your own office which no other tourism board provides.”



**Pawan Kumar Gupta**  
Managing Director  
Peekay Holidays



**Lokesh Chawla**  
Director  
Xtra Mile Travel Services

“ITM is of great help for us as it is one of the best platforms for travel agencies, serious on selling Australia. We have around 84 suppliers here and have got knowledge about the new products which will help us create different itineraries and offer different and unique experiences for Australia. The new attractions which have been in demand are self-drive trips, Sydney Bridge climb, Merlin Entertainments, Village roadshow, etc. Focus has also been put on local cuisines. We have been dealing into whole of Australia, including New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory and Victoria.”



**Tejas Joshi**  
Manager- MICE Contracting  
Outbound Travel  
Cox & Kings Limited

“We are happy to see the variety of sellers present this year at the ITM. It is good to see so many options to promote Australia. The abundance of unique experiences in Australia makes it specially attractive for tourists. Although the destination is still at mid-stage for MICE, reason being cities like Sydney, which have big inventory problem, whenever there are events happening, we face pricing and availability issues. If we see from Indian MICE perspective for 200-300 people, we find it a little bit difficult to find 150-200 rooms to be available at one place.”



**Ajit Sehgal**  
Managing Director  
Shaurya Travels

“This year we witnessed a good seller turnout compared to last year. There were plenty of new products added to ITM 2017 and I see tourism growing towards Australia. Credit goes to the Tourism Australia management who have been working hard to promote the destination. We have been promoting destinations right from Perth, South Australia, Queensland to Gold coast, Melbourne, Sydney and interiors of New South Wales, which are among the must see destinations for travellers. We have been catering to mid-luxury segments of clients. The average stay of our Indian customers in Australia has been 10-12 nights.”

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# MORE AND MORE AGGRESSIVE, WONDERFUL INDONESIA TO PROMOTE IN THE 3 CITIES OF INDIA



**Jakarta** – Realising the importance of Indian market for Indonesia tourism and by looking at the ever-increasing number of Indian tourists to Indonesia, the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia continue to promote Indonesia tourism in the form of business meeting between Indonesian sellers and Indian buyers. Wonderful Indonesia is going to enthusiastically promote in 3 cities of India.

The 2017 Greater Bali Sales Mission to India in the city of Coimbatore on 7th of August, Bangalore on 9th of August and Chandigarh on the 11th of August. What's interesting in this sales mission is that will go deep exploring the opportunities of promoting Indonesia not only in New Delhi or Mumbai, the two largest cities of India. The aggressiveness is not without a justification. It is based on the big increase of Indians visiting Indonesia. Latest data of January to May 2017 period shows that there were 183,558 Indian visits to Indonesia which is an amazing increase of 20.72% in comparison to the same period from last year.

Beside the high growth, demand of local Indian travel agents about latest packages of Indonesia tourism is high. The proof to the statement is the last Wonderful Indonesia sales mission events held were always full with buyers. The fact also drives the Indonesian tourism industries to become highly excited to take part in every opportunities to introduce their products to their Indian counterparts. "The quota of participants for sales mission to India is always full so that we

always provide extra quota. For this sales mission, there are 22 participants taking part from the original 20 slots," explains Mr. Vinsensius Jemadu, the Director of Asia Pacific Promotion.

These high growth and also increasing demand prompt the air route opening between India and Indonesia. After Garuda Indonesia opened flight route from Mumbai to Jakarta on 12th of December 2016, Indonesia AirAsia soon followed by opening Mumbai-Denpasar (Bali) route on 20th of May 2017 utilising wide body aircraft of Airbus A330 and just recently on 24th of July 2017, Batik Air, a subsidiary of Lion Air Group, opened Chennai-Denpasar route. However all these flights still require transits in either Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur. "The Ministry of Tourism greatly expect more airlines will follow the move taken by Garuda Indonesia, AirAsia and Batik Air to open flight route connecting India and Indonesia," wishes Mr. I Gde Pitana, the Deputy Minister for International Tourism Development. "The opportunity to open direct flight is widely open as there are still plenty of origination cities are yet to be connected directly to Indonesia for example New Delhi, Bangalore and other big Indian cities," adds Mr. Pitana.

For Indians, Bali is still the prime destination in Indonesia. The similarities in cultural and religious background make Indians feel comfortable conducting their excursion to Bali. "Over 50% of Indian tourists visiting Indonesia entered through the Ngurah Rai International Airport of Bali," says Mr. Jemadu. The fact is considered as a challenge by the Ministry of how to introduce other destinations in Indonesia to Indian visitors. "Even in Bali, most Indians only roam around popular destinations such as Kuta, Seminyak and Ubud," continues Mr. Jemadu. Therefore, the content for the upcoming sales missions is not only centered around business meeting (table top meeting) activities between Indian and Indonesian tourism industries but there will also be "Indonesia tourism update" presentation presented in order to reveal the development of Indonesia tourism especially about the "Top 10 New Destinations" or often dubbed as the "10 New Balis", namely: Lake Toba, Tanjung Kelayang, Tanjung Lesung, Seribu Islands, the Borobudur, Bromo-Tengger-Semeru cluster, Mandalika, Labuan Bajo, Wakatobi and Morotai.

[www.indonesia.travel](http://www.indonesia.travel)



**I GDE PITANA**

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# Trade supports Odisha travel mart

FICCI in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha, organised a roadshow in Delhi to announce FICCI's 1<sup>st</sup> Odisha Travel Bazaar to be held in Bhubaneswar from October 15-17.



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# Trade wants e-Visa for UK

The Indian outbound market is growing and so is the demand for electronic visa (e-visa) or visa on arrival (VOA) facilities for Indian tourists. When asked which countries should extend e-Visa or VOA facility to Indian tourists, most of the travel trade said the UK and Schengen countries to offer the same. Australia and New Zealand were next in line for this demand, followed by Singapore, Russia and South Africa.

Country/Region	Percentage
(A) Australia & New Zealand	25%
(B) UK & Schengen Countries	29.5%
(C) Singapore	22.7%
(D) Russia	9.09%
(E) South Africa	9.09%
(F) People's Republic of China	4.5%

**POLL RESULT**

# Oman eyes Indian MICE

After a thunderous response from India's leisure market, Oman is keen to attract the MICE market, which already ranks in the top five source market for corporate groups.

**TT BUREAU**

Just over a year old now, the Oman Convention Bureau—established and supervised by the Ministry of Tourism, Sultanate of Oman—is preparing to tap the India market aggressively, just as its parent started doing a few years ago through Blue Square Consultants. On his first sales visit to India recently, **Khalid Al Zadjali**, Director, Oman Convention Bureau, met key tour operators and MICE agents in Mumbai and New Delhi to explore strategic partnerships with them. He says, "The idea is to have strategic partnerships with a couple of travel companies here in India and discuss how we can work together. The next step is to bring Oman suppliers to India with a focus on MICE."

The government of Oman's new national strategy for tourism underlines MICE as one of main focus areas. As a result, it decided to form a convention bureau which would undertake this and the Oman Convention Bureau was launched in April 2016. "We submitted a plan to the Government which highlighted the main source markets for MICE in Oman and India is one the markets that we want to focus on for the next three to five years," Zadjali adds.

