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# 1 year of GST: Sore still?

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) came into effect in July 2017 and shook the entire travel industry. While many said that it simplified processes, others believed that it deviated from the 'One nation One tax' idea.

TT Bureau



EM Najeed  
Senior Vice President,  
Indian Association of Tour Operators

“A lot of positive changes have taken place after the implementation of GST in the country. As far as the tourism and hospitality industry is concerned, a lot more has to happen in the coming days. Both IATO and the Ministry of Tourism are working to take the issues to the GST Council and Finance Ministry to avoid multiple taxes known to tour operators and transport operators. We are very hopeful that we can find solutions for these issues very soon to resolve the confusion around GST.”



Guldeep Singh Sahni  
Immediate Past President,  
Outbound Tour Operators  
Association of India

“GST is a great system brought in haste without training and development. While 5 per cent GST on tour operator services was a welcome move by most quarters, the government must separately deal with inbound and outbound tour operator services. Outbound tour operators are impacted in a big way in competition with internet bookings where one does not have to pay any GST. Overseas bookings for only hotels are also impacted due to GST. GST should be implemented on our service charge and not on services produced and delivered in another country.”



Subhash Goyal  
Hon'y Secretary  
FAITH

“2017 was not a very good year for tourism as most of the industry was trying to recover from demonetisation and the implications of GST. We would like to get the input credit on the GST being charged by other service providers to tour operators. We have also asked the government to exempt GST on all foreign exchange earned from international tourists. With some issues of GST having been resolved, I still feel that the taxes on five-star hotels are quite high which is making the Indian tourism products more expensive than the neighbouring countries.”

Contd. on page 16 ▶

# 2k meetings at Travel Wedding Show

Pegged at \$40 to \$50 billion, the Indian wedding industry is the second largest market in the world after the USA, according to a study revealed at 5<sup>th</sup> Travel Wedding Show, held recently in Jaipur.

Kanchan Nath

Pegged at \$40 to \$50 billion, the Indian wedding industry is the second largest market in the world after the USA, revealed Rajeev Jain, Founder and

Director, Rashi Entertainment at the 5<sup>th</sup> Travel Wedding Show, held recently at Jaipur Marriott Hotel. The event witnessed over 2000 B2B meetings between exhibitors and buyers spread across two days. Speaking on trends in

the wedding industry, Jain said, “The global wedding industry is pegged at \$300 billion. As far as international destination weddings are concerned, the most wanted destination initially was Thailand but now people are

venturing to Turkey, UAE, Cyprus, Mauritius, Macau, Malta, Sri Lanka, Bali, London, among other new destinations. Destination weddings are paving a new path for the modern Indian couple aspiring to marry

in a bigger and better way to make a mark on all their friends and relatives.”

What do wedding planners look for while deciding on a hotel within the country? Jain said that these include

the pricing factor, number of rooms in a hotel, the brand that wedding planners are working with and the quality of food. For international destination weddings, planners take into consideration

Contd. on page 6 ▶

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# Ushering in a trade of freshness

TRAVTALK speaks with six second-generation entrepreneurs who have joined their family business and are blazing a trail for their company with a fresh vision that is in accordance with the changing market dynamics.

	When they Joined	Major Achievement	Their Vision
 <p><b>Adil Karim</b> Director Creative Tours &amp; Travels</p>	<p>I joined the company in 2014 and until then, we were a traditionally run business. I saw the drawbacks that came with this kind of operations, especially in an industry that was going through huge transitions in terms of technology and best practices.</p>	<p>My area of focus therefore has been to not only replicate the offline business online but also develop the e-commerce platform for easy payment. I am also responsible for taking our DMC division for the South India B2B market completely online. This division too will have a payment gateway.</p>	<p>My vision is to offer our trade partners a complete online solution. To be able to achieve this, we need to be a single-point platform for all their needs by clubbing all possible travel-related products – not just tours but also allied products – and bringing them together on one portal to make it easy and convenient for them. This way we can ensure that we retain all our clients.</p>
 <p><b>Hussain Patel</b> Director Atlas Travels Online</p>	<p>I joined the business when I was 18 years old but that was part-time and still studying. I became part of the company full time by the time I turned 21. This was nine years ago and it feels that I'm still learning. By this time, we had already established ourselves strongly in the Hajj and Umrah business and the daily group departures that we do pan-India.</p>	<p>When I joined, we were still functioning in the offline arena. My aim was to have a wider appeal and so took the business online. I wanted to improve operations, improve management and bring in efficiency in cost per ticket. But most of all, I wanted the company to have a wider distribution. We finally launched our portal in 2012 and since then I have been leading the online vertical.</p>	<p>I want to use this channel and help potential partners all over the world to take advantage of our exceptional distribution capability, and maybe in the process even expand it to include other verticals beyond travel. I want to do this within the next two to three years.</p>
 <p><b>Vasundhara Gupta</b> Manager (Corporate and Trade Sales), Costa Cruise India, GSA Lotus Destinations</p>	<p>I joined this company in January 2013 when I was 25. By this time, I already had some work experience, having worked in London with an airline for about three years. My focus at the time was to work intensely on customizing the Costa Cruises product to the needs of the Indian travel agents and clients.</p>	<p>We introduced the concept of INR static pricing rate sheets for the most popular itineraries of Costa to ease the booking process for agents. I have also worked with airlines to introduce the fly + cruise packages and strategic alliances with tourism boards and event companies. Instead of conventional advertising, I wanted to do something different so I decided to collaborate with Lakme Fashion Week to have the first ever fashion show onboard a cruise liner in India in January 2017.</p>	<p>I want the company to be deeply involved in creating domestic cruising within the country, enabling many Indians to experience a cruise holiday and help build the blue economy of India.</p>
 <p><b>Suprabh Oza</b> Business Development Manager, Blue Star Air Travel Services</p>	<p>I joined the company after completion of my graduation in 2009. Initially, it was very difficult because I was still learning the nuances of the trade. Since my background was finance, I started with book-keeping. When online came into the picture in 2013, we – the Oza brothers – went for it aggressively.</p>	<p>My responsibility is about looking at new opportunities for the business. So, one of the things I am looking at is NDC and to ensure that the company is ready for it. I am also focusing on the new Fare Families concept by Amadeus. It is a mechanism introduced by GDS' for bundling of products.</p>	<p>I want the business to grow into a huge wholesaler in India, reaching even the B2B agents in Tier-III cities, and selling not only all travel products like railways but also diversify into non-travel segments such as movie tickets, mobile top-ups, utility bills, etc; precisely products that have bigger margins.</p>
 <p><b>Neil Patil</b> Founder and Director Veena World</p>	<p>I was among the first founding director at Veena World when we set up the company in 2013. We started the company with 35-odd people which has now grown to a 1,000-member team. It has been a roller-coaster ride but a very interesting one. The last five years have been spent creating a foundation to achieve our 'lakshya' – that is to make Veena World 'Bharat ki sabse badi travel company'.</p>	<p>Today, I'm managing the technology aspect of the business. The last five years have been spent in creating a foundation, ensuring that we are making the right investments in technology and manpower.</p>	<p>In the next five years, we are making huge investments in machine learning and Artificial Intelligence. In order to take the next leap forward, I feel it is key that the company has a strong blend of technology as well as the human touch. I want to see the company develop more innovative products such as the ones we already offer such as special interest tours.</p>
 <p><b>Alisha Shiroadkar</b> Vice President— Business Development Tamarind Global</p>	<p>I joined Tamarind two and half years ago at the age of 27. By then, I gained some work experience and had established The Belgian Waffle Co with my husband. I started with leading our marketing division across all four verticals - tours, weddings, events and corporate services. This role has now evolved into marketing, business development as well as operations and client servicing.</p>	<p>My move into Tamarind was the birth of the marketing department. In the past, we have never really done anything to create a unified identity for the company with so many distinct audiences and services. We have now made a conscious effort to drive awareness of what we stand for, reach out to the right audiences and make sure we have a strategic business development approach.</p>	<p>It's not just mine but a collective vision – to move from DMC operation which is our core business to being an 'EMC'. It is a term we have coined which stands for Experience Management Company. We want to offer more of experiences than anything else, whether it is weddings, tours, or corporate events.</p>



## ADTOI elections on August 11

The Association of Domestic Tour Operators (ADTOI) is set to conduct its elections on August 11, 2018 in New Delhi.



TT Bureau

ADTOI is all set to elect its new team after two years at The Metropolitan Hotel and Spa, New Delhi—the same venue of its last elections and with the same Returning Officer (RO), Harbans Singh, Retd Secretary, Election Commission. The date and venue for the election was announced by **PP Khanna**, President, ADTOI at their General House meeting held recently at Country Inn & Suites by Radisson, Sohna Road, Gurgaon. The current team will be completing its two-year term on August 16, 2018.

Khanna talked about the Fam tours that the association is taking to different parts of the



**PP Khanna**  
President, ADTOI

country including the recent one to Amritsar as well as the one to Ramada Neemrana and Days Hotel Neemrana Jaipur Highway.

**Chetan Gupta**, General Secretary, ADTOI informed the members that the new website is now fully functional. He



**Chetan Gupta**  
General Secretary, ADTOI

said that they are constantly approaching MOT for linkage (with their newly developed website) when queries will be transferred to ADTOI members.

ADTOI members will also be participating at India Tourism

Mart, to be held from September 16-18, 2018 in New Delhi. Khanna said that the information has been forwarded to all members for booking stalls. He also informed that he has been nominated as the Chairman of the Exhibition Committee and the response for booking the stalls was overwhelming. In addition to that, he said that ADTOI will be signing an MOU with PHD Chamber of Commerce to promote yoga under Baba Ramdev and will promote Krishna Circuit initiated by UP Tourism.

Commenting on the last two years of his team, he said that they opened three new chapters of ADTOI in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab/Haryana/Chandigarh.

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## GST turns one

In July last year, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) came into effect and it took the travel and hospitality industry by storm. With multiple slabs and a plethora of confusions for both inbound and outbound business, it was way beyond the 'One nation One tax' ideology for the industry. All the associations, be they IATO, ADTOI, FHRAI, TAAI or OTOAI, arranged special sessions for their members to understand and clarify issues related to GST and ways to adopt it in the best possible manner in their business, especially with different taxes in different states. The hospitality industry saw the taxes going up till 28 per cent for hotels charging above Rs 7500 per room night, which according to industry experts has made the Indian travel product much expensive than those of our neighbouring countries, especially Sri Lanka and Thailand. While it could be a simplified way of taxation on paper, the industry is still grappling with the situation and trying hard with the government to address their woes.

## MOT gears up for ITM

While the India Tourism Mart (ITM) was announced only recently, the Ministry of Tourism says that they have been preparing for the same since a long time. However, from what has been announced, ITM would be India's first flagship government-led travel mart and whether it matches the scale of an ITB, WTM or ATM, it would surely be a good start. The industry needed an event where the government becomes a part and pushes the industry forward. While the expectations from the event are very high, the good part is that MOT and FAITH with all its stakeholders, are reaching out to the world. On the contrary, in an industry where global events are decided way in advance, would ITM receive the attendance of buyers it wants, especially when it was announced only three months prior to its date? While the associations, state governments and MOT are working hard towards making sure that the event becomes a success for both buyers and sellers, we can only wait and watch!

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

Then



Tony Marwah  
Travelite India

Now



Tony Marwah  
CEO, Indian Travel Promotion  
Company and Executive Committee  
Member, IATO

25 years back, Tony Marwah was working with inbound travel company Travelite (India) and today he is the CEO of Indian Travel Promotion Company. A veteran in the industry, he was recently elected as an Executive Committee Member of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO).

## FRANKLY SAID...



"Correct me if I'm wrong, but do you advertise this place as a home away from home with no restrictions, or not?"

# Wedded in holy matrimony

► Contd. from page 3

the food, visa formalities, airlines connectivity and the language barrier.

Quoting a survey on how to generate business for weddings, he says, "In India, 50 per cent of the business gets generated through referrals; 20 per cent from social media; 15 per cent through search engine and 15 per cent from other sources. For



international markets, social media is 43 per cent, 25 per

cent is by search engines. 13 per cent by referrals and

rest is by other sources."

## Quote Unquote



H Deniz Ersoz  
Culture & Tourism Counsellor  
Turkish Embassy

"Turkey knows how to meet the demands of Indians. Even though Antalya, Istanbul, Cappadocia and Bodrum are popular wedding destinations, many more are yet to be discovered"



Sarika Bambhani Rawal  
Vice President  
DDP Exhibitions

"As the buyers were senior level buyers with CEOs and MDs in attendance, exhibitors were able to do good business. We now look forward to introduce Travel Education Show"



Punam Singh  
Associate  
Travel Show

"With a slight change in format this year, we conducted the inaugural ceremony and the knowledge session before we started the business meetings"

A panel discussion was held on 'Destination Weddings: An overview, India v/s International.' Moderated by Jain, the session's panelists included H Deniz Ersoz, Culture & Tourism Counsellor, Turkish Embassy, New Delhi; Hemant Mediratta, Senior Vice President - Sales, Oberoi Hotels & Resorts; Saurabh Bhargava, AVP Sales, Indian Hotels Company; Shampa Dhali, Area Director, National Sales - India, Marriott International and Abinash Manghani, Area Manager and Head Travel, ITC Hotels. A knowledge journal titled 'An insight on Weddings in India & abroad' was also released on the occasion. 🍷



# RDTM to woo domestic buyers

Set to be held from July 20-22, 2018 in Jaipur, Rajasthan Domestic Tourism Mart (RDTM) is being organised by the Rajasthan Tourism and FHTR.



