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Ratnagiri boasts of an impressive Stupa surrounded by votive stupas of varying dimensions, with curvilinear tower, which is one of its kind discovered in Odisha. Large number of stone sculptures, few bronze and brass image of Buddha prove that Ratnagiri was a great centre of Tantric Buddhism. It is part of the Diamond Triangle with other nearby Buddhist sites such as Lalitgiri, Udayagiri and Langudi Hills.



Source : Sankar - Subbar

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Nominate

IATO's new team for 2018-20

On April 28, IATO voted a new team to power. **Pronab Sarkar** and **Rajeev Mehra** were re-elected unopposed as President and Vice President respectively, while **EM Najeib** was elected the new Senior Vice-President.



TT Bureau

Pronab Sarkar, Swagatam Tours, has been re-elected as the President unopposed, while **Rajiv Mehra**, Uday Tours & Travels, was also re-elected as the Vice President unopposed at the IATO elections. **EM Najeib**, Air Travel Enterprises has been elected as the Senior Vice President. Another new entrant in the core committee of IATO is **Rajesh Mudgill**, Planet India Travel, who has been elected



as the Honorary Secretary. **Ravi Gosain**, Erco Travels, is the new Treasurer and Ra-

jnish Kaistha is the new Joint Secretary, both of whom were elected unopposed too. The

voting was conducted for the position of Senior Vice President, Honorary Secretary as

well as EC Members in the EC active and allied category. The returning officer for

the election was Akshay Kumar of Mercury Himalayan Explorations.

Thanking everyone for the victory, Najeib said, "It's a great honour and pleasure for me to have been elected as the senior VP of a prestigious association. I want to assure my wholehearted commitment and support for serving this organisation with my team members by working together to reach newer heights."

Contd. on page 19 ►

Resounding applause to PAP move

The relaxation of Protected Area Permit (PAP) by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) would not only mean lesser processes for the visiting foreigners, but also for inbound agents. Here is what they have to say...



Nisha Verma

"The decision is definitely going to help in the future, both for the visiting foreigners, as well as the agents. Earlier the movement in these areas were restricted as there were many formalities to be fulfilled before sending the clients there. There were many things to be considered before planning a trip in these areas for the client. However, now with this initiative, things would be better. It would be beneficial for us as well. Now, infrastructural developments need to be made, which is very important. Right from roads, hotels to wayside amenities — everything has to be created to suit the tourists' needs. It would allow the business to increase as well."



Jatinder Pal Singh Taneja
Hon. Secretary, PATA India
and Managing Director,
Travel Spirit International

"It's a very progressive step, indicating the transparent and simplicity in the way the government is adopting to visit the diversified areas of the country. Northeast offers virgin areas and diverse tribes, which we would love to promote. Earlier we had to plan much ahead for foreigners and ask for passports and details well in advance to get prior permissions. However, now it would make the planning faster and easier for us, allowing us to offer better itineraries. It's a welcome step since it would allow tourists to explore a lot more in India. This will be the experiential part of travel that visitors are looking out for in the country, apart from the classic Golden Triangle tours, which they usually do."



Atul Rai
Managing Director,
Ananya Tours

Contd. on page 7 ►

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Convention @ Cape Town

After two back-to-back conventions in Southeast Asia, the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) has chosen South African port city of Cape town for its grand convention from August 11-14.



Hazel Jain

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) has announced that it will conduct its next annual convention in Cape Town from August 11-14, 2018. These details were shared by **Mahendra Vakharia**, President, OTOAI, who said, "The convention will be followed by a three-night post-convention tour for our members and we urge them to block these dates at their earliest."



Mahendra Vakharia
President
OTOAI

Responding to the water crisis issue reported by mainstream media recently, he added, "There is absolutely no problem with water there. Tourism has not been affect-

ed at all and the industry is more than equipped to handle this situation." Vakharia added that the team is working with a local partner in Cape Town for this event.

“The convention will be followed by a three-night post-convention tour for our members and we urge them to block these dates at their earliest. The team is working with a local partner in Cape Town for this event”

Sharing more details is **Himanshu Patil**, Vice President, OTOAI, and Convention Chairman, who says, "We will be staying at the Taj Cape Town for three nights of the convention and then we will have post tours to Kruger National Park, the Garden Route, and Cape Town city attractions. So far, all our conventions were conducted in South East Asia so this year we wanted to go beyond that

region. South Africa as you know has a lot to see and explore." The team will finalise the convention theme and agenda soon.

The association conducted its first convention in the Philippines followed by Bali in Indonesia. Patil adds, "As always, we expect outbound tourism from India to South Africa will grow phenomenally

Contd. on page 22 ►

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TRAVTALK

VIEWPOINT

Inbound beyond usual

The regular Golden Triangle or the wellness or religious tours down South do remain the focal point of any India-bound itinerary. However, adventurous and experimental travellers still look for new experiences in India and now they can explore the pristine areas of Northeast India, including the protected areas in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim. Thanks to the relaxation of the Protected Area Permit (PAP) in these areas, now inbound tourists can explore the unique culture, beauty and lifestyle around here. While the news has spread a positive wave amongst inbound tour operators, we also need to make sure that the infrastructure development and facilities in these areas are up to the mark. Private players as well as government should come forward to invest in these places and develop facilities in a planned manner, creating innovative experiences and comfortable stays. In a way, they can now use these regions as blank canvases to draw unique tourism experiences.

India's aviation game gets big

The National Civil Aviation Policy, when released, set an objective of flying a billion people in India very soon. Currently, this number is around 200 million passenger trips a year. The growth, as put by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, would see the number of planes in India go from 500 to 2000, the number of helicopters from 200 to 400, while the number of airports will increase from 75 to 200. The Nav Nirman scheme is underway to unveil next-gen airports in the country, not only in the bigger cities, but also in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Since the ministry believes in India's travel potential, today they are thinking 15-20 years ahead and building airports for the same. From a couple of brownfield airports that have been launched recently, to many greenfield airports that are already underway, India's passenger capacity would be increasing manifold and is going to be a big player in the UDAN scheme to offer regional connectivity. With the aviation capacity and the infrastructure in tandem, India would soon be a force to reckon with in the aviation industry.

Lowering India's handicap

If golf clubs in India adopt tourist-friendly policies, we can become a golfing destination, says **Rishi Narain**, MD, RN Sports Marketing.

That golf is a centuries old sport is perhaps a touch incomplete without mentioning an Indian connection. Established in 1829, the Royal Calcutta Golf Club (RCGC) is the second-oldest golf course in the world, after the home of the sport – St. Andrews (Scotland). In fact, that makes RCGC the oldest golf course outside the British Isles.

That apart, India has about 220 golf courses, in which more than 20 are signature golf courses which are at par with international standards. One such property is the nine-acre Jaypee Greens Golf and Spa Resort, located on the outskirts of the national capital. Designed by veteran golfer Greg Norman, the resort promises some of the most stunning views of the beautiful 18-hole golf course. It attracts many foreign tourists.

Besides Jaypee, other top golf courses for incentive groups would be Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club (Hyderabad), Classic Golf & Country Club (Manesar), Eagleton Golf Resort (Bengaluru), Oxford Golf Resort (Pune) and Royal Springs Golf Course (Srinagar).