According to him, India's incentive market is strong which is good for Oman since it can offer a lot of options for that. The first phase of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) is located opposite the airport opened last year. This

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**Khalid Al Zadjali**  
Director  
Oman Convention Bureau

The next step is to bring Oman suppliers to India with a focus on MICE

includes an exhibition hall spread over 22,000 sq m and 10-12 meeting rooms around it. Phase two will be completed by the second quarter of 2018 and will include a convention hall. There are also other infrastructure and tourism projects within the 9<sup>th</sup> five-year development plan (2016-2020) that the Oman Tourism Strategy will reinforce.

### Numbers from India

- In the last five years, Oman has witnessed 82 per cent growth in Indian arrivals
- In 2016, Oman received 297,628 arrivals from India as compared to 256,210 arrivals in 2014—that is over 16 per cent growth in the last two years
- There are roughly 200 flights a week operating currently between India and Oman



# ATTRACTIONS



Armed with diverse topography and rich culture, Ras Al Khaimah (or RAK) provides endless options for unique and traditional activities, and is a one-stop shop for everything luxurious under the sun. Here's a sneak-peek into RAK's best tourism options.



Imagine opening your eyes to a breathtaking sunrise, with the rays of the sun slowly illuminating the cracks and crevices of the rugged mountains till the range is completely visible and glows golden in its majestic glory. Set against the backdrop of the highest mountain range in the eastern Arabian Penin-

### Unfolding history

The Dhayah Fort offers a glimpse into Ras Al Khaimah's fascinating past while providing a modern symbol of the emirate's enduring heritage. The fort was originally built as a 16<sup>th</sup> century fortification to defend against invading forces and offers a mesmerising bird's eye view of the city.



for adventure seekers, tourists can partake in overnight camping, or explore along the artistically eroded cliffs and deep canyons.

### Camp under the stars

Oasis Desert Camp or Bassata Desert Camp lets travellers live the ultimate

the UAE National Sailing Championship.

### Quench your thirst for adventure

RAK is also home to the first commercial Via Ferrata in the UAE where adventure enthusiasts can experience



sula, the Al Hajar Mountains, is Ras Al Khaimah-UAE's northernmost emirate. Founded in 1971, the emirate is about an hour's drive from Dubai and offers travellers a more authentic and traditional Arabian experience. Although long overdue, the emirate is now fast catching up with its cousin, Dubai, and is emerging from its shadows as a luxury hub for the quintessential traveller. Opulent five-star hotels and resorts throng the southern region of RAK while exclusive activities like aerial tours of the city on a sea plane or discovering the ultimate desert experience in the lap of luxury, are aplenty.

### UAE's wealthiest museum

Lovers of culture and history are bound to be allured by RAK's National Museum which is now considered the UAE's wealthiest monumental museum. Formerly a palace and residence of the Al Qasimi Royal family until 1964, it currently features a diverse collection of historical artefacts, ancient ornaments, priceless manuscripts and traditional weapons.

### Soak up the sun

Outdoor enthusiasts should definitely indulge in hiking and trekking at Jais Mountain or Jebel Jais, the highest peak in the UAE. A hub



desert experience with the a wide range of traditional Arabic activities like dune bashing, belly dancing, Arabic Tanoura, as well as Arabic barbecue.

### Experience royalty

Al Hamra Marina & Yacht Club is a members' club for sailing, yachting and water sports enthusiasts and is instrumental in organising activities like on-water events and competitions for the Marina. The Royal Yacht Club also organises and hosts a round of

the grandeur of Jebel Jais as they swoop across the three ziplines. In addition, travellers can spend the day at the emirate's new karting track or indulge in hiking and thrilling water sports.

### Rejuvenate

Once the outdoor activities thoroughly wear you out, make a visit to the Waldorf Astoria Spa, a place of refuge and restoration. Signature treatments combined with exceptional care help guests surrender to their senses and emerge feeling completely revitalised. What's more, the spa uses products from Voya and Rodial.

### Spoilt for choice

Located along the Al Hamra area, the Double Tree by Hilton Resort & Spa Marjan Island has 485 rooms; 270 guest rooms, 5 suites, 150 chalets and 60 pool view rooms. A wealth of sporting and leisure options, including golfing and sailing are among the varied activities to indulge in.



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# Mic drop! GPS '17 concludes in Pune

In its last leg for the year, Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) hosted its first-ever showcase in the city of Pune. The Pune edition of GPS witnessed a response of 900 plus registrations. The first day, which included product presentations and the much-talked-about GST session, saw attendance of over 350 plus attendees.





# Bohemia brings Balkans closer home

Tourism Enterprises in collaboration with Bohemia Travel Agency recently organised roadshows in Delhi and Mumbai to introduce the Balkan region to the Indian market.



Bulgaria-based DMC Bohemia Travel Agency (BTA), under the aegis of Tourism Enterprises, is making a foray into the India market through the latter's vast network of travel agents and tour operators in the B2B segment, informs **Ravi Gosain**, Managing Director, Tourism Enterprises. "It is for the first time that one operator is

and active holidays. For the travel trade, the company organises informative tours every autumn and spring to allow tour operators to discover the destinations themselves and discuss potential business opportunities.

Identifying trends from the India market, Gosain points out that MICE travel to Europe is currently very popular and the company is trying to take the



**Bayko Baykov**  
General Manager  
Bohemia Travel Agency, Bulgaria

groups to the Balkan region as well. Families and friends are also travelling to this region from India. "We are targeting the middle class travellers because this region is very affordable. One can experience the European charm in this region at a cheaper price, familiarise with the culture, cuisine and traditions of the region before they head out to explore the rest of Europe," says Gosain. He further adds that the average

duration of stay for Indian travellers is minimum 6-7 days and their average spend is about \$600-\$700 per person which includes the 3-4 star hotels and transport within the region.

"Bohemia Travel Agency has already handled few Indian tourists and is abreast with the needs and demands of Indian travellers. Tourism Enterprises will represent them in India and we will be the point of contact

for all the information regarding the DMC and their products for the discerning travellers from India," adds **Kumar Utakarsh**, Senior Manager, Tourism Enterprises.

## Countries promoted

↓ Greece, Romania, Montenegro, Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia



**Ravi Gosain**  
Managing Director  
Tourism Enterprises

providing services for the entire region. We invited about 100 travel agents and tour operators and even MICE agents to the roadshows to apprise them about the products on offer in the Balkan region. We will be organising a Fam trip where 15-20 selected travel agents will be hosted at various destinations in the Balkan region. For this, we have asked Turkish Airlines for support and hope that something will formalise soon," adds Gosain.