Buyers from around the country are expected to attend RDTM in Jaipur and explore the properties and experiences of Rajasthan. While preparations for the event are in full swing, **Bhim Singh**, President, Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR), said that the aim behind the event was to bring domestic tourism to the fore for the state. "While domestic tourism needs to be given a thrust, there is a need to reach and connect to prospective travellers through tour operators and travel agents



**Bhim Singh**  
President  
FHTR

for the same. At present, the domestic tourist arrivals in Rajasthan is 4.6 crores with an objective to reach more than 5 crores," he informed.

**Gyan Prakash**, Secretary General, FHTR, explained that the association is dedicated towards boosting tourism in the state. "FHTR is a consortium of the stakeholders of tourism, hospitality and affiliated institutions as well as experts from the field. To associate with the government for RDTM, FHTR's sole objective was to promote tourism and increase tourist arrivals in Rajasthan. We are doing the event on a public-partnership model, thereby contributing to the job creation and GDP of the state," he added.

Singh informed that they are expecting approximately 200 sellers from across Rajasthan and around 200 hosted buyers from 29 states and seven Union Territories. Post Fam tours will also be organised for the delegates.

For growing this event further, Prakash shared, "The strategy has been worked out to reach the maximum number of tour operators from across the country. The sellers include hotels, both heritage and leisure, who will be connecting with major events and wed-

ding planners to showcase their properties. Apart from that there will be new destinations and properties in the state. RDTM would provide a mix of all segments of tourism for maximum exposure."

According to Singh, RDTM

would cater to everything ranging from heritage, adventure, wildlife, medical tourism, leisure, MiCE, pilgrimage, safaris and camps, events, weddings, film shoot destination, etc. "The event presents a unique opportunity for travel and tour operators as well as

event companies interested in the rapidly growing Rajasthan tourism market to expand their business portfolio. The initiative is supported by all the industry associations of Rajasthan, besides the national associations," revealed Singh.



**Gyan Prakash**  
Secretary General, FHTR



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# Working out a German package

At the recently-held Germany Travel Mart (GTM) in Dresden, travel agents from around India explored both new and old products as well as held meetings with service providers from every part of Germany.



Nisha Verma from Dresden



Ujjit Thaker  
Founder & CEO, World  
Wide Travels, Ahmedabad

“If I compare GTM with other international travel shows, it is the only show which gives you a comfort of doing business. The meetings were organised in a systematic way, and in case one doesn't have a pre-fixed meeting, there was still time to meet any supplier if one found a product interesting. The pre-tours were also great and also gave us a lot of spare time to explore places on our own.”



Sweta Mistry  
Managing Partner, Aspen  
Vacations, Ahmedabad

“What I liked about GTM was the excellent organisation of the event. Every region had all its products together and we did not have to run from one point to the other for our meetings. With pre-scheduled meetings, I could meet everyone I wanted to and explore new products in Germany for my clients. A lot of information from tourism boards, hotels and operators helped us in understanding the destinations well. All the evenings offered great networking opportunities and experiences.”



Gurpreet Johar  
Owner Red Carpet Tours  
New Delhi

“GTM is primarily for the German travel market and this makes it very specific for business. If you are selling Germany, it is the best platform as one can see all suppliers, coach companies, operators and hotels, allowing you to directly deal with them and work out your package. About 90 per cent of our business to Germany is MiCE, especially trade fairs. In leisure, we combine Munich in Germany with Eastern Europe.”

“GTM offered a great platform for networking as our forte is MiCE. We were exposed to a lot of new destinations and even discovered Dresden which can be combined in a Europe package along with Prague and Leipzig. Indian food options are in plenty, which plays a crucial part for Indians. In comparison to other travel shows, GTM is very precise. The networking tool we were given allowed us to do our homework well before the meeting.”



Jagdeep Bhalla  
Head—Business  
Development, LTA tours,  
New Delhi

“The reception at Verkehrsmuseum was quaint and the educational programmes were informative. The two-day B2B workshops held at Messe Dresden with 300 exhibitors showcasing their products with delegates from the travel industry and international media partners from over 50 countries were flawlessly handled. We made a lot of new friends and re-acquainted ourselves with many we already knew.”



Merlyn Kurian  
Partner, Evershine  
Holidays, Bengaluru

“The best part about GTM'18 was the location—Dresden, a city distinguished by the celebrated art museums and classic architecture of its reconstructed old town. The ambience and atmosphere of the Saxony capital was the perfect venue for GTM. The selection of delegates was done after proper due diligence. Often, such platforms lose their value because of the overflow of participants, but at GTM, the networking sessions were well-planned.”



Aman Sharma  
Manager—Operations &  
Sales Support, The Intrepid  
Club, New Delhi



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# For *Innoway*tive transactions

The new B2B travel e-platform, Innowayt, hopes to break down physical barriers and enable DMCs and travel suppliers to transact with travel agents and tour operators.



TT Bureau

Venya Traveltech India has launched the beta version of the B2B travel platform, Innowayt after eight months of developing its product and building its team. The portal will enable DMCs and travel suppliers across the globe to transact with travel agents and tour operators. **Narayan Mallapur**, CEO & Co-Founder, Venya Traveltech, says, "We started Innowayt with a vision of fixing the current state of broken B2B travel transactions globally. To rethink travel technology and make it invisible but truly assistive, we allow the travel trade to do what they love – take care of their clients."



**Narayan Mallapur**  
CEO & Co-Founder  
Venya Traveltech

Mallapur adds that after having done a survey with industry experts, suppliers and agents from various destinations in August and September 2017, they started developing the platform from October end with a tech team of seven. They registered the entity in April 2018. "We have already begun on-boarding suppliers and DMCs from various countries from May 28 under beta. As on today, we have registered over 55 suppliers and on-boarded 33 from these. We are looking at 110 countries for suppliers. We plan to onboard agents from end of July and will initially target India, the US and European markets. At the moment, we are bootstrapped," he says.

**Vikas Khanduri**, Co-Founder, Venya Traveltech adds, "Travel technology has touched all aspects of travel space - flights, buses, trains,

transfers. What remains are tours and activities and as per Phocuswright Research, globally the tours and activities business is 80 per cent offline and growing at the rate of nine per cent per annum with a market size of US\$ 118 billion."

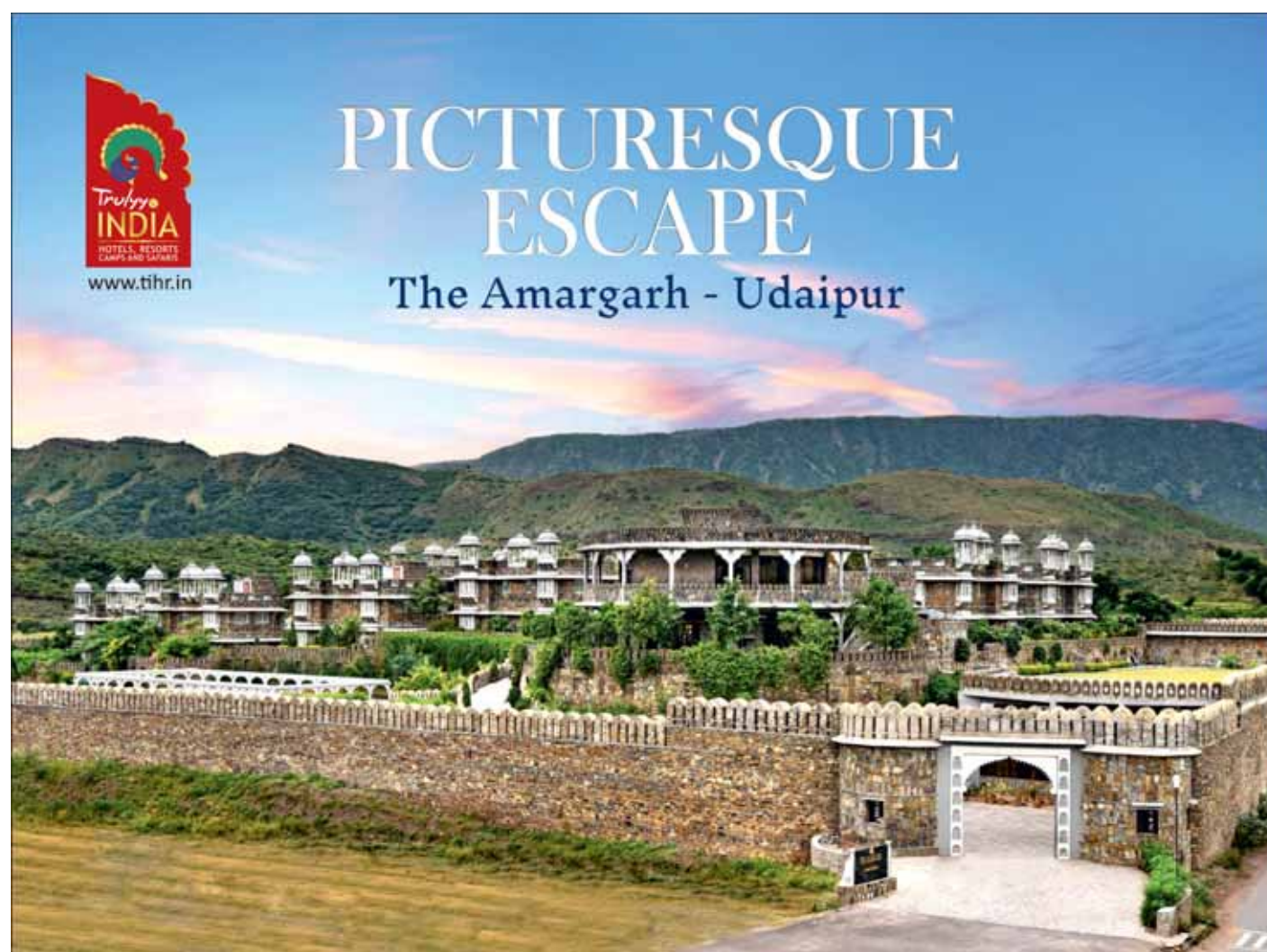
Speaking about the pin points of clients that this platform will address, Mallapur says, "It is not just a payment gateway. A supplier can upload his content, contracts, inventory, prices for multiple markets and the same is instantly available for all travel agents

from different countries. They currently spend a huge amount every year visiting and canvassing for on-boarding of travel agents in different markets. Meanwhile, an agent currently asks for quotes from suppliers and there is a time lag due to time difference,

delay in responses, etc. With Innowayt, he gets ready packages on the system once he logs in. He can also create packages on the fly as per customer requirements. These are only a few key features. We will add several additional features in phases."



**Vikas Khanduri**  
Co-Founder, Venya Traveltech



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# All hail progressive Punjab!

**Shivdular Singh Dhillon**, Special Secretary cum Director, Department of Tourism, Cultural Affairs, Archaeology—Museums & Archives, Punjab, reveals the state's tourism focus and thrust.



Inder Raj Ahluwalia

## Q What is the key focus of Punjab Tourism today?

The tourism potential of Punjab has been one of the best guarded secrets for very long. The focus is now on sharing this secret with the world. Towards this end, the varied attractions of Punjab including its heritage, monuments, glorious history, vibrant festivals, mouth-watering cuisine and the joie de vivre of people are all being exposed and put together on a platter for tourists.

## Q Has Punjab's rich heritage played a role in the state's overall attraction factor for tourists?

It is a fact that the heritage and history of Punjab are major pull factors. This is a

land with more than 5,000 years of history with sites of the Indus valley and Harappan civilisation. Several grand monuments all over the state tell the stories of bygone eras.

## Q What are Punjab's three key tourist attractions?

The jewel in the crown is of course the Golden Temple in Amritsar, which has already been declared by the World Book of Records as the most visited destination in the world. The unique Virasat-e-Khalsa museum at Anandpur Sahib is amongst the most visited museums in the country. The forts and palaces of Patiala tell the 'larger than life' stories of Patiala, including that of the Patiala Peg and the Patiala Gharana of music. This is a place where legion and history dovetail with each other.

## Q Is Punjab Tourism developing any new tourist circuits?

Punjab - the state that brought the Green Revolution to the country, is today showcasing its farmhouses for the benefit of visitors and tourists. These farm stays are becoming increasingly popular on the Punjab tourism circuits and are adding value to various circuits such as the Heritage circuit, the Religious circuit and the Mughal circuit.

## Q Which are the main feeder areas for Punjab's incoming tourism?

Punjab is attracting tourists and visitors from all over. On the domestic front, more than 1,00,000 visitors who come daily to Amritsar include visitors not only from Punjab but also other states,



**Shivdular Singh Dhillon**  
Special Secretary cum Director, Department of Tourism, Cultural Affairs, Archaeology—Museums & Archives, Punjab

including the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala and eastern states of West Bengal and Orissa. So far as international tourism is concerned, the main international tourist and visitor contingents come from the UK, the USA, Australia, France and Germany, among others.

## Q Punjab's tourist mainstay has been domestic tourists. Is there any recent focus on getting foreign tourists?

Yes, there most certainly is a focus to increase foreign tourist arrivals in the state. Thanks to the large Punjabi diaspora spread out across the globe; today the overall awareness about the tourist potential of Punjab is spreading in a big way across the borders. Last year, the number of foreign tourist arrivals witnessed a growth of over 65 per cent.

## Q Is Punjab Tourism keeping the 'environment' factor in mind while developing its tourism industry?

Punjab tourism is now focussing on ecotourism. Towards this end, we have

developed tourist facilities at nature sites such as the Keshopur and Harike wetlands, which got some 97,000 winged visitors last year. A Bird Festival at Keshopur has also been started as an annual feature. These initiatives are bringing increased awareness about the environment. Incentives for 'green' hotels and resorts are being provided to encourage eco-friendly units in the state.

