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Maya felicitates trade in Agra



The fifth edition of India Travel Awards concluded at Hotel Clarks Shiraz Agra amidst the presence of stalwarts of the travel and tourism industry. The chief guest for the evening was Satyajee Rajan, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, who not only felicitated the winners, but also congratulated them for their contribution to the industry. The award was given in a total of 74 categories, celebrating the achievements of travel professionals in travel and MICE industries across the country. India Travel Awards celebrates the winners and achievers of the travel industry by honouring them at a glittering ceremony.

MOT lists guidelines for OTAs

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) has formulated a set of guidelines for approval of Online Travel Aggregators (OTAs), that is set to be rolled out by the end of December 2018.



The guidelines formulated for approval/re-approval of OTAs are aimed to ensure that there are adequate safeguards against deficiency

of service, alternate arrangements if needed and punitive deterrence. The voluntary scheme is currently open to bonafide OTAs to bring them on a common platform in the organised sector. After these guidelines are rolled out by the end of December,

all applications and fee payment will have to be made on the online platform. The scheme is expected to set standards towards accreditation and add value to the reliability of the aggregators in the online space operating in the organised tourism sector.

The OTA will be deemed approved by MOT for five years, based on the inspection report/recommendations of a committee comprising the concerned Regional Director (RD), a representative of FHRAI and a representative of IATO, along with approval

of Competent Authority (Chairman, HRACC). Post this, the re-approval will be granted for five years after inspection conducted by a committee, based upon an application made by OTA along with the requisite fee/documents on the online platform. ↴



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PATA's adventurous trail

The event brings together international experts at the forefront of the adventure travel industry from both private and public sectors to discuss the sector's issues and opportunities.



Manas Dwivedi

Ahead of the 5th PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart (ATRTCM) 2019 scheduled to take place

Briefing the details, **Runep Sangha**, Executive Director, PATA India Chapter said, "This sales meeting is organised to share the value and success of PATA ATRTCM. The idea is to give the trade first-hand informa-

tion in the state. Known as the 'Yoga Capital' of the country, Rishikesh is the perfect destination to showcase the true values of adventure, spiritual and responsible tourism. I am sure that local

has been declared as the 'Year of Adventure' and as part of our efforts to promote adventure tourism in the country, we have been successful in bringing this event to India. We are hoping that ATRTCM 2019 will



in Rishikesh from February 13-15, 2019, the association organised a curtain raiser cum sales meet for the travel trade fraternity in Delhi. A one-day travel trade mart with international buyers and sellers and another conference are being organised in collaboration with Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) and Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI).

tion which will help them take a decision to participate in the event. The PATA India Chapter is working very closely with UTDB and ATOAI to make this event a great success."

On hosting ATRTCM 2019, **Dillip Jawalkar**, Secretary, Tourism & CEO, UTDB, said, "I am hopeful that the success of ATRTCM will boost the growing prospect of adventure

stakeholders in the state will benefit from this initiative."

During the one-day travel mart of the event, pre-matched appointments will facilitate face-to-face meetings for sellers with leading adventure product buyers from around the world.

On the occasion, **Captain Swadesh Kumar**, President, ATOAI said, "The year 2018

attract the tourism fraternity of Asia Pacific region to India in large numbers."

Tejbir Singh Anand, Chairman from ATOAI for PATA ATRTCM 2019, said, "The one-day conference during the event on the theme 'Rejuvenate Your Soul through Travel' will explore the nuances, trends and dynamics of one of the fastest-growing tourism sectors." 📌



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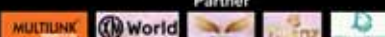
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The countdown begins

As we bid goodbye to another year, the industry, like every year, is dealing with new issues as well as old. Here's hoping that the New Year helps to come up with new solutions and new beginnings. For inbound, the last one year came with many highs, as far as MOT's marketing initiatives were concerned. The Ministry announced a slew of new campaigns, market specific approach, new initiatives, Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD schemes, events like Buddhist Tourism Conclave, International Yoga Day and India Tourism Mart. With all this, MOT is striving to attain the goal of 20 million tourists by 2020. However, how successful these initiatives have been and how happy the industry is from these events, that is yet to be debated. But the efforts are being seen and we hope that they reap benefits for both the industry and the Ministry. On the other hand, the outbound market is still recovering from GST issues and is facing repercussions of the declining value of the rupee. Nevertheless, the industry is hopeful because of the rise in demand for travel amongst Indians for both international and domestic destinations. We hope that the New Year brings good news for both inbound and outbound, boosting business for the stakeholders. Happy Selling!

The OTA conundrum

The hospitality industry in Gujarat, Chandigarh and Delhi released statements against working with Online Travel Aggregators (OTAs), claiming to be facing exploitation in terms of rates and information shared on these portals. While many hotels are claiming that the monopoly of OTAs in terms of room bookings is not only harming their reputation but also the ARR's on their own websites, there are others who say that a common ground needs to be reached with OTAs and hotels, so that neither party suffers. In the light of this controversy, Ministry of Tourism has also released guidelines for OTAs, which not only defines their business but also their dealings with the service providers/hotels as well as the consumers. While this may be seen as an encouraging step in this OTA debate and may come as a breather for some in the industry, how it is implemented remains to be seen.

TRAVTALK brings to you news and events that made headlines 25 years ago with relevance even today. From the archives, we present the December 1993 issue:

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Then



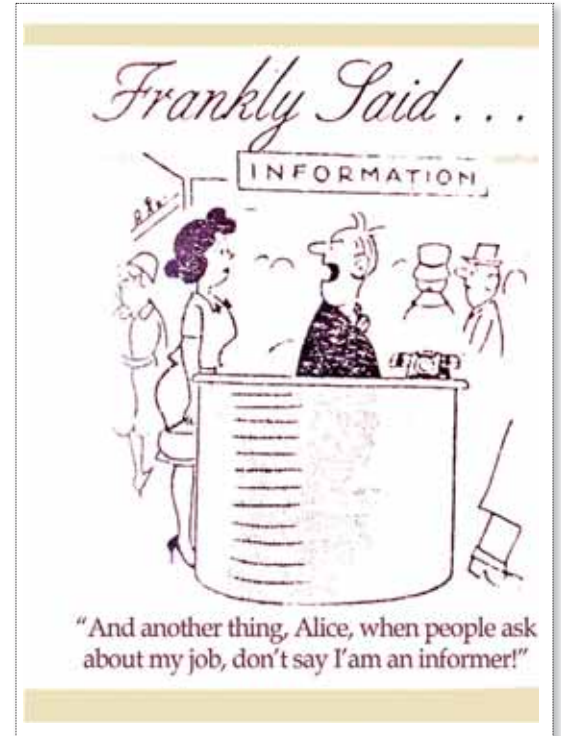
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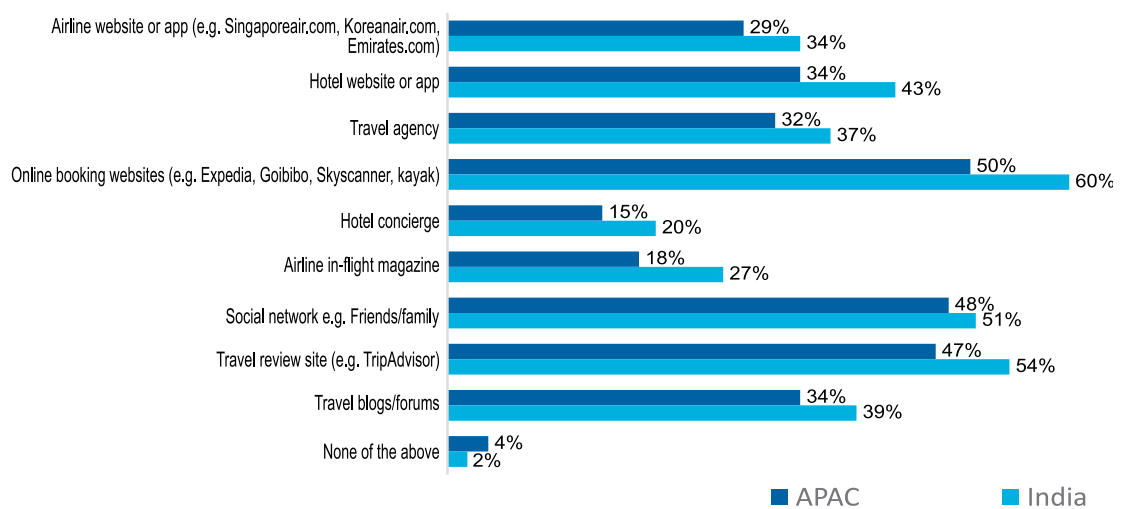
Maharaj I.S. Wahi, Owner, Travel Promotion Bureau, has been a prominent face in the inbound industry and has even served as President of Indian Association of Tour Operators from 2001-2003. In 1993, he also diversified into hotels called TPB Hotels and Resorts. Today, apart from his travel company—TPB, he also heads Rudra Experiences, which excels in offering a range of experiences to travellers coming to India.



Online channels rule travel

A report 'Journey of Me Insights' by Amadeus reveals that almost 60 per cent of Indian travellers receive the most relevant travel recommendations through the medium of online channels.

Platforms that have sent travellers relevant travel recommendations



- Online schannels provide the most relevant travel recommendations to 50 per cent APAC traveller. According to the report, travel review sites also contribute to relevant travel recommendations for 54 per cent Indian travellers and 47 per cent APAC travellers.
- Other sources for the same include travel agencies, hotel concierge, airline in-flight magazine and social network (family and friends), among others.

Source: Amadeus-Journey-of-Me-Insights-APAC-report

'Tourism employs 84mn people'

Addressing delegates during the inaugural ceremony of 14th CII Annual Tourism Summit in Delhi, **KJ Alphons**, Union Minister of State (I/C) Tourism, asserted that tourism is the future of India.

 Kanchan Nath

With 29 states, 4,000 cities, a rich history and incredible diversity of culture, India's travel and tourism industry has tremendous potential to serve as an engine for economic growth, job creation and development, states a World Economic Forum report. Resonating the same, **KJ Alphons**, Union Minister of State (I/C) Tourism, said, "Approximately, 84 million people are currently employed by the tourism industry across the country. In the last 4.5 years, we have created 13.92 million jobs in tourism. Tourism remains one of the biggest job creators in India."

According to a latest report by World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC), India ranks third as the world's third most powerful country for travel and tourism, after China and the USA, with an annual turnover of 234 billion dollars. Elaborating on the facts and figures, Alphons mentioned, "Out of this, 87 per cent comes from domestic tourism and the rest 12 per cent comes from International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs). ITAs have gone up by 14 per cent in India, while the global figures were at 7 per cent. The revenue earned through ITAs grew by 5 per cent globally, while in India it grew by 19.2 per cent. We have immense potential for growth in tourism. In three years, we want to double the ITAs and touch the 20 million mark. We also want to increase the income from tourism to \$50 billion in three years and in five, reach \$100 billion. These targets are achievable."

Indicating the vast potential of increased tourism from neighbouring nations, he said, "Last year, the Chinese outbound stood at 144 million people while we just got 240,000 Chinese tourists visiting India. The

UAE stands as a good example in this regard. In two years, the number of Chinese tourists in the UAE shot up dramatically. During our roadshows in China, we made front page news, met all the officials in Beijing, visited the local provinces and met the governors."

China, according to Alphons, associates India with three aspects - Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bollywood actor Aamir Khan and philosopher-poet Rabindranath Tagore. "We need to cash in on all of this and get the tourists to come to India. In two



years, I want to get at least one per cent of Chinese outbound, which means 1.4 million people from China. We have already strengthened our foreign offices and spend ₹650 crore only on publicity out of which ₹453 crore is on foreign publicity," he shared. 

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India Connect

 The Chinese associates India with three aspects - Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bollywood actor Aamir Khan and poet Rabindranath Tagore

FITUR to put spotlight on MiCE

The new FITUR MITM - MICE & BUSINESS space offers a new platform for business opportunities and networking between FITUR exhibitors and a selection of leading international executives.



FITUR 2019 will again transform the halls at Feria de Madrid into a global meeting point for tourism industry professionals from January 23-27, 2019. Organised by IFEMA, this is the leading event for both inbound and outbound Latin American markets, which will this year incorporate important new features geared toward increasing business opportunities. In this regard, the trade fair is unveiling a new B2B area focused on MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events). FITUR MITM - MICE & BUSINESS, organised in partnership with GSAR Marketing, the specialist company in MITM Events, will provide a platform for meetings between a select group of industry professionals and FITUR exhibitors.

The format for FITUR MITM - MICE & BUSINESS will involve a schedule of up to 30 pre-arranged appointments between exhibiting companies interested in taking part in the programme (up to a limit of 100 companies, with priority given to the main exhibitors) and 100 top-tier international executives. Companies can register for participation through the FITUR website.

FITUR is also organising its traditional Hosted Buyers Workshop, another important B2B platform, which has consolidated its position as a mechanism of proven effectiveness and extensive participation. Through these pre-arranged business meetings, FITUR 2019 will again connect supply and demand, in line with the commercial and strategic interests of exhibiting



companies and their partners, and international buyers.