According to **Bayko Baykov**, General Manager, Bohemia Travel Agency, Bulgaria recorded 15,000 Indian tourist arrivals last year. "We



**Kumar Utakarsh**  
Senior Manager  
Tourism Enterprises

hope this number will double per year and Indian travellers will also explore the other Balkan countries. We are offering a combination of programmes for the Indian market, which include Greece, Romania, Montenegro and Croatia, along with our focus area on Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia," says Baykov. He further adds that the company is expecting MICE movements, FIT travellers and young travellers from India who are looking for nightlife

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# Paint the town Red with celebrations

Red Apple Travel organised a three-city 'Rendezvous with its global team' in Chennai, Ahemdabad and Mumbai for its trade partners and supporters. Red Apple Travel team expressed its gratitude to its partners for their unwavering support. The participants could meet and interact with the Destination Offices and brainstorm and keep to date with developments at Red Apple Travel.



# India gets set to explore the Balkans

Tourism Enterprises in collaboration with Bohemia Travel Agency is introducing the Balkan countries to the Indian travellers. The company organised informative presentations and Q&A sessions in Delhi and Mumbai to educate the travel trade about the new destinations for the coming year.





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**KOLKATA**  
July 27 - 29  
2017

**KOCHI**  
Aug 03 - 05  
2017

**PUNE**  
Aug 10 - 12  
2017





# Focus on innovative packaging

With new rail packages targeting specific segments, Pacific Travels is on a growth path, claims **Nasir Zaidi**, Managing Partner, Pacific Travels.



Since its inception in 1968, Pacific Travels has emerged as one of the top B2B operators in India. Talking about the company, Nasir Zaidi says, "Pacific Travels offers diversified services through various companies under its umbrella, ranging from visa facilitation service for Iran and Algeria, to securing scheduled or non-scheduled flight approvals

In the coming year, they are looking at introducing new products as well. "We understand the growth and trends in Indian travel market. Also, we understand the gaining maturity of Indian travellers and we wish to add products of more value to the market. We are looking at introducing and innovating new experiences, destinations and products which are suited to our clients and facilitate mutual growth. Valuing our

partnerships internationally and understanding the need for newer experiences, we have meticulously created rail itineraries on prime rail networks like Eurail, BritRail, etc. and the same is gaining momentum. We are also offering scenic itineraries to Harry Potter experience as well as an experience on the Royal Scotsman," he claims.

They are adopting promotional techniques

like roadshows and print media to present and promote their products. "We work on a focused approach with a clearly identified target audience and have been successful so far. Innovation and new experiences are the basic ingredient of our packaging. Newer and friendly destinations like Iran; and products like railway packages and youth travel have received very positive response and are doing well," he asserts.



Nasir Zaidi  
Managing Partner  
Pacific Travels

Understanding the need for newer experiences, we have meticulously created rail itineraries on prime rail networks like Eurail, BritRail, etc.

from Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)."

They also create ease of procurement of services and assure value to their partners and clients. "While we facilitate travel and tourism to various destinations, we also make tourism boards, airlines and other service providers understand the growing Indian market and help them in establishing their business with India successfully. Pacific Travels extends some attractive B2B and B2C rates for the UK and other parts of Europe, apart from offering attractive packages to scenic Iran," he informs.

Zaidi says they have experienced a steady growth year-on-year. "It is our endeavour to keep new and innovative products in our portfolio. Apart from our ticketing, visa facilitation and tour business, our rail business with ticketing and passes being issued to Europe, Canada, Australia and Japan has been a phenomenal contributor to growth."

## DoubleTree by Hilton Shirdi to open in Q1 2019

Hilton and DoubleTree by Hilton has announced the signing of a management agreement with Trillion Real Estate & Properties for a new DoubleTree by Hilton property in Maharashtra. Scheduled to open in Q1 2019, DoubleTree by Hilton Shirdi will be located at Shirdi's historical town centre, marking Hilton's entry into the popular pilgrimage destination. The latest addition increases Hilton's pipeline of hotels in India to 19 properties. When

open, the 125-room DoubleTree by Hilton Shirdi will be one of first global hospitality brands in Shirdi. It is located approximately four kilometres from the famous Shirdi Sai Baba Temple and is easily accessible to Sainagar Shirdi Railway Station, the town's main train station, and the soon-to-open Shirdi Airport. In addition to a banquet hall and four meeting rooms, hotel will have an outdoor pool, a fitness center as well as three restaurants.

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# Ark: At the helm of Indian cruising

Ark Travels, the Preferred Sales Agent for Star Cruises in India, recently hosted its annual get-together titled 'Big Bang Nautical Fiesta' onboard SuperStar Gemini. More than 400 of its travel agent partners were hosted for this event who came from all over India including smaller cities like Indore, Surat, Rajkot and Karimnagar near Hyderabad.





# Saying ‘I do’ with Marriott in style

Marriott has launched a new programme called ‘Shaadi by Marriott’ to tap the growing Indian wedding segment. **Neeraj Govil**, Area Vice President–South Asia, Marriott International, elaborates on how the group’s innovative concepts and partnerships help them ace the wedding market.

**ANUPRIYA BISHNOI**

**Q**How is Marriott involved in the wedding segment?

The premise behind the campaign ‘Shaadi by Marriott’ is to show that we have our fair share of the burgeoning wedding space. This is a segment we have been interested in for a very long time. There are two

reasons for that—the first is that we are looking to attract domestic tourists and ensure we endear ourselves up to them. Secondly, we are a global player and the largest hotel company in the world. We are confident that if people can understand and value what we do in India, when they travel outside India, they are likely to stay at a Marriott property. We see this as a

way to grow our share of wedding business in India.

**Q**Would this mean that you’d do away with the external wedding planners?

We are not doing away with them, we are working in partnership with them. If a consumer wants to work directly with the hotel, we are more

“We are now putting bridal rooms in our properties. We have also put specialist wedding planners in our hotels. We are getting the food tasting done for a wedding at the clients’ homes, instead of them coming all the way to the hotel.”

**Neeraj Govil**  
Area Vice President–South Asia  
Marriott International



## Growth story of North



**Sanjay Sharma**  
Market Vice President -  
North India and Nepal, Marriott  
International

For **Sanjay Sharma**, Market Vice President - North India and Nepal, Marriott International, the North India market is phenomenal currently. “If there is a bit of sluggishness in terms of inbound tourism, it is because performance in Rajasthan has been sluggish. On the contrary though, Rajasthan has achieved phenomenal numbers in comparison to last year because of domestic tourism. The wedding segment has also grown in leaps and bounds from the domestic market.” He claimed that Delhi-NCR has been the best performing city in North India for them. “Also, Lucknow is among the top markets for us. Remote locations like Jaisalmer have also done very well. One city that we would love to see doing well is Srinagar,” he added. In terms of new additions, he revealed that after opening Four Points By Sheraton in Srinagar, they will be opening four more hotels by the end of the year. “We have JW Marriott coming up in Jaipur, Fairfield in Jodhpur and Amritsar, and a Marriott in Indore,” he concluded.

than happy to work with them. We are working with a lot of wedding planners across India. The whole idea, from an operations perspective, is about planning to be able to cater to all sorts of weddings. We are now putting bridal rooms in our properties. We have also put specialist wedding planners in our hotels. We are getting the food tasting done for a wedding at the clients’ homes, instead of them coming all the way to the hotel. This personalisation has been very well accepted by our guests. We also launched a campaign towards the end of last year which stated, “If you

do your wedding at a Marriott, we will take care of your honeymoon.” We are trying to be a one-stop-shop for weddings, but this is not at all about getting rid of our partners.