Oxford, in particular, has been constantly rated among the country's top golf and leisure destinations. This Phil Ryan-designed layout is surrounded by the Sahyadri Hills on three sides. The resort is also home to Leadbetter Golf Academy, a world-renowned golf school headed by David Leadbetter who is considered one of the greatest coaches the sport has seen.

small, medium and large events which attract golf tournaments to India especially those with international television broadcast coverage. Associations are also lobbying with city development authorities and state tourism development boards to build courses which bring immense benefits. Couple of projects in Naya Raipur and in Manipur are already underway, which hopefully will lead to more.

to reach their professional dreams. At the elite level, we miss out on the technology advancements that is enabling foreign coaches to produce world champions. From a tourism standpoint the policies at the clubs need to be more tourist-friendly. Most clubs are geared to cater to their regular members only and are not currently really prepared for the tourist friendly, hospitable and high-quality service that golfing tourists expect.

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

“When golfers travel, they look for destinations with at least three to four world-class golf courses located within an hour's drive of each other and close to classy hotels, restaurants and shops”

What we need though...

To promote golf culture and attract tourists, over 100 new golf courses and driving ranges are required in the country. It will not only help attract tourists and generate revenue for the owners, but also open new job opportunities for the youth. The Ministry of Tourism acts as a catalyst and active supporter for promoting golf tourism in the country. They have actively been supporting

There are challenges too

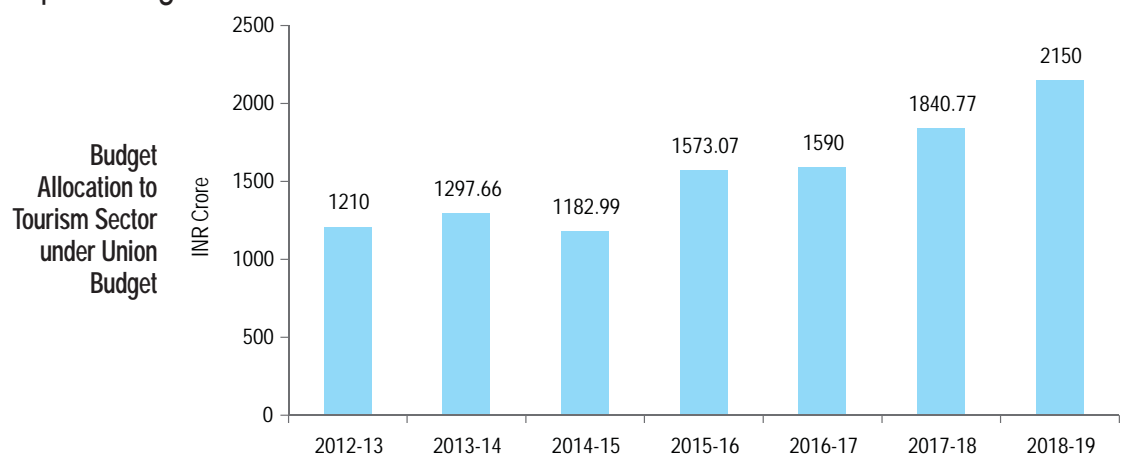
For instance, the number of golf courses and driving ranges are too few. While we have world-class courses like DLF Golf & Country Club and driving ranges of international standard such as Hamoni, both in Gurgaon, we require many more of such facilities around the country. There is also a shortage of good, trained coaches and mentors who can guide talented juniors



Rishi Narain
MD, RN Sports Marketing, and
Board Member of Golf Industry
Association (GIA)

Budget more generous to tourism

The government has taken key initiatives to promote inbound tourism in India, one being an increase in budget allocation. The budget has seen an increase of over 40 per cent growth from ₹1210 crore allotted in 2012-13 to ₹2150 crore in 2018-19.



Source: www.indiabudget.nic.in

Thumbs up to PAP relaxation

► Contd. from page 3

“It is a welcome step by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to allow foreign tourists visit these protected areas and explore the pristine surroundings there. While the most sensitive areas would still need permission to visit, this move shows that the government is understanding the need of the travellers, and the decision to relax the permit is in favour of the tourism industry. It will be extremely beneficial for the foreigners who are coming here to see such places and enjoy the culture, beauty and nature of these areas. Now, the tourists would be very happy to go there and enjoy the facilities in these regions, which would also be developed in the near future. The government has a right approach and attitude towards tourism right now and it's a positive gesture by them. I think the industry — the tour operators and foreigners, will appreciate it together.”



EM Najeed
Sr. Vice-President, IATO
and MD, Air Travel
Enterprises India

“The relaxation of PAP has come as a positive news for the industry and enthusiastic travellers. However, there will be no immediate impact of these relaxations, as people still would have to decide on their programme and it will take time to develop new itineraries covering these regions. It's good that they have relaxed the permit and hopefully foreigners will visit all those virgin destinations, which would allow them to explore a new side of India. We also have to see how the connectivity and infrastructure in those areas is looked at. Once that is developed, it's going to be a goldmine for tourism. We weren't getting many queries for these areas earlier, apart from some areas in Sikkim, for which we had to take special permit. However, now the relaxation of the permits would open many doors, allowing tourists to get new experiences in the country apart from the usual tours.”



Lally Matthews
Director
Vacations Travels & Tours



JK Jhala
MD
Transline Tours & Travels

“This relaxation would help a lot because earlier when we used to send the groups or FITs, they had to go to many windows and get help from land handlers. However, now if someone wishes to visit Nagaland, it will be much easier. The tribes we have in Mizoram, Nagaland and Assam are experiences that are exclusive to India. I think we will be able to bring more people's interest in the culture and tribes of these areas and many other places in the country. When a special permit is required, tourists will think 10 times about the risk, but now they will feel safe.”



Deepak Bhatnagar
EC Member, IATO and MD,
Aamantaran Travels

“Earlier, getting a special permit to visit these places was a hindrance and even travellers were speculative. Now foreign tour operators will include these areas in their itineraries. It will become accessible to foreigners and we can promote it further. However, now infrastructure, including proper roads and hotels should be there, allowing tourists to have a good stay there. The local government and bodies should now develop the right infrastructure for the tourists.”



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Aviation sector shines bright

With the Union Cabinet approving a sum of ₹5,082 crore for the upgradation and expansion of airport infrastructure at Lucknow, Chennai, and Guwahati airports, the aviation map of India is only going to shine.



Nisha Verma

The Union Cabinet has recently approved the construction of new brownfield airports in Chennai, Lucknow and Guwahati. **Jayant Sinha**, Minister of State, Civil Aviation, shared that the construction of these three terminals together would see investment of over ₹5,082 crore. He said, "The Cabinet has given approval for three aviation projects. It is the first time that we have changed the design paradigm of airports. We will be building terminal and airports that will reflect our heritage. We have consulted the architects under a special design council for the same."

Sinha claimed that there will be huge investments to boost airport infrastructure in India. "For ensuring an infrastructure that will facilitate a billion trips, there is going to be an investment of ₹5-6

lakh crore over 15 years. In the next five years, we will see an investment of about ₹1 lakh crore in this sector," he added.