## Punjab Attractions

Punjab's attractions cover a wide range and include just about everything - from the state's rich history, to its festivals, heritage, delectable cuisine and the zestful nature of its people. An increased awareness is key to promote them

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# MP to host AdventureNEXT

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board (MPTB) is set to hold AdventureNEXT by Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) in Bhopal from December 3-5, 2018.

 TT Bureau

A curtain raiser for AdventureNEXT held recently in Delhi saw in presence **Hari Ranjan Rao**, Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board; **Gergana Nikolova**,

grateful to ATOAI who have been at the forefront to take this event forward.”

Finifrock added, “AdventureNEXT is not only an event for Madhya Pradesh but also for all adventure travels across relationship with ATTA as well as the adventure travel fraternity in the world. In the next three-four years, we hope to have its summit in India and are expecting AdventureNEXT to extend to other states too,” he said.



Regional Manager—Europe; ATTA; **Jake Finifrock**, Regional Director—Asia, ATTA and **Swadesh Kumar**, President, ATOAI.

Rao said, “We are grateful to ATTA to have agreed upon coming to India and bringing so many partners from other parts of the world. I am also India. We are expecting around 300-350 delegates to attend AdventureNEXT. International buyers who will come to see the travel products available in India will also have an opportunity to meet local suppliers in the travel sector.”

Kumar said, “We expect that it is the beginning of our Nikolova who is also Event Director, AdventureNEXT India, shared, “The theme of AdventureNEXT is ‘Pulse of Tomorrow’, a combination that comes from MP as the heart of India; and everything in India is heart driven - the pulse, the emotions, the colours and the taste.”

# Solid footing for tourism

According to the FICCI-Yes Bank Knowledge Report on tourism infrastructure, the investment is expected to soar to `5,546.3 billion in the next 10 years.

 Manas Dwivedi

The FICCI-Yes Bank Knowledge Report on tourism infrastructure, released at the 4<sup>th</sup> Tourism Investors Meet 2018 in New Delhi, indicated that investments in travel and tourism is expected to rise by 6.7 per cent per annum over the next 10 years to `5,546.3 billion in 2028.




**Usha Padhee**  
Joint Secretary  
Ministry of Civil Aviation


After releasing the paper, **Usha Padhee**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, said that the tourism and civil aviation ministries are engaging continuously to identify solutions and implement them for the growth of both these sectors. “The way forward is a focused approach for evolving tourist places under the aviation connectivity scheme and expanding existing routes under UDAN scheme including helicopter routes in hilly and Northeastern regions. This will provide good infrastructural support to the tourism sector,” said Padhee. She also talked about ministry’s plans of developing airports under the UDAN scheme for international connectivity in the future.

Titled as ‘Tourism Infrastructure Investments: Leveraging Partnerships for Exponential Growth’, the report highlights the foremost areas of developing a robust tourism infrastructure and the current scenario of tourism in India. It also suggests recommendations to establish India as a global tourism hotspot.

In her welcome address, **Dr Jyotsna Suri**, Past President FICCI & Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee said that increasing connectivity will boost tourism. The meet was moderated by **Rahul Chakravarty**, Consultant—Tourism, FICCI while **Bhupesh Rathore**, President & Head—Strategic Government Advisory, Yes Bank and **Dipak Deva**, Co Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee also marked their presence.



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# Fascinated by theme parks

**Rocky Too**, Senior Vice President—Sales & Marketing, Genting Malaysia Berhad, talks about the importance of the Indian market and the boom they expect once the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox World Theme Park opens doors.



Anupriya Bishnoi from Malaysia

## Q Tell us about your Indian clientele.

India has been a very important market to us. Since Indians love the concept of theme parks, Resorts World Genting as a holiday destination appealed so much in the past to Indian visitors when our indoor and outdoor theme parks were still open. We used to have over 200,000 Indian visitors visiting us annually, however we saw a reduction since the closing of the theme parks late 2013. But we are seeing a good influx of Indians coming back since 2017 with the opening of new attractions and a new mall. We are confident to see even more of tourists from India coming in the near future with the opening

of the Skytropolis Indoor Park and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox World Theme Park, a first-of-its-kind in the world



**Rocky Too**  
Senior Vice President—Sales & Marketing, Genting Malaysia Berhad

scheduled to open soon. We are expecting a minimum of a three-day stay from this market.

## Q Which are your key source markets in India?

The key markets for us would be Delhi and Mumbai. A lot of South Indian travellers also visit their relatives here. This is also because the southern part of India is closer to Malaysia so there is definitely a close bond between the two countries. Now, with airlines flying to tertiary markets, we should be able to see a lot more tourists from India.

## Q What kind of challenges do you face?

We do not have enough rooms despite having seven hotels with over 10,000 rooms. Last year, we closed our room occupancy at 96 per cent. A majority of our arrivals are based on membership. Close to 80 per cent of our rooms are taken



by our members (we have over 4 million members) and 20 per cent by FITs, OTAs, MICE travellers and other tourists. Once our park opens doors, we hope some of the membership allocation will be open for our new client base. So, the experience is going to be unique to the world apart from being the world's first.

## Q How long will it take the Indian market to stabilise?

Once the park opens, the Indian market is set to stabilise. During my sales trips to India recently, tour operators were curious to know more about the 20th Century Fox World Malaysia. Also, people want something new to experi-

ence beyond the Petronas Twin Towers when they visit Malaysia. Hopefully, with the opening of our new theme park, Indians will get a new and adventurous reason to visit Resorts World Genting as we have everything under one roof. Even the tourism board of Malaysia is looking forward to this opening.

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# Ideal escape in the Maldives

A family-friendly hotel, Lily Beach Resort and Spa is changing the perception of Maldives while offering an all-inclusive holiday deal for the Indian market.



Nikhil Jeet from The Maldives

Unlike Maldives's general perception as a romantic beach destination with limited offerings for kids and families, Lily Beach Resort and Spa offers a complete family holiday. In a chat with TRAVTALK, Michael Wieser, CEO, Lily Hotels, talks extensively about this property, stating, "The most positive thing about our property is that we are extremely family-friendly."

Having reopened in 2009, Lily Beach Resort and Spa features 125 rooms with an easy, exclusive access to the pristine Maldivian waters. The resort was the first to introduce an all-inclusive platinum plan (for all guests) in the Maldives.

The property is surrounded by an exotic house coral reef teeming with over 10 million aquatic species. The resort offers guided snorkelling tours of the house reef for the novices and is in close proximity to amazing dive sites. Excursions like snorkelling with Manta's, turtles and whale sharks are not to be missed. The resort also offers sunset cruises, dolphin watching cruises and fishing expeditions.

## Tailored offerings

The hospitality brand is represented by Explora in India and has been working closely with trade partners. About 80-85 per cent of the Indian bookings are coming from travel agencies in India. Lily Maa, the resort's main restaurant offers a variety of Indian food options including dishes especially designed for the Indian traveller. Special anniversary and honeymoon benefits are also offered which can be tailored for Indian visitors.

## Working with trade

The resort is focused on increasing its presence in the Indian market and is working with travel agents from across the country. "We have been conducting Indian roadshows and participating in events such as the Global Panorama

Showcase and Luxury Travel Show. Indian agents often benefit from promotions like free accommodation for kids," adds Sunny Katara, Managing Partner, Explora.

The property sees most visitors from the South and West India due to its geographical proximity. An average stay for Indian travellers is four nights. The resort is now focusing on increasing its presence in North India.



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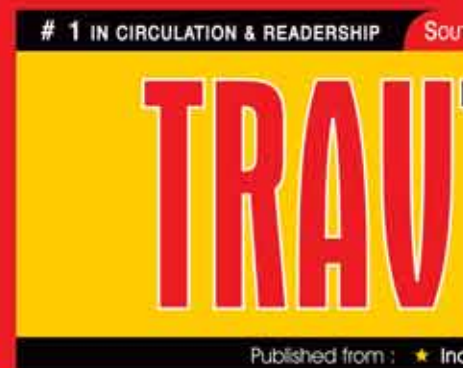
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# GST needs to be simplified: Trade

► Contd. from page 3



**Chander Mansharamani**  
Vice Chairman, India  
Convention Promotion  
Bureau (ICPB)

“GST has made a big impact on international conferences. This has affected the business where most of the foreign organisations don't want to pay the GST. Right now, they cannot take the input tax credit at the moment. However, good news is that Ministry of Tourism is working on that, because we at ICPB, have given them a background on how this business has affected us. I hope they come out with a solution for our woes with GST and work towards rationalising it.”



**Sameer Karnani**  
Travel Agents Association of  
India (Western Region)

“While there is still a lot of confusion in the minds of many, we who are part of the travel trade have definitely understood and adapted GST into our business. It was really a challenge with a lot of uncertainty about GST where apart from the trade even the consultants had different views on various things. It was a difficult process rife with confusion but some presentations by TAAI cleared some myths and doubts about GST.

Today, based on the knowledge that we have received in the last one year through various platforms, we feel we are ready for it.”



**Sampat Damani**  
Founding Partner  
Disha Travels

“GST has completed one year but regrettably there is still not much clarity for us in the travel and tourism industry. Our industry is quite complex; we provide multi-faceted services which are sourced for our clients and each service has its own uniqueness. Those complexities still exist which lead to double and treble taxation, thereby defeating the fundamental purpose of GST: One Nation One Tax. Honestly, each one of us is still groping in the dark. We still

believe that we have got it right. I sincerely wish that the department sits with us with the right approach and attitude.”

“GST still needs proper implementation and not everyone in the industry can claim that he understands how it can prove to be a major benefit for the tourism and hospitality industry. The process to claim and avail input tax credit is clear with some adjustments and government support. GST increases costs and compliances for the taxpayer, especially the business owners. Domestic air travel has clearly seen a boost post GST with air prices reducing. GST is a great reform but we need to work closely with the government and stakeholders to ensure we have the entire benefit to help the industry to leapfrog to higher growth.”



**Sanjay Narula**  
Vice President, Travel  
Agents Association of India

“GST is a good initiative. Since multi-level buying and selling is involved in travel trade, the process becomes slightly complicated for a stakeholder. GST has to be simplified for tourism as most stakeholders are small and medium operators. With a complex structure in terms of business transaction, customers shouldn't end up paying more taxes. However, the input tax credit allowed for tour operators is a welcome move. GST should be made user-friendly not only for the stakeholders but also for end users.”



**Debjit Dutta**  
Chairman, IATO West  
Bengal Chapter

“GST is a great step. For the hotel industry, there is now 18 per cent and 28 per cent slab. The 18 per cent slab is very fair. The issue is with the 28 per cent slab because some of our hotels come under it and that is extremely unfair. It suddenly pushed our whole product price, making it around 15 per cent more expensive of what it was pre-GST. I am also told there is a review committee sitting to discuss GST rates soon. I hope that the government will bring a flat 18 per cent GST for the hospitality industry instead of 28 per cent. It would give a huge boost to the sector.”



**Himmat Anand, Founder**  
Tree of Life Resorts &  
Hotels and Tree Leaf  
Hospitality



**Deepak Bhatnagar**  
Managing Director  
Aamantran Travel

“In terms of our business, GST has made a negative impact. The main issue is that a lot of things are still not clear. There is a lot of ambiguity on certain aspects of GST. Until that gets cleared, we cannot assess the impact of this regime entirely. It was said that GST is one tax but the same is not the case. In fact, it is not at all true for the tourism industry. We are paying tax on tax, and this is what the GST Council should look at and resolve the problem. I hope the industry gets its due soon.”



**Anjum Lokhandwala**  
Founder & Director,  
Outbound Konnections

“Before GST was rolled out, the tourism industry was liable to pay multiple taxes. With one nation, one tax—GST, the cost of the land packages in India have reduced to quite an extent. As we move forward, enough time has been provided by the government to understand and file the returns. Regular updates and many conferences in India were arranged to satiate the queries and problems. Moving forward, the systems are easy to follow now. With uniform rates and better use of input credit, the cost for the end users have reduced. India is taking baby steps in digital implementation of the taxes.”



**Nishith Saxena**  
Founder & Director  
Cruise Professionals

“One year of GST has surely been a rollercoaster ride for most people in the business. Since correct invoicing and application is the key in GST, it automatically disciplines all businesses up and down the line. For cruise business as well as other outbound businesses, the products being sold online and overseas are available to passengers at the same price, hence it is a bit difficult to remain competitive under GST regime. I guess, businesses would have to live with the complexity of such tax regimes as the tax base needs to increase dramatically for government to reconsider further rationalisation of GST rates. Till then we all need to control costs, be extra efficient and continue to grow.”

“At SOTC, we have observed that the GST tax structure has rationalised and simplified travel costs. Since we were prepared for the roll out of GST, we faced lesser concerns while implementing it. This tax structure has brought in simplicity from a customer perspective as there is a flat 5 per cent GST on all tour packages. Since travel packages qualify for this rate without input credit, hassles related to avail credit are minimal. There is also a flexibility of charging GST, based on commission or base fare model on air travel. The GST structure has given an impetus to the domestic travel sector, since it allows credit of GST paid on the purchase of domestic tour packages. However, the filing process is too cumbersome and should be simplified. The tech infrastructure administering the GST also needs improvement.”



**Vishal Suri**  
Managing Director, SOTC  
Travel

“While the road to 'One Nation One Tax' has been a challenging one, the significant achievement must be acknowledged in this year of GST implementation. The government has put in strong efforts to address various issues including frequent amendments, clarifications and IT related concerns. Considerable intervention is yet required to bring GST to its full efficiency as it continues to evolve. Despite the multiple continuing challenges of adapting to GST across the ecosystem and the cumbersome compliance process due system challenges from GSTN, our core travel businesses have delivered strong results, thanks to our focused initiatives of not just growing volumes and productivity but also enhancing margins.”