**Q**How strong is Marriott in the MICE segment?

A large portion of our business comes out of MICE. Most of the JW Marriott properties have large banqueting spaces, both indoors and outdoors. Even our resort locations are big in MICE. We understand the value of this sector and as we are moving ahead with designing our future hotels,

we are making sure these hotels are designed in a way that they facilitate movement of larger groups without meddling with the operations of rest of the hotel. We are also keen to be close to large convention centres. For instance, Aerocity has a large convention centre planned that makes it a great place to be. We are also going to open an Aloft in the same location. Growth, for us, has been phenomenal, despite demonetisation. We have also seen a significant amount of increase in our weddings and are looking for a double-digit growth in this segment.



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Speaking of Shahpura Hotels, Digraj S. Shekhawat comments- “It was my Family’s prime endeavour to place Shahpura Hotels on the map of luxury travel in Rajasthan, and India as a whole. Hence the creation of Shahpura Hotels was conceptualized, accentuating an authentic Shekhawati experience.”

www.shahpura.com



# Indians travel off the beaten track

Indian travellers are maturing and seeking newer, off-beat destinations to spend their holidays. We get the opinion of our esteemed India Travel Award winners on the international destinations that are the top draw for 2017 and the trends that are ruling the roost for outbound travel from India.



## ► Best Online Travel Agency (West 2014) – EasyMyTrip

### Southeast Asian destinations are here to stay

Keeping the key deciding factors in mind, short-haul destinations such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Dubai will continue to trend among Indian travellers as they provide more value for money, feels **Nishant Pitti**, CEO and Co-founder, EaseMyTrip.com. "Some of the emerging destinations that are gaining popularity include Morocco, Oman, Cambodia, Philippines, Jordan, Vietnam, Seychelles, Istanbul and Athens," says Pitti. He further informs that innovation has been the most defining characteristics of EaseMyTrip and the company is planning to establish EMT Holiday Hubs in all metro cities to increase revenues from non-air products like hotels, bus reservation, tour packages and car rentals. "We are targeting to expand our business in Tier-II & III cities of India by opening its franchises. We already have overseas branches in Bangkok, Singapore, Maldives and Dubai and will open branches in London, Hong Kong, and the United States soon," adds Pitti.



## ► Most Trending Personality (North 2016) – Shalini Jain

### Santa Village & Ice Hotel attract Indians

Croatia as well as the Scandinavian countries have been the top sellers this season as these are exotic destinations for Indian travellers, points out **Shalini Jain**, Director-Operations, Click2Travel.in. "Indian travellers are now seeking newer destinations with exotic value as their spending capacities have increased manifolds. But they still want the worth of their money," says Jain. She adds that Iceland is one destination which will be in high demand this winter as it offers exciting winter sports activities and other attractions like the Santa Village. "Also, the Ice Hotel in Canada is getting fast sold out. We are also aggressively promoting Crystal Cruises and Silver Sea Cruises to the Indian market," says Jain.



## ► Best Destination Weddings & Events Travel Planner (North 2016) – Leisure and Travel World

### Croatia, Jordan emerge as top sellers

Primarily, Indian travellers prefer common destinations in every continent but recently, destinations like Croatia, Budapest, Madagascar, Bulgaria and Jordan have started picking up in the Indian market, points out **Akashdeep Chanana**, Director, Leisure and Travel World. He says, "Exploring a new place once or twice in a year is trending especially among the solo travellers and backpackers. Considering the weather conditions in the last quarter, European market will be a little slow for the coming season. I see a demand for Vietnam, Mauritius, the Maldives, Boracay, Cebu and African countries." Chanana adds that the company is introducing packages for Jordan, Israel, Sanya; photography tours to Hoi An (Vietnam) and cross country road trips in some European countries.



## ► Best Cruise Consolidator (West 2014) – Ark Travels

### Bali rules Southeast Asia

Outbound travel segment is growing undoubtedly. Old destinations have not lost their charm but the new ones have created a lot of interest in the minds of the discerning Indian travellers, points out **Anju Tandon**, CEO, Ark Travels. She says, "Bali, in my opinion, has seen a very high rate of growth from India. This destination has picked up by word of mouth and through roadshows conducted by the tourism boards and destination management companies like U&I Holidays and Pacto. In addition, the increase in number of flights from various hubs on Air Asia and Malindo and Singapore Airlines helped in the growth of Bali." Tandon points out that Russia, Iceland and Norway have also seen a substantial growth in popularity. "We see maximum growth for ourselves in the cruise segment. We have more itineraries from Star Cruises now, covering almost the entire Southeast Asia," adds Tandon.



## ► Best Travel Management Company (North 2015) – Bonton Holidays

### Abu Dhabi gains stride in India

Destinations like Dubai, Thailand and Singapore have been the most attractive for Indian travellers for long owing to shorter travel time, cheaper flights, the affordability of hotels and sightseeing, feels **Keyur Vora**, Director, Bonton Holidays. "I also see a lot of potential in Abu Dhabi. Attractions like the Ferrari World and the Grand Mosque are highly sought after and it's only a matter of time before the trickling number of Indian tourists increase manifolds to Abu Dhabi," says Vohra. He informs that in 2017-18, the company will be introducing a lot of series departures to all the most popular destinations like Dubai, Thailand, Singapore and Mauritius. The company also looks forward to increasing private group tours in the coming season.



## ► Fastest Growing Travel Company (North 2016) – Holidays by Sahibji

### Direct flights aid travel to newer destinations

Though the US, the UAE, Central Europe, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, UK, Hong Kong and Macau have always been in demand among Indian travellers, this year, Bali, Russia, Greece (Athens, Mykonos, Santorini), Vietnam, Cambodia, Seychelles and Sri Lanka have gained the most traction, informs **Garima Sethi**, Director, Holidays by Sahibji. Other popular destinations include Reunion Island, Portugal, South Africa, East Africa, Bora Bora, New Zealand and Iceland. Sethi says, "This popularity is because of greater connectivity between India and the destinations. Further, ease in visa rules and streamlining of the visa application process has made it more practical and easier for Indian travellers." She further adds that the company has already received pre-bookings for destinations like Maldives, Mauritius, Australia, Egypt, Almaty, Tashkent, Zanzibar, Spain and Dubai. "Cruise tourism has seen growth y-o-y and is an emerging holiday trend, owing to floating advance purchase offers and special offers for the Indian market from international cruise liners."



Contd. on page 42 ►





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# The Philippines fills India with joy

## ► Best Business Travel Agency (South 2017) – Archana Travels

### Bangkok continues to be the most popular

Outbound travel has become popular and is growing at an exponential rate because there is a change in the mind set of people, believes **Bhoja Reddy Baddam**, Proprietor, Archana Travels. "Today, travel has become a part of lifestyle and a priority where Indians take trips every three-to-four months to new locations every year. The growing aspirations are complemented by cheap air fares and packages now available, which sometimes are even cheaper than domestic travel," says Baddam. Owing to the above, he points out that Bangkok is the most popular destination followed by Malaysia, Singapore and Dubai. "There are newer destinations also coming up like Maldives, Bali, Vietnam, Philippines and Myanmar that are gaining traction due to enhanced connectivity," adds Baddam.