FITUR will also be hosting the 10th anniversary of the INVESTOUR Tourism Investment and Business Forum for Africa, geared toward boosting the development of sustainable tourism. As usual, the event will feature a round table that will discuss the twin topics of safe,

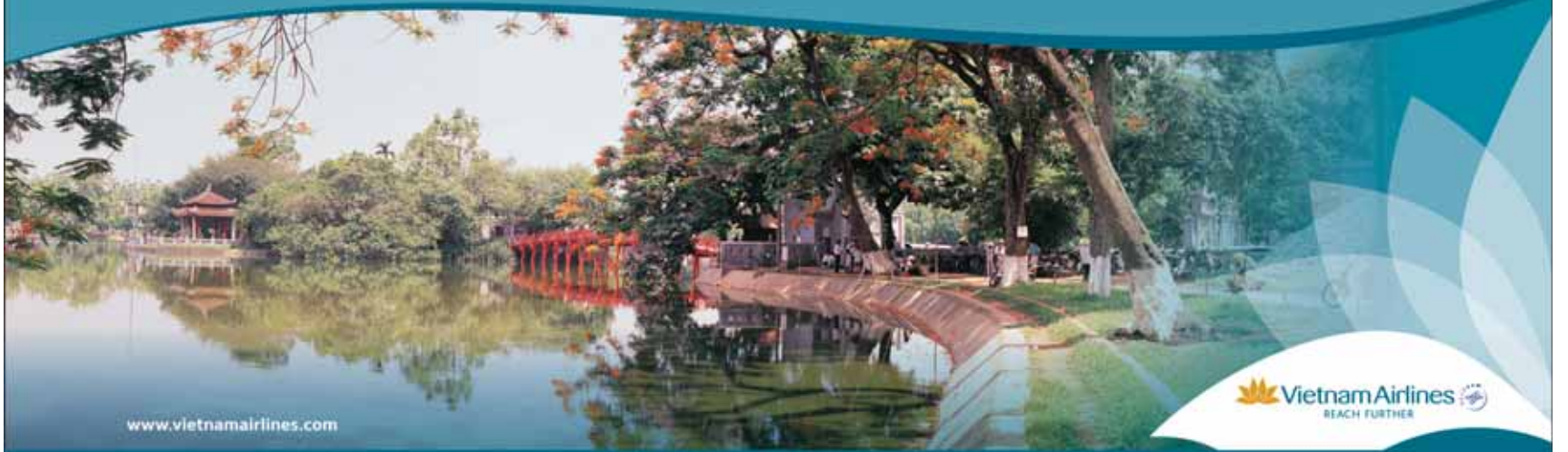
uninterrupted travel in Africa: promoting resilience and risk management in the tourism industry and embracing digital transformation, innovation and promotion of niche tourism. Alongside this activity are B2B sessions aimed at supporting leading African companies in their development of sustainable tourism projects by connecting them with international investors.

In this way, FITUR 2019 offers a key platform for focused, high-quality matching of supply and demand in the international tourism sector across all its segments. This is reflected in the figures for the previous trade fair, which brought together 251,000 participants and played host to more than 6,800 business meetings.

The trade fair will also feature well-established specific sections which already account for a significant volume of business, including FITUR GAY (LGBT) and FITUR SALUD, as well as FITURTECHY and FITUR KNOW HOW, where technology is spotlighted as an essential lever for growth in the sector.

One of the main areas of focus at FITUR 2019 will be knowledge and know-how, best represented through its programme of seminars, which covers every section of the trade fair, as well as its many different activities, organised within the framework of the fair by international organisations such as the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Latin American Conference of Tourism Ministers and Entrepreneurs (CIMET). ↴

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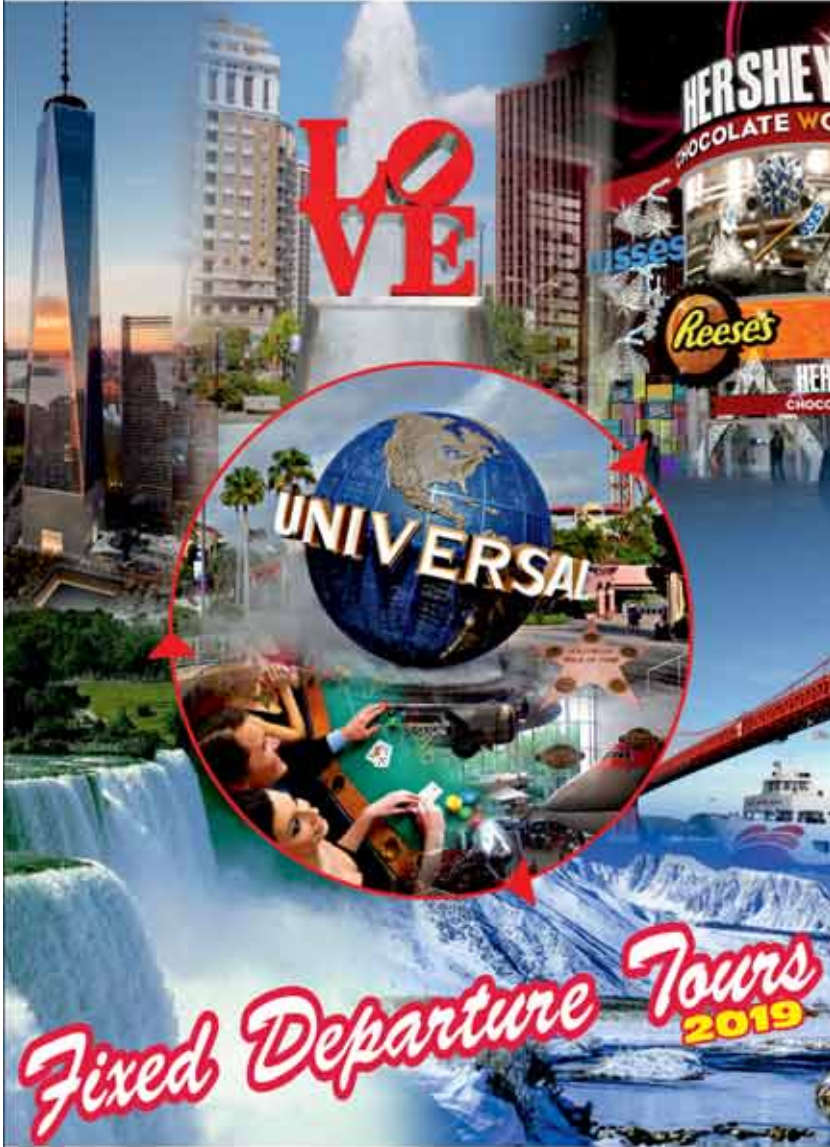
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Strengthening India base

In the past 10 years, the total amount spent by visitors from India to Scotland has seen a growth of 60 per cent with 64,000 Indians travelling to Scotland in 2017.



Manas Dwivedi

After garnering healthy growth from the Indian market, VisitScotland organised business development workshops in Mumbai and Delhi in partnership with Emirates to update the travel trade about Scotland's latest trend. Multiple partners from Scotland such as Gleneagles (five-star hotel), Cashel Travel (Edinburgh), The Spires (luxury serviced apartments in Edinburgh) and the newly refurbished Caledonian Sleeper train, held fruitful conversations with tour operators and industry leaders in Mumbai and Delhi.

On the occasion, Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive, VisitScotland said, "India continues to be an important growth market for Scotland with spends and visits by Indian visitors increasing by almost two thirds in the past 10 years. This Business Development Mission will give Scottish business an opportunity to engage face-to-face with tour operators in the



Malcolm Roughead
Chief Executive
VisitScotland

market and help develop future products for Indian travellers. With India's luxury travellers and the fast-growing middle-class traveller market having a propensity to travel outside of the main visitor season, India plays an important role in marketing and developing Scotland as a year-round destination.

In the past 10 years, the total amount spent by visitors from India to Scotland has seen a growth of 60 per cent – to £17.6 million. There has been an increase in the number of Indians visiting Scotland too. The country has seen a 92 per cent rise from 2016 to 2017,



Emma Hallington
Market Manager—India
Middle East & Australasia

paired with a 65 per cent increase in spend for 2017.

Briefing details on the growth numbers, Emma Hallington, Market Manager—India, Middle East & Australasia explained, "In 2017, we saw 64,000 Indian visiting to Scotland which is a healthy growth in comparison to numbers in 2016. We are anticipating similar growth in 2018 too."

"The primary catalyst has been connectivity. On the Middle East route, we have seen the introduction of the Emirates' new direct flight to Edinburgh," she added further. ↴

Memories for a lifetime!



Packed with exciting activities, a Fam trip was recently organised by SWISStours in which agents were taken to Switzerland, covering Gstaad, Zermatt and Interlaken. The agents enjoyed a helicopter ride over the Matterhorn, the first glider on Grindelwald First, a horse carriage ride and e-biking in Gstaad. Coupled with great accommodation at premier hotels like Victoria Jungfrau and sumptuous meals, the group returned with memories sure to last a lifetime.

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Silversea hopes to up bookings

The Monaco-based all-inclusive, ultra-luxury cruise line hopes to cash in on the Indian outbound numbers. The product is currently promoted in India by Cox & Kings primarily.



Hazel Jain

While selling cruise packages on ultra-luxury ships might be a challenge in a last-minute market such as India, Silversea Cruises might have a good chance because of its all-inclusive concept. The

Monaco-based cruise company that has nine ships in its fleet today is hoping to attract some part of the growing Indian outbound.

Daniel Krupp, Vice President, Silversea Cruises, was recently in Mumbai to take around 10

“While the outbound market from India is about 20mn, 2017 figures show that there were only 1,70,000 cruise passengers”

operators and agents around on its Silversea Muse that had docked in Mumbai and

interacted with them onboard the liner over lunch. They also went around the ship for

an inspection after a product presentation to get a first-hand feel of the exclusive experience. The ship, which is the newest addition made in 2017 to its fleet, departed from Muscat on October 23 and docked in Mumbai on October 26. It then cruised to Kochi on October

28, going on to Colombo, Rangoon, Phuket, Pulau, Klang and finally arriving in Singapore on November 9.

The product is currently promoted in India mainly by Cox & Kings along with three or four other agents and tour operators. The family-owned cruise liner operates relatively smaller ships to give an intimate and exclusive experience. Most of them are small enough to enter smaller towns on their routes.

Explaining the cruise liner's focus, Krupp said, “Cruising in India in general has grown.



Daniel Krupp
Vice President
Silversea Cruises

While the outbound market from India is about 20 million, 2017 figures show that there were only 1,70,000 cruise passengers which means there is less than one per cent penetration. So we're very much at the beginning of cruising in India mostly because of inadequate port infrastructure and lack of awareness.”

The company offers an early booking bonus of 10 per cent for agents across the fleet. The company also follows a dynamic pricing policy so early bookings are beneficial. “We plan to engage the trade in India more and more. There is a strong interest from India particularly for our Expedition product because even the shore excursions are included in that. We even offer charters for big groups for which we need to work about 18 months in advance. We have a very generous group programme for a minimum of 10 guests through which agents can benefit from incentives like price protection for 90 days,” Krupp added. ↴

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'Rejuvenate Your Soul Through Travel'

The PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart (ATRTCM) 2019 is Asia Pacific's leading travel trade event dedicated to the adventure travel industry.

ATRTCM 2019 comprises a one-day travel trade mart with leading international buyers and sellers, and a one-day conference along with high-level networking opportunities.

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Nestled amidst lush greeneries guarded by the breathtaking hills of northern Uttarakhand, every corner of Rishikesh has stories to be told.

Beyond its marvelous temples, pilgrimage site and the magnificent Ganges River, the city attracts tourists from all over the world for its numerous adventure sports including white-water rafting, cliff-jumping, kayaking and camping.

Rishikesh is situated a half-hour drive away from the nearest airport, Jolly Grant (also known as Dehradun Airport) which offers direct flights from international airports in New Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow and Srinagar through popular carriers such as Air India, Spice Jet and Jet Airways.

ATRTCM 2019 is kindly hosted by the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board.

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India on priority

For Tourism and Events Queensland, the India market has witnessed a 3-year growth trend of 15.4%. The agency's India Country Manager, **Ryna Sequeira**, talks about the importance of Indian travel trade.

 Harshal Ashar from Queensland

The India market is clearly a priority for Tourism and Events Queensland as it has witnessed a three-year growth trend of 15.4 per cent. **Ryna Sequeira**, Country Manager—India, Tourism and Events Queensland, elaborates about the significance of the Indian travel trade.



Ryna Sequeira
Country Manager—India
Tourism and Events Queensland

"As of June 2018, the Indian visitor numbers to Queensland grew by 17.1 per cent to 78,000. Therefore, we expect to see double-digit growth in 2018 over 2017," says Sequeira.

She further adds that the idea of hosting Queensland on Stage India 2018 in Brisbane and Gold Coast was to showcase new products in the region, with Brisbane as the new city to visit for Indian travellers, and Gold Coast to go beyond Surfers Paradise and experience the cool vibe of southern Gold Coast. "The

Fam is an eye opener for the travel trade who have never stayed in Brisbane earlier and experienced the city as the change in perception will only result in the destination being packaged as part of the Australia itinerary for group travellers, foreign independent travellers (FITs) and MiCE," she mentions.

Emphasising on the importance of sales and marketing, Sequeira reveals, "The travel trade is extremely important

as we don't physically sell products in India. However, we influence the trade to sell the best of what the destination offers, keeping in mind consumer demands.

India is a traditional booking market for long haul-destinations like Australia and the trade plays a significant role in providing end-to-end services to travellers."

Sequeira also talks about the relevance of marketing initiatives essential to promote a destination like trade campaigns, media and key opinion leader Fams, Queensland roadshows in markets and aviation campaigns.

Besides, the agency is focusing on specific itineraries for Indians which include a two-night stay in Brisbane, self-drive up to Sunshine Coast from Brisbane and Port Douglas from Cairns, Airlie Beach and the Whitsunday Islands. ↴

Multilink to payments

Multilink helps entrepreneurs build their own brand in the market by providing state-of-the-art and highly-secured B2B2C digital fintech portal.

 TT Bureau

Since the last few years, we have seen numerous outlets offering instant money transfers, railway bookings, flight and bus ticketing, hotel bookings, bill payments, instant mobile recharge and many more services. Not many know that most of these outlets are powered by Multilink, informs **Nikhil Shah**, Director & Co-Founder, Multilink.