Sinha revealed that out of the total to be invested in the next five years, around ₹21,000 crore will be done by AAI, while ₹25,000 crore will be invested in upgrading infrastructure at airports like Delhi, Hy-

derabad and Bengaluru that are run by private operators. In fact, around ₹50,000 crore is expected to be invested in new airports in Mumbai, Goa, Jewar in Greater Noida, Pune, Bhogapuram in Andhra Pradesh and Dholera in Gujarat.

Guruprasad Mohapatra, Chairman, Airports Authority of India,

"Sikkim is set to enter the aviation map of the country when Pakyong Airport becomes operational. It will be the 100th functional airport in the country when it will be commissioned in June"

said that the new terminal buildings in Chennai and Lucknow will become operational by December

2021, while the new terminal at Guwahati airport would start operations from March 2021. "These airports will suffice for the requirement in Lucknow for 2030-31 and at Guwahati and Chennai for up to 2026-27. Of the total investment of around ₹5000 crore, about 60 per cent will be raised from the debt market and the rest from our funds. We will follow the same

principle for next five years and raise 60% of the ₹21,000 crore to be invested by us," he added.

Sinha also talked about Ministry of Civil Aviation's 'digi

yatra' programme. Sinha said, "We are expecting to roll out the 'digi yatra' programme in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Varanasi and Vijayawada in phases by January 2019. This means that the entry to security and boarding would be done through e-gate, which would be activated by face recognition. Passengers will receive all services through face recognition. However, the tests for the same are going on, and as they would use personal data of a passenger under the scheme the government will ensure that enrolment for digi yatra would be voluntary and non-intrusive in nature. The formats would be finalised soon and we will be consulting with the Law Ministry."

Sinha made a special mention for the upcoming Sikkim's Pakyong airport. "Sikkim is all set to enter the aviation map of the country when Pakyong Airport becomes operational.

It will be the 100th functional airport in the country when it will be commissioned in June," added Sinha. Sikkim was the only state in the country without an airport. Under the UDAN scheme by MoCA, SpiceJet has been granted permission to fly to Pakyong from Kolkata.

Mohapatra added, "A total of 25 airports have been added to the aviation network under the regional connectivity scheme. The airports from where flights would start in May/June under the scheme are Jamshedpur, Cooch Behar, Durgapur, Kullu and Pantnagar. Thirteen airports are being upgraded under the scheme. They include Kanpur, Rourkela, Burnpur, Utkela, Jeypore, Jharsuguda, Bilaspur, Ambikapur, Jagdalpur, Mithapur, Neyveli, Solapur and Raigarh. Apart from that, 23 airports and helipads have been awarded to handle helicopter operations under the scheme."



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India's strength at ATM 2018

As India retains the top spot on Dubai's list of source markets for inbound tourism, its commitment was showcased at the Arabian Travel Market, which was held at Dubai World Trade Centre in April this year. While the Middle East showcased its offerings, according to Colliers International, around nine million Indians are expected to travel to the GCC by 2021.



Goa is now in full 'Bloom'

Having registered 84% company-wide occupancy in FY17-18, Tom Welbury, VP Strategy, Bloom Hotel Group, is targeting 20% growth this year.



TT Bureau

QTell us about the brand.

The Bloom brand was conceptualized in conjunction with several industry experts ranging from university professors to leading architects. Its mission over the past 5 years has been to revolutionise the affordable hotel space. Today, The Bloom has been widely recognized as one of Asia's leading mid-market hotel brands and has had a very successful start with launches in Delhi, Bengaluru and Goa. Each hotel has quickly become a ranking leader on Tripadvisor and other qualitative sites.

QWhat kind of growth have you seen in the last year?

As a group we push our team very hard to deliver only

the best performances across the board. Coming off the back of a blended occupancy of more than 80 per cent across the group in financial year 2016-17. The team is expected to deliver revenue growth of more than 20 per cent across the same hotels in the year 2017-18. We are RevPar leader in our category and stay away from discount led success which is eventually destructive to a brand.

QWhat is the USP of your new hotel, Bloom Suites Calangute in Goa?

Bloom is known for picking outstanding locations in each of its respective markets, be it bang on 100 Feet Rd Indiranagar in Bengaluru or a stone's throw from New Delhi Railway Station, which is no different in Goa, where we are at a walking distance from Calangute beach. With an



Tom Welbury
Vice President Strategy
The Bloom

inventory of 130 keys, including 75 rooms and 55 suites the hotel is able to cater to all segments. Boasting of Calangute's largest pillar-less conference/banquet hall and serving concept food & beverages under the Captain Barracuda's Bar & Grill brand, the hotel is quickly becoming a popular MICE destination.



QHow do you stay ahead or deal with competition in a market like Goa?

Bloom is spearheading the gentrification of Calangute with a fresh approach to mid market hotels, bringing world-class facilities at affordable rates.

Bloom is delivering a lot more than hotels to the travelers with great success through a highly innovative and contemporary design concept.

QWhat kind of promotional strategies are you adopting to create visibility in your Goa property?

At Bloom we are passionate about creating world class

stay experiences to ensure we are the undisputed quality leader of the mid-market segment. When you have a quality product you don't need to focus too much on promotions but rather let your guests themselves tell the market about the hotel.

During the launch of the hotel we run introductory pricing with our preferred online & offline partners which is our way of letting the market see that we can live up to our promise of being best in class. The feedback till date has been outstanding from our channel partners, which is kudos to the hard work of our operations team.

QHow are you engaging with travel agents to boost the sales of the Goa property?

We strongly believe in building long-term relationships with our loyal distribution partners both online & offline. Over the past 6 years we have consistently delivered top of segment performance for each of our partners, which has led to deep relationships that we have extended into the Goa market. There is also a priority placed with select partners in the charter market which has been a win-win relationship in Goa. Our contemporary design & fresh service approach has been greatly appreciated by inbound travellers. 📌

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KUONI eyes Tier-II & III cities

After a strategic restructuring of the Kuoni brand, the Global Travel Service business of the company will expand its footprint in Tier-II and III cities in India with a focus on new products and experiences for Indians.



TT Bureau

Following the sale of the European tour operator businesses to DER Touristik in 2015 and the CHF 1.4 billion takeover by Swedish private equity fund EQT in April 2016, the erstwhile Kuoni Group restructured into three divisions: B2B accommodation services (GTA); destination services/incoming (GTS); and visa services (VFS). **Reto Wilhelm**, CEO, JTB Europe Inbound, Tumlare and Kuoni GTS, says, "Kuoni as we knew it in the past has undergone quite a big transformation and its various businesses have been split up." He elaborates that the GTA business has been sold to Spanish-based Hotelbeds and the GTS division sold its six incoming agency subsidiaries in Asia, Australia, Middle East, Africa and The Americas to Thomas Cook India Group. The Indian group had also acquired Kuoni's tour operator busi-

nesses in India and Hong Kong earlier. Subsequently, the GTS business has been acquired by JTB Corporation.