**Mahesh Iyer**  
CEO, Thomas Cook India

“Before GST, we were hopeful that all our worries would go and the multiple taxes would fade away. However, GST came with multiple slabs for the hospitality industry. We have been telling the ministry that all our source markets are at 8 per cent and we should be kept in that slab only. However, with the mechanism of reverse charges and input credit, we realised that 12 per cent may be a rational thing with 2-3 per cent input tax credit. Today, the 28 per cent GST on hotels is making Indian hotels expensive. We did get a few concessions in the restaurant industry but we hope that something is done for the hotels as well.”



**Garish Oberoi**  
President, FHRAI



## Skyscanner soars high

Over the last six months, Skyscanner recorded an increase in its unique monthly visitors. The company is investing on enhancing its direct bookings feature, currently operational with 20 partners globally.



TT Bureau

Airline meta-search engine Skyscanner is working at a global level with over 1100 flight partners comprising a mix of online travel agents and airlines. Started over 16 years ago with a primary focus on low cost carriers in Europe, Skyscanner over the years has gone global and now features all airlines across all sectors of aviation, informs **Hugh Aitken**, Senior Director—Strategic Partnerships, Skyscanner.

Aitken sees Skyscanner as the largest global search site with a clear philosophy where the traveller comes first, the partners second and Skyscanner third. "This means that we build every product keeping in mind the needs of the travellers, building their trust and engagement into our product. We also make sure that the traffic we generate for our partners is of good quality, converts well and thus helps them grow globally. Most importantly, our content powers many search sites for flights," says Aitken.

He explains that 30 per cent of the total traffic is generated from Asia with India included

not only the cheapest route but also speed and fastest route from point A to point B. We have seen an increase in high frequency travellers with a solid base of leisure tourists growing day by day," adds Aitken.

Skyscanner is working towards scaling its direct bookings feature which allows



**Hugh Aitken**  
Senior Director—Strategic Partnerships,  
Skyscanner

users to not only search with Skyscanner but also complete the booking within the platform. This feature has already been introduced with 20 partners globally like British Airways, Scoot, Singapore Airlines, Finnair, etc and recently announced newer additions like Cathay Pacific. "We are not trying to become

about 40 markets, we localise our products for the markets with language, currency, partners, etc. Travellers like to book with identifiable brands which have to be localised.

### Diversification

Though we started as a flight comparison site, we also offer hotels and car rentals. We have recently launched an App only rail search function in the UK and we will test this in the market to see how the users respond to it and then take it forward. Though flights remain the largest business for us, we have seen steady growth in the hotels segment too and plan on introducing the direct booking capability for this segment as well.

### Growth plans

The company uses a mix of unpaid and paid channels to market itself and is also very local in terms of marketing the products. Aitken explains, "We hope to grow not only directly but also through our partners on the B2B side. We are trying to work towards making Skyscanner not only a price-comparison platform but a product-comparison site. We introduced data into the site to allow users to see the various amenities onboard an aircraft like Wi-fi, etc so that they can compare the products well. We also introduced the Partner Quality Score into the platform to allow users to rate the experience with any of the partners. Also, since India is moving so rapidly towards the mobile devices, we are also making all services mobile-capable for the market."

**"In India, Skyscanner recorded 100 per cent growth in searches for domestic routes and close to 80 per cent growth in international searches. The trunk routes like Delhi-Mumbai remain the most frequent while London gains international popularity."**

in it, 20 per cent is from the Americas and the rest is from EMEA. In India, Skyscanner recorded 100 per cent growth in searches for domestic routes and close to 80 per cent growth in international searches. The trunk routes like Delhi-Mumbai remain the most frequent while on international routes, London is most popular. Germany and Australia have also seen steady growth. The company identifies its users based on high frequency travellers and is largely leisure centric. "We develop products based on

an OTA and thus, the airline remains the merchant on record while the travel agent issues the ticket to the traveller."

### Tech Talk

With the rise of different channels of search and distribution, Skyscanner has identified some technologies to focus on. Aitken says, "Search by voice is certainly growing as our conversational technology is improving rapidly. We are investing in voice and bot technology, and learning how users are using them. Although we operate globally in

### New Features

Skyscanner is working towards scaling its direct bookings feature which allows users to not only search with Skyscanner but also complete the booking within the platform

This feature has already been introduced with 20 partners globally like British Airways, Scoot, Singapore Airlines, Finnair, etc

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# Taking big strides

Halfway through 2018, Visa Lounge has grown by leaps and bounds in the last six months. **Clevio Monteiro**, CEO, Visa Lounge discusses his plans for 2019.



TT Bureau

Offering e-visas to over 19 countries all over the world, Visa Lounge is not leaving any stone unturned to expand its presence across the globe. **Clevio Monteiro**, Chief Executive Officer, Visa Lounge talks about his plans to enhance the company's presence in at least six more countries by financial year 2019. He says, "We have sent API agreements and white label solution to most of the large and mid-sized B2B agents in the country, and we hope to go 'live' with a few of them during the third quarter of this year and rest by mid-2019. We have appointed two international partners as well."

Eyeing pan India presence to cater to every city of the country, Visa Lounge has appointed new Regional Managers in the metro cities across South, East and North regions. Adding manager-level



**Clevio Monteiro**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Visa Lounge

staff in the non-metro cities, the company has expanded its western market to Punjab and Gujarat as well. Monteiro says, "We have added a pan India team and we are also doing aggressive promotion on social media platforms. Our numbers are improving month-on-month and we are on track for reaching our targets."

Strengthening its stronghold, Visa Lounge has also started processing visas to

offline countries. "We have started forms for Thailand and Singapore on the website so that our passengers can just download the form, fill it and send it to us with their signatures. The response has been very encouraging and we will soon start full-fledged services for other offline countries. We now cover e-visas, offline visas and everything in between as well making us a one-stop solution for any and every kind of visa needs," tells Monteiro.

Apart from visa services, Visa Lounge offers OTB, insurance and Meet & Greet services at 18 international airports worldwide.

## What's New?

Strengthening its stronghold, Visa Lounge has started processing visas to offline countries like Thailand and Singapore

# Spreading wings wide

**Jaal Shah**, Founder, RezLive.com revives the importance of travel agents in his company's growth and helps them expand their business with TMA.



TT Bureau

**Q**As a global B2B platform, how have travel agents and operators helped RezLive.com grow?

When we started RezLive.com in 2007, we had dreamt of making it a global brand. Today, we have clients in more than 30 countries and are growing at a rapid pace. This could not have happened without the support of our loyal clients. We have built a strong product that is backed by 24x7 back-end support. Recently, we were awarded 'Superbrand' status for the UAE market.

**Q**Tell us about the base and network of RezLive.com.

Our 20 years of legacy in India have helped us understand the market very well and spread our business in not only Tier-I cities but also in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Our sales team,



**Jaal Shah**  
Founder  
RezLive.com

located across India are reaching out to travel agents in every nook and corner and providing them opportunities to diversify their travel business and make it sustainable.

**Q**Tell us something about the Tourism Marketing Alliance.

RezLive.com along with four other partners recently formed the Tourism Marketing Alliance (TMA) to help travel agents in Tier-II and Tier-III cities to expand their business and

make it sustainable. We have already done four roadshows in Amaravati, Ankola, Raipur and Mumbai and have planned another series in Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Punjab in the coming months.

**Q**How has been the last six months fared in terms of growth?

We had a fantastic Indian season and are in the middle of a very strong Middle East season. Apart from these two markets, we have also seen a strong growth in the Southeast Asian markets. Our growth lies in the strength of our product, user-friendly interface and proprietary technology.

## Expansion Plans

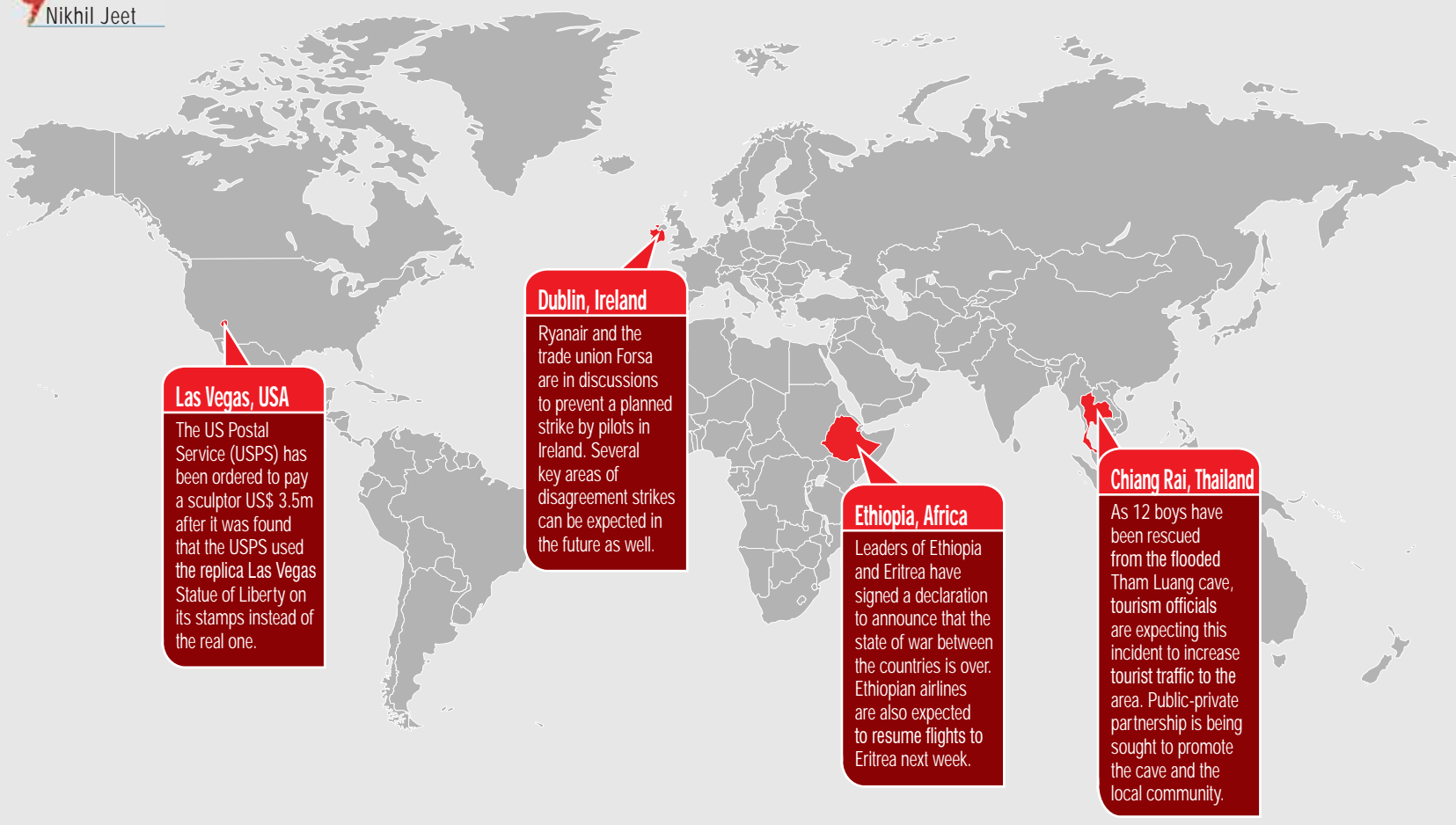
RezLive aims to continue consolidating its expansion in global markets like Asia Pacific, Africa and Europe as a region

# World Talk

The following regular column provides you a brief update on world events and how they impact the tourism sector.



Nikhil Jeet



### Las Vegas, USA

The US Postal Service (USPS) has been ordered to pay a sculptor US\$ 3.5m after it was found that the USPS used the replica Las Vegas Statue of Liberty on its stamps instead of the real one.

### Dublin, Ireland

Ryanair and the trade union Foras are in discussions to prevent a planned strike by pilots in Ireland. Several key areas of disagreement strikes can be expected in the future as well.

### Ethiopia, Africa

Leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea have signed a declaration to announce that the state of war between the countries is over. Ethiopian airlines are also expected to resume flights to Eritrea next week.

### Chiang Rai, Thailand

As 12 boys have been rescued from the flooded Tham Luang cave, tourism officials are expecting this incident to increase tourist traffic to the area. Public-private partnership is being sought to promote the cave and the local community.



# Swiss e-learning in India now

The tourism board has done away with its India-specific e-learning programme and introduced its international one here as well to keep it more relevant to a market that has been steadily maturing.



Hazel Jain

Switzerland Tourism has introduced its global e-learning programme for the travel agents to sell the destination in the India market as well. This was launched in January this year and its India-specific programme that was created especially for this market was discontinued. Speaking about the decision behind this development, **Claudio Zemp**, Director—India, Switzerland Tourism, says, "We are very proud to



Claudio Zemp  
Director—India  
Switzerland Tourism

introduce our new e-learning programme – the Switzerland Travel Academy – in India. This is a global programme for travel agents all over the world and is now also available for the Indian agents. Observing the fast-evolving nature of the demand and requirements from the India market as well as the knowledge about the destination, we have now started using the same e-learning programme for India."

The NTO recently conducted a series of four webinars this year that received an overwhelming response with about 600 people joining each webinar. The numbers are also good, as Zemp reveals. "We had an increase of 23.4 per cent in terms of tourists generated out of India in 2017 over the previous year. It was a hugely successful year for us and we are grateful to the travel trade for that. This year, we are already seeing increased numbers. The first three months of 2018 saw an increase of 16.4 per cent over the previous year during the same period, which is traditionally not a busy season for us," he says.