## ► Best Luxury Tour Operator (East 2017) – Jet Setters

### Sun & sand charm Indians

Singapore continues to rule the roost in terms of number of Indian tourists visiting the destination annually for both business and leisure travel segment, while UAE has emerged as the second most popular foreign destination for Indians, points out **Tarakeshwar Singh**, Director, Jet Setters. He informs that the traditionally strong bond between India and the UK continues to flourish as many students and entrepreneurs visit the country apart from tourists. "Moreover, UK also serves as a gateway to Western Europe, and is among the most sought-after getaways for a significant number of Indian tourists. Beach destinations are leading especially places like Costa del Sol to the quieter Costa Brava in Spain. We sell Cote d'Azur a lot. Australian beaches are also popular. Countryside tours, city trips and conducted tours are also gaining interest," adds Singh. The company will be adding newer destinations in Europe and South Africa to its portfolio this year.



## ► Best Corporate Incentive Tour Operator (East 2015) – Aaryan Leisure & Holidays

### The Philippines: Complete value for money

In 2017, Philippines, Thailand, Dubai, Maldives, Oman and Israel have kept the Indian travellers busy, believes **Sanjeev Mehra**, Director, Aaryan Leisure and Holidays. Mehra says, "I also feel that Israel, Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Vietnam are some of the destinations that will pick up in coming times." He further feels that Myanmar needs to look beyond their Australian and European markets and encourage Indian partners for leisure travel. South Korea is also an upcoming destination but it needs to work on its airfare if it has to be promoted in India. "We are now promoting Dubai with six nights stay as lots of new attractions have come up in Dubai. We are also developing Oman for four-to-six nights as it's a really an unexplored destination. For China, we have developed 14-night packages especially including The Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival," adds Mehra.



## ► Provider for Destination Weddings (North 2016) – Destination Wedding Company, a division of Blue Moon Travels

### Culinary itineraries are a new trend

Vietnam and Bali are popular among Indians as they offer short getaways for relaxation, while Dubai attracts Indians for shopping, informs **Vijay Dadhich**, Managing Director, Blue Moon Travels. He further adds that Eastern Europe has been popular for longer holidays not only because of Bollywood but also because it suits many budgets and promises an exotic experience. "With today's travellers being more curious and also adventurous to travel to off-beat destinations, new destinations are taking centre stage. These include Chile, Mongolia, Bermuda, Finland and even South Korea. Culinary itineraries, road trips, walking tours and sustainable travel are some of the trends that are fast catching on with the newer generation that wants to explore and go beyond the regular destination," says Dadhich.



## ► Best Corporate Incentive Tours Operator (South 2017) – Parry Travels

### Philippines tops chart for MICE & incentive travel

For MICE and incentive travel, Philippines is on top of the charts this year as an increased number of groups prefer to travel to this exotic destination, informs **Laxmi Angara**, Business Head-Travel, Parry Travels. "The Philippines saw an increase in leisure as well as MICE and incentive travel and has been picking up well for the last two years. Other destinations like Romania, Budapest and Prague in Eastern Europe have also done well but largely so for the leisure segment of travel," says Angara. She further adds that for the upcoming months, Korea is picking up and cities like Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru have shown maximum interest from the region. "We have done a few exhibition groups for Korea while Almaty too is picking up. There is a sizeable market for industry delegation too which is emerging for outbound segment of travel," says Angara.



## ► Entrepreneur of the year (East 2017) – Manoj Saraf

### CIS countries gain traction

Over the last few years, Eastern European destinations such as Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia have generated a lot of interest from the India market, points out **Manoj Saraf**, Managing Director, Gainwell Travel and Leisure. Citing the reason for this growth in demand, Saraf says, "Besides providing lower rates than Western Europe, this region also offers value-for-money packages, which are inclusive of attractions and meals." He further elaborates that the erstwhile Russian countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan present a lot of opportunity for budget, MICE travel and FIT travel from India. "Other destinations that I feel will soon emerge as popular hot spots for outbound travel from India include Israel, Jordan and Tanzania. At Gainwell, we have recently added Japan, Uzbekistan, Czech Republic and Hungary as new destinations to our product portfolio. We also see a great potential for increase in business to Sri Lanka and Australia."





## Iris Reps keen on aggressive expansion

Having completed five years this June, Iris Reps has grown its client portfolio over the years with a recent addition of five new clients.



Mumbai-based Iris Reps India has completed its five-year milestone this June 2017 but it is not resting on its laurels. "This is just the beginning and there's a lot more to come. We have recently shifted into a new

needs. "As the market evolves so do its needs and demands. We have therefore tried to connect the principals with the OTAs, running campaigns on the social media space, and actively promoting our products on various travel trade WhatsApp groups," Singh says.



Alefiya Singh  
Director  
Iris Reps

The agents have slowly realised the importance of specialisation and diversification so they are moving into the online and mobile app space now

office space and have added a few more clients to our portfolio," says Alefiya Singh, Director, Iris Reps.

Some of the new clients that Iris Reps has signed up include VISTAdmc – Spain and Portugal, MGM Macau, Coco Collection Maldives, LN Garden Hotel Guangzhou, Swiss-Garden Group Malaysia, and IMT Travel Services – a DMC from Greece. The team has since been busy planning a strategy for each of these clients to spread awareness for the products among the trade, getting the right sales partner and participating in road shows and trade fairs.

Speaking about the India market, Singh says, "This market is no longer predictable. There is no clear segmentation in terms of B2B and B2C markets. The travellers are now more evolved and confident of planning their own itineraries and booking tickets as well as hotels online. The agents have slowly realised the importance of specialisation and diversification so they are moving into the online and mobile app space now." Iris Reps has also evolved along with the changing market

## Spotlight on Digital Influencers

Scheduled to take place on Day 1 of WTM London 2017, Digital Influencers' Speed Networking 2017 will be the biggest one yet, with an increased focus on YouTubers and Instagrammers.



This year's Digital Influencers' Speed Networking will be the biggest yet, with 120 digital influencers taking part, and an increased focus on YouTubers and Instagrammers. WTM Portfolio Press and PR Manager, Paul Nelson, said, "The number of digital influencers attending WTM London has increased dramatically over

the past few years, as their power and influence continue to grow stronger especially in the travel industry."

Last year's event saw 400 exhibitor personnel discuss business opportunities with 110 bloggers. The event launched in 2014 with 70 bloggers and expanded to 100 in 2015, and will see 120 digital influencers in 2017. The fourth edition of the 90-minute



session will see participants partake in quick-fire business meeting with exhibitors interested in increasing their media exposure. Meanwhile, WTM London has announced Italy as its Premier Partner for this year's edition through which

the deal will provide widespread media coverage, offer maximum support to tourism industry, and highlight Italy's diverse range of holidays. The Italian National Tourist Board will have two main stands at WTM London (EU2000, EU2070) and will share its exhibition space with around 230 Italian travel trade partners, including regional tourism bodies, hotels, travel agencies, resorts and operators.