Wilhelm adds, "GTS is a B2B service provider in the leisure area focusing on group business and India is one of the key source markets for us. After the transition, we are now a €1 billion company. With GTS and Tumlare, our two active brands in India, we hold 50 per cent of the market share of Indian outbound travellers to Europe and some specific MICE business. The overall growth recorded by Kuoni GTS in 2017 over the previous year was 10 per cent."

Explaining the company's focus in India, **Tim Martin**, Sr. VP—Global Sales, Kuoni GTS, points out, "Not only is the market growing at high double digit, there is a major shift in the buying behaviour. There



Reto Wilhelm



Tim Martin



Reto Kaufmann

is an increase in demand predominantly for new hotels, new destinations and a look-out for newer experiences." The company specialises in tailor-made itineraries for the Indian customers and at the same time caters for Indian meals, adds Martin. He says, "We will be looking at build-

ing our product portfolio for India and expand in Tier-II and Tier-III cities where we see major growth in 2018. We are already present in the major metros, but have seen good growth from cities like Pune, Surat etc. We are targeting the entire south Indian region for development."

Reto Kaufmann, Vice President-Sales for South East and South Asia, Kuoni GTS, further explains that since the source markets have shifted from the capital cities to Tier-II and Tier-III cities, the company is aggressively seeking opportunities to grow business in the smaller cities and thus, has come up with some innovations.

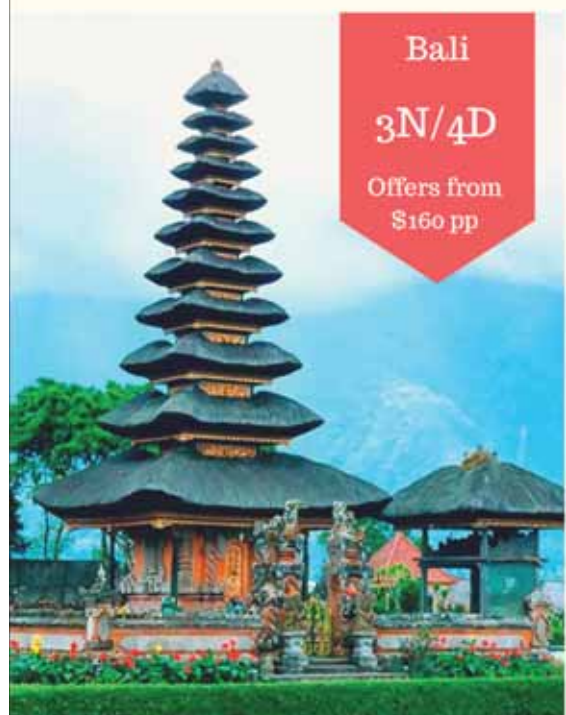


"Particularly on the content side, we have tried to take the business to small and medium sized tour operators by providing travel agents with Kuoni managed tour leaders to attach to their group tours to any of our destinations. We focus a lot on meeting local dietary needs of the Indian travellers like vegetarian food at our destinations. Apart from this, we are also exploring newer ways to entertain the Indian travellers in Europe and have come up with the concept of sensory experiences to offer a different touch

and feel of the destination," says Kaufmann.

Pointing out some trends in the Indian market, Martin explains that a big shift has been recorded towards Scandinavia which contributes to a high double digit growth. Russia is also a major growth area and an increased interest for the Baltic and the Balkan countries is being seen. "Amongst the Indian clientele, predominantly the 4-star hotel category is very popular. Our target customers are usually the middle class to the premium Indian professional travelling with the family."

Renewed Focus

Indian travellers are showing an increased interest for destinations like Russia, Scandinavia, Balkan and the Baltic countries

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UIA starts Delhi-Kiev flight

On May 1, Ukraine International Airline launched its first non-stop flight from Delhi to Kiev. Besides winning over tourists from India, Ukraine has also seen Indian students travelling to the country for higher education.



Simranjeet Singh

Ukraine's flag carrier has started operating its first non-stop scheduled connection from Delhi to Kiev from May 1, 2018. The Boeing 767 aircraft will have three different classes — Business Class, Premium Economy,

Speaking about the potentialities of Ukraine as a travel destination, **Igor Polikha**, Ambassador of Ukraine to India said, "Ukraine can be defined in three terms — incredible, unique, and hospitable. It has a lot to offer, including, its diverse natural beauty and its scenic and mesmerising view from the hills. Ukraine's

monuments are worth a study and its distinctive national cuisine is to relish upon."

Ukraine has seen a rise in Indian students travelling to obtain higher education. Universities of Ukraine have been very popular amongst Indian students and this is a new trend

which the airlines have found. Currently there are 10,000 students staying in Ukraine and to enhance the growth rate of Indian students in the country, UIA will consider providing special rates for them.

STIC Group, the GSA for Ukraine International Airlines,

is performing various steps to promote the airlines. The competitive inaugural price technique is for ₹26,500 round trip from Delhi to Kiev. The frequency of the direct connection flight is now four times in a week. Speaking on the code partnership plans, **Subhash Goyal**, Chairman STIC

Group said, "We are looking at Air India and Jet Airways for Code Partnership as we want to bring tourism from Ukraine and various other 40 international destinations to India. This historic step will help tourism sector and it will see about 20-25 per cent growth by 2019."




Igor Polikha
Ambassador
Ukraine to India

and Economy. The 267-seater flight will take a total journey time of 6 hours and 30 minutes. Two hundred and forty two passengers boarded from Delhi with exceptional inaugural round trip price of ₹26,500. "India being a great potential market for tourism, we have been planning to launch the flight for consecutive years and preparing to provide with the best of our abilities to


“India is a great potential market for tourism. We have been planning to launch the flight for consecutive years for the travellers from Delhi to Kiev or beyond Kiev”




the travellers from Delhi to Kiev or beyond Kiev. We launched the direct flight between both the capitals and Ukraine international Airline is also eligible to fly to another nine cities of Ukraine and 40 international destinations within Europe for passengers from Delhi," said **Sergey Fomenko**, Vice President Commerce, Ukraine International Airlines.



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GITB to remain relevant for years

The attendees of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar opined that the exhibition is most relevant to network with fellow industry partners and at the most generate some leads to follow up later.



Ankita Saxena



Arun Khanna
Director
Colonel's Retreat

“Initially, I was a little hesitant about our participation in GITB. However, after meeting various buyers at the show on the first day, we can successfully conclude that it was a good show. For us, the quality of the show can be determined by the presence of relevant buyers for our business. We excel in personalised services and non-group travellers; the buyers we received were interested in just that, which works for us.”



B R Achuta
Senior Vice President—Operations,
Windflower Resort & Spa

“This is a very useful platform for us and we saw some genuine buyers this year. We felt that over the years, GITB has not changed much, but in this year's edition, there was an increase in the number of foreign buyers. The quality of meetings was much better than previous years, and we were very happy to receive queries from newer markets. Some of the buyers from countries like Brazil showed interest in our products which was very encouraging.”



Digraj Singh Shekhawat
Director
Shapura Hotels

“This year's edition of GITB has been much better than the previous one. The number of foreign buyers increased this year and the quality of queries from buyers has become more product specific. We have been participating in this show since its inception and I feel that this year, the buyers are filtered not only based on the source markets, but also according to the product requirement. We are now pitching into the luxury heritage segment and Australia and New Zealand are our new markets.”