**India spends more now**  
Zemp claims that India is one of the strategic growth markets for Switzerland Tourism. "This means that we are expecting the highest growth from these markets. We also invest the most money per traveller in these markets.

India currently ranks eighth and second in Asia after China. In terms of spends, our annual review showed that while in the past Indians spent an average of Swiss Francs 240 per person per day in Switzerland, this has increased to about Swiss

Francs 310, making India the third-highest spender in Switzerland after the GCC and China!" he adds.

The NTO will conduct its 'India Workshop' where it takes 40 key buyers from India to Switzerland in Zurich

this year in September. This will be followed by its annual 'Switzerland Travel Experience' roadshow in October 2018 where it will bring 25 key Swiss partners and visit Mumbai and Delhi as always but also Kolkata and Cochin.

## Bollywood Link

Switzerland Tourism's campaigns with Ranveer Singh aimed at showcasing the destination from a different angle than what most people already know

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### International Speakers



**Mario Hardy - CEO, PATA**

Chief Executive Officer, PATA since Nov. 2014, Mario has 30 years' experience in specialized aviation businesses focusing on data analytics and technology. He is also founder of venture capital firm, MAP2 I Ventures, an investor fund with a wide portfolio of technology-centric businesses.



**John Koldowski - Professor, School of Tourism, Leshan Normal University, Sichuan Province, China**

John past Deputy CEO of PATA is an accomplished travel and tourism analyst. He specialises in analysis and interpretation of information concerning shifts, movements and trends in the travel & tourism industry, particularly those affecting Asia Pacific region.



**Massimo Tochhetti - President AIGO, Italy**

AIGO is a marketing and communication agency that has specialised in tourism, travel and hospitality since its inception in 1990. Its key focus is strategic consulting, representation, public relations, digital PR, consumer engagement, social media monitoring and management.



**Oliver Martin - Partner, Twenty31 Consulting**

Oliver directs various brand and tourism development consulting engagements including Dubai Tourism, Tourism Nova Scotia, South West Ontario Tourism amongst others. He is a member of the PATA Sustainability and Social Responsibility Committee.



**Sriram Vaidhya - Head Airbnb Trips, South East Asia & India**

Sriram based in Singapore is tasked with building thriving communities of Experience hosts and entrepreneurs, and growing Airbnb's presence as a hospitality leader across the region.

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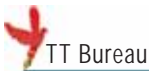
**TRAVEL**

**destination  
reporter**



# Skål's strong growth in Asia

The recently-held 47th Skål Asia Area Congress in Macau witnessed a considerable representation from India. Skål International Delhi took over the mantle of the largest Skål Club in the world.



The Indian delegation was the largest at this year's Skål Asia Area Congress with participation of more than 40 delegates, despite the Macau congress recording the highest number of international

delegates in recent years. Skål Hyderabad 606 was declared the 'Club of the Year for Skål Asia region'. **Ganesh Rao**, President, Skål Hyderabad, received the prestigious award. Sohn, in his address, stated, "Among the regional areas of Skål

International, the Skål Asian Area commands the largest area, stretching for more than 10,000 km from Guam in the Pacific region to Mauritius in the Indian Ocean." On expansion and growth of the association in Asia,

Sohn mentioned, "Asia is the only area in the world where Skål International is experiencing strong growth. In the Asian region, we achieved an increase of 14.7 per cent in the number of members compared to a year ago and

currently, there are about 2,400 members in 41 clubs in Asia. The newest Club No 726 is Trivandrum." "We are also proud to mention that Skål International Delhi took over the mantle of the largest Skål Club in the world," he added.



Ganesh Rao  
President  
Skål Hyderabad

The delegates had the chance to explore and experience the diversity of Macau's culture and heritage, experience the hospitality and indulge in its cuisine with the '2018 Macao Year of Gastronomy' theme. Skål Bangalore will host the 48<sup>th</sup> Skål Asia Congress in 2019.

The event saw the august presence of Congress Skål Asia President **Robert Sohn**, who graced the occasion with dignitaries **Alexis Tam**, Secretary of Tourism, SASC; **Dr Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes**, Director, MGTO and **Perry Yuen**, President, Macau Culinary Association. Skål International (SI) World President **Susanna Saari** and CEO Daniela Otero; two SI past Presidents, **Uzi Yalon** and **Richard Hawkins**, SI Director Peter Morrison; two SI past Directors **Jason Samuel & Andrew Wood** and SI past Asia President **Gerry Perez** also marked their presence.

## Skål Numbers

The number of countries in the world that have a Skål Club decreased by one, from 84 to 83 while there was no change to the 19 countries in Asia that has Skål clubs

Club wise Skål International lost four clubs going down from 359 to 355 clubs while Skål Asia increased its number of clubs from 40 to 41 and in terms of membership Skål Asia increased its numbers by 311 going up from 2,114 to 2,425

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# Trade voices GST preparedness

India Travel Award winners from across regions share their opinions on the implementation of GST on its first anniversary, while highlighting the importance of security for women travellers.



Manas Dwivedi

## ★ Best Tour Operator — 68M Holidays (South 2018)



“GST has been a good move. The tax structure will make our industry more organised and transparent. I feel the tax filling structure needs to be simple and easier for agents located in small towns and villages,” feels **Syed Mur-taja Ali**, Managing Director, 68M Holidays. For making travel safe for women, he says, “We need to take more preventive action to ensure security for women travellers through imparting knowledge to taxi drivers, tour guides and the hotel staff. We need to develop a holistic infrastructure to elevate a pleasant experience.”

## ★ Best Tour Operator - Inbound — Cholan Tours (South 2018)



“GST has abolished tax on tax structure and reduced the complexity of taxation procedures. For customers, GST is now more comprehensible. Moreover, the process to claim and avail ITC (input tax credit) is also clear,” says **Pandian**, Director, Cholan Tours. On safety measures, he added, “Unfortunately violence against women does exist everywhere, but this alone cannot be considered to brand India unsafe for women. We ourselves need to find solutions to prevent violence on women and the Indian media too should act a responsible role in showcasing positive news about India.”

## ★ Best Sales & Marketing Professional— Sachin K S (South 2018)



“GST is a good initiative, but the tax rates could have been better. Few of our neighbouring countries or tourist destinations charge fewer taxes. Putting less burden of tax on the guests will enable more inflow of travel. The GST should be guest-friendly and economical to hotels as well,” feels **Sachin KS**, Director— Sales & Head South Travel Trade, Hotel Royal Orchid Bangalore. On women safety, KS advocates instituting a committee in hotels where issues related to women security can be monitored and appropriate action is undertaken.”

## ★ Best Corporate Travel Agency— Archana Travels (South 2018)



“Baddam Bhoja Reddy, Managing Director, Archana Travels, says that GST has severely affected his business. He says, “Our regular bookings have gone down by 25 per cent, which has hit us really hard.” “For the safety and security of women passengers, the company should take care of each and every booking from the beginning to end. To ensure a healthy development of our business, we need to be on our toes,” Reddy further added.”

## ★ Best 5-star Business Hotel— Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield (South 2018)



“The idea of GST was a masterstroke but its execution has taken a huge toll on the hospitality industry. Whilst the GST structure of mid/upper segment hotel has helped, the payment issues from corporate companies are still cumbersome,” explains **Vinod M**, General Manager, Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield. On women safety at his hotel, he says, “Efficient monitoring by CCTV cameras at the hotel is crucial. We have single lady guest floors at the hotel, which is guarded by trained female guards. Female housekeeping attendants ensure the female guests feel at ease.”

## ★ Excellence in Customer Service— The Fog Munnar Resorts and Spa (South 2018)



“Analysing GST’s effect, **Vimalroy V**, General Manager, The Fog Munnar Resorts and Spa, says, “Hotels had published tariffs and special tariffs for contracted agents, but GST questioned the existence of this system. Same is the case with the season /off season tariff systems. The issue remains unresolved.” On safe travel environment, he adds, “India is still one of the safest places to travel even for solo women travellers. I think one or two isolated incidents, though very unfortunate, should not be the yardstick of safety of travellers in the country.”

## ★ Best B2B Travel Event— Global Panorama Showcase (South 2018)



“GST is a welcome change. There are a lot of benefits on following the correct procedures in the GST ambit. It has long-term benefits for the future. The biggest challenge with GST is getting ITC. There is a need to spread more awareness about it,” believes **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, Managing Director, Global Panorama Showcase. He further addresses the security issue, “With such a huge population, I think ‘tourist police’ is something that should come into play. The industry as a whole should be aware. We should whole-heartedly welcome our guests.”

## ★ Best Boutique Tour Operator— Nexus Travels (West 2017)



“Talking about GST’s implementation, **Vicky Ray**, Director, Nexus Travels, says, “GST is a mixed bag of improved, easier rules and regulations and increased costs and compliances. The initial hiccups after GST implementation are highly unlikely to slow down the growth of the tourism and hospitality industry. However, it remains to be seen whether the cons outweigh the pros for this sector.” Speaking on enhancing safety and security of tourists, Ray says that they should remain cautious about the existing codes and laws and not fall in any trap.”





EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



JULY 2018

Singapore Tourism Roadshow	Trichy	16
Singapore Tourism Roadshow	Ludhiana	16
ACTE Global Summit	Singapore	17-18
Singapore Tourism Roadshow	Lucknow	18
Singapore Tourism Roadshow	Coimbatore	18
Israel Tourism Roadshow	Nashik	19
Switzerland Tourism B2B Training	Mumbai	19
GPS	Lucknow	19-21
Singapore Tourism Roadshow	Kochi	20
Singapore Tourism Roadshow	Kolkata	20
Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart	Jaipur	20-22
Singapore Tourism Roadshow	Surat	24
Focus Philippines	Goa	25-29
Singapore Tourism Roadshow	Visakhapatnam	26
IITM	Bengaluru	27-29
Dubai Tourism Leisure B2B Roadshow	Kolkata	30
Dubai Tourism Lesiure B2B Roadshow	Pune	31

AUGUST 2018

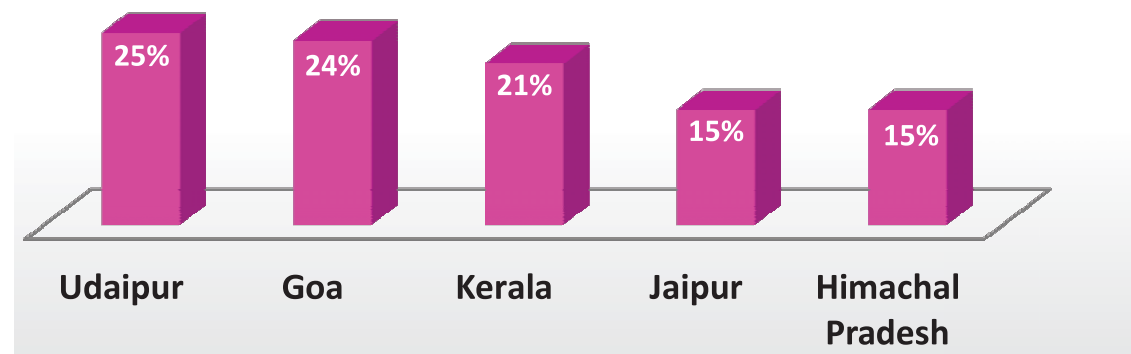
Philippines Tourism & Singapore Airlines Roadshow	Kolkata	1
Sri Lanka Tourism Roadshow	Visakhapatnam	1
Dubai Tourism Leisure Roadshow	Ahmedabad	2
GPS	Kolkata	2-4
Sri Lanka Tourism Roadshow	Coimbatore	3
Dubai Tourism Leisure Roadshow	Mumbai	3
IITM	Chennai	3-5
Tourism Powerhouse by PATA India	Delhi	5-6
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Mumbai	6-7
Chic Retail, Bicester Village Sales Mission, B2B	Delhi-NCR	6-7
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Delhi	8
Chic Retail, Bicester Village Sales Mission, B2B	Ahmedabad	8
India International Hospitality Expo	Noida	8-11
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Kolkata	9
Isreal Tourism Roadshow	Pune	9
Chic Retail, Bicester Village Sales Mission, B2B	Mumbai	9-10
GPS	Kochi	9-11
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Bengaluru	10
OTOAI Convention	Cape Town	11-14
Tourism Fiji Half Day Roadshow	Hyderabad	13
Tourism Fiji Half Day Roadshow	Pune	14
Tourism Australia ITM 2018	Kochi	16

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

Tie the knot amidst royalty

Udaipur has been ranked as the most preferred wedding destination in India, according to a recent survey conducted ahead of Travel Wedding Show.