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# Aussies come calling to Pune

Tourism Australia hosted its annual India Travel Mission (ITM) 2017 in Pune from August 17-19, 2017. ITM provides a platform to facilitate business relationships and ensure that leisure and Business Event (BE) visitors going forward drive tourist arrivals to Australia.





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- All packages should be for nine nights or above, out of which five nights should be in places other than Cape Town and Johannesburg
- Highlight activities/specials about a small town in South Africa e.g. Hermanus, Oudtshoorn, Nelspruit etc.
- Itineraries should have a minimum of three activities
- All packages to be booked with a DMC that is a member of SATSA
- South Africa must be seen as the best adventure and wildlife destination in the world. You can develop holiday packages that are fun, memorable, engaging and easy
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- A mechanism on how to depict value for money - NOT selling the destination as a cheap option
- Packages need to be deal driven

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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM



# MakeMyTrip logs in to Travelport

With this strategic partnership, MakeMyTrip and Travelport aim to strengthen domestic and international air bookings, besides enhancing the hotel front.



TT BUREAU

InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ), the official distributor of Travelport in India, and MakeMyTrip have forged a strategic alliance that will allow the OTA access into Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform. Under the agreement, MakeMyTrip can expand the use of Travelport's technology from the Ibibo Group to their other primary

distribution channels starting in the second half of calendar year 2017.

Elaborating on the partnership, **Gordon Wilson**, Travelport's President and CEO, stated, "With this development, we believe we are now the leading travel technology provider in India and now we've got a partnership with the leading OTA in the market as well.



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"India is a very important market for us – it has now surpassed Germany as the third largest booking market for air GDS, and has moved up to occupy the second spot, after the US. Our business in India has reported a 20 per cent growth in air bookings in the first six months of this year which is faster than any market, as a result of the share gains we've been making here, and MakeMyTrip will accelerate this differential even further."

**Deep Kalra**, Founder, Chairman and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip, said, "This is an exciting time for MakeMyTrip and we are delighted to partner with Travelport and ITQ as part of our growth strategy in the service of the travelling Indian consumer."

Adding on, **Sandeep Dwivedi**, COO, ITQ, commented, "We were partners with Goibibo and seeing the advantages we've brought to the table, thanks to our state-of-the-art technology, MakeMyTrip has embraced our value. What we also value is the kind of growth MakeMyTrip has attained so far so it's a win-win-situation for both of us. The Indian aviation market is witnessing double-digit growth which is an indication that the prospects are going to be beneficial for us so we would like to continue investing in this market."

Travelport currently boasts a portfolio of approximately 400 airlines, including the merchandised content of over half of these carriers such as fares families and ancillary products (paid seat assignments, baggage fees, priority boarding, etc).

MakeMyTrip, along with its other entities Goibibo and redBus, receives over 33 million visits via its desktop and mobile-web platforms and serves over 40 million mobile app active users each month.





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# Ark's next big 'Dream' bash in 2018

Ark Travels has announced that it plans to host a bigger 'Big Bang Nautical Fiesta' next year on Dream Cruises to thank its travel partners as well as showcase Asia's biggest luxury ship yet.

**HAZEL JAIN FROM SINGAPORE**

Ark Travels, the preferred sales agent for Star Cruises in India, recently hosted its annual get together titled 'Big Bang Nautical Fiesta', from August 13-16,

Karimnagar near Hyderabad. The three-night itinerary included Singapore-Penang-Port Klang-Singapore.

**Kishan Biyani**, Managing Director, Ark Travels, says, "The first of these an-

we have grown tremendously over the years. We had agents who have done just one or two bookings with us till now. But after experiencing this ship, I have converted them into a long-lasting partner. An agent selling one cabin is as impor-

ters for the India market. Explaining this, Biyani adds, "This event was to showcase not just the cruising experience but also to show our partners what charters can offer. Charters deliver more value to customers at almost the same price. Next year you will see a lot of charters coming in, in co-operation with Star Cruises from Bangkok and Malaysia which will be a three-night itinerary."

Through this event, Ark Travels wanted to showcase a different experience on a ship that charters can offer—multiple entertainment options such as Indian Idol night and DJ party at multiple venues. For the forthcoming travel season, Ark Travels will also focus on promoting other Star Cruises ships like SuperStar Libra (ex-Port Klang) and SuperStar Virgo (ex-Shanghai).

Speaking about these products, Biyani adds, "The flexibility that Star Cruises offers is unbelievable especially for a last-minute mar-

## What they have to say

"Nine years ago, this man came to us and said that he will become one of our top supporters in a year's time. He has stayed true to his words. He has charisma, sincerity and lot of determination."



**Michael Goh**  
Senior VP (Sales)  
Genting Cruise Lines



**Naresh Rawal**  
VP Sales (India, South Asia, Russia, Middle East & South Africa), Star Cruises

"His participation is whole-hearted whether it is creating policies for agents or selling our products or training partners. Instead of picking 40 destinations around the globe, he has narrowed it down to what he really wants to sell."

ket like India. There is still a lot of potential for Singapore and Malaysia cruises for the India market. Gemini is currently doing 100 per cent oc-

cupancy. I see 100 per cent growth from India market in 2018. Not double-digit, but triple-digit growth. This will mostly come from MICE."

"The first of these annual events, which was held at Lavasa, lasted for 2 days; the one held this year on Gemini continued for 3 days; and next year, it would perhaps be for 5 days on Dream. This event is to say thank you to all our partners."



**Kishan Biyani**  
Managing Director, Ark Travels

2017, onboard SuperStar Gemini. More than 400 travel partners were hosted for this event, who came from all over India including smaller cities like Indore, Surat, Rajkot Raipur, Nagpur, Solapur, Kolhapur, Ludhiana, Agra, Banaras, Aurangabad and

nual events, which was held at Lavasa, lasted for 2 days; the one held this year on Gemini continued for 3 days; and next year, it would perhaps be for 5 days on Dream. This event is to say thank you to all our partners. We started nine years ago and with their support

tant to me as the one selling 300. This is how business grows. When we go and meet agents, we don't show them the itineraries. We tell them how to sell a cruise."

Ark Travels is keen on doing more and more char-

# SriLankan Airlines spreads its wings

SriLankan Airlines recently celebrated the launch of their new services to Coimbatore, together with Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad. With these additions, SriLankan now operates 126 flights per week to 14 cities in India. SriLankan Airlines' Chief Commercial Officer Siva Ramachandran said the new connections would strengthen ties between both countries, promoting two way travel for leisure, business, MICE tourism, pilgrimages, health requirements and education.