“At GITB this year, we received good queries from some of the new clients. The buyers who came for meetings were mostly those who were just starting off with selling India as a destination and particularly seeking the experiential segment of travel. The point of these exhibitions is to meet newer buyers even if they belong to the popular source markets. As a representation company, our main purpose is brand building and lead generation so that some of these queries convert into actual business when we follow-up with the DMCs.”



Sowmya Rao Vijamohan
Partner
RARE India

“This year, the show was much more positive as compared to last year. The fact that there are so many buyers at the show and interest has been evoked for India as a destination, is a very positive sign for the future. Such shows put a name and face together for further business. Lead time of doing business is shrinking and the overall buying behavior is also changing. The speed and cycle of doing business is much faster nowadays. Business may or may not close here since tourism is a composite product and results may be visible after a certain time.”



Ashish Vohra
Founder and CEO, Justa
Hotels and Resorts

“I feel that over the years nothing much has changed at GITB. Just like last year the Day 1 of the show promised good meetings and we met some very good clients who were interested in the product and service we offered. Some of the clients were just enquiring and gathering information which is characteristic of any exhibition. I feel GITB will continue to remain relevant for travel trade industry as this is one platform that promises business leads and upon follow-up also gets concrete closure.”



Shruti Pandey
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Vasco aims offbeat travel

With a yearly growth of 26%, Vasco Travel plans to focus on offbeat experiential travel in 2018 which can grab the attention of the current generation.



TT Bureau

Vasco Travel started its journey as a tour operator in the tourism industry in 1990. The company is owned and managed by the third generation of Abbot family, which has a long association with the tourism industry, informs the company's Managing Director—Vikas Abbott. As the products and dynamics of the travel industry are changing, the company is looking forward to introduce new experiences for the tourists. The



Vikas Abbott
Managing Director
Vasco Travel

“We always lookout for new experiences. Our research is in process for opening new destinations in the future. Rather than mass tourism, we are trying to focus more on offbeat experiential travel”

outbound division of the company has a strong foothold in the market and subsequently, recorded a growth of 12 per cent, while the company recorded an overall growth of 26 per cent in the year 2017. With hopes of expansion in the inbound tourism industry, Abbott feels that the company's inbound division is new and thus will take some time to grab the eyeballs of the market.

For the business growth in 2018, Vasco Travel is in constantly exploring to

increase its revenue by understanding the market and developing their niche marketing strategies. “We always look out for new experiences. We are planning to focus a lot on outbound in 2018. Our research is in process for opening new destinations in the future. Rather than focusing on

mass tourism, we are trying to focus more on offbeat experiential travel which can grab the attention of the present generation,” explains Abbott. He further adds that for digital promotions, the company is working in full swing on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram. ↴

Cruising for growth

■ Cruise Carrot, a leading cruise operator in India offers worldwide cruises like Celestyal Cruises, Costa, Princess Cruises, Dream Cruises, Star Cruises, MSC Cruises, Royal Caribbean and many more. In 2017, the company recorded 40 per cent growth in terms of occupancy and in 2018, the company's target is to become a one-stop-shop for all travel partners. According to Neeraj Sharma, Managing Director, Cruise Carrot, the company's aim is

to educate the travel agents and make the industry aware about the different cruises and their offerings pan-India to grow business in the future. The company offers exotic destinations on cruise itineraries like Santorini and Patmos in Greece, Penang and Port Klang in Malaysia, Phuket in Thailand, Guang-zho in China, Hong Kong and Singapore.

“Cruise Carrot is very focused on product knowledge. One does not need to worry about



Neeraj Sharma
Managing Director
Cruise Carrot

the competition in the cruise industry if the product is perfect, business will definitely flow,” says Sharma.

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NCL strengthens its trade arm

With its office in Mumbai, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings is making all efforts to grow the cruise market from India. The company plans to rely on travel agency partners and educate them. It will conduct various Fam trips to offer them first-hand experience of their products.



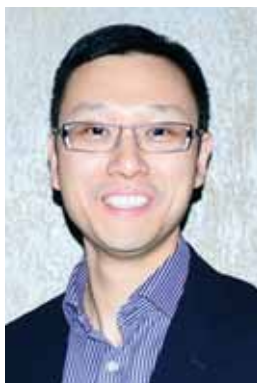
TT Bureau

India is the fastest growing market for NCL Holdings, informs the company's Vice President—Sales Asia, **Felix Chan**. He explains that since the opening of the office in Mumbai, a double digit growth has been recorded. He says, "The growth is not only measured by the increase in number of passengers each year, but the increase in revenue per passenger. We have seen the yield increase from nearly \$120-\$130 per guest per day to \$150 since we stepped into the Indian market. We offer three brands—Norwegian Cruise Line for the mass segment; Oceania Cruises—upper premium brand and the luxury segment brand—Reagent Seven Seas."

Chan points out that NCL has drawn the maximum at-

tention mostly because the company has spent maximum efforts on this product. The demand is from the leisure travellers and MICE travellers who are primarily engaging in incentive travel. On the other hand, for Reagent Seven Seas, the company started with a small base and this segment too has shown tremendous growth.

"We realise that India is a polarised market where maximum traction is either for the mass segment ships or the luxury segment ships. Since we do not have any cruise ships based in India, we work on the fly-cruise model. An important thing to note is that Indians do not think of cruises as a form of vacation. They first decide the destination of their choice and then compare various forms of vacations. The option that



Felix Chan
Vice President—Sales Asia
Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings

offers them most value for their money is chosen."

In terms of destinations, Chan elaborates, the most popular so far is Europe, mostly on luxury ships and in Europe the Mediterranean remains the most visited. Apart from this, the Caribbean is also very pop-

“The growth is not only measured by the increase in number of passengers each year, but the increase in revenue per passenger. We have seen the yield increase from nearly \$120-\$130 per guest per day to \$150 since we stepped into the Indian market”

ular. However, it is important to note an increase in interest for the Baltic countries like Norway, Finland and Northern Europe. "Since Asia has a small cruising population, there is a need to apprise the market about the value of a cruise vacation versus a land vacation. Hence, the importance of a travel agency cannot be undermined. They add a lot of value in convincing travellers to take up cruises as

a vacation. We feel that travel agents can convince their clients better if they have experienced the product themselves and thus we offer Fam trips."

He further adds that the company invests heavily on its products and has upgraded its older ships to offer the same experience to the cruisers as on a new ship. Chan feels that the proportion of repeat guests

is an important yardstick to understand the reception of the product and further points out that on an average globally, one third of the total guests on NCL are repeat cruisers while for the premium and luxury brands, 60 per cent of the guests are repeat travellers.

Though Mumbai, New Delhi and Bengaluru are the highest yielding markets in India, the cruise line has seen a significant interest from Tier-II and Tier-III cities towards their luxury products. Chan further says, "It is difficult to make the target market understand the difference between the mass segment ships, premium and luxury ships. Also, most Indians take short-haul vacations and selling anything beyond 10 days becomes a challenge."