Top 5 preferred wedding destinations in India



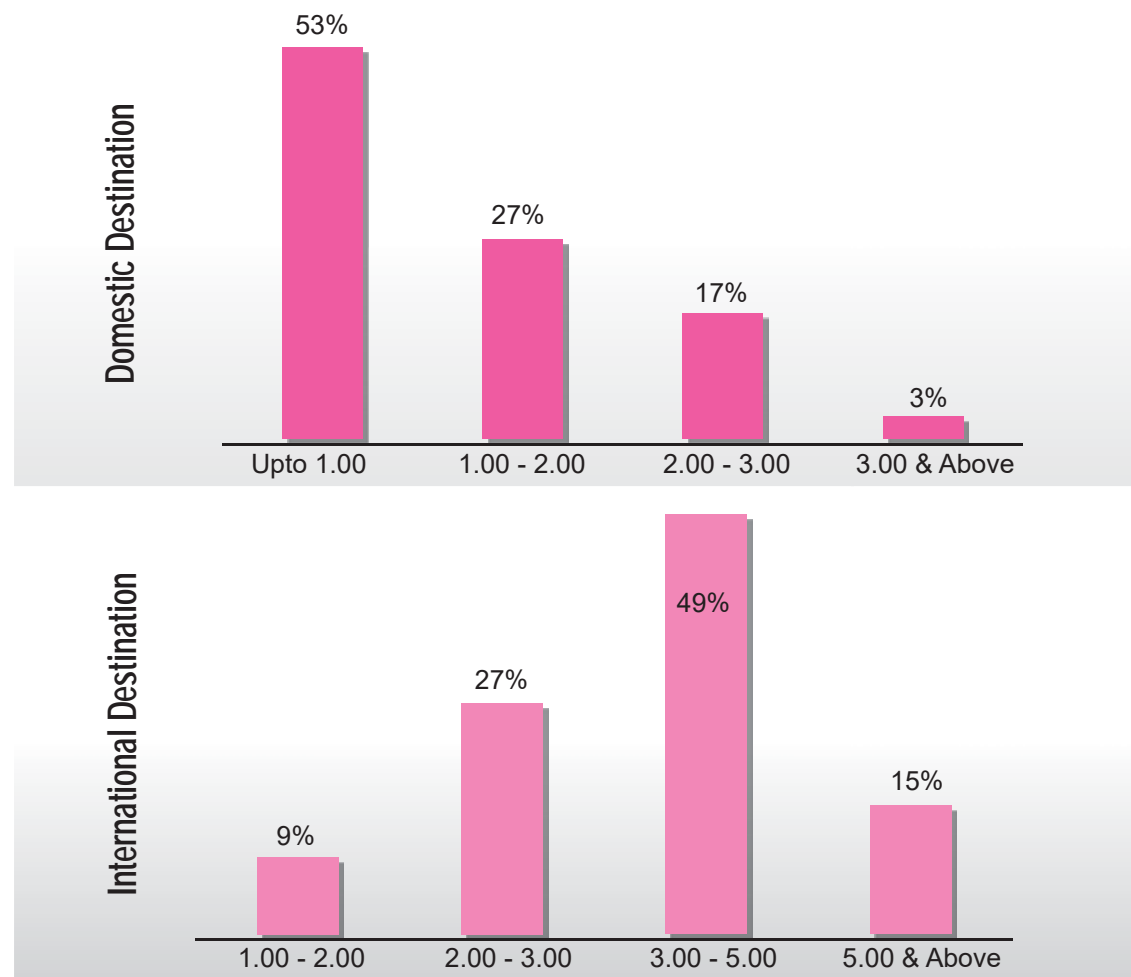
■ What better than getting married in the most romantic city with a passionate flavour floating in the air. Besides, one can have a mini honeymoon in Udaipur as well right after the wedding day.

■ Several celebrities like Neil Nitin Mukesh and Raveena Tandon chose Udaipur for their royal wedding. As Udaipur is counted amongst the most appropriate destinations for having a lavish destination wedding, people from all around the world choose it for their special day.

Lavish spends on weddings

For domestic destination weddings, 53 per cent of Indians spend upwards to one crore on weddings; one to two crore is spent by 27 per cent; two to three crore is spent by 17 per cent and above 3 crore is spent by 3 per cent, according to a recent survey by Travel Wedding Show.

Expenditure Report – Expenditure Value (in crore)



\*\* The above survey is for 200-300 guests

■ This calculation is based on an all-India survey and not just metro cities. For international destinations, one-two crore is spent by nine per cent people; two to three crore by 27 per cent; the major chunk is between three to five crore, which is 49 per cent and the classiest weddings happen above 5 crore which remains at 15 per cent.



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## Raviz Hotels & Resorts

### Kovalam

Raviz Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Sanjay Kaushik** as its Chief Operating Officer. Kaushik moved to Raviz from IHG where he was the Area General Manager for West India. With 22 years of experience in hotel industry, he holds proven track record in business turnarounds. Kaushik started his hotel career with the ITC Maurya Sheraton, Carlson and IHG. He won many accolades in the industry including Kerala State Tourism Award for the Best Hotel General Manager.



## The Westin Mumbai Garden City

### Mumbai

The Westin Mumbai Garden City announced the appointment of **Hema Hariramani** as the new Hotel Manager. Hariramani has had a long-standing career in hospitality of over 18 years. In her new role, she is responsible for the seamless operational management of the hotel. Her expertise helps support the Heads of Departments, achieve and exceed their revenue and guest satisfaction targets. She began her career with Marriott in 2000 as a Sales Manager at the Marriott Executive Apartments. She was part of the pre-opening team and then moved on to being a pre-opening member of the Renaissance Mumbai Hotel and Convention Centre.



## The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat

### Kolkata

**Rahul Maini** has been appointed as the new General Manager of The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat. With an experience of over 20 years, Maini started his career with The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai. In his current role, he is all set to focus on improving personalisation and guest recognition, besides improving the competitive edge and re-strengthening the brand presence. Additionally, Maini will be seen formulating, administering, directing and coordinating all department activities to develop and implement long-range goals to meet business and profitability growth objectives.



## The Fern Hotels & Resorts

### Delhi

**Devraj Halder** has joined The Fern Hotels & Resorts as General Manager—Operations (North). Prior to this, he was associated with Royal Orchid, Jaipur. Armed with an MBA, Halder carries with him more than two decades of work experience, having worked with some of the best national and international brands including Renaissance Goa Resort, Crown Plaza New Delhi, The Suryaa New Delhi, to name a few. In his new role, he will be responsible to consolidate the brand in the northern territory.



## Clarks Resort, Bhopal

### Bhopal

**Sunil Singh Parihar** has been appointed as General Manager of Clarks Resort, Bhopal. He has over 17 years of experience in hotel operations, specialising in F&B and good understanding of MiCE. In his new role, Parihar will be responsible for executing the overall operational standards for Clarks Resort and positioning the resort as the most preferred MiCE and wedding destination of central India. Prior to joining Clarks Resort, he was the Unit GM with Best Western Hotels & Resorts. Parihar is an alumnus of SOHM-IPS Academy Indore.



## Chalet Hotels

### Mumbai

**Premal Zaveri** joins Chalet Hotels as General Manager with prime responsibilities of analysing and evaluating all growth opportunities for the company as well as advising the senior management team for potential acquisitions and expansions in key markets of India. He is also responsible for aiding in development of business forecasts and liaising with business partners and consultants for various projects. His core competencies lie in real estate financial evaluation of hospitality and leisure asset classes, investment advisory, growth and development strategy and markets evaluation in India, Sri Lanka, and Maldives, amongst others.



## Hyatt Regency Pune

### Pune

Hyatt Regency Pune announces the appointment of **V Prakash** as Director of Sales & Marketing. With a career spanning over 18 years in the hospitality industry, Prakash brings in a wealth of knowledge and experience. A post graduate in Marketing, he began his career with Taj Mahal Palace and Towers Mumbai in 1995 and has spent maximum time with ITC Hotels in Sales. In his current role, Prakash will be responsible for improving the sales and providing the best of Hyatt Regency Pune experience to guests along with leading a young team. Prior to joining Hyatt Regency Pune, Prakash was Country Director—India and Sri Lanka for Soneva.



## Freedom Travel Limited

### Mumbai

**Aseem Arun Hattangadi** has been appointed as the Director of Sales, India for Freedom Travel Limited, a destination management company (DMC) that specialises in ground handling Hong Kong, Macau, Shenzhen and China. With over 15 years of experience in the travel trade, Hattangadi will be responsible for driving and boosting sales for the company, as well as managing its marketing activities on a pan-India level. He has previously worked with Tourism Australia, the erstwhile Shree Raj Travels, Kuoni Holidays and Panoramic Tours and Travels.



## Hyatt Regency Chandigarh

### Chandigarh

**Shul Ambwani** has been designated as Director of Operations for Hyatt Regency Chandigarh. In his new role, Ambwani will be responsible for the Rooms Division including front office, housekeeping, laundry, spa and Food & Beverage operations. He has previously worked with Park Hyatt Goa and Hyatt Pune. He brings over a decade of expertise and has worked with brands like Taj Hotels and AccorHotels. He is excited to work together with the team, support his colleagues in their respective areas and enhance the guest experience at Hyatt Regency Chandigarh.

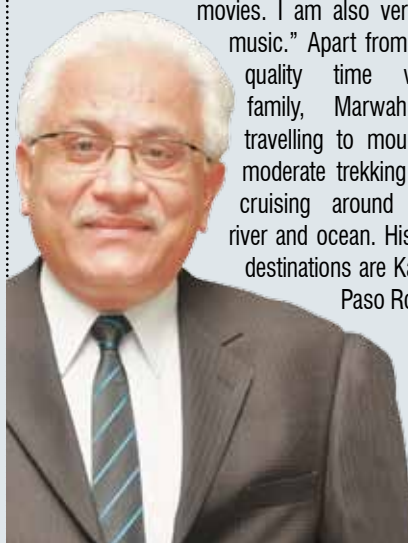


## TALKing People

For **Ranju Alex**, Multi-Property Vice President—Bengaluru & Kochi and General Manager, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield, travelling is one of her key passions. “My favourite part of the world is Europe; I make it a point to go there primarily between February and September. In India, I loved a recent trip to Sikkim as it made me realise that India has so much to offer in terms of its beauty, culture and food,” Alex said. She loves to read and cook, and even has a home library of more than 6000 books.



**Tony Marwah**, CEO, Indian Travel Promotion Company is a classic movie buff and loves reading and travelling. He says, “I love watching old classic movies. I am also very fond of music.” Apart from spending quality time with his family, Marwah prefers travelling to mountains for moderate trekking and also cruising around on both river and ocean. His favourite destinations are Kasauli and Paso Robles.



Expressing his profound love for his pet, **Himmat Anand**, Founder, Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels and Tree Leaf Hospitality says that his seven-year-old Labrador, Jugnoo is like a stressbuster for him. “Jugnoo and I both speak different languages but we understand each other a lot. We talk to each other the whole day,” he added. For Anand, India is a beautiful place to explore, especially Kerala. His mantra for success is self-belief.





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# MOT upbeat on India Tourism Mart

Ministry of Tourism (MOT) is set to organise its flagship travel exhibition—India Tourism Mart (ITM) from September 16-18, 2018 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. **KJ Alphons**, Union Minister of Tourism, shares insights into the preparation going behind the big show.



Nisha Verma

MOT is organising the India Tourism Mart (ITM) in association with Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) along with assistance from various states and Union Territories. KJ Alphons revealed, "For the first time in the history of India, ITM is going to bring the together global tour operators, travel agents and bloggers to the country. The aim is to double the number of foreign tourist arrivals in the next three years. Last year was extremely good for Indian tourism as the FTAs shot up by 15.6 per cent and receipts went up by 20.8 per cent. ITM is set to give a boost to tourism in the country as we are going to have the best marketing people from around the world to see, experience and promote India. We expect the PM to inaugurate the event and hoping for a huge gathering."

## Buyers and sellers

Alphons said that all the states and members from the tourism and hospitality industry will be the sellers at ITM. "Through this event, we are going to get the best buyers from around the world to meet our sellers here, which would include

state governments, tour operators, travel agents, hospitals for medical tourism, hotel associations and adventure tour operators. This event will dramatically increase India's profitability and the number of foreign arrivals. We are expecting around 300 buyers and 250 stalls at the event. The three-day event will have pre

India and showcase its tourism products, MOT has been conducting roadshows aggressively. After South-east Asia, MOT recently concluded its roadshow in the USA. "We just finished our roadshow in New York, Chicago, Houston and St Louis. With exposure to the visual and social media,

be focusing on these popular products at ITM.

## Domestic tourism

Alphons said, "Domestic tourism generates many more jobs than those created for foreign tourists. Last year, we had 1.8 billion domestic trips, which resulted in an increase in room occupancy and other infrastructure. In 2017, we contributed 7 per cent to the GDP of the country and created 14.62 million jobs in the tourism industry."

**"We are expecting around 300 buyers and 250 stalls at the event. The three-day event will have pre and post tours. We will also announce the dates of ITM for the next five years."**

and post tours. We will also announce the dates of ITM for the next five years," he revealed.

Alphons further added that the selection of buyers will be a priority for the ministry. "We will be getting buyers from all over the world, especially from key markets like the USA, Europe, as well as emerging markets like China, Russia, Japan and Latin America. Our overseas offices are helping us draw a list of prospective buyers who have already been marketing India. We are also putting together a list by a selection committee which would select buyers from associations, states as well as from Air India. This would ensure that we get only genuine buyers," he insisted.

**International roadshows**  
In an aim to attract people from around the world to

we met representatives of Indian communities in all these places and requested them to come back to their roots. Rashmi Verma, Secretary—Tourism, is also leading another roadshow to Russia and the Nordic countries. A roadshow in China is also in the offing because the outbound numbers from China is increasingly growing," said Alphons.

## Focus on inbound

Alphons also said that the number of unique visitors on the new Incredible India website is 6.5 million. He claimed that after the success of the Ayurveda and Yoga campaign in many countries, they will also



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**Buyers and sellers**  
Alphons said that all the states and members from the tourism and hospitality industry will be the sellers at ITM.

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## MOT Initiatives

MOT is undertaking initiatives like Incredible India 2.0 campaign and the introduction of Incredible India website

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# Evolving guest needs

**Gaurav Shiva**, General Manager, Novotel Chennai Chamiers Road, talks extensively about the new property and factors that has led to the growth of South India as a hotspot for hospitality projects.



Anupriya Bishnoi

**Q**What is the USP of your property?

Novotel Chennai Chamiers Road is the first Novotel with contemporary design and interiors. The hotel has been conceptualised by SODA, an international design firm known for creating fresh, innovative yet sustainable spaces. The contemporary feel starts at the entrance of Novotel Chennai Chamiers road, which has been inspired by various 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings of the city.