Multilink is a B2B2C digital fintech company. Shah further says, "We wanted to make life easier by bringing the entire utility problem under one umbrella with just one click. Providing such a complicated business model in a simple format was the biggest challenge. Initially,

we faced a lot of problems due to weak internet connectivity and limited usage of technology by suppliers. Fortunately, these issues got normalised over a period of time. Providing a secured environment for such huge volumes was the biggest challenge. Innovation and the belief that everything is possible are key inspirations in the growth of Multilink."

The company helps entrepreneurs, retailers and professionals to build their own brand in the market by providing state-of-the-art and highly-secured B2B2C digital fintech portal. It uses India's number one hosting company for secured transactions. Ease of use backed with an extraordinary support system helped propel Multilink



Nikhil Shah
Director & Co-Founder
Multilink

to newer heights. Appointing franchisees across India, today Multilink has its presence in more than 2,400 cities and 18 states with over 60,000+ franchisees and processing over 45 million transactions per month serving 1-2 million customers annually. ↴



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WTM promises good prospects

WTM London was a mixed bag for participants visiting the UK. While some felt that, this year too provided a platform to renew old ties, some were disappointed with the low footfall and empty stalls that drew a sorry picture at the India pavilion.



Peden Doma Bhutia from London



Vellamandi N Natarajan
Tourism Minister
Tamil Nadu

“WTM as platform is important for us because if you are not here, people will not know where Tamil Nadu is. We have come here to showcase the strengths of our state. Eight stakeholders have come under the umbrella of Tamil Nadu Tourism in the areas of wellness tourism, travel agencies and hotels. We are a safe state in terms of law and order — infrastructure and roads are good too. We are also well-connected as we have four international airports.”



Pramod Kumar
Tourism Minister
Bihar

“WTM is a great platform for us to showcase a unique place like Bihar. It's a value addition for us. True to our theme of Blissful Bihar, we are rich in religious circuits — everything from Buddhist circuit to Jain circuit and Sikh circuit can be found in Bihar. We are using this platform to promote tourism in Bihar on an international level. Our tourist spots attract international visitors, but they are all from Buddhist countries, and now we feel it's time to reach out to the world as sites like Bodh Gaya and Nalanda are all world heritage. The international visitors should know about the heritage of Bihar.”



Jehangir N Katgara
Chairman & MD
Trail Blazer Tours India

“WTM has always worked well for us, as this platform allows us to meet our existing clients. Moreover, our prior appointments enable us to make sure that we plan our time well and our meetings take place as per the time mentioned. This platform allows us to meet new people as well as strengthen old ties with our existing customers. So, as far as we are concerned, it's a good show for us. Like every year, I am happy with the outcome of the show, but I just feel that the India pavilion should look more authentic and feel more Indian.”

“WTM has been good, although we didn't have a stall. But, I feel there is less traffic coming in to the Indian pavilion and we need to know why this is happening. Is it because the destination India is becoming expensive? We need to find it out as smaller countries like Maldives and Sri Lanka are doing very well in terms of traffic. I'm surprised that some state tourism boards haven't even participated. The Ministry of Tourism needs to speak to its stakeholders and to the various states to make sure that participation is strong.”



Debasish Bhowmik
Senior Vice President
Hotel Clarks Shiraz

“Veena World has been participating in WTM for the last two years. It is a great experience for us to be able to interact with people directly and I have been coming to WTM for the last 20 years and know how important it is to be here. Most of the English-speaking countries come together at this platform and I get to meet my friends at one place in a year. The interactions are good and there is an abundant chance for networking. The exhibition is great for business. Throughout the years, WTM has given me some very good friends and partners.”



Sudhir Patil
Founder & Director
Veena World

“Overall, we found WTM productive this year. For us, it's a way of securing new products that we need for global expansion, it's also an opportunity to acquire new customers and develop deeper relations and increase sales for existing clients. It's also an opportunity to liaise with tourist boards in terms of driving campaigns and learning more about the destinations, so that we can educate our customers. As we are an online business, it's great to see innovations in the marketplace and showcase our products.”



Darryl Ismail
CEO and Co-founder
Instant Travel



Arun Kundu
Director-Incoming
The Rail Journeys, Mercury Travels

“WTM is not a place to secure new business. There are various marts that help you to transact new business; this mart is more to help educate people about your products. Because this is our source market, we use this place to inform people about our products. Sometimes when people come, their first reaction is that the product is very expensive, but then we educate them about what luxury trains in India are all about. So, when we filter down the information to our B2B partners and even to the B2C channel, it helps them decide on a holiday like this. We make them understand the value of a holiday on a train.”



Vandana
Manager—Events & PR
Kesari Tours

“In the last two years, we have started taking a separate stall and it's been good so far. My contracting and inbound teams had kept themselves busy with meetings for the two days. We see good potential business coming our way in the next year. WTM is an important platform as tourism stakeholders from all over the world are here to conduct meetings and have one-on-one interaction with their partners and explore business opportunities with future partners. We share ideas and business strategies, and it's an extremely effective platform for business.”



Abhishek Jangid
VP—Product Sales
Quadlabs

“This year, WTM wasn't as great as the previous years. The footfall was less on the first day, the second day was comparatively better, but the third day again was quite vacant. The reason for this maybe that they keep shifting the location. This year too they shifted the location, whereas most of the traffic comes from the other side. Last year, the technology section was on the other side and this keeps happening. Despite various events centering around technology, there wasn't much footfall. This year, we are not happy with the quality of customers and the low footfall.”

IITT 2019 set to raise the bar

The India International Travel & Tourism (IITT) exhibition is back in its sixth edition to welcome the tourism fraternity from January 10-12, 2019 at the Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai.



TT Bureau

The sixth edition of India International Travel & Tourism Exhibition (IITT) is all set to raise the bar and create a new definition in the exhibition business industry. The exhibition is scheduled from January 10-12, 2019 at the Bandra Kurla Complex,

Mumbai. The inauguration will witness key dignitaries from the travel, tourism and hospitality industry.

IITT is India's leading travel trade exhibition with over 500 exhibitors from more than 25 countries showcasing their products and services. IITT 2019 will be precisely driven



by its content which includes workshops, training academy, speed networking lounge, panel discussions, walk the talk with your mentor and

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10-11-12 January
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much more. IITT is delighted to announce its association with Cox & Kings for the coming years. Cox & Kings will be creating experiential zones for

its visitors and it would be a unique experience for visitors. The specially-designed grandeur experience will be the highlight of the show, which the industry will always look forward from year on year.

The panel discussion committee includes some of the leading connoisseurs from

the globe who will discuss various interesting topics and trends such as cruise tourism, travel trade technology, outbound tourism, MiCE tourism and much more. It will prove to be an insightful panel discussion for the visitors as the leading players in the industry will share their trade experience.

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Agents bid adieu to 2018

The year 2018 has been a mixed bag for the travel fraternity. Looking back, the who's who from the trade speak on how they dealt with myriad concerns whilst expressing good cheer for 2019.

TT Bureau



Subhash Goyal
Chairman
STIC Travel Group

“The year 2018 has been a wonderful year as we have witnessed overall growth. We represent four cruise companies – Holland America Line, Seabourn, Windstar Cruises and A-Rosa River Cruises—and there has been growth in all. We represent ‘Alamo rent-a-car’, in that too, we have seen growth. In Wyndham Hotel Group, which is the world’s largest hotel chain, we have seen a fantastic growth. Even in all the 10 airlines, which we represent, there has been an upward trend.”



Guldeep Singh Sahni
Managing Director
Weldon Tours & Travels

“The outbound tourism has always boomed for India. Even for 2018, the outbound figures were good. The expectations were high. In our company, we were expecting 22 per cent growth but we achieved about 17 per cent. We are happy with this growth and the best part is the emergence of a diverse kind of demand; we are also happy to sell new products. The rupee depreciation has also not impacted much, although MiCE would have impacted a bit, but for FIT market, the numbers remain unaffected. We did find resistance in a few bookings, but overall it didn’t affect the numbers.”



Himanshu Patil
Director
Kesari Tours

“Customer satisfaction this year was high and the overall performance for the year 2018-19 was about 85-90 per cent. However, the cherry on the cake this season has been the Christmas Market, specially for our travellers. Going by the current travelling trends and customer affinity towards ‘activity-based’ traveling, we have organised special cricket tours to Australia. The plan is to gradually introduce two or three new destinations and new tours every year in terms of new products and tours. That is how we have tours right from the domestic market to Antarctica and even the Arctic Circle and the North Pole today.”

“We have seen growth in our business this year, especially in the business travel sector. Airlines have always been our core product, but we have also noticed good growth in like rail and visa services. Our network has grown with new travel partners and airlines being added to our system. To support these partners, we have also opened multiple branches in 2018 in Ludhiana, Guwahati and Rajkot, thus increasing our service branches to 56 in total.”



Manoj Samuel
Director
Riya Group

“We have expanded our footprint across the country since the acquisition of Travel Tours last year. We have tapped Tier II markets as we understand the potential of growth there. In addition to serving large corporate companies, we are one of the first organised companies to target the SME space by making use of technology and travel tools such as SBT. Such tools help SMEs to increase their operational efficiencies. Moreover, FCM’s achievement of AD2 certification helped us grow tremendously.”



Rakshit Desai
Managing Director, FCM Travel Solutions, Indian Subsidiary of Flight Centre Travel Group

“We have stayed strong in terms of our patronage in India and most of our partners have shown a slow but steady upward movement in absolute pax numbers. We have also brought about innovations. For instance, Globus Escapes offers affordable curated vacations for winter tours. Globus also introduced Private Touring in Europe designed for parties ranging from two to two dozen guests. Any Europe itinerary from Globus can be converted to a private touring experience once an itinerary is chosen.”



Abira Sinha
Regional Sales Manager—
India, Globus family of brands

Contd on page 25 ▶

IHTC academics meet in Italy

Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress (IHTC), along with The European University for Tourism (UET Italia) held its 11th international conference in Palermo, Italy. The four-day event themed on ‘Innovations and Opportunities in Global Tourism’ addressed the need for a specialised workforce in tourism and hospitality; hence the requirement of a formal education.



Europamundo highlights Russia

Aparna C Basumalik, Country Head, Europamundo Vacations, gives an account of how its 23rd Convention fared for the Indian contingent.



The three-day convention in Moscow witnessed the entire Europamundo family from around the world gathered to meet, work and spend a great time together. Luis Garcia Codron, Director General, Europamundo Vacations; Berend Lund Christian, Director—Corporate Planning, Europamundo Vacations and Alejandro de la Osa, Director—Commercial, Europamundo Vacations, welcomed the delegates at the convention.



Aparna C Basumalik
Country Head
Europamundo Vacations

The event was attended by distributors and commercial team from 41 countries, which included the Indian contingent with their commercial team led by Aparna C Basumalik, Country Head, Europamundo Vacations. The distributors present from India included Akbar Holidays, Cox & Kings, MakeMyTrip and Travel Tours.

Speaking about the convention, Basumalik said, “Each year, we choose a country which will be potential for growth on Europamundo products in the coming seasons. In 2019, we have numerous options for Russia. During the convention, the sales for the current year, itineraries and new routes for the coming season were discussed. New distributors were introduced to the team and Russia was showcased as a destination.”

The global brochure has over 300 products and with all the programmes included, it is certainly the most robust brochure in the market, insisted Basumalik. She also claimed that the

Indian delegates had a great experience. “India contributed for the highest growth in the global market. The distributors had strongly recommended the itineraries with Indian meals, which were introduced in 2018

and in 2019,” she added.

This year, Europamundo Vacations carried nearly 1,80,000 passengers on all tours put together. India shone with over 30 per cent of the market share. ↴






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Celebrating 20 years

No excuses for the tears of joy that roll down Caper Group CMD, **Bharat Bhushan Atree's** eyes as he nostalgically meanders down the memory lane and recapitulates his assimilated treasures that screen his subconscious perceptions.



Caper has just turned 20 years young! "Young, because we still have far to go, ambitions to achieve and the zenith is so close and yet so far, but always achievable. Yes, Caper, from its humble initiation from a single room office with two people as staff in December 1998, grappling in a comparatively alien field of business in the travel trade has now graduated to a multi-faceted company with over 300 industrious young executives, eager and hungry to excel and deliver. This metamorphosis

mesmerised the industry and the tacit technology bonanza incapacitate petty business opposition that fell by the wayside," remarked Bharat Bhushan Atree, CMD, Caper Group.

Origin and initial footprints

What's in a name? There is not a fragment of imagination, Atree states with authenticity and as incredible it may seem, the name moulds the character and destiny charts its course. Atree elaborated, "The term 'Caper' literally means a playful act and the idea was to set up a travel company because of our own passion for travel. The initial Sparo dive success made us serious and Caper, now with hundreds of tourism professionals, provides services to a galaxy of international tourists along with networking with hotel partners and associates in the Indian subcontinent. The initial plunge was hasty and without fully grasping the basics of the trade. We were resolute and with each fall we bounced back stronger, wiser and more determined to

Caper Travel wins National Tourism Awards



Bharat Bhushan Atree, CMD, Caper Group, receiving the National Tourism Award 2016-17 for No.1 DMC in Category 1, by KJ Alphons, Minister of State (I/C), Tourism, along with Rashmi Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

overcome the teething, arduous, back breaking and testing years. We had our

first international communication from a UK-based operator, asking for

“ We had our sight aligned to develop global markets and provide experimental tourism services to globetrotters. In our initial business forays, nothing was too small and we gracefully accepted every reservation, facilitating flight tickets, booking hotels, domestic and outbound packages in the process travelling to all corners of Delhi and NCR ”

sight aligned to develop global markets and provide experimental tourism services to globetrotters. In our initial business forays, nothing was too small and we gracefully accepted every reservation, facilitating flight tickets, booking hotels, domestic and outbound packages in the process travelling to all corners of Delhi and NCR.”