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Souvenir retains firm growth

Souvenir has seen 15 per cent growth in revenue and 79 per cent occupancy throughout its hotels in Jaipur. The company also plans to launch new hotels in places like Raja Park, Jaysinghpura and Kukas.



TT Bureau

Souvenir Hotels has four properties in Jaipur—Souvenir Prime, Souvenir Pride, Souvenir Peppermint and Souvenir Premier. By 2023, the hotel chain further plans to launch its new hotels in Raja Park and Jaysinghpura. The property in Kukas will be a resort with 200 rooms. The company has big plans in the pipeline to become a major hospitality player in Rajasthan and cover nearby areas like Agra, New Delhi etc.

The year 2017 has been very good for Souvenir Hotels, informs **Rao Khushnood**, Corporate General Manager, Souvenir Hotels. He says, "We had 15 per cent growth in revenue



Rao Khushnood
Corporate General Manager,
Souvenir Hotels

“We had 15 per cent growth in revenue last year with an occupancy of 79 per cent. This is a stable growth in the business”

last year with an occupancy of 79 per cent. This is a stable growth in the business. Of the total guests at our hotels, 40 per cent are foreigners while the rest 60 per cent are domestic. Our major focus for inbound tourism is from the source markets like the Far East, France and Germany, which are mostly series departures. The domestic business at the hotels is fuelled by corporate and leisure travellers.”

Souvenir Hotels' Kukas property will focus on leisure and MICE segments as the group also intends to come up



with banquets and marriage halls in the city for social and business events.

Khushnood further informs that the company will participate at various travel trade exhibitions and fairs in order to promote the brand and generate awareness.

Stable Growth

↳ Souvenir hotels recorded 15 per cent increase in revenue

↳ The hotel chain has big plans for 2023 with new hotels in Rajasthan

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Industry hails tourism upswing

The travel and hospitality industry is positive about the tourism business this year for both inbound and outbound segment. With strong economic buoyancy, the esteemed winners of the India Travel Awards from various regions opine that this year holds good signs of growth for the tourism industry at large.



TT Bureau

► Best Debut City Hotel — **Ramada Darjeeling Gandhi Road**

Inbound season shows positive signs

The General Manager of Ramada Darjeeling, Gandhi Road— **Vivek Shukla**, believes that this year the inbound season looks positive. The property is coming up with a spa, heated swimming pool and a shopping arcade soon, informs Shukla. "In 2017, we recorded an approximate occupancy of 80 per cent and the ARR's were at ₹ 9000. Out of the total guests, 70 per cent are domestic and 30 per cent are international. The largest share of guests book through various online portals and the rest are the independent individual travellers to Darjeeling," says Shukla. The property is aiming to target the corporate travel market, leisure travellers and events and destination weddings segment.



“In 2017, we recorded an approximate occupancy of 80 per cent and the ARR's were at ₹ 9000. Out of the total guests, 70% are domestic and 30% are international.”



► Best Destination Management Company — **STHI Holidays India**

Age & demographic pattern governing demand

STHI Holidays India is focusing on doubling its targets vis-a-vis last year from this outbound season, informs **Gagan Kumar**, Director, STHI Holidays India. He says, "Trends are changing and we are capitalising by educating our preferred partners with the requirements in more specific terms wherein we can springboard our strengths to gain business perspective." Kumar further points out that technological breakthrough is presenting strong opportunities as well as fair share of challenges. He adds, "The demand shift is driven by generation and demographic pattern across the globe. Our destination showcase presentations at various events at domestic as well as international level have given lots of leads."

“Trends are changing and we are capitalising by educating our preferred partners with the requirements in more specific terms.”

► Best Inbound Tour Operator - Western Europe — **ACME Voyages**

Need to report swindlers

The Indian tourism industry can certainly expect a better outbound season this year given the buoyancy in the market due to strong signs of economic recovery, feels **Surinder Yadav**, Director, ACME Voyages. He identifies that though challenges prevailed in the day-to-day business, segments like adventure, culture, group travel, culinary tourism and medical tourism thrived. Yadav says, "We believe in responsible tourism and firmly believe that travel agents must adopt the guidelines of Department of Tourism to become a recognised service provider. As a community, we must report and take strong action against all fraudulent activities."



“We believe in responsible tourism and firmly believe that travel agents must adopt the guidelines of Department of Tourism to become a recognised service provider.”

► Best Tour Operator-Outbound — **World Travel Studio**

Return of the offline booking mode

According to **Hareesh Koyande**, Founder and Managing Director, World Travel Studio, this year is going to be a bumper year for tourism. He points out that post the impact of demonetisation and GST on the tourism and hospitality industry, this year has kick-started extremely well and the company is witnessing unprecedented demand. He says, "We are seeing an increased number of clients, who in the past made bookings online, are coming back to offline tour operators, as most of them have realised that they get much better value and most importantly personalised service when they book with offline travel agents."

“An increased number of clients, who in the past made bookings online, are coming back to offline tour operators for better value and personalised service.”

► Best Tour Operator-Outbound — **Flag Holidays**

Adventure travel rules outbound

Although the online portals remain a big challenge for the traditional travel agents, the Managing Director of Flag Holidays— **Vinay Arora**, believes that the traditional travel agents can get enough share of the pie as the outbound tourism market has always been strong in India especially for destinations like Australia, Canada, USA and Europe. He points out that this year there is an increased demand for adventure tours especially among the young travellers. "The medium-sized families to big family and friends groups are seeking tailor-made itineraries which can provide unique and authentic experiences at different destinations. Also, destination weddings have picked up in the recent past."



“The medium-sized families to big family and friends groups are seeking tailor-made itineraries which can provide unique and authentic experiences at different destination.”

HOTELS

The Leela eyes big

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts' hotel in Gandhinagar will be the first luxury hotel in India to be constructed at the airspace of a railway station.



Kanchan Nath

With the latest addition of Mahatma Mandir and The Leela Gandhinagar to the group's portfolio, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has reinforced its plan to expand into

It was felt that the standard of excellence was not maintained at the property. Therefore, the facility needed to be run professionally. Top hotel operators in the country and abroad were invited for bids. We were the ones who won the bid in

International projects

Elaborating on the brand's foray into the international market, Nair said, "A number of dignitaries and royals from the Middle East have stayed with us, especially at our Chanakyapuri property. We plan to have an



(L-R): Amit Samson, GM, Mahatma Mandir; Vivek Nair, CMD, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts; and Rajiv Kaul, President, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

the international conferences and events space, underscoring its asset-light growth strategy. Elaborating on the same, Vivek Nair, Chairman and Managing Director, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts and Executive Committee Member, FHRAI, said, "The Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhi-

September last year. We started operation of the facility from April this year."