**Q**How has the hospitality industry in South India evolved over the years?

Blessed with plenty of natural beauty, South India has everything that a leisure traveller looks for, from scenic hill stations to tranquil beaches.

In recent years, the region has experienced stunning business growth, especially in the IT and manufacturing space. Cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai have now been dubbed as the epicentres of IT growth of the country. Owing to this, as hoteliers, we have seen a very large increase in corporate travel over the last few years. Over time, we have seen our guest mix evolve from a relatively homogenous reliance on a single segment to a much more diversified combination of travellers with varied expectations and priorities. It is a welcome change that has shaped our strategy and helped us cater to the evolving guest needs. On the business front, this evolution in the guest mix has been of great benefit as unlike leisure travel, business travel has no season and hence, occupancy rates remain

healthy year-round. The spurt in corporate travellers has also given a boost to MICE.

**Q**How and why has the presence of AccorHotels in South India evolved?

With the launch of Novotel Chennai Chamiers Road, AccorHotels has achieved a milestone of becoming the largest international hospitality

player in Chennai with a total inventory of more than 1000 rooms. Their other hotels in the state are Novotel Chennai SIPCOT, Novotel Chennai OMR, Mercure Chennai Sriperumbudur, ibis Chennai SIPCOT, ibis Chennai OMR, ibis Chennai City Centre and ibis Coimbatore City Centre. In Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, we have a combined inventory of over 2500 rooms in 16 hotels across brands.

South India has emerged as a hotspot for hospitality projects as leading brands have established a presence

“With commercial activity gaining momentum and subsequent influx of foreign nationals, hospitality players find South India a potential market for expansion”

in the market here over the last three years. With commercial activity gaining momentum and subsequent influx of foreign nationals, hospitality players find this

region a potential market for their expansion plans.

**Q**Do you foresee any challenges? How are you planning to tackle them?

The core challenge for the hospitality industry at large is the ability to attract and retain the right talent which is intrinsic to driving great guest experience and ensuring all our guests 'Feel Welcome'. With attrition at around 25-30 per cent across different levels, a metric often considered amongst the highest across all

service industries, talent and culture are areas we focus on strongly as a group. 📌



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# AdventureNEXT: Dec 3-5

A curtain raiser event was held in Delhi recently in which Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board (MPTB) announced that it will host ‘AdventureNEXT’ in Bhopal from December 3-5, 2018, organised by Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA). The event saw in presence **Hari Ranjan Rao**, MD, MPTB; **Gergana Nikolova**, Regional Manager—Europe, ATTA; **Jake Finifrock**, Regional Director—Asia, ATTA and **Swadesh Kumar**, President, ATOAI.



## Celebrating women in the workforce



Travel Spirit International

In an effort to celebrate womanhood and appreciate the efforts of women employees, TRAVTALK has started the PINK Friday initiative. We encourage people to wear something pink to work every Friday. Kudos to the teams from Travel Spirit International and Indian Legends Holidays for turning up in pink on a Friday. We encourage more people from the industry to take this up and celebrate the efforts, dedication and unparalleled commitment of the women in the workforce.



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## One-stop solution for agents

With an aim to move its business online, Travstarz Global Group is planning to launch a new reservation system globally by the end of July 2018.



TT Bureau

Experiencing robust growth with its two different verticals - Travstarz DMC and Rez2b.com, Travstarz Global Group is looking to enhance its online presence with a new reservation system. Pankaj Nagpal, Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group believes that the new system will offer innovative tools to help agents in running their businesses more efficiently and economically.

"The reservation system will offer worldwide inventory of flights,

hotels, tours, transfers, visa services, insurance and forex on a single platform. We are expecting to launch it by the end of July 2018 and our ultimate focus is to move most of our business online, including our DMC services," says Nagpal.

Riding on a phenomenal run of success in the last two years, Nagpal says that Travstarz is growing at a rapid pace. "We have 100 per cent year-on-year growth over the last two years. We now have our DMC operations in Mauritius, the Maldives, Seychelles, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Dubai, Ras-Al-Khaimah, Bahrain, Sharjah, USA and Canada," he adds.

Expressing joy over the company's expansion in Mumbai, Nagpal says, "We already had our sales team in

Hema Man-ghnani, Executive Director of the company who is based in Mumbai."

Nagpal also briefs about Travstarz's operations in Egypt, saying, "We have been making strategic investments in existing DMCs overseas and Egypt is the latest addition in our DMC operations. With tie-ups with major hotels in Egypt, we are offering a wide range of readymade itineraries."

Planning to conduct city-wise networking events with a focus on Tier-II and Tier-III cities, Nagpal speaks about Travstarz's campaigning plans to enhance its reach. "We recently conducted a three-city roadshow with Seychelles Tourism in May at Ludhiana,

will be doing four roadshows with Bahrain and atleast two shows with Canada. We will be working with Centara Hotels for these events," he reveals. Nagpal feels that such events are the best way to promote a destination and its products as it gives them direct access to contact their

partners and build mutual trust.

Expressing his view about the growth of outbound tourism in India, Nagpal explains, "India is one of the fastest growing tourism markets in the world and with higher disposable incomes in hands, we expect the industry to grow at a gradual pace. We have a very young economy with over 65 per cent of the population below 35 years of age. In this segment, travellers are keen on visiting more places and exploring the

world. With this trend, we can expect a double-digit growth ahead as well." 

“The reservation system will offer worldwide inventory of flights, hotels, tours, transfers, visa services, insurance and forex on a single platform. We are expecting to launch it by the end of July 2018 and our ultimate focus is to move most of our business online”

Mumbai but our new office here will now look after the entire West India region catering to Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The team will be led by

Indore and Baroda; our calendar is packed with events throughout the year. We shall also be conducting webinars regularly to enhance destination knowledge among the travel trade for our preferred destinations," Nagpal says. "We are now the Joint Promotion Partners with Canada, Bahrain Ras Al Khaimah. We

### Events Calendar

- Travstarz will conduct four roadshows with Bahrain and atleast two shows with Canada
- The company has been conducting webinars regularly to enhance destination knowledge among the travel trade

Pankaj Nagpal  
Managing Director  
Travstarz Global Group

# Palav



# Underground River

## One of the natural wonders of the world

## New version of Smartpoint

Travelport has launched an all new version of its Smartpoint platform—Travelport Smartpoint 8.1—soon after launching the 8.0 version recently.



TT Bureau

Travelport Smartpoint is a unique travel commerce platform offering content from more than 400 airlines, 650,000 unique hotel properties and 36,000 car rental locations. While it increases the productivity and enhances customer experience, its handy GUI helps clients to deliver the best kind of customisation options. The latest version of the platform with a new add-on has also been launched to make the interface better.

The 8.1 version of Travelport Smartpoint offers an amalgamation of point-and-click and graphical screens along with the ability to use cryptic commands, which allows users to choose the way they want to work. With the new Flex Windows theme, they can get up to eight active windows along with a PNR Viewer, so that one can do more in less time. This, along with the enhancements to TripQuote, allows agents to send travel options to customers much faster.

The new version is upgraded and is the ultimate solution for numerous customisation possibilities, enabling agents to offer 10/10 service to customers, especially with new features. Travelport Smartpoint 8.1 is a step ahead of

8.0 in many ways. Firstly, Travelport Smartpoint Flexible Windows allows users to create the number of windows, expand or collapse it and also change the colours. It also features, Trip Quote enhancements, allowing one to choose the content and include it in the quote after adding it to a basket. Improving the quality



Sandeep Dwivedi  
Chief Operating Officer  
InterGlobe Technology Quotient

of the information within a quote helps customers decide on which quote to book. This provides the ability to include a service fee and mark up to ensure that the price quoted can include all applicable fees and charges upfront.

With 8.1, one can cancel and rebook segments accurately from the branded fares and ancillaries FS rebook workflow; fare store accurately upon choosing a branded fare; remove duplicates from fare shop rebook response. 🚀



William Boulter  
Chief Strategy Officer  
IndiGo

## 56<sup>th</sup> destination of IndiGo is Surat

IndiGo's new flights from Surat to major Indian cities will be operational from August with fares starting from ₹1,999. The airline will also operate three new routes.



TT Bureau

Starting August 16, IndiGo will start operating new flights from Surat and connect with Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Jaipur. The airline recently launched Surat as its 56<sup>th</sup> destination, for which the bookings have opened with fares starting from ₹1,999. In addition to that, IndiGo will operate three new routes including Jaipur-Varanasi, Jaipur-Guwahati and Mumbai-Bagdogra, which will also start in August 2018.

The new flights are targeted to service both business and leisure travellers, and the launch of these flights would further strengthen the airline's operations. William Boulter, Chief Strategy Officer, IndiGo, said, "We are pleased to have the opportunity to fly out of Surat starting August 2018. Surat, undoubtedly holds immense potential, and launching operations to and from the diamond city is in line with our growth strategy for the India market. We are also launching three other new routes which includes Jaipur-Varanasi, Jaipur-Guwahati, and Mumbai-Bagdogra. With these services, we are providing more flexibility of choice." 🚀

awan



# Raising a toast to 18 years

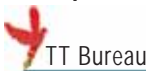
Virgin Atlantic recently celebrated 18 years of flying from Delhi to London. Staying true to the spirit of innovation and personalisation, the event had Virgin flair spread throughout by engaging guests with entertainment, whisky tasting and trade partner awards.





# Ensuring global footprint

Two international hotel groups – The Kingsbury Hotel and Amaya Resorts & Spas – have appointed Linkin Reps to promote their hotels in India whilst increasing their market share and awareness in the country.



The Kingsbury Hotel and Amaya Resorts & Spas, that have properties in Sri Lanka and the Maldives collectively, have announced their strategic corporation with Linkin Reps to increase their market share and awareness in India.

The agency has been appointed as the sales and marketing representative in India for four properties of the group, namely, The Kingsbury Colombo Hotel, Amaya Lake – Dambulla, Amaya Hills – Kandy and Amaya Kuda Rah – Maldives. **Denesh Silva**, Director Head —Marketing & Sales, The Kingsbury and Amaya Resorts & Spas said, “Amaya Resorts & Spas and The Kingsbury Hotel are delighted to partner with Linkin Reps to promote our product in the Indian market. We are confident that this partnership will further enhance the hotels’ footprint in India and lead to even more guests from the sub-conti-



**Denesh Silva**  
Director Head —Marketing & Sales, The Kingsbury and Amaya Resorts & Spas

nent indulging and experiencing the warm hospitality and wonderful product offering which they have to offer to the discerning Indian traveller.”

**Komal Seth**, Director, Linkin Reps said, “We are happy to be appointed as the India office for the hotels



**Komal Seth**  
Director Linkin Reps

and resorts of The Kingsbury Hotel and Amaya Resorts & Spas. Both the brands are well-known entities in terms of luxury, cuisine and the quality of services



they offer to all travel segments be it leisure, MICE or wedding groups. Developing and multiplying their market share

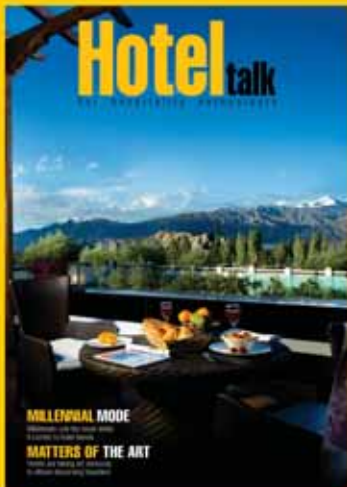
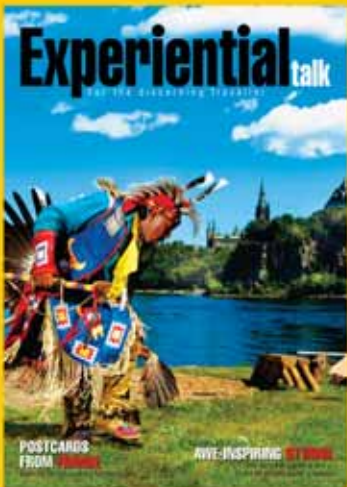
in India will be our utmost focus. We are keen on making success stories for Kingsbury and Amaya, who are bejewelled as finest five-star hotels and resorts located in Sri Lanka and Maldives.”

The appointment is a part of Kingsbury Hotel and

Amaya Resorts & Spas’ strategic direction in ensuring that they have footprints across all major markets globally, including India. According to Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, India continued to be Sri Lanka’s top source of tourists with 384,628 arrivals (up 7.8 per cent) in 2017. On the other hand, Indian tourist visits had reached 83,019 by end of December 2017, as per the Maldivian Tourism Ministry.

## Special Supplements

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# Sarovar showers offers

**Ajay K Bakaya**, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels, talks extensively about the latest developments of the brand, its performance till date, his views on industry disruptors and more.



Anupriya Bishnoi

## Q What are the latest updates at Sarovar?

We had an exciting first quarter this year. Sarovar opened the first branded hotel in the historic city of Jhansi and the fifth in Uttar Pradesh. That has been a significant development for us. We have also announced the opening of our crowning glory, Sarovar Premiere, Jaipur in the Pink City. This quarter also brings in the monsoon as a magical season to travel and explore. Destinations such as Thekkady in Kerala, Goa and Shimla allow different experiences during this time of the year. Our hotels in these destinations are offering exclusive 'Best

Deal Guaranteed' packages for the season and 'Book Direct' offers for stays. Other expected openings in 2018 include hotels in Lusaka, Zambia, Dar Es Salaam and Tanzania, and Jaisalmer, Katra, Dibrugarh, Junagadh and Gorakhpur in the domestic market.