Atree likes to believe that the company has not stagnated, but has progressed and harnessed communication skills that form the genesis of being 'instantly available' — from fax to email and beyond. "The eureka moment came when we received our

proposal and quote. We burnt the midnight oil and bagged our first international account. Caper had surely come of age! This along with our annual interaction with World Travel Market London and a market with perceptible promise, we opened an office in London for marketing and business development," he shared.

By and by Russian tour operators began seeking Caper out and this became a dominant market. Russian operators and representatives connected with the company, thus paving the way for us to emerge as the leading DMC for Russia today. Caper

then intentionally expanded further and cemented its flags in Europe and Latin America. It had further diversified and mushroomed into other allied travel services like travel technology, hospitality, aviation with the next phase of growth and expansion.

Hi-life Tours was carved to give specialised services with the use of technology and Indian corporates today's key differentiators like the internet, automation and technology, Caper established a travel technology company called Softtix. It develops ERP, booking engines and works on automation. The company further partnered with personalities with big knowledge and experiences of domain to form four more verticals. Era Hospitality runs and manages hotels, Jet Concepts caters to aviation industry and provides services to charter flights, Aamantaran Travel and Aayan Journeys were founded to improve the market portfolios of Australia, Asia, Japan and Eastern Europe, thereby improving Caper's market portfolios and enhancing global presence.

of Caper's excellence

What Caper is all about

Caper Travel Company is one of India's leading award-winning destination management companies providing inbound travel solutions for the Indian subcontinent. It provides comprehensive travel solutions for leisure, group, charters and small business travellers, backed by real-time websites and unmatched products. Since its inception in 1998, the company has been growing rapidly, aspiring to emerge as one of the foremost travel companies in India. Fairly young, it is receptive to new ideas, flexible and adaptable to our clients' needs. Its 'India Travel Guide' is embellished with the very best of tourist destinations, attractions, cuisines and experiential activities to do in India.



With offices at multiple locations in India and overseas at all its major markets, Caper extends top-of-the-class services to customers from across the globe. Keeping in mind the lingual problem of our clients, the company has now started providing an in-house Linguistic Trade Guide facility in Russian, Spanish, Italian, German and French. The organisation is headed and managed by people with a rich experience in hospitality and tourism. Caper cater to different markets namely the US, the UK, Russian, among other leading markets.

The company offers all types of packages - premier, standard and budget - with personalised services within India and the neighbouring countries. Caper Travel is experienced in providing regular group tours and bespoke tailor-made cultural, spiritual, religious, tribal, adventure, wellness and wildlife tours, along with other basic packages of Rajasthan, Kerala and major tourist destinations in India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Caper also promotes luxury trains such as Palace on Wheels, Maharaja Express, Deccan Odyssey and Golden Chariot.

Quote Unquote

“ It was in December 2004 when my wife received a call from Caper. They required a Russian translator but since my first child was very young, I decided to take up the responsibility instead of her. This was the beginning of my Caper journey in which I got an opportunity to explore India and view tourism from ground zero with Caper. The journey of the last 14 years has been enriching in terms of experience and exposure. My engineering background helped me assist in automation of operation process. I got a golden opportunity for handling mass tourism movement in India. Tourism is a growing sector with a strong influence on the environment. Keeping this in mind, I am looking forward to decreasing the carbon footprint created by the industry. Technology can be an effective means of doing the same and make tourism sustainable. The journeys so far from ground zero to senior management level have been interesting and I am looking forward to the next travel cycle. ”



Anupam Kumar
Director
Caper Travel



Vishal Jaiswal
CEO, Caper Travel

“ I was recommended to Caper Travel by a common friend who was looking for a tourism professional. My career journey and Caper journey have started at the same time; so I feel like one of its founding members and has since been learning and stirring all verticals from domestic, outbound, inbound and charters business. From 'meet & greet' to operations to business development, I have done it all. Tourism gave me the opportunity to travel extensively in India and international markets. I am dedicated to Indian tourism and now looking forward for the next phase of learning and contributing towards the common objective of the company. ”

Why Caper?

Word of mouth and personal live experiences propel Caper to the forefront where its first-time tourists decide whom to entrust with their travel arrangements. Travelling with Caper allows travellers to embark on a journey that promises to unearth the enigma hidden in each destination and categorically ensures that they relax and put down their feet. The company's dedicated executives have hands-on knowledge of customers' requirements and will leave no stone unturned in making the order perfect in all aspects. Caper Travel promises and delivers a 'beyond expectation' experience and allows travellers a walk down memory lane by painting the canvas of history, as they would want it, right in front of their eyes. While others take you on the run of the mill wildlife expeditions, Caper lets you experience undefined wildlife. It stands tall by a mile, head and shoulders above other competitors by developing permanent relationships and winning the clients' trust for life.

Chronicle of memories

Individuals have varied mindsets and so are their reasons to travel. Caper

Hi-Life Tours bags World Travel Leaders Award



Bharat Bhushan Atree, CMD, CTC Holding, received the TRAVTALK-WTM World Travel Leaders Award for Hi-Life Tours at the recently-held World Travel Market (WTM) in London. The World Travel Leaders Awards honours companies and individuals for their outstanding contribution to the industry over the last 24 months voted for by the WTM Media Partners.

Travel designs each trip with logistic perfection to encase travellers' economic compulsions and satiate their thirst for a perfect holiday. Take your pick from the company's boutique group journeys, luxury family holidays, conferences and incentive programmes and experimental journeys.

With an experienced team of Indian subcontinent specialists and a plethora of information and knowledge of personal destination, the company takes pride in offering in-depth knowledge, dedicated customer service and transparent pricing. The passion for travel, according to Atree, and to make clients see their dream destinations through the com-

pany's eyes keeps Caper on its toes.

Conclusion:

Caper is not a company cocooned in a gazebo with frosted glass and limited vision. It competes with the best because of its forward looking policies, modern social skills, transparent operations and highly qualified busi-

ness executives who have hands-on experience in the travel trade. Bharat Bhushan Atree, like the captain of the Caper ship, has built a team around him that will deliver even if they have to go the extra mile. For Caper, the pinnacle for tourism, is within grasp and it will certainly leave footprints on the sands of time.

500 attendees at TAAI Convention

Delegates at the 65th Travel Agents Association of India's (TAAI) convention and exhibition were warmly welcomed in Kunming, China. The three-day convention highlighted the theme 'Tourism Beyond Boundaries' and hopes to further strengthen tourism ties between India and China. The TAAI Convention started with a golf tournament with players participating from both the countries.



Recounting the success story

As a venture of young enthusiasts with versatile experience of hotels and the hospitality industry, Numen Hospitality is at the forefront of responsible and sustainable hospitality.

TT Bureau

Having 10 hotels in six cities, Numen Hospitality is offering accommodation solutions for all business segments — be it corporate, RFP (Request for Proposal)-driven hotels and the destinations, MICE & wedding products like La Cabana Resort Goa, Yois Hotel Udaipur, luxury tents and leisure business catering to the FITs and the groups. The company will also provide services to soon-to-be-opening Jaipur Bagh hotel by Saagasa Hotels in Jaipur.



Nidhi Gupta
Director
Numen Hospitality

Recounting the success story of Numen, Nidhi Gupta, Director, Numen Hospitality, says, "Considering the fact that it inception just at the beginning of 2018, the company has grown rapidly. Currently, we have a portfolio of 10 hotels and we are expanding fast. We have set up a huge expansion benchmark for 2019. Also, we are going to open a hotel in Vaishali Nagar, Jaipur by early 2019; another hotel in Ranthambore will open in the second quarter followed by other properties under its umbrella."

She further adds, "2019 will see a massive expansion in the network of Numen Hospitality. We are focusing to cover a lot of new markets and destinations for offering accommodation solution to several corporate and MICE clients. In terms of new announcements, we are coming up with a vegetarian fine dine restaurant at The International by Tunga in Mumbai, which is already popular for its seafood restaurant — Something's Fishy! We are also looking to revamp Pickle & Pint restaurant at Paradise by Tunga."

Sharing her thoughts on the growth of hospitality industry in India, Gupta says, "India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Currently, we are the third largest aviation market in the world; every airline is increasing the capacity and frequency to the existing

“We are going to open a hotel in Jaipur by early 2019 and another hotel in Ranthambore in the second quarter”

sectors and moving to the new sectors, particularly Tier II and III cities. Domestic market is

also growing exponentially as demand is growing up in every sector like never-before. Moreo-

ver, the concept of staycation and short breaks are picking up fast with the increasing disposable income."

Pointing out the challenges the industry is facing currently, she says, "I believe that we are coping with the short supplies

and infrastructure connectivity. As far as the demand is growing from many of the corporate cities, you really can't see much addition in the inventory. Cities like Mumbai are still facing short supplies. The same goes with leisure destinations like Agra and Varanasi." ↴

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The year that was...

► Contd from page 16



Sudeep Jain
Vice President—Development
South West Asia, IHG

“2018 has been the ‘year of Holiday Inn brand family’ for IHG’s India business. We recently signed Holiday Inn Udaipur Urban Square. Last year, we partnered with SAMHI to rebrand approximately 2000 rooms, 14

hotels (operating and under construction) within their India hotel portfolio, to Holiday Inn Express hotels. We will be opening additional six to seven Holiday Inn Express hotels by the end of the year. We have also signed a portfolio deal with Lotus Trans for four Holiday Inn hotels spread across the Buddhist Tourist Circuit. This year, we are introducing Holiday Inn Resort Kolkata NH6 and have marked our debut in Agra with Holiday Inn Agra MG Road. These recent partnerships have helped us build a great momentum in the mid-scale market in India.”



Alefiya Singh
Director IRIS Reps

“This year IRIS Reps has been on a fast-moving growth curve. We are thrilled with the successful acquisition of marquee accounts in 2018, which demonstrates that we are recognised by some of the finest luxury brands. Our

goal will be to ensure the momentum of growth of travellers from all over India to these luxury brands. This year we partnered with The Urban Valley Resorts, Malta; The Passage Samui Villas and Resort, Thailand; The Haven Resort, Ipoh, Malaysia and VFC DMC for Philippines. As India maintains its double-digit annual growth in MiCE and luxury travel segments, tourism businesses around the world are looking to capitalise on India’s growth potential.”



Supratim Basu
Founder Director
Help Tourism

“2018 has been a blessed year for the entire East and Northeast of India, along with neighbouring Eastern Nepal, Bhutan, Northern Bangladesh and upper Myanmar. After 12 years of lobbying, we finally have regular tourism to and from

Myanmar through land with Manipur and Mizoram. For Indians wanting to do the land route to Myanmar, visa is online. For the industry in this region, we had more demand for homestays in rural areas than the hotels, lodges and resorts in popular destinations. The Himalayan Hospitality and Tourism Development Network (HHTDN), a new industry network of smaller regional and local associations, have also been formed as a model for Sikkim and West Bengal. The Association for Rural Tourism in India (ARTI) was also launched at the International Conference on Rural Tourism, organised by Jamia Millia Islamia University, with the support of Ministry of Tourism.”

“We’ve had our share of exchange rate issues as well as GST concerns, but those are short-term barriers. However, the Indian traveller is now geared to travel. So, I guess we have to rise above all these stumbling blocks. For the coming year, we are ready with a bouquet of about 300 products and 8000 itineraries. We recorded over 100 per cent profit last year. It is a lot of hard work and we are looking forward to a great 2019 as well.”



Aparna C Basumalik
Country Head
Europamundo Vacations

“Innovation moved fast this year with partnerships between major technology companies consistently making headlines. This pace will only continue to increase, and those who want to keep up will have to level-up. For Sabre, 2018 was an important year on many different levels. First, for achieving impressive financial results. Q3 earnings reveal an 8 per cent revenue growth for us and we expect a strong finish in full year results. Second, for honouring our commitment to invest in technological innovation with the launch of Beyond NDC Program enabling airlines, TMCs and travel agents to participate in the evolution of NDC. We now have 10 partners in the Beyond NDC Program and plan to announce more in the future.”



Todd Arthur
Vice President—Asia Pacific
Sabre Travel Network

“2018 has been a fantabulous year for the industry, barring the three weeks when the dollar really went up by almost 20 per cent. I think that was a very short-term challenge which the market faced, but I feel that things are back to normal now. Going forward, there are hopes from 2019. While April might be a slow month as India heads to polls at that time with elections happening round the corner. That might give some detrimental business, especially during those six weeks when the elections are taking place.”



Ankush Nijhawan
Managing Director
Nijhawan Group

“2018 may be termed as the year of consolidation. After the twin set back in 2017 — demonetisation and GST, 2018 saw a recovery and travel business was generally good.

In September/October 2018, these factors contributed to a further setback for our industry.”



Manoj Saraf
Managing Director
Gainwell Travel & Leisure

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Maya rules the

The fifth edition of India Travel Awards concluded at Hotel Clarks Shiraz Agra amidst the presence of the stalwarts of the travel and tourism industry. The award was given in a total of 74 categories, celebrating the achievements of travel professionals in travel and MICE industries across the country, in the presence of **Satyajeet Rajan**, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India — chief guest for the night.





night at **ITA 2018**



Emirates fosters sportsmanship

Continuing with its agenda to inspire the spirit of sportsmanship, Emirates recently organised the third edition of its 'Emirates Cricket Trade Tournament 2018' for the travel trade at Islam Gymkhana, in Mumbai. The event saw 32 travel agency teams competing for the Emirates trophy with 45 games.



Tourism wrap-up



As a year full of possibilities and expectations, 2018 proved to be illustrious in terms of many milestones and achievements. TRAVTALK picks out five defining moments which shaped the tourism industry in India and set the benchmark for coming years.