The convention centre as well as the hotel have been funded by a joint venture of the Ministry of Railways and the Gujarat government. Leela Gandhinagar is the first luxury hotel

80-room Leela Palace there and two other service apartments. The construction of that has just begun. We want to take that on a fast-track basis and it should be ready in two years. Then we have a project in Dubai itself on the Jumeirah beach, very close to the Four Season's hotel and one in Business Bay,



tion Center is a facility for 6,000 persons and has about 10,000 square feet of exhibition space. The location of Mahatma Mandir is also very important. This was set up about four years ago and run by the Gujarat government.

in the country to be constructed at the airspace of a railway station and will be built 25 metres above ground. The logistics issue of bringing people, especially if there was a conference of 6,000 people, was realised.

which is in Burj Khalifa. We have recently entered a contract to develop a property in Nha Trang, Vietnam. This is going to be the destination's finest hotel, a large property which is currently under development."

New team for IATO

► Contd. from page 3

Rajiv Mehra said, "I'm glad to be re-elected and I will be working with the team to fulfil many things."

Committing his association with IATO, Mudgill said, "I'd like to thank the members for their

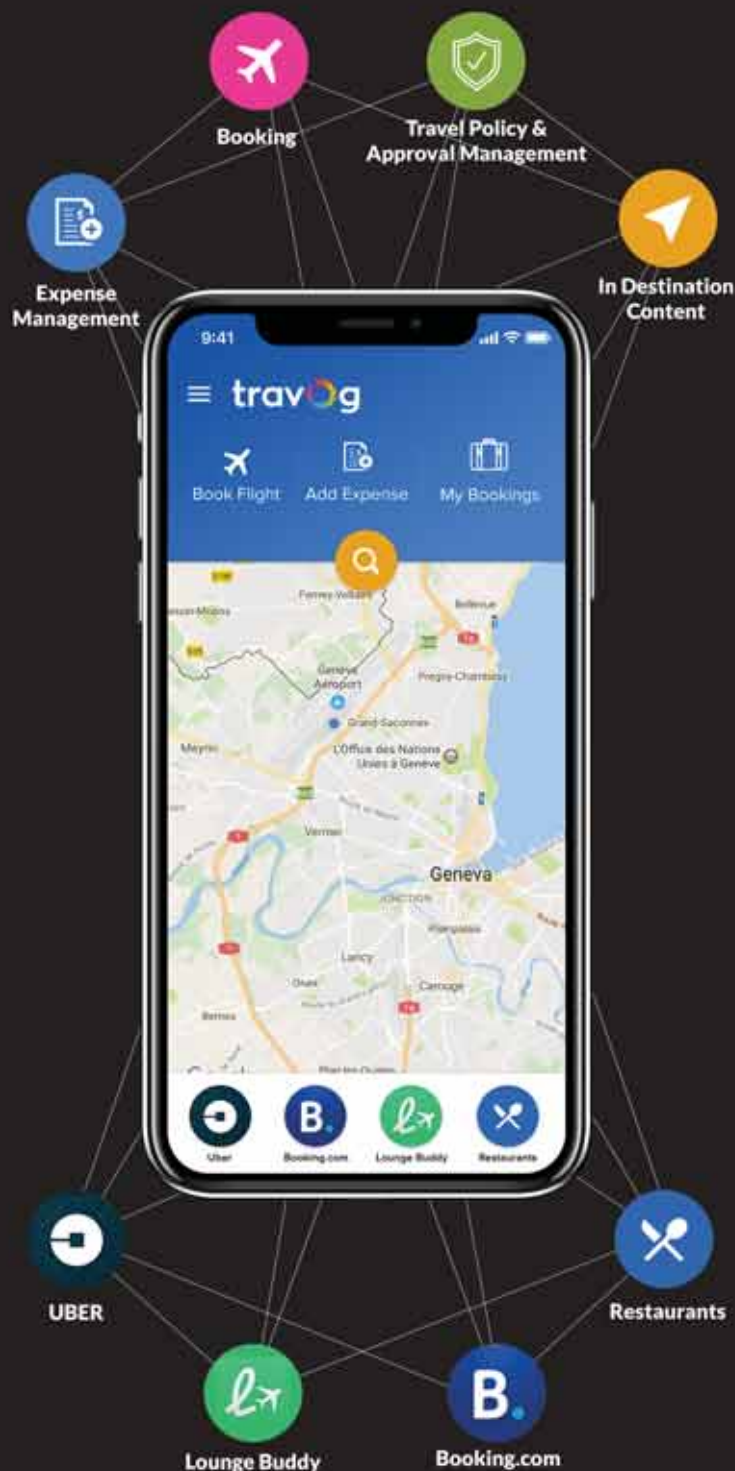
support. I've worked with many of this team in the past and will now be working together again."

The active EC members are Raj Bajaj of Adventure World India, Tony Marwah of India Travel Promotion Company, PS Duggal of

Minar Travels India, Deepak Bhatnagar of Aamantaran Travel Company and Viney Tyagi of Uni Crystal Holidays. The EC allied members are Zia Siddiqui of Alliance Hotels & Resorts, Sunil Gupta of Travel Bureau and P Vijayasarathi of Benchmark Hotels.

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ADTOI's new N India chapters

Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) launched its Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh chapters on May 5 to boost tourism in these states as well as the states of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. The 9th Chapter was launched in the presence of Vikas Pratap, Principal Secretary (Tourism) and SS Dhillon, Director (Tourism), Govt of Punjab, in a ceremony at JW Marriott Hotel, Chandigarh.



MiCE, meetings & merriment

Marriott International held their signature MiCE event, Marriott Meetings Matter - M CUBE 2018 at Jaipur in April, at the newly-opened JW Marriott Jaipur Resort & Spa. The 5th edition brought together the largest corporate and professional conference organisers under one roof. The event witnessed a healthy mix of general managers, market leaders and senior Marriott leadership of South Asia in attendance.



Leaders in hotel booking

Hotel Expertz has recorded business worth ₹35.90 crore till date in 2018 from North India and has high hopes to grow the business even further in the year.



TT Bureau

An initiative of Kehar Travel Ventures, Hotelexpertz.com is a fully interactive and online hotel reservation system relevant and especially designed for travel agencies, inform **Rajan Kehar** and **Raman Kehar**, Directors, Hotel Expertz.

Explaining the functionality of the platform, Rajan Kehar says, "We offer a single window platform where travel agents can find results from the finest quality of wholesalers from across the world. The quality of products is accompanied by an opportunity for travel agencies to get the best rates. We have put in our best efforts and the most innovative ideas in place to build a platform that can cater to the needs of travel agents in minimum time."

Raman Kehar further adds, "When people ask why they should use Hotelexpertz.com, I



Raman Kehar
Director
Hotel Expertz

can cite a lot of reasons. Some of those are our widespread international network which brings you properties from across destinations. We have an unmatched reporting of travel history of every hotel we put on the platform; our experienced and dedicated professionals understand your requirements; the corporate call centre can assist you in hotel bookings and apart from this, our 24-hour emergency helpline

is available to offer immediate support for your travel queries."

Climbing up the growth ladder

The company has been on a growth trajectory for over a few years now with revenues climbing up each year, points out the company's Chief Executive Officer **Neeraj Kumar**. He says, "One can map this growth from the fact that in the financial year of 2015, we did business worth ₹15.16 crore in the Delhi/NCR region, which increased to ₹25.20 crore in 2016 from the same markets. In 2017, this revenue further increased to ₹48 crore from Delhi/NCR while in 2018, year to date, the company has already done business worth ₹35.90 crore from North India."