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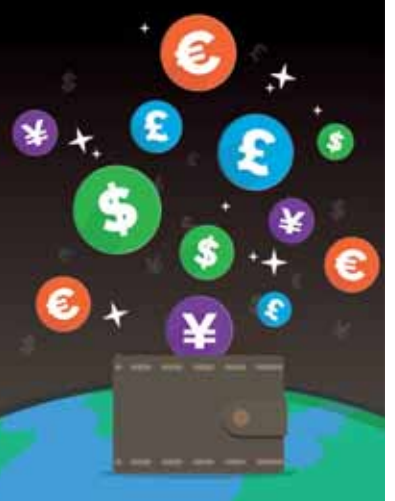


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# EVENT TALK

## SEPTEMBER 2017

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

## OCTOBER 2017

IATA Global Sustainable Aviation Summit	Geneva	3-4
Spain roadshow	Delhi NCR	4
Spain roadshow	Ahmedabad	5
Skai World Congress	Hyderabad	5-9
Spain roadshow	Chennai	6
UNWTO/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook	Guangxi, China	10-12
CAPA-ACTE Global Summit	London, UK	11-13
CII Tamil Nadu Travel Mart	Chennai	12-15
India Travel Awards West	Ahmedabad	15
Odisha Travel Bazaar	Bhubaneswar	15-17
CITM	Kunming	20-22
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

For more information, contact us at: [talk@ddpl.com](mailto:talk@ddpl.com)

# ASSOCIATION TALK

## No clarity despite GST session

The educational workshop organised by TAAI with officials from the CBEC failed to clear doubts of travel agents. Hopefully, the board will include feedback from the trade in its report to the Ministry of Finance.



HAZEL JAIN

After repeated requests from its members, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) reached out to the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) to get the low-down on Goods & Service Tax (GST) straight from the horse's mouth. The association members were hopeful that after attending a multitude of sessions on GST over the last few months, this one would bring some clarity, but in vain.



Sampat Damani  
Chairman, Western Region  
TAAI

Sampat Damani, Chairman, Western Region, TAAI, says, "We are still trying to

find our feet as far as GST is concerned. Despite conducting multiple sessions on GST, our members still have no clarity. At the behest of India Tourism, senior officials from CBEC agreed to conduct presentations for our members. But even the spokespersons could not clarify our doubts since there is still a lot of ambiguity and overlapping as far as GST for the travel industry is concerned."

Rashmi Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, had

also come down to Mumbai to talk to some agents regarding this issue. Damani adds that CBEC will take the members' inputs and present them before the Union Ministry of Finance for vetting. "It is a long process. Until then the agents will have to try and survive. The government will take it easy in the first three months of GST and hand-hold us until September. They are giving us time for trial and error till the picture is clearer. Our industry is quite complex with too many layers," Damani adds.

## ADTOI's first all-women Fam to Ranthambore



In a first, Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) organised an all-women Fam to Juna Mahal, Ranthambore from Aug 18 to 20, 2017. All women ADTOI members participated with great enthusiasm. "When we speak about empowering women – it's for a better tomorrow. Women take a back seat we want them to come forward and lead the industry. We plan to do many more women Fams and events like photography workshops, adventure, bird watching, etc. which we will be sharing from time to time," said Reena Chopra, Chairperson Women Empowerment & House Cultivation for ADTOI.

## OBITUARY

### Ronnie Lobo



Vice President Operations  
Carlson Hotels Worldwide  
(1950-2017)

Ronnie Lobo, Vice President Operations at Carlson Hotels Worldwide passed away on August 14, 2017, at his New Delhi residence. He is survived by his wife and children. In the span of his career, Lobo worked with prominent hospitality players such as Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group & Taj Hotels and Resorts. The Carlson group honoured him for an outstanding career achievement with its 2011 Carlson Fellows Award. He will be deeply missed by all.

## Over 17% growth in domestic airline passengers during Jan-July 2017 y-o-y

Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January to July 2017 were 657.21 lakhs as against 560.87 lakhs during the corresponding period of previous year thereby registering a growth of 17.18 per cent. The passenger load factor in the month of July 2017 has shown declining trend compared to previous month

primarily due to the end of tourist season. According to the On-Time Performance (OTP) of scheduled domestic airlines computed for four metro airports viz. Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai, IndiGo led with 84.6 per cent followed by Go Air at 78.2 per cent, Vistara at 74.5 per cent and SpiceJet at 73.4 per cent.





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### Bigbreaks.com

#### Delhi

**Ashutosh Yadav** has been appointed as Head-MICE at BigBreaks.com. With nine years of experience in Tourism (MICE), Yadav derives his knowledge having worked in areas of sales, operations and event management, but his true forte lies in sales. Yadav has chartered his professional career working with travel companies like JTB Travels, Tybros India Tours and Club7 Holidays. With a passion and commitment to build relationships, Yadav has taken over responsibility to spread BigBreaks's footprints in the MICE market.



**Ashish Agri** has been appointed as Business Head-Domestic at BigBreaks.com. Being an industry insider for over 12 years, Agri has chartered his professional career working with the most prolific companies in travel and hospitality industry like Catapult, Tamarind Tours, ITC Luxury Hotels and Yatra. He has worked in areas of Sales, Operations and Event Management while his forte is Sales & Marketing and Public Relations. Teaming his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Indian Subcontinent with a passion and commitment to build relationships, Agri has taken over responsibility to spread BigBreaks's footprints in the domestic market.



### Radisson Blu Pune Hinjewadi

#### Pune

**Pankaj Saxena** has been appointed General Manager at Radisson Blu Pune, Hinjewadi. Saxena was most recently GM at Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Mysore, and brings with him 20 years of hospitality experience. He has previously worked at Radisson Varanasi, Sarovar Hotels and ITC Hotels. He also served in the Executive Committee as Vice President 2011-12 Hotels & Restaurant Association of Andhra Pradesh, India. He has a Diploma in Business Administration and also holds a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management from Mangalore University.



### Le Méridien Goa, Calangute

#### Goa

**Norton Pereira** has been appointed as the General Manager of Le Méridien Goa, Calangute. Prior to this, he was the General Manager at Le Méridien, Mahabaleshwar. With more than 19 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Pereira brings a wealth of experience in handling leisure destinations and resort properties like Udaipur, Mahabaleshwar & Goa. He has also worked with elite properties like Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa, Westin Mumbai and Sheraton. Pereira holds an MBA degree in Sales and Marketing and has studied from the Institute of Hotel Management, Goa.



### Le Méridien Gurgaon, Delhi NCR

#### Delhi NCR

Le Méridien Gurgaon, Delhi NCR has appointed **Sanjay Gupta** as the General Manager. Gupta joins this property after a successful stint at Le Méridien Jaipur for four years. Under his lead, Le Méridien Jaipur significantly grew its top-line along with guest satisfaction scores. Gupta has also been instrumental in establishing Le Méridien Coimbatore, the newest hotel in India by Starwood Hotels & Resorts and the 100<sup>th</sup> Le Méridien hotel globally for the brand. After a successful term at the Jaipur property, Gupta is keen to replicate his significant work at Le Méridien Gurgaon, Delhi NCR.



### The Fern Hotels & Resorts

#### Mumbai

**Kevin Martis** joins the Fern Hotels & Resorts as General Manager-Sales & Marketing, West. Martis comes with over a decade of hospitality experience, with deep expertise in business development. He has worked with hotel brands such as Meluha-The Fern and Rodas - Ecotel Hotels, VITS Hotels & Lotus Resorts, Sahara Star & Bawa Group of Hotels. He has done Bachelors in Business Administration and holds a Diploma in Hotel Management & Catering Technology and is also an alumna of St. Andrews Institute of Hotel Management, Mumbai.