Incredible India 2.0 campaign launched

The Ministry of Tourism launched the Incredible India 2.0 campaign to promote various destinations and tourism products of the country including spiritual, medical and wellness tourism in important and potential source markets overseas. The Incredible India 2.0 campaign aims at a shift from generic promotions undertaken across the world to market specific promotional plans and content creation with thematic creatives on different niche products including spiritual, medical and wellness tourism. The campaign aims at moving to the next level of promotion and marketing with a shift from generic promotions across the world to market specific promotional plans and content creation.



Guidelines on adventure tourism

For the first time, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) launched a set of guidelines on 'Safety and Quality Norms for Adventure Tourism in India'. Formulated along with the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) to make adventure sports safer, the set of guidelines lists out the basic minimum standards required for adventure tourism activities in India. The aim is to help adventure tour operators understand and execute safety guidelines in a better manner.



These guidelines cover land, air and water-based activities which include mountaineering, trekking, bungee jumping, paragliding, kayaking, scuba diving, snorkelling, river rafting and many other sports.

India Tourism Mart 2018 welcomes buyers from 60 countries

The maiden India Tourism Mart (ITM) organised by the Ministry of Tourism along with Federation of Associations in Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) at The Ashok, New Delhi, saw attendance by 250 delegates from 60 countries, who also attended the second edition of Paryatan Parv, a nationwide celebration of tourism at Rajpath Lawns in Delhi. ITM gave an opportunity to the buyers to see world-class tourism facilities available in the country such as airports, hotels, tourist destinations, MICE facilities, potential in the field of adventure tourism and other niche products.



Prez inaugurates International Buddhist Conclave 2018

President of India, Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the International Buddhist Conclave 2018. The four-day conclave organised by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the state governments of Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in Delhi and Ajanta (Maharashtra), was followed by site visits to Rajgir, Nalanda and Bodhgaya (Bihar) and Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh). The President also launched the Ministry of Tourism website

on important Buddhist sites - www.indiathelandofbuddha.in and a new film showcasing the Buddhist sites in the country on the occasion. Delegates were taken for site visits to Aurangabad, Rajgir, Nalanda, Bodh Gaya and Sarnath.



First Swadesh Darshan Scheme project in Nagaland

The central government launched 'Development of Tribal Circuit: Peren-Kohima-Wokha Project' under its Swadesh Darshan Scheme to develop Nagaland as a tourist state. The project was sanctioned by Ministry of Tourism in November 2015 for ₹97.36 crores. Under the project, the Ministry has developed facilities like tribal tourist village, eco log huts, open air theatre, tribal rejuvenation centre, cafeteria, helipad, tourist interpretation centre, wayside amenities, last-mile connectivity, public conveniences, multi-purpose hall, nature trails, trekking routes, etc. In addition to the above project, the Ministry has sanctioned another project in Nagaland 'Development of Tribal circuit: Mokokchung-Tuensang-Mon' for ₹99.67 crores.



EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



DECEMBER 2018

EVENT	CITY	DATES
OTOAI Members Meet	Delhi	15
TAFI Meet	Delhi	21
ADTOI Christmas Carnival	Delhi	22

JANUARY 2019

India International Travel Mart (ITM)	Kochi	3-5
TTH Expo	Ahmedabad	3-5
Adventure and Travel Show India	New Delhi	4-6
India International Travel Exhibition	Vijaywada	4-6
Travel Turkey Izmir	Izmir, Turkey	6-8
U & I Roadshow	Kolkata	7
U & I Roadshow	Delhi	8
U & I Roadshow	Surat	9
India International Travel & Tourism Exhibition	Mumbai	10-12
International Joint World Cultural Tourism Conference	Hyderabad	10-12
U & I Roadshow	Ahmedabad	11
U & I Roadshow	Pune	14
U & I Roadshow	Mumbai	15
Global Aviation Summit	Mumbai	15-16
SATTE	Delhi	16-18
Alitalia Roadshow	Delhi	18
14th ATOAI Convention	Araku Valley, Andhra Pradesh	17-20
Indonesia Travel Mart	Kuta, Indonesia	18
Business and Luxury Travel Mart	Delhi	18-19
ASEAN Tourism Forum	Thailand	22-26
Switzerland Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	23
Outbound Travel Mart	Mumbai	23-25
National Tourism Bussan Fair	Tokyo	23-24
Fiture	Madrid	23-27
TTH Expo	Surat	26-28

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

ASSOCIATION TALK

Year 2018 in retrospect

For industry leaders and stakeholders of the travel trade, year 2018 was replete with ups and downs. While some have witnessed growth, others believe that it could have been better. Take a look at what the association heads have to say...



TT Bureau



PP Khanna
President
Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India

“The year 2018 was full of challenges. The implementation of GST was the main hurdle for the travel fraternity. ADTOI along with Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) comprising all the member associations have taken up a lot of queries with the Ministry of Finance as well as Ministry of Tourism. We are also expecting reforms in decreasing tax rates on hotel rooms. Apart from these, 2018 was a wonderful year for the domestic tourism market as well as inbound and outbound markets. The government’s efforts in easing the visa process for countries across the world has now facilitated the e-visa benefit for more countries.”



E M Najeeb
Senior Vice President, Indian Association of Tour Operators

“The aviation and the hospitality industries are sailing in rough waters. Airlines are trying hard to keep up their profits and yields. The new GST rates for high segment of hotel rooms are as high as 28 per cent. The fuel cost is also going up. The devastating Kerala floods in August 2018 adversely affected the tourist season. Despite that, the industry bounced back and moved forward with determination to ensure that the season remained unaffected. The government and the private sector worked in tandem to take the industry forward and successfully conducted the Kerala Travel Mart. Though the market is challenging in generating profits, we could show growth in our financial performances as well as enhance the quality of our services.”



Jitul Mehta
Chairman
Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI)—Western India

“In the last few years, the traditional stream of revenue for most TAFI agents – ticketing – has been dwindling. Past committees had started to include non-air products in the TAFI WI agent’s portfolio and our managing committee of TAFI WI has taken it forward by partnering with principals like hotels, car rental companies, overseas DMCs, foreign exchange providers, travel insurance providers, visa facilitation centres and cruise lines to increase the visibility and reach of a TAFI WI member. The feather in our cap was the agreement signed with a leading hotel chain in India to provide credit facilities to interested TAFI WI agents on reasonable terms.”



Rajiv Mehra
Vice President
Indian Association of Tour Operators

“Since the middle of this year, the outbound market has been slightly slow as compared to last year. As we also deal in the outbound business with international and domestic ticketing, the growth has geared up for us. I am quite hopeful that in the next four months of this financial year, inbound business should pick up pace and we should be able to reach the last year’s targets. There are many more inquiries coming for the winter season ahead of Christmas and New Year. I feel that this will result in increased business and there will be a big surge in the number of inbound tourist arrivals which will be very beneficial for the tour operators and the travel industry.”

“We organised our convention this year in Cape Town where the delegates enjoyed both pre- and post-event trips. We also had some important dignitaries addressing the audience at the convention. Besides, we have increased our membership base this year and organised training programmes on soft skills and destination workshops to enhance members’ knowledge. Our office bearers were also invited for meetings with the Ambassador of Cuba, Sri Lanka and the Deputy First Minister of Scotland. The year was a mixed bag for the industry. Business could have been better in comparison to last year. The summer season was on target, but Diwali was relatively slow due to the rupee depreciation and slowdown in the markets across industries.”



Mahendra Vakharia
President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India

“IAAI has grown in terms of membership strength. The support of agents from Bhopal and Indore this year was a shot in the arm for us. IAAI is also adding to the i-Top arsenal with NDC connectivity, insurance, cruise and other tie-ups for revenue assurance to members in these testing times. i-Top has already succeeded in completing three stages. Currently, i-Top platform facilitates with Galileo accessibility, consolidators and OTAs and NDC ticketing and major airlines, and the special NDC rates are much more competitive for members to earn more benefits. On another front, when IATA implemented Res 812, we alerted members on its financial implications and cautioned on the credit limit facilities under Remittance Holding Capacity.”



Biji Eapen
President
The IATA Agents Association of India

“The year 2018 was phenomenal for us. We recorded a very strong year-on-year growth. This year decided to focus more on non-air revenues and we will continue to do so in 2019 as well. 2018 was important because of the introduction of ‘pink’ tourism or LGBT tourism after the Supreme Court’s ruling on Section 377. The aviation industry faced challenges but the outbound growth remained robust with an overall 20 per cent growth. New destinations like Scandinavian region, Iceland and central Asian destinations are also picking up demand.”



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MakeMyTrip

Delhi

MakeMyTrip has announced the appointment of **Vipul Prakash** as Chief Operating Officer for MakeMyTrip and Goibibo. In this role, Prakash will be responsible for developing and executing strategic direction and priorities of the company. He joins MakeMyTrip from PepsiCo where he was last serving as Senior Vice President – Beverage Category for PepsiCo India region. He holds a post-graduate diploma in management from IIM Ahmedabad and a mechanical engineering degree from IIT Delhi.



Insight Vacations and Luxury Gold

Singapore

Insight Vacations & Luxury Gold, two award-winning brands of The Travel Corporation (TTC), have announced **Anthony Lim** as the new Managing Director for Asia for both brands. Leading the team in Asia from the Singapore office and for India, Lim will work closely with Darshan Maheshwari, Country Manager for The Travel Corporation, Asia; Bhavani Arun, Senior Sales Manager, Insight Vacations and Insight Vacations and Luxury Gold General Sales Agent for India - Signature Tours by Creative Travel. Lim will be responsible for growing partnerships with the travel trade across Asia.



Tourism Malaysia

Mumbai

Jane D'cruz has joined Tourism Malaysia's Mumbai office as a Marketing Manager. Prior to this, she worked for 12 years with Beehive Communications as a Media Consultant to Tourism Malaysia. At Beehive apart from Tourism Malaysia, she consulted various tourism and hospitality clients like Costa Cruise, Sri Lanka Tourism, Switzerland Tourism, Star Cruises and others. Her key role in Tourism Malaysia would be to encourage marketing Malaysia as an attractive destination, organise trade Fams, collaborate joint promos with trade partners, participate in various trade fairs and organise Tourism Malaysia roadshows.



Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Paschim Vihar

Delhi

The Radisson Hotel Group has announced the appointment of **Puneet Chaudhry** as the new General Manager of Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Paschim Vihar. Chaudhry is a seasoned hotelier with over 19 years of experience in the industry. He has been associated with the Radisson Hotel Group for more than nine years. In his new role, Chaudhry will be spearheading the future growth and development of the hotel. His core expertise lies in delivering successful outcomes by empowering the teams.



Radisson Blu Gorakhpur

Gorakhpur

Having started a new role in August 2018 with Radisson Hotel Worldwide, **Akash Roy Saigal** has been designated as General Manager for Radisson Blu Gorakhpur. With 19 years of hospitality experience, Saigal worked for five years as General Manager at The Palms Town and Country Club, Gurgaon, two years with Radisson Hotel Worldwide and a year with Wyndham Hotel Group. He has always had a hands-on approach especially in the hotel's revenue generation and client relationship activities. Saigal has also worked for IHG, Fortune Park Hotels and Uppal's Orchid Hotel.



JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity

Delhi

Bringing over 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry, **Mohit Kanwal** has been appointed as the Director of Operations at JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity. Kanwal plays a key role in overseeing the functions of the operational departments, driving guest experience and ensuring that the standard of service across the hotel exceeds guest expectations. From developing key accounts, growing business verticals and ensuring that revenue targets are consistently met, Kanwal has ensured that the results have always exceeded expectations.



Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa

Chennai

Ather Raza has been appointed as Director of Operations at Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa. Bringing with him over 16 years of hospitality experience, he is responsible to ensure smooth hotel operations and oversee the functioning of various departments. Prior to this, Raza worked as an Executive Assistant Manager (Rooms) at Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre. He has a vast experience of handling pre-opening of properties like Sheraton Bangalore at Brigade Gateway, Aloft Bengaluru at Cessna Business Park, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru, and Sheraton Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre.



Courtyard Agra

Agra

Sheetal Sachdeva has been appointed as the new Operations Manager of Courtyard by Marriott Agra. In her new role, Sachdeva will effectively leverage her experience of managing diverse responsibilities of Guest Services, Rooms Division Management, F&B Operations, Administration and driving revenues at Courtyard by Marriott, Agra. She has over 18 years of experience in the core hospitality and customer-oriented operations with luxury hotel chains. Prior to joining Courtyard by Marriott Agra, Sachdeva held the role of Operations Manager in Four Points by Sheraton Ahmedabad.



Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel

Mumbai

Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel promoted **Ashwin Vaidya** as its new Director of Rooms. With 11 years of experience in hospitality and extensive knowledge of the brands at Marriott International, Vaidya will be ensuring that the guest experience at the hotel is aloft to exceptional levels. After beginning his career in 1991 at the Oberoi Mumbai, Ashwin joined The Renaissance Mumbai in 2007 as a Front Office Executive, after which he also worked as Duty Manager at Marriott Goa in 2010.

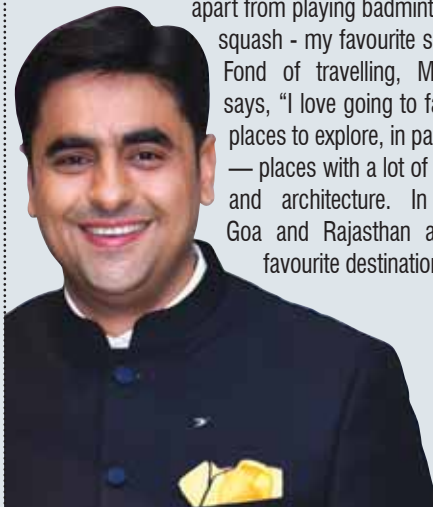


TALKING PEOPLE

Anmol Ahluwalia, General Manager (North Goa), Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa and Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa, IHCL, likes to de-stress by indulging in shopping, reading, wellness and gardening. "For me, it is important to keep doing something which keeps me occupied. I love to collect curious, collect art and artefacts and experience and learn various aspects of wellness. At some stage in life, I want to open my own spa or nursery," he says. Ahluwalia also loves interacting and working with NGOs.