## Q How has the year fared for the brand till now? What kind of occupancy did you see?

Sarovar Hotels is focused on strategic expansion throughout India and Africa and we are continuously striving to achieve our goal to have 100 hotels by 2020. This year contributed with some exceptional hotel openings and signing of new proper-

ties. Our hotels are logging an occupancy level above 70 per cent and we believe that this is poised to go further as the Indian economy continues a speedy growth

ties. Our hotels are logging an occupancy level above 70 per cent and we believe that this is good and poised to go further as the Indian economy continues a speedy growth around 7 per cent per annum.

## Q It's been a year for GST implication. What kind of changes have you observed in the industry?

Under the Goods and Service Tax, the hospitality sector stands to reap the benefits of stand-

ardised and uniform tax rates, and easy and better utilisation of input tax credit. As the final cost to end user decreases, we can see the industry attract more overseas tourists than before.

## Q What are your views on industry disruptors?

They serve a useful purpose for hotel guests. There needs to be greater regulation by the government from a security and tax

perspective, but disruptors are definitely here to stay.

## Q As a home-grown brand, what advantages do you have over the others?

We know the market well and the local sub-market even better. We connect with our guests with the warmth of being local guides and understand their needs well. We talk the language of the land.



## Ajay Jadeja takes in the sights and sounds of Ireland

CELEBRITY WATCH

Former Indian cricketer **Ajay Jadeja** recently visited Ireland to promote the T20 International series that was held between India and Ireland in Malahide, Dublin. The cricketer who was the commentator for the matches also visited attractions like Malahide Castle, the Ha Penny Bridge, Irish National Stud and Japanese Gardens, the famous Guinness Store House, and the Kilkenny Castle.



## Get healed at The Farm



The Farm at San Benito is a world-class holistic medical wellness resort located in Lipa, Batangas, a 90-minute drive south of Manila, Philippines. It rests on 48 hectares of lush green jungle with a stunning view of the majestic mountains, pure and fresh air with clear and positive life-giving energy radiating around the property.



# Building a versatile portfolio

With 49 properties in its kitty, **Sowmya Rao Vijaymohan**, Partner, RARE India talks about the company's expansion plans in the country and abroad while announcing the dates for Très RARE 2019.



Manas Dwivedi

From four properties to 49 now, Rare India has grown by leaps and bounds over a period of time, believes **Sowmya Rao Vijaymohan**, Partner, RARE India and is hopeful to add a few more properties onboard by the end of 2018. She says, "We have recently announced a few additions to our portfolio. Taking the list to 49 brands, we have taken up Suryagarh in Jaisalmer and Narendra Bhavan in Bikaner. While taking up Wild Mahseer in Assam, we have also got our hands on another property called Anahata Retreat on Ashvim beach in Goa. We have also taken up The Lodge at Wah in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, a six-room property run by a young couple. Our acquisitions are geographically varied with presence in different parts of the country. We have also got a wellness Ayurveda boutique retreat known as Mekosha near Trivandrum, which makes our Southern portfolio very strong."

Announcing the dates for Très RARE 2019, Vijaymo-

han says, "Set to be held on March 29 and 30, 2019, Très RARE aims to bring to-

gether all the small boutique experiential or transformational properties in the

Indian subcontinent under one roof. Going ahead, Très RARE is branching

off not as part of RARE but as a show in itself; we will be inviting many more



Sowmya Rao Vijaymohan  
Partner  
RARE

non-RARE hotel partners to participate."

Expressing joy over RARE India's growth in the last six months, Vijaymohan shares, "Everyone talks about the growth that India is witnessing in terms of tourism. But I hear of lot of people talk about struggling to match up to last's year's numbers. Fortunately for us, most of our

“Set to be held on March 29 & 30, 2019, Très RARE aims to bring together all the small boutique experiential properties”

properties have witnessed a jump in numbers. If not, some of them have seen a steady growth but it's been the growth nevertheless, which is good news for us.”

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## Eyes on Lanka

With a presence in neighbouring countries, RARE India is now keen on expansion

With a property each in Bhutan and Nepal, the company is looking at Sri Lanka too. By the end of this year, new properties are also expected on board

## Kiwi Link India visits Mumbai



Despite the relentless rain in Mumbai, Kiwi Link India 2018 continued smoothly with participation from a record 40 New Zealand operators and 72 Indian delegates from 49 travel companies. The Kiwi delegates visited Bengaluru and Delhi after Mumbai to showcase their offerings to the trade.



# Tourism PowerHouse in Delhi

PATA India Chapter, in its 7<sup>th</sup> Update and Outlook Meeting recently held at The Claridges, New Delhi, announced that it will organise Tourism PowerHouse from August 5-6, 2018 at The Park New Delhi. The event saw in attendance **Rashmi Verma**, Secretary, MOT and Chairman – PATA India Chapter; **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, MOT and **MP Mall**, Chairman and Managing Director, IRCTC.





# Akquasun promotes Maldives

Akquasun Maldives recently hosted a networking evening along with Sun Siyam Resorts for its partners in Mumbai to showcase the destination.



With Maldives becoming one of the most popular outbound destinations for Indian travellers, the Akquasun Group constantly tries to promote it to the travel industry in India. Keeping this in mind, Akquasun Maldives recently hosted a networking evening along with Sun Siyam Resorts for its agent partners in Mumbai.

Present at the event were a few of Akquasun clients and the aim was to introduce them to Sun Siyam Resorts. Leading the delegation from the resort property was **Rakesh Gupta**, Account Director of Sales & Marketing – India, Sun Siyam Resorts.

Speaking about the event, **BA Rahim**, Group Director & CEO, Akquasun Group, says, “This event is all about promoting Maldives and showcasing the different experiences that the destination can offer. All these years Maldives has been known for a few chosen properties in India. But now, there are lot of new and upgraded properties that have been built and introduced to the Indian market. Sun Siyam Resorts is one such property that is tapping the Indian market.”

It currently has three properties in the Maldives and is coming up with one more property there soon. Rahim adds, “Slowly but steadily they have penetrated the market here. All their properties have a lot of potential here. This event will be followed with a series of much bigger event in five cities. It will have a Maldivian night where we plan to bring in some performers from Maldives and Maldivian cuisine. We will cover the metros of Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai.”

Underlining the cities that they will be tapping for Maldives, **Sujit Nair**, Founder & Group Managing Director, Akquasun Group, adds, “We are continuously tapping newer markets and cities such as

Bhubaneswar, Raipur, Indore and we want agents to come and see the vibrancy and the potential of Maldives. They already give us business. But since all the properties

are eyeing India as a source market – there are so many properties and the competition is becoming tough and everybody has their own niche.”



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# Kashmir hosts MiCE group

Kashmir recently played host to a MiCE group of over 200 when a leading Indian private sector bank organised an incentive trip to the state for its senior management officials.



TT Bureau

A mega three-nights four-days reward incentive trip was recently organised to Srinagar by one of the leading private sector banks of the country for over 200 of its senior officials posted in many branches across India. The MiCE trip comes in line with the efforts of the department of tourism projecting Kashmir as

## Reviving Image

Such events would go a long way in diluting the negative perception among travellers intending to visit Kashmir

With the successful organisation, agents are expecting more business houses to turn to the Valley

one of the best MiCE destinations of the country with many corporate houses organising events and incentive trips for their employees here. The trip was organised by Leisure Corp in collaboration with Mascot Travels and Jammu & Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC).

During the trip, the delegates visited popular places for sightseeing in Srinagar and indulged in other experiences including shikara rides and Mughal gardens as well as relished local music at events promoting local talent. About 90 per cent of the delegates in the trip were visiting Kashmir for the first time. Overwhelmed by the beauty of the place, they expressed surprise over the negative image of the state in national media.

Commenting on the role of JKTDC in promoting MiCE, **Naveen Kundu**, Founder & MD, Leisure Corp said, "Kashmir has been my first choice for such events. We can easily

meetings and conferences at such a place."

**Mahmood A Shah**, Director, Tourism, JKTDC, said that they have been promoting Kashmir

**"Kashmir has been my first choice for such events. Besides Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar for conventions, big hotel brands have also come up for corporate tours"**

organise incentive trips here for corporate houses who desire to visit the Valley. Besides Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar for conventions, big hotel brands have also come up for corporate tours. This is exactly what corporates would need when they have

for events and conferences at MiCE shows and travel trade exhibitions outside the state during which they meet event management companies and showcase the potential of corporate tours to Kashmir.

Leisure Corp has already organised a few such incen-

tive trips to Kashmir and the delegates have been overwhelmed with the beauty of the state. "Such events would go a long way in diluting the negative perception among travellers intending to visit Kashmir. The successful conduct of this tour has lifted the hopes of travel agents about more such events in the future," added Shah.

Yaseen Tuman of Mascot Travels, who has been working hard to get this corporate tour to Kashmir, said many more business houses are willing to organise MiCE trips to Kashmir. "This has been the biggest event since 2016, when situation turned bad for tourism. With our

successful organisation of this event, we are expecting more business houses to turn to Kashmir," he said.



Naveen Kundu  
Founder & MD, Leisure Corp

# An experiential perspective

Travel Spirit International conducted an interactive session at The Park New Delhi for its associate agents from across India and the neighbouring countries on the theme 'How to Provide Experiential Holidays'. Prominent speakers from the industry like **Runeep Sangha**, Executive Director—Pata India Chapter; **Ashok Chand**, Former Additional Commissioner, Delhi Police; **Shoba Mohan**, Founder Partner—Rare India and **Sunil Gupta**, MD, Travel Bureau Agra shared their valuable ideas and experiences.





# Nijhawan to up Uzbek numbers

Uzbekistan is set to create a splash in the Indian tourism market by simplifying its visa regime and offering a five-day free-visa transit. It has appointed Nijhawan as advisor for tourism of Embassy of Uzbekistan.



Nisha Verma

The Embassy of Uzbekistan is undertaking various initiatives to attract Indian travellers to its shore as India remains a high potential market for the country. Nijhawan Group has therefore, been appointed as the advisor for tourism promotion of Embassy of Uzbekistan in India. Making

who says, "We have agreed on many ways of promotion of tourism potential of Uzbekistan in India. With a focus on increasing the number of tourists from India to Uzbekistan, we would be happy to work with the Nijhawan Group in this sphere."

**Ankush Nijhawan**, Managing Director, Nijhawan Group



“With this partnership, we are confident to unravel the full potential of India’s growth story. With the Indian outbound at a record high, we are confident of strong numbers coming in from the region”

**Ankush Nijhawan**

the announcement is **Farhod Arziev**, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to India,

added, “We aim to generate wide awareness and publicity on Uzbekistan as a preferred leisure

and business destination whilst boosting the country’s tourist arrivals. With this partnership, we are confident to unravel the full potential of India’s growth story. With the Indian outbound at a record high, we are confident of strong numbers coming in from the region.”

Arziev added that the proximity of the destination and frequen-

cy of flights to Uzbekistan from India makes it a preferable destination for Indians. “There is a great scope to expand the tourism exchange between the two countries. Uzbekistan is just 2.5 hours away from India and we have direct flights from Delhi to Tashkent daily. We are also going to establish new direct flights from Mumbai to Tashkent. In addition, we have

common history, culture and traditions. As a destination, Uzbekistan has a variety of unique products for Indian travellers, be it for heritage tourism, family tourism, adventure or MICE.”

Arziev also explained that the country has simplified the visa process for Indians. “From February this year, we have included Indians into the list of countries for which we have introduced simplified visa process. Uzbekistan will launch the e-visas system starting from July 15, 2018 for the citizens of 101 countries including India. The consular fee for processing and issuing an e-visa is \$20. The visa relaxations are expected to further boost people-to-people exchanges between Uzbekistan and India by enhancing convenience for Indian tourists,

business persons as well as repeat visitors. We also plan to start a five-day visa free transit for transit passengers from India soon.”

Nijhawan further adds, “The first step is to create awareness about the destination and pave way for communication between Indian agents with the DMC partners in Uzbekistan. We plan to organise Fam tours of both trade and media to the destination so that Indians know about the tourism potential of Uzbekistan,” he added.

## Uzbek USP

Uzbekistan has a beautiful landscape and ancient cultural heritage, including the silk route

## PADI for Tarkarli Resort

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation’s Tarkarli Resort close to Malvan has been awarded the PADI certification.



TT Bureau

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has been reinventing itself and developing interesting activities while investing in infrastructure upgradation. One of its beautiful resorts – Tarkarli Resort – located 6 km away from Malvan has been

sort for scuba-diving in Maharashtra concerning the safety of tourists. The organisation has granted accreditation to scuba diving centres across 180 countries and India is one of them.

Maharashtra is blessed with natural resources in abundance and serene landscape.

activities including wreck diving and wall diving among others.

Jaykumar Rawal, Minister of Tourism & EGS, Government of Maharashtra received this prestigious award along with scuba divers of the MTDC Tarkarli Resort. Also present at the event were Vijay Gautam, (IAS), Principal Secretary,



awarded the famed Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) certification.

PADI recently awarded the property as a five-star dive re-

Witnessing the demand for adventure sports, MTDC has been promoting Tarkarli as a scuba diving and snorkelling destination for tourists, where they can enjoy various diving

Department of Tourism and Culture, Government of Maharashtra & MD, MTDC as well as **Aashutosh Rathod**, Joint MD, MTDC and other MTDC officials.

## Agents' day out with Sanju



Thai Airways recently conducted a screening of Rajkumar Hirani's latest film *Sanju*, based on actor Sanjay Dutt's life. The screening was held for the travel trade at PVR Phoenix, Lower Parel, Mumbai.







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# 5

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