### Hyatt Regency Lucknow

#### Lucknow

**Kumar Shobhan** is the new General Manager of Hyatt Regency Lucknow. Shobhan has spent more than 17 years in the hospitality industry in a number of remarkable roles—from Food & Beverage to Rooms and Spa and Catering. Shobhan started his career in August 2000 as a Food & Beverage associate at Hyatt Regency Delhi. After a brief stint outside Hyatt, he returned to serve the hotel brand again in December 2006. A year later, he was promoted to Director - Food & Beverage at Hyatt Regency Delhi. Following that, Shobhan went on to hold similar operational roles with Hyatt in various Indian cities before moving to Lucknow in 2017.



### The Roseate

#### New Delhi

Roseate Hotels and Resorts, a part of Bird Hospitality has appointed **Namit Agnihotri** as the new Hotel Manager at The Roseate, New Delhi. In his new role, Agnihotri will be responsible for planning and administering hotel services and operations at the flagship hotel. Agnihotri brings 21 years of experience in the hospitality industry to the role. In his previous assignments, he has held senior leadership positions like General Manager at The Gateway Hotel Vadodra (Taj Group of Hotels). He has also worked with other leading hospitality chains such as the ITC Group, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, and Intercontinental Hotels & Resorts.



### Sarovar Hotels

#### New Delhi

Sarovar Hotels has appointed **Nihar Mehta** as Corporate HR Manager. Based out of Sarovar's corporate office in Gurugram, Mehta will be looking after human resources and manage employee development policies and systems. Prior to joining Sarovar Hotels, Mehta had worked in Ravi Jaipuria Corporation as Manager - HR and has led the Human Resources Department for the Retail Division for J Mart brand of Ravi Jaipuria Corporation. Mehta has also worked at ITC Fortune Corporate Headquarters. Mehta is a Business Management graduate from Manipal University and holds an MBA from University of Western Australia and a Masters of Human Resource Management from Monash University, Melbourne.



## TALKing People

**Jaswinder Narang**, Complex General Manager, Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel and Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa enjoys travelling as it offers a great opportunity to experience varied cultures and scrumptious local cuisine. "When it comes to domestic travel, Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra is amongst my favourite. Internationally, I like Vancouver. I also have some fond memories of Egypt and Turkey. I loved travelling to Morocco with my family," he says. Narang likes to watch movies and his all-time favourite include classics like Ben-Hur, The Sound of Music, The Godfather, and My Fair Lady.



**Nasir Khan**, General Manager, Fariyas Resort Lonavala, unwinds by walking, reading books, watching offbeat cinema, listening to music, going on long drives, and at times, cooking for the family. Khan says, "I am passionate about learning new things in the field of hospitality. One thing about me not many people know is that I can cook some very good Indian kebabs and curries. One of my most memorable holiday moments was when I was working in Delhi and took an impromptu break and drove down to Mumbai with my wife." His favourite holiday destinations in India are Dehradun and Dharamsala; and Dubai, Oman, and Paris outside India.



**Lally Matthews**, Hony. Secretary, Indian Association of Tour Operators, has been fascinated by the travel industry ever since he was a child and visited airports with his father, who was in aviation. "Luckily I came into this industry, despite the fact that I started my career under a CA, leaving it within 6 months to start working with ITDC. I started my own company in 1989. Having been a part of IATO for so many years, I am able to work for and give back to this industry." A sports enthusiast, Matthews' favourite holiday destination in India is Kerala. "I love going back to Kerala and internationally, I like going to Amsterdam," he added.







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# Lufthansa wings to start-ups

Wolfgang Will, Senior Director, South Asia, Lufthansa Passenger Airlines, says the Indian market is very crucial. India's growing economy and a booming aviation industry has made them launch their latest aircraft in the country and the airline is also propelling various start-ups here.



NIKHIL ANAND & NISHA VERMA

**Q** Please tell us about the Start-up Expo, which Lufthansa is part of.

Lufthansa recently co-organised the Start-up Expo alongside The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), which saw over 75 investors, 100 partners, 500 mentors and 250 start-ups showcasing their business. Through the Start-up Expo, Lufthansa is bringing together all that a start-up needs to be successful, be it investors, mentors, experienced business leaders, who are there together. We are very proud to contribute to form an ecosystem, which really helps young entrepreneurs to showcase their business, their ideas and fuel the booming Indian economy with this initiative.

**Q** How is the Start-up Expo different from last year?

We are very excited because this platform is getting bigger and better. There will be a lot of investor start-up meetings, a lot of opportunities for the start-ups to exchange between themselves including ideas and best practices. There would



“We have introduced Airbus A350 on our routes from Mumbai and Delhi to Munich. We have Airbus A380, which is our flagship aircraft operating from Delhi to Frankfurt, and we have also introduced a new route from our Brussels Airline this year, which would fly on the Brussels-Mumbai route.”

**Wolfgang Will**  
Senior Director, South Asia  
Lufthansa Passenger Airlines

as partner in this success of Indian business.

**Q** Lufthansa has been following the path of digitalisation and what should we look forward to in this approach?

There are a lot of changes coming up for us—digitalisation as well as innovation. We have declared 2017



also be a lot of job interviews, and we are expecting more than 10,000 participants coming for Start-up Expo 2017.

**Q** What would Lufthansa get by being a part of such an event?

We are very proud to partner with the success of Indian business. With India being a home for us for more than half a century, we have accompanied the country on this growth path and to success. Actually for us, it is important to be seen and recognised

as our year for digitalisation and innovation. We have an innovation hub in Berlin, which is like a little start-up factory, where a lot of ideas are coming up. For example, we are working to change the possibility for passengers to access reading material. Earlier, one could get a magazine and some newspapers on board, and now-a-days, they have a possibility to download content they want from a selection of hundred magazines and newspapers on their own device on board.

**Q** Are there any new routes and aircraft you're introducing in the Indian market?

We are committed to the Indian market, always bringing in the best and modern aircraft here. This year, we have introduced Airbus A350 on our routes from Mumbai and Delhi to Munich. We have Airbus A380, which is our flagship aircraft operating from Delhi to Frankfurt, and we have introduced a new route from Brussels Airline this year, which would fly on the Brussels-Mumbai route. We are investing and we are very much engaged in the booming Indian market, and we want to be part of the growth.

**Q** How has the demand from the Indian market been?

India is one of our strategic markets. We know about the demographics, as well as the dynamics in India. Thus, we are looking forward to also be a part of the growth which we see happening in this country. We are very proud to be recognised as a partner in the success of Indian business. We started 8 years ago to actively take up initiatives in this area and now Lufthansa runway to success and the Start-up Expo are seen as one of the most important platforms for SMEs and start-ups in India.

**Q** What makes Lufthansa successful in India?

Our commitment to the Indian market is very strong. When you think of Lufthansa group, then you have three things in mind—the European carrier with a lot of connectivity; over 300 connections and flights beyond our gateways to Europe and to North America; and quality made in Germany with a heart of India. 🇮🇳

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