Sachin Malhotra, General Manager, Grand Mercure Mysuru, believes that the life of a hotelier revolves around financial numbers and guest relations. He shares, "I like to break this monotony by reading, apart from playing badminton and squash - my favourite sports." Fond of travelling, Malhotra says, "I love going to faraway places to explore, in particular — places with a lot of history and architecture. In India, Goa and Rajasthan are my favourite destinations."



Satyajit Kotwal, General Manager, The Resort Mumbai, loves reading as it helps him de-stress. He says, "A good book with a cup of coffee is a great combination. Besides, I am very passionate about food. I love cooking and I find it therapeutic. Whipping up my favourite dish is something I enjoy, and I love Indian and Mexican food." One of his most memorable holidays has been a hiking trip in Uttarakhand. "It was a walk from Binsar to Jageshwar. I have a fascination for rural Himachal," recalls Kotwal.



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Secretary debuts at IATO meet

Yogendra Tripathi, Secretary, Tourism, received a warm welcome by the industry at the recent IATO luncheon, where he expressed his willingness to work with the industry hand-in-hand and take forward the work done by his predecessor Rashmi Verma.



Nisha Verma

Having been appointed as Secretary, Tourism, **Yogendra Tripathi** made his first official outing at the luncheon hosted by Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) in Delhi to bid farewell to Rashmi Verma, Former Secretary, Tourism. Verma superannuated from her post on November 30, 2018. Thanking Verma for her incredible work, Tripathi said, "I was aware of the contributions of Verma to the sector, her dynamic leadership, her clarity of thought and understanding of issues. My awareness was confirmed when I heard the industry speaking highly about her contribution."

Tripathi claimed that it is necessary for the Secretary to advocate on behalf of the industry with the centre as well as other ministries, who have their own goals and priorities. "All this requires a lot of persuasion. I am coming to a sector where my predecessor has been able to achieve a lot, in turn making my job fairly easier. I feel blessed to have succeeded her in the MOT," he added.

However, he insisted that there are always unresolved issues. "There are always new problems and agendas for the industry. The Tourism Secretary is nothing but an advocate for the industry. Apart from what we do indirectly, what we do directly is primarily promotional and this is also supporting the industry one

way or the other. It is our job to support the industry, and we will continue to do that," he added.

Expressing contentment over the position now being in able hands, Verma said, "I am happy to have handed over my charge to such an able officer. Tripathi has had hands-on knowledge of ground reality

facilitators and I am sure that the huge gap that we and the tour operators have of shortage of guides, will be resolved to a large extent. These facilitators will become companions and guides for all the tourists coming into our country."

Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO, also thanked Verma for her contribution to the tourism

waiting time at the airport. She also helped us remove biometrics upon arrival at cruise terminals for tourists coming on e-visa and exempted it till 2020. Under 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme, she had approved and gave the responsibility to IATO for maintenance of toilets, blocks and signages at Mahabalipuram as well as Ellora caves. We also thank her



and I am sure he will soon be on top of all the issues related to tourism. Given his finance background, many GST concerns, which IATO and other stakeholders keep talking about and want a solution for, will now be resolved. In fact, he will be able to take initiatives to resolve all other issues pertaining to tourism and industry as well."

Apart from that, Verma added, "I am happy to share that the tourist facilitator programme launched in the last week of my tenure has got more than 30,000 people enrolled already. These are the future

industry, saying, "I express gratitude and thanks to Verma on behalf of the entire IATO membership. She has efficiently settled all the problems we approached her for through personal intervention. As Secretary, she also took forward the e-visa facilitation, which is now extended to 166 countries. I am thankful to her for taking up GST issue with the Ministry of Finance and resolving a few issues get some relief for our business. Long queues of e-visa counters at T3 IGI Airport, Delhi, was a major crisis and Verma took the initiative to resolve the same within less than 24 hours by reducing the

for attending two of our annual conventions and interacting with our members directly at our luncheon meetings twice."

He further added, "With her support, we have completed a series of roadshows in global markets that helped us in developing new contacts."

Verma Acts

- ↳ First India Tourism Mart
- ↳ Int'l Buddhist Conclave
- ↳ International tourism figures reached 10 million in 2017



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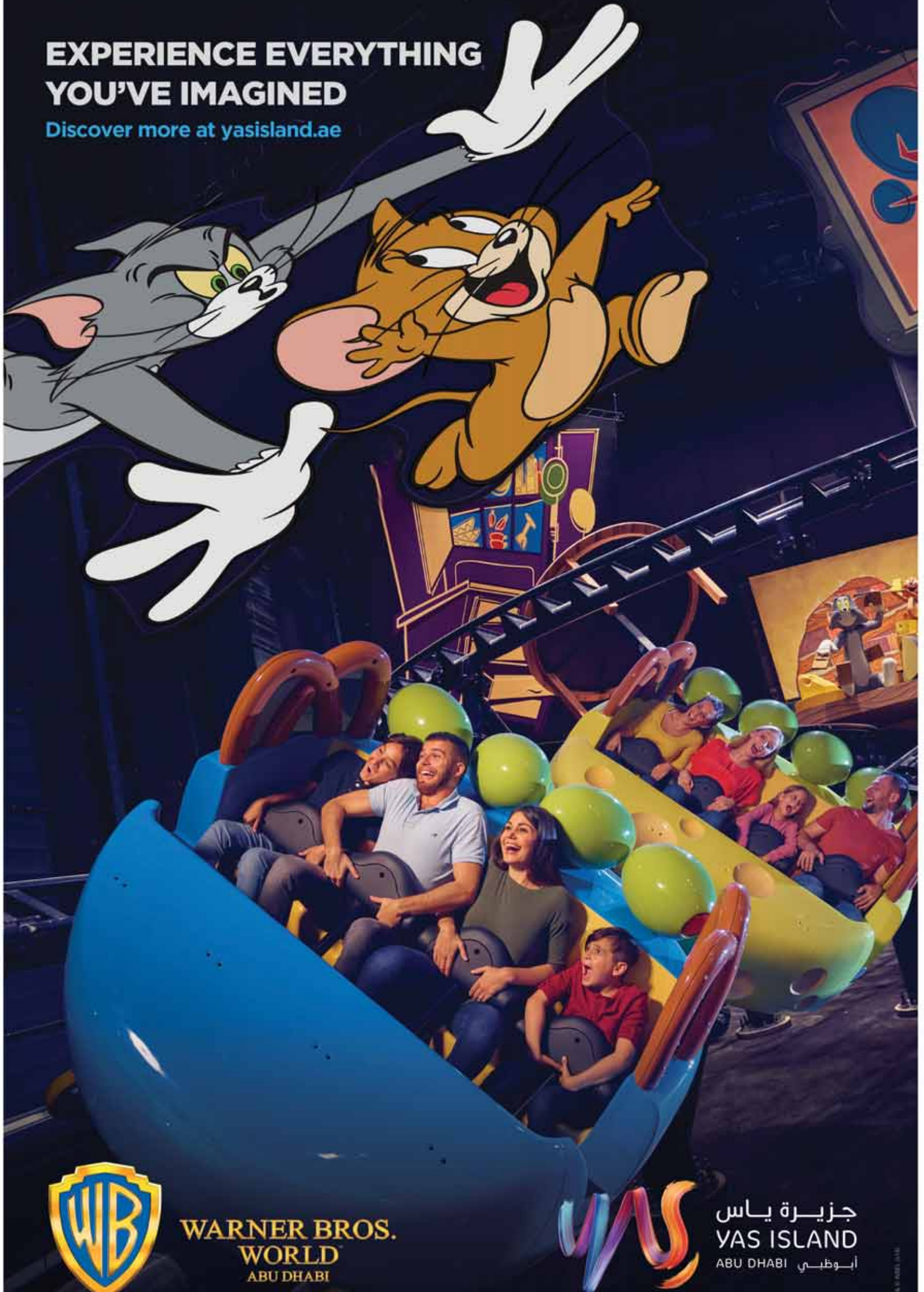
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Cruise talk

Pages 24

Sail through the world of cruising

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NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

As an emerging hotspot in the Asian market, the Indian cruise industry — which has largely remained untapped in the recent years — has vast potential to grow. The launch of India's first-ever passenger cruise ship service from Mumbai to Goa is one of the many initiatives set to change the dynamics of luxury cruising in India. The five major ports in the country— Mumbai Port, Mormugao Port, New Mangalore Port, Cochin Port and Chennai Port have received more cruise ships as per the programme of various cruise companies as a port of call.

During 2017-18, 1,62,660 cruise passengers and 139 cruise ships visited India at six major ports. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cruise vessels have been revised and operationalised for hassle-free entry and exit of cruise passengers at major ports. The e-visa facility has been extended to cruise passengers, while immigration counters have also been set up at five major ports visited by cruise ships. Cruise tourists arriving in India with e-visa have been exempted from the requirement of biometric enrolment for a period of three years facilitating expeditious immigration clearance. Further, the Sagarmala programme of the government promises to modernise the country's ports with world-class terminals.

In this issue, you will find how Mumbai is turning into a hub of modern cruising, along with some exciting activities to enjoy on a luxury cruise vessel and various other factors that boost cruise tourism in India.

EDITORIAL

Devika Jeet
Peden Doma Bhutia
Manas Dwivedi
Amrita Ghosh
Akanki Sharma

DESIGN

Raashi Ajmani Girdhar

MARKETING

Harshal Ashar
Karishma Khanna
Priyanshu Wankhade
Gaganpreet Kaur

COVER PICTURE:

Norwegian Cruise Line

NEWS IN BRIEF

SEVEN SEAS EXPLORER TO VOYAGE TO SOUTH AMERICA

Regent Seven Seas Cruises' luxury ship — Seven Seas Explorer is set for its maiden voyage to South America in early 2019. After cruising the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Northern Europe and Africa during her first two years, Seven Seas Explorer will now visit picturesque ports in 10 South American countries from January through March 2019 during five highly-anticipated voyages. **Jason Montague**, President and CEO, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, says, "Seven Seas Explorer sailing this region of the world for the first time gives her guests the opportunity to experience Seven Seas Explorer in a new way, while providing guests with the beauty of South America's destinations aboard the most luxurious ship ever built."



Halong Bay's largest five-star cruise sets sail

Luxury Vietnamese cruise operator, Lion Asia has put the first of two President Cruise ships on the waters at the UNESCO World Heritage site, Halong Bay. The five-deck, 1200-ton steel craft has made its debut with its 46 spacious cabins, a piano bar, spa and two expansive sun decks. It is also the largest overnight ship to ever ply Halong Bay's waters. **Franco Muzzone**, General Manager, President Cruises, said, "Our new President Cruise is full steam ahead with our unrivalled entertainment, dining and relaxation options."

River cruise from Kolkata to Bangladesh

A trans-boundary river cruise operation is expected to start from Kolkata in March 2019 through Sunderbans to Bangladesh first, and then towards the Northeast.

SVK Reddy, Member, Inland Waterways Authority of India, informed, "At bilateral secretary-level meetings between India and Bangladesh, it has been decided that a river cruise operator would begin operations from Kolkata."



The dawn of Cruise Tourism

With its vast and beautiful coastline, India has a great prospect to develop and prosper in cruise tourism in the country. With the government announcing cruise tourism development as a project of national importance, the future of cruises in India sure seems bright.

MANAS DWIVEDI





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QUOTE UNQUOTE



“Indian tourists are spending heavily on cruising. They love to stay in luxury suites and balcony cabins, which tells that today’s discerning traveller is going gaga over cruises.”

NEERAJ SHARMA
Managing Director, Cruise Carrot



“The market from India is growing at a healthy rate of 15 -20% every year because of larger ships and larger inventories. The per diem rate is also coming down.”

MANOJ SARAF
MD, Gainwell Enterprises



“The government is playing its role in recognising cruising as an economic multiplier and catching up with the rest of the world in terms of policies and infrastructure.”

VARUN CHADHA
COO, TIRUN Travel Marketing



“Indians require customisation and flexibility in a product. Brands that understand this factor are doing well in the market.”

RICHA GOYAL
Director-Group Business Development, STIC Travel Group



“The potential of cruising in India is tremendous – we are right at the point where an increased volume and interest of cruising is taking off!”

NISHITH SAXENA
Founder & Director
Cruise Professionals

The Government of India has identified cruise tourism as one of the key thrust areas to be implemented across all key ports as a priority. To showcase their preparedness for hosting cruise vessels and sensitise stakeholders about promoting cruise tourism, a number of actions have been taken by the authorities, including proposals to link Mumbai and other port cities with major cruising hubs of Southeast Asia.

In its plan to position the country on the global cruise map, the government has announced cruise tourism development as a project of national importance. An international cruise terminal is under construction at Mumbai Port at an estimated cost of ₹300 crore. Capitalising on a vast and beautiful coastline of almost 7500 km, the country can attract up to 700 cruise vessels from its present strength of 70 vessels a year. Additionally, the rich historical and cultural heritage can make India a fabulous tourist destination for cruise tourists.

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

As a top source market for cruise tourism worldwide, the volume of cruise travellers sourced



Capitalising on a vast and beautiful coastline of almost

7500 km, India can attract up to 700 cruise vessels

from Asia has quadrupled since 2012. With China making rapid strides in the industry in terms of developing infrastructure, India seems to have missed the boat. More than 60,000 Indian tourists a year fly to Singapore and other South Asian countries to join cruises. India faces a challenge in retaining travellers from going out for cruising while developing roadmap for providing world-class cruising in the country.

According to **Neeraj Sharma**, Managing Director, Cruise Carrot, the cruise industry in India is touted to grow leaps and bounds in coming years. “The cruise industry in India is headed for a bright

future ahead as Indians love to stay in luxury suites and balcony cabins. This itself says that today’s discerning traveller is going gaga over cruises nowadays,” says Sharma. He further adds, “The government should take initiatives to make India a hub of cruises. More dedicated efforts from the government will pay way for generating more employment in the industry as well as in bringing more inbound tourists.”

On the growing Indian market, Sharma says that his company is getting cruise travellers from distinct parts of the country. “We are getting demand from all major cities. I am happy that people from Tier II



and III cities are also getting curious about cruising; the market is growing with each passing day. We might see some new cruise liners in the Indian market which will further lead growing number of cruise passengers,” he adds.

Manoj Saraf, Managing Director, Gainwell Enterprises feels that the Indian cruise market is now moving towards an experiential and longer-duration cruise. He says, “India is celebrating 25 years of international cruising. Prior to that, the number of Indian passengers cruising abroad was negligible. The market from India is growing at a healthy rate of 15-20 per cent every year because of larger ships and larger inventories. The per diem rate is coming down, making it more affordable for Indian passengers. With one of the largest coastlines in the world, India has the potential to become a cruising hub in Asia. However, we have a long way to go to develop our infrastructure, including ports, passenger terminals and a cruise-friendly tax policy.

“There is a strong possibility that next year might become a landmark year in the history of Indian cruising, provided the new domestic cruise is inaugurated by the summer of 2019. This will provide the next-generation growth to the cruise



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There is a possibility that next year may become a landmark year in the history of Indian cruising, provided the new domestic cruise is inaugurated by summer 2019



industry in India. A domestic cruise will ensure that no passports are required. Opening up this segment will open the gates of cruising to a much larger audience in the country,” affirms Saraf.

Commenting on the growth of cruising in India, **Varun Chadha**, COO, TIRUN Travel Marketing says that cruise tourism has started coming of age as there is more relevant deployment, along with more people who have cruised in the last three years. Chadha tells, “Today, cruising is becoming popular with more and more cruise brands deploying their ships closer to home. The government is playing its role in recognising cruising as an economic multiplier and catching up with the rest of the world in terms of policies and infrastructure. Once we see the advent of home porting, this vacation experience becomes accessible to many more as it eliminates the need to fly to various destinations.”

Richa Goyal, Director-Group Business Development, STIC Travel Group believes that cruising is no longer a niche category in leisure travel and Indian travellers are making good

use of it. “Indians require customisation and flexibility in a product. Brands that understand this factor are doing well in the market and as a result are expanding the size of the market in the cruise category. An increased consumption of cruise holidays will encourage more in the industry to focus on this segment,” she tells.

Nishith Saxena, Founder & Director, Cruise Professionals, believes that Indian cruising industry has a huge potential. “We are right at the point where an increased volume and interest of cruising is taking off but not all business falls into your lap just because it is at your doorstep. Cruising was looked upon as a segment which is expensive and is for a certain age group in India. The perception is gradually fading as in 2018, major cruise liners have witnessed significant growth from the Indian market,” he affirms.

He further adds, “A demand for more experiential cruising would be high next year as people now are shifting towards things that are offbeat and tourists are willing to go out of their comfort zone to have that one-of-a-kind experience.”



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Up the **cruise** ladder

Despite being a late-bloomer in cruise tourism, India has already climbed up to the sixth position among the Asian countries. **Peter Kollar**, Head — International Training & Development, CLIA, gives a status quo.

The latest cruise passenger numbers that were revealed by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) indicate a rapid growth from the India market. Figures show that it now ranks sixth in all Asian markets with 172,300 passengers. This is almost four per cent of the total Asians cruising right now. This was also a 16.1 per cent increase from the 2016 numbers. However, there was reportedly a six per cent decline in cruise visits in 2018 scheduled into Indian ports, which is a concerning fact given that evolution of all strong cruise markets around the world and the economic benefits that come with it have come historically off the back of their respective thriving domestic markets. Until such time as India can plan, develop, promote and engage in this local endeavour of bringing ships to its wonderful coastline, and more importantly, invest in the turnaround appeal, further increase will depend on whether the fly-cruise product will continue its gains in this sector of travel.

For those of you selling cruise, if your cruise business increased more than 16.1 per cent in 2017, congratulations on gaining market share against your competitors! Anything less, even if positive, means you are missing the boat, so to speak. In both cases, I would still suggest further education of agents about understanding the value proposition of cruising. Despite the growth, the potential is still very much untapped in India, especially when you consider the greater trend towards cruising that is occurring around the world, specifically other Asian markets which have taken to cruise in the past few years. Just over four million Asians took a cruise in 2017, which now accounts for 15.3 per cent of the



PETER KOLLAR
Head of International Training
& Development
CLIA

“
Indian passengers
tend to be some of the
youngest in the world,
with an average age of
37 years in 2017

”

26.7 million passengers worldwide. This is the highest market share ever for Asians, with 59 per cent of the passengers just from mainland China.

RANKS & FIGURES

Government officials and Ministries need to work with knowledgeable stakeholders such as the recently-formed India Cruise Line Association (InCLA) on plans and reforms towards not only operational measures for vessels like tax breaks and streamlining the passenger experience, but there also need to be investment and incentives provided to the very people filling these ships, the travel agents and their cruise education.

Currently, Mumbai is the only port scheduled for turnarounds this year (nine cruises) and will see the most calls at 48, followed by 32 in Cochin. However, India ranks 12th of all Asian cruise destination markets with just two per cent of Asia's total calls. Given the coastline and port potential, this is an area that needs great attention. Mumbai is currently ranked 36th in Asia for volume of port cruise traffic.

As for the Indian passengers currently sailing away, a majority of them chose up to three-day cruises, resulting in an overall average of 3.1 days in 2017. Indian passengers also tend to be some of the youngest in the world, with an average age of 37 years in 2017 (down from 37.5 in 2016).

Overall, these are positive numbers, and though there is still so much more work to be done and gains to be made, it's a move forward which is great news for the industry.



Figures show that India now ranks sixth in all Asian markets with 172,300

passengers. This is almost 4% of the total Asians cruising right now

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FLY or SAIL? Take your pick...

Genting Cruise Lines has played an integral role in the evolution of cruise business in Asia. It now plans to cater to the needs of the modern travellers, reveals **Naresh Rawal**, VP — Sales, Genting Cruise Line.

MANAS DWIVEDI



NARESH RAWAL
Vice President—Sales
Genting Cruise Line

While keeping pace with the needs and preferences of a modern traveller, cruise lines around the world are modifying their products and offerings to provide the traveller with a ‘wow’ experience. With the current trends, a new standard of private luxury travel is set to soar high above all others across the globe.

As a pioneer in the Asian cruise industry, Genting Cruise Lines’ brands have played an intrinsic role in the evolution of the cruise business in Asia and around the world. With its family of popular brands — Star Cruises, Dream Cruises and Crystal Cruises — the company provides a range of varied products from contemporary cruises to ultra-luxurious vacation experiences to modern travellers. Taking the concept of cruising to the skies, Crystal’s air

cruises are redefining the experience of flying while taking it closer to the experience of sailing on the sea. The all-inclusive Crystal Experience is a heady combination of indulgent services and enriching discovery, carefully balancing on-board enrichment and shore-side adventure to create the most magnificent luxury experience at sea, river, and on air.

Crystal AirCruises owns a Boeing 777 long-range wide-body airliner that offers guests everything from bespoke luxury to exotic worldwide destinations. The celebrated Crystal Experience shines above the clouds, amidst exquisitely-crafted amenities and spaces created to be used exclusively by the guests. The aircraft only houses 88 flatbed seats which gives the guests a first-class experience. A guest on chartering an aircraft can choose to do so



The all-inclusive Crystal Experience is a heady combination of indulgent services and discovery, balancing on-board enrichment & shore-side adventure



The celebrated Crystal Experience shines above the clouds, amidst exquisitely-crafted amenities

In addition to air cruises, Crystal also has ocean, river and yacht offerings.

Rawal further shares that India is one of the leading 'fly-by' markets for cruising globally. "We are expecting an exponential rise in the number of Indian passengers who board our ships. Guests nowadays are always on the lookout for 'Instagram-worthy' experiences; hence

for a 5-night or 10-night itinerary. The cost of chartering an aircraft is inclusive of all peripheral charges.

Briefing about changing preferences of travellers on cruises, **Naresh Rawal**, VP — Sales, Genting Cruise Line says that cruising companies have to constantly evolve to keep up with the expectations

of passengers. "The cruising experience has now moved towards a whole holiday package where guests have to be entertained while being served the best cuisines from across the world to suit their palate. Keeping this in mind, a cruise ship has to be a perfect amalgamation of fitness, leisure and recreational activities," he adds.

cruising companies have to ensure that the activities on board their ships give passengers an experience of a lifetime. As visa application processes are now digital, we have seen a rise in the number of Indian passengers travelling to the countries from where our ships disembark. This increases our horizons for potential customers on board our ships," he quips.



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bliss TASTE OF ON CRUISE

Norwegian Bliss hosts excitement around every corner and delights its guests with thrilling activities spanning the entirety of the ship. Get set and pack your bags for a blissful journey!



Norwegian Cruise Line's sixteenth ship 'Norwegian Bliss' has been designed for the ultimate cruising experience and it will make her way to Miami to offer seven-day cruises to the Eastern Caribbean, with calls to St Thomas, US Virgin Islands; Tortola, British Virgin Islands and Nassau, Bahamas through March 30, 2019.

Andy Stuart, President and Chief Executive Officer, Norwegian Cruise Line, said, "Norwegian Bliss's inaugural season surpassed anything we could have imagined, with guests and travel partners alike championing her innovation and beauty." He further added, "Miami has long been home to Norwegian Cruise Line, and we are excited to bring Norwegian Bliss and one of our most innovative vessels, to the East Coast for a winter of Caribbean cruising."

Take a look at the exciting activities available on board offering luxurious accommodations, gourmet dinners, live entertainment and more.

TWO LEVEL ELECTRIC-CAR RACE TRACK

Enjoy the blue sky above and turquoise waters below from the largest competitive race track at sea, a first for any North America-based cruise ship. Put your driving skills to test and experience a thrilling ride on the two-level competitive race track built at the top of Deck 19 with amazing views while twisting and turning.

OPEN-AIR LASER TAG COURSE

Experience the first-ever open-air laser tag at sea. Get your friends and family to join you on a mission to search an abandoned spaceship and shoot for the stars in galactic laser tag.

HEART-RACING WATERSLIDES

The ship's Aqua Park includes two multi-story thrilling waterslides — the Ocean Loop, which

is a free fall slide with exhilarating loops that stretch down to the deck below; and the tandem Aqua Racer slide that allows guests to race side-by-side on inner tubes for more than 360 feet, both offering stunning ocean views.

KID'S ZONE

Little cruisers, aged 6 months to just under 3-years old, have a dedicated space to enjoy aboard Norwegian Bliss with the fleet's largest Guppies playroom. For children between 3 to 12 years, Splash Academy offers fun activities while children from 13-17 years can enjoy with their peers and make new friends at the entourage.

ULTIMATE PAMPERING EXPERIENCE

After glacier trekking in Alaska or discovering hidden caves and sea pools at the Baths of Virgin Gorda in the Caribbean, Norwegian Bliss's guests will be able to revive, refresh and recharge at the ship's Mandara Spa that offers an ultimate pampering experience with its 24 treatment rooms, a full-serviced salon, barber shop and thermal suite.

NIGHTLIFE, CASINO & ENTERTAINMENT

Norwegian Bliss brings the best of live entertainment, electrifying deck parties and an expansive casino featuring hundreds of slot machines and table games to suit the likes of novice and professional gamblers alike. The Social Comedy & Night Club features sets from today's popular stand-up comedians, and then transforms into a nightclub late in the evening. Enjoy Broadway-style live musicals like Jersey Boys, theme parties, grab a drink and groove to the music at legendary clubs on the cruise.

180-DEGREE OBSERVATION LOUNGE

Guests will be in sheer awe at the 180-degree indoor observation lounge offering expansive views at sea and featuring a full-service bar, so that they can toast colourful sunsets with their favourite cocktail.



Put your driving skills to test and experience a thrilling ride on the two-level competitive race track built at the top of Deck 19

“It has been a satisfying year with a growing demand for cruises, especially on Dream Cruises ex-Singapore and Norwegian Cruise



Line ex-Europe. A new trend suggests that passengers are now repeating their cruise experience to newer destinations. Next year shall be a revolutionary time for cruising in India. Not only will it be for the first time in 2019, when more than one ship shall be home-ported in Mumbai, that is, Angriya and Jalesh, but the whole market pie of cruisers shall grow both within India and outbound. The ships in India shall give them a first-hand experience which shall then lead to increase in international cruisers from India. So, there are many reasons to look forward to an exciting year.”

PRADEEP SABOO
Managing Partner
Guideline Travels

“Data shows that cruise vacations are steadily on the rise with a projected 27.2 million passengers expected to set sail in 2018



globally. We see three key trends emerge. Cruise lines have recognised the need to bring their best ships and amenities to the Asian region. Within a five-six hour flying radius from India, there are now world-class ship available from ports such as Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore. Globally, the on-board offerings on cruise lines are being tailored to Asian guests aimed at multi-generational families, high-end shopping, and adapted menus. The total cruise outbound travellers from India are still less than one per cent of the total outbound traveller.”

TARIQUE HUSSAIN
Co-founder
Cruise Club

“Avalon’s Suite Ships have made a splash in river cruising. This has been a good year for cruises with many new clients opting for river cruises due to our innovative marketing campaigns. Though older travellers have been opting to travel on river cruise, the river cruise demographic has been gradually changing to a younger audience. Accordingly, every itinerary throughout Europe in 2019, Avalon Waterways is adding an Avalon Adventure Host to all 2019 European cruises. Through this, cruisers can choose to bike, sail, hike or even kayak. In April 2019, author Elizabeth Gilbert will christen our newest ship Avalon Envision on the Danube River in Budapest and we are looking forward to this.”



VARESH CHOPRA
Regional Director
Avalon Waterways – South Asia & Middle East
Globus Family of Brands



“India has begun its journey as an emerging market for international cruising and there is huge potential for everyone. Besides the popular Bahamas, the Caribbean islands and Alaska, destinations such as the Mediterranean region, Australia, and Bermuda did well for us in 2018. The Indian traveller has been cruising since the last 20 years or more and certain segments have graduated to become connoisseurs of cruising undertaking expeditions and small ship cruising, while a large segment undertakes cruising as a part of their vacation. MiCE and special events onboard will continue to be high point of 2019.”

DIPTI ADHIA
Director (Sales & Product Head)—Cruises
Discover the World - PSA for Carnival Cruise Lines

India, propelled

Cruising as an experience has never been so popular among Indians and this suggests that the numbers are up for grabs.

HAZEL JAIN



“We at MSC experienced a very strong trend where MiCE groups are concerned along with a substantial increase in our individual traveller booking ratio. We have been experiencing consistent growth on our West Mediterranean sailings not only because of the ‘value for money’ offerings provided by MSC, but also because of the new ships being deployed in this region. Indian travellers have been excited about the new prototypes of ships being launched and considering our ambitious plans to launch ships every year till 2026, we are ensuring we capitalise on this trend from India. We are launching two ships in 2019 – MSC Bellissima in March & MSC Grandiosa in November.”



KUNAL SAMPAT
General Manager – India
MSC Cruises

“While the overall sales figures in 2018 were average, we saw a big growth in our partner relations with a growth of 26 per cent gross revenue from new agents. We also witnessed a high growth in offbeat destinations and also popular destinations at low season times. We brought to our portfolio new and exciting brands on the oceans and the rivers to give great options to our partners. The new year will be interesting as India is getting on the cruising map with its very own luxury cruise. While this is news for the domestic market, I am sure that this development will also grow the cruising appetite for the outbound cruise market. We are conservatively looking at a 25-30 per cent growth in our sales for 2019.”



IAN BANERJEE
Director
Global Anchor Cruises

“Indian cruisers are actively looking for weekends cruise options from short-haul destinations and this trend helped us to achieve 20 per cent growth as compared to last year for sectors like Singapore on our major selling cruise Genting Dream. We catered to over 50,000 pax until October this year. European and Mediterranean sectors have done fairly well as we noticed 12-15 per cent year-on-year growth for Norwegian Cruise Line. Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong top the chart among Indians, given the proximity. Indians are keen on an ocean cruise. Larger ships, on-board activities like gaming, casino, waterslides, entertainment and dining option ave their own appeal for Indians.”



KISHAN BIYANI
Managing Director
Ark Travels



Safe Sailing

“We definitely see an increase in demand for the cruise cover as more and more Indian travellers are opting for cruise vacations. Further, the cruise travel companies appreciate that safety is of utmost importance, and hence, are looking to provide customised packages, based on customer preferences. With all these factors coming into play, we have seen close to 20 per cent growth in our exclusive cruise product in 2017-18. Cruise companies are working closely with travel protection and ancillary services providers to design customised products. At our end, we are focusing on enhancing our portfolio and are targeting to hit the market with differentiated cruise travel benefits next year. Overall, we are continuing to keep the momentum of growth from FY 18 into FY 19 as well.”

DEV KARVAT
Founder & CEO, India & Emerging Markets
TravellTag Cover-More





The online connect

With cruises going online, the dynamics of the B2B cruise market would certainly change. Here's how the online players are turning a new page in cruise sales.

NISHA VERMA

As Indian travellers are increasingly opting for cruises, service providers and cruise companies leave no stone unturned to capture the market. While the traditional representatives and sales agents of cruise brands have been providing the cruise inventory to travel agents and other B2C channels with a growing interest in the market, the B2B business is now going online with TBO Cruises as well as Travstarz Global Group. Although the two companies have distinguished ways of doing business, it would be interesting to see how they both help change the dynamics of the B2B cruise business with time.



TBO CRUISES

Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder, TBO Group, claims that TBO Cruises is going to be one-of-a-kind platform that brings cruises online. "What we will enable for travel agents include booking cruises real-time with transparency, seamless transaction, and enabling the travel agent to see the inventory in a much wider and more elaborate way. Hence, I think it's going to be a game changer for cruise sellers in India and I am sure it's going to

With their distinguished ways of doing business, TBO Cruises and

Travstarz Global Group would help change the dynamics of cruise tourism

help the travel agents who already use TBO for their hotel and airline requirement,” he shares.

Gaurav Bhatnagar, Co-Founder, TBO Group, adds, “TBO Cruises is an aggregated platform for booking cruises globally and everything will be available on one platform. So, with the same login and same cash limits, travel agents can now book cruises too.”

Nijhawan insists that by bringing an offline product like cruises online, they will bring scalability in the market. “A lot of travel agents in Tier V, VI and VII cities, that were not selling cruises will start selling them. I believe that cruise market is one of the fastest-emerging niche markets, which has grown in the last couple of years and will continue to grow in India,” he elaborates.

He also emphasises that by making the availability of cruises online, the market scenario might change. He also shares that they are not only looking at the market within India, but outside as well. “I don’t know what’s going to happen, but for us at TBO, there is no boundary. TBO Cruises will not only sell in India, we will be selling it across the world. Thus, as of now, we cannot say whether a PSA will get a share or

not. At present, we have started it in India, and we will be taking it to Middle East and then to the entire world. Apart from it, we have already signed contracts with NCL, Star Cruise, Genting Cruise and MSC. Once they go on board, we are sure rest will follow,” he states.

TRAVSTARZ GLOBAL GROUP

The latest product to be added in the Travstarz Global Group portfolio is cruises. In fact, **Sucheta Nagpal**, Co-Founder, Travstarz Global Group, reveals that they are the Preferred Sales Agents (PSA) for Dream Cruises as well as Star Cruises. “We are on board and sailing now. There are many new interesting and exciting itineraries, whether they are ex-Singapore or ex-Australia,” she says. Adding further, she informs that being an online platform would give them an advantage in this business. “We brought cruises online because being an online portal and having cruises on our platform makes things easy for travel agents. Along with hotels, flights, sightseeing, visas and travel insurance, they can now find cruises online too. Moreover, if a travel agent is sitting with any B2C client, he can just open the portal, check on the inventory and book it as and when required. We are actually bringing it to another level by getting cruises online and making it more easy for our agents,” she claims.

QUOTE UNQUOTE



“TBO Cruises will not only sell in India, but we will be selling it across the world.”

ANKUSH NIJHAWAN
Co-Founder, TBO Group



“Having cruises on our platform makes it easily accessible for agents.”

SUCHETA NAGPAL
Co-Founder
Travstarz Global Group



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A tribute to tradition

CGH Earth's Spice Coast Cruise houseboat enables travellers to get intimate with the bewitching waterways of Vembanad Lake in Kerala, informs **Michael Dominic**, Chairman, CGH Earth Experiences.

HAZEL JAIN



HOW WELL IS THE RIVER CRUISE DOING?

The Spice Coast Cruise Houseboat Experience that we introduced in 1996 is a hit among international tourists, particularly the British, Australians, Swiss and the Scandinavians. What they look for is an authentic local cruising experience. Our cruise packages are designed in such a way that one gets to experience village life, see the temples, schools, local markets, craft and more. Spice Coast Cruises gets guests who stay for a period of four days up to even two weeks.

WHAT DOES THE EXPERIENCE INVOLVE?

During the cruise, they make stops at the local village, go out into the market with our boatmen, buy fish, vegetables and more for their meal and



MICHAEL DOMINIC
CEO
CGH Earth Experiences

come back and have it cooked in a traditional manner. The kettuvallam even has bicycles on board which guests ride to the village, giving them a taste of the local life. At times, when the package is for a long duration, homely meals are arranged at a local house, which the guests get to part-take in, as part of that day's trip.

WHAT SETS THIS CRUISE APART FROM OTHER RIVER CRUISES IN INDIA?

In this day and age when the rest of the market makes larger and more conventional houseboats, we've stuck to the original and maintained our kettuvallam the way it was, for the simple reason that it gets to traverse the narrow canals, as this is where life happens, and this is what makes our guests keep coming back.



CGH Earth's Spice Coast Cruise packages are designed in a way that one experiences village life, see temples, schools, local markets, craft and more



CGH EARTH IS USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH HOTELS. WHAT LED TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS PRODUCT?

Spice Coast Cruises is unlike traditional properties tourists holiday at. A typical 'property' is a hand-made houseboat called kettuvallam, a large traditional boat made of sturdy wood logs tied together by coir which takes you on a journey through the waters of the Vembanad Lake. Kettuvallams have been an essential part of Kerala's history and culture. They are said to have been built thousands of years ago and were traditionally used for transporting merchandise like rice and spices, as well as to ferry passengers. As time passed, they gave way to faster modes of transport and the houseboats started taking the role of cultural relics of the past, now turned into tourist attractions.

IS THIS CRUISE ALSO A GREEN INITIATIVE?

The Spice Coast Cruises is a representation of ecotourism focusing on three main elements - being one with the local ethos, caring for the environment and working with the local communities. The location (route, in this case) of the property is something else that makes it unique, as Spice Coast Cruises are centred around the 90 km expanse of Vembanad Lake.

It is a large inland lake on the backwaters of Kerala with a unique ecosystem unlike any other water body in the world. The lake is a natural habitat to several species of fauna and flora, a lot of which can be spotted on the cruise.

You will see a lot of them at the Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary on its eastern shore. As you cruise along the backwaters, you'll come across several species, both marine and non-marine.

Moreover, the lake is home to thousands of people who live along its edges and are sustained by it in



Life on a kettuvallam

There's a lot that tourists can experience while on their cruise starting with the experience of staying on a houseboat itself, all the way to socialising with folks from the villages that exist along the banks of the lake, while getting to live a day in their life as well. In that sense, the houseboat or the kettuvallam in itself is the most significant attraction of the property.

many ways. What will delight the tourists is the old-time charm of life that's still intact. That's to say, life here moves in its own slow pace.

WHAT DOES CGH EARTH DO TO ENSURE THAT THE ENVIRONMENT HERE REMAINS INTACT?

CGH Earth is aware of the great burden upon Vembanad through the various activities it supports. Thus, CGH Earth is deeply committed to its care and ensures that the water is not polluted with waste, and it is duly treated before disposing off. Apart from being the pioneer and catalyst of ecotourism, the property practises sustainability to create a shared value that benefits all key players.

At Spice Coast Cruises, we work with the community and ensure our guests get the real picture of the scenario and encourage them to go back and continue these practices.

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PACK RIGHT FOR *Cruising*

Ready to hit the high seas for cruise, but have you got your checklist right yet? We have put together some suggestions to enhance your on-board experience.



Choose the right time

According to the Cruise Lines International Association, cruise ships can take you to more than 500 ports around the world. For example, summers are ideal for sailing to Europe and Alaska, while winters are perfect to cruise in Australia and South America. December through April is the best time to sail for Caribbean.



Keep your cruise card handy

Once you board the cruise, you will quickly learn that it is a cashless system. Upon check-in, you will be given your personalised card. This is your ID, room key and payment card. You will need it to get on-and-off-the-ship for your own security. So, whatever you do, try not to lose it!



Pivotal Paperwork

Check with your cruise line to find out what documents you'll need for the trip. Be sure to carry all the necessary travel documents, identifications and medication documents on board.

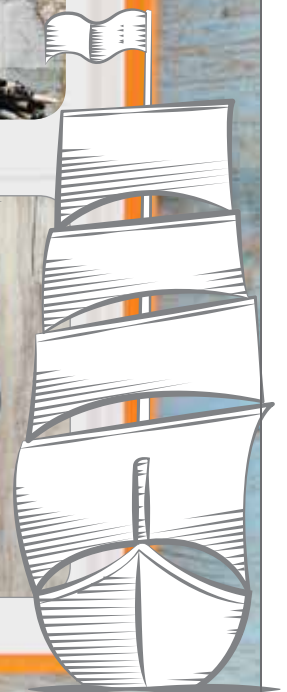
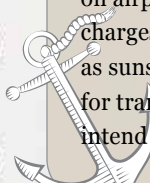
Packing smart

Pack wisely and keep a small day bag with one set of clothes, medicines, documents and toiletries while waiting for your checked bag to be delivered. Also, don't forget to pack at least one set of formal clothing that you will need for the main dining hall.



Remember the basics

Most cruise ship cabins don't come with alarm clocks. So, it would be better if you bring your own. In case you are using your cell phone for this job, keep it on airplane mode, so that you don't incur roaming charges in foreign waters. Carrying other items such as sunscreen, ear plugs, power strips and plastic bags for transporting liquids can prove pivotal, if you don't intend to buy them on board at a higher cost.





DREAM CRUISES

Dream Cruises

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Phuket
Get your swimsuit ready in the paradise for water sports lovers, or visit the bustling street markets to experience the energetic soul of Phuket.



Miyakojima
Known for its lovely beaches and excellent coral reefs, Miyakojima's tropical climate makes it a popular year-round destination.



Ha Long Bay
Hear the tale of this region as you glide through waters, among more than 1,600 limestone isles and pillars that form the mesmerising seascape of Ha Long Bay.



Fireworks at Sea
Be dazzled by spectacular live fireworks displays during our 3-night and 5-night cruises. Watch the colours burst as you revel on the main pool deck or Zouk beach club.



The Palace
Our private ship-within-ship concept featuring over 140 lavish suites, 24-hour dedicated butler service, and exclusive privileges and facilities.



Zouk Beach Club
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Above offer can be availed on other sailings too.

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