Online Expertz

The company has widespread international network

Heritage at its best

The 400-year-old Fort Dhariyawad in Udaipur is now run by the descendants of Prince Sahasmal who ensure that guests are treated like royalty.



TT Bureau

Dhariyawad was founded in the middle of the 16th century by royal prince Sahasmal, the grandson of Maharana Pratap, the legendary hero of Mewar, Udaipur. Situated on the confluences of the Jakham and Karmoi rivers, Dhariyawad is located in the south of Rajasthan and is surrounded by alluring valleys along with the Vindhya and the Aravalli range running parallel to each other. Bhils and other tribal people inhabit this area. This region is unspoiled by modern civilisation, and the best cultural heritage can be experienced here. The fort of Dhariyawad has been converted into an exclusive heritage hotel whilst maintaining the decor and the traditional splendour of the fort.

Bhanu Pratap Singh, Owner, Fort Dhariyawad, says, "The USP of our property is the multifarious excursions we offer



Bhanu Pratap Singh
Owner
Fort Dhariyawad

"The USP of our property is the multifarious excursions we offer to our guests such as the Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary"

to our guests such as the Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary which is 16 km away from the fort known for its flying squirrels and panthers. We also organise riverside jungle lunches and sundowners at Jakham Reservoir. We engage our guests in live cooking demonstrations, the recipes for which come straight from the kitchen of Late Rawat Shaheb Udai Bhan Singh, ruler of Dhariyawad."

He adds that both inbound and domestic markets are equally important for him. "We are trying really hard to achieve balance in both the markets. The previous financial year 2017-18 has been impressive and we hope the same in the coming future. We're intensively focusing on digital marketing because it serves as a substantial medium in attracting tourists. Travel trade fairs serve as the best forum for meeting buyers and getting to know more about the hospitality sector," Singh concludes.

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EVENT TALK

MAY 2018

IMEX	Frankfurt, Germany	15-17
PhocusWright Europe	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	15-17
ITB China	Shanghai, China	16-18
PATA Annual Summit 2018	Gangneung, Korea	17-20
ILTM Asia Pacific	Singapore	21-24

JUNE 2018

IATA AGM 2018	Sydney, Australia	3-5
International Travel Roadshow (ITR)	Delhi	12
International Travel Roadshow (ITR)	Kolkata	13
International Travel Roadshow (ITR)	Pune	15
BITE	Beijing, China	15-17
International Travel Roadshow (ITR)	Hyderabad	16
International Travel Roadshow (ITR)	Kochi	19
International Yoga Day	India	21
HRAWI Convention	Sri Lanka	27-30
Telangana Tourism Conclave-2018	Hyderabad	28-30

JULY 2018

Hotel Operations Summit India 2018	Delhi	2
GPS	Chandigarh	5-7
TTF	Kolkata	6-8
Travel Wedding Show	Jaipur	7-8
Kiwi Link India	Mumbai	9-10
Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training	Bengaluru	12
GPS	Ahmedabad	12-14
Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training	Delhi	13
TTF	Hyderabad	13-14
ACTE Global Summit	Singapore	17-18
GPS	Lucknow	19-21
Focus Philippines	Goa	25-28
IITM	Bengaluru	27-29
UNICEF Adventure Expo	Noida	28-29

AUGUST 2018

GPS	Kolkata	2-4
IITM	Chennai	3-5
Israel Ministry of Tourism Roadshow	Ahmedabad	7
Israel Ministry of Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	8
GPS	Kochi	9-11
OTOAI Convention	Cape Town	11-14
ITM B2B Event, Tourism Australia	Kochi	16
ITM B2B Event, Tourism Australia	Kolkata	17
ITM B2B Event, Tourism Australia	Goa	18
ITM B2B Event, Tourism Australia	Mumbai	20
GPS	Pune	23-25
Dubai Business Roadshow	Mumbai	27
Holland Sales Mission & Roadshow	Delhi	28
Holland Sales Mission & Roadshow	Bengaluru	29
Dubai Business Roadshow	Delhi	30
Holland Sales Mission & Roadshow	Mumbai	30

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

ASSOCIATION TALK

OTOAI convention Aug 11-14

► Contd. from page 3

after our event. This is because our members tend to push that particular destination after having visited it. For instance, after our convention in the Philippines, it saw a growth of about 37 per cent."

The convention committee is hoping to get about 200-plus registrations for this convention. "We have started discussions with airlines for this convention and the registration fee and the itinerary will be announced soon."

Sharing an insight on the alleged water crisis, **Hanneli Slabber**, Regional General Manager (Asia, Australasia, Middle East), South Africa Tourism, said, "We need to sort out the myth from reality, which is that Cape Town is open for business, that it has enough water. What we are doing is we are trying to be more responsible and sustainable in all our tourism activities as well as everyday lives in South Africa. Cape Town has protected business centres under which all the tourism sectors fall. But I think the best thing about Cape



Himanshu Patil
Vice President, OTOAI,
and Convention Chairman

Town at the moment is that innovation has come from this.



Hanneli Slabber
Regional General Manager (Asia,
Australasia, Middle East), South
Africa Tourism

There is no reason not to travel to South Africa." 🇿🇦

ADTOI launches new chapter

Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) has launched Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh chapters, aiming to promote tourism.



TT Bureau

Speaking about ADTOI's new chapter **Rajat Sawhney**, Vice President, ADTOI said, "Chandigarh is unique being the capital of the Punjab and Haryana, it's the best planned city in India. Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh serve as a transit point to all tour operators in the country and tourists going to Shimla to Jammu and Kashmir. We will intensify efforts to promote destinations in all these northern states through this new launched chapter".

Sawhney also said that, "ADTOI in its attempt to promote inter-state tourism in the country has been reaching out to every



Rajat Sawhney
Vice President
ADTOI

state where we have the presence of our members and launch of the chapter will help to work closely with travel, trade and the state government to promote destinations in the states. Punjab,



Manmeet Singh
Chapter Chairman
ADTOI Punjab, Haryana

Haryana and Chandigarh are important gateways to Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir and the cities here can be a very important transit points for the people travelling up to north.

Speaking to **TRAVTALK**, **Manmeet Singh**, Chairman, ADTOI Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh, Northern India Chapter, said that he was excited to work forward with total positivity. "I have a clear vision of promoting tourism by inter-state development, where in there will be a footfall of tourist from one state to another and vice versa. All states have been promoting tourism on an individual basis, but the need of the hour is to promote tourism in an integrated manner. Every state has its own USP's and we need to utilise it to develop a complete package." 🇮🇳

Bengaluru Skål gets new prez

Manoj Mathew, General Manager, Vivanta by Taj MG Road Bangalore, has been elected the new president of Skål International Bangalore.



TT Bureau

Mathew will lead Skål International Club for the next two year years and succeeds **Rajendra Singh Bhati**. Mathew is an established leader in the hospitality space and brings over three decades of professional experience, all of which has been with Taj Hotels, Resorts & Palaces in overseas destinations and in various properties in India.



Manoj Mathew
General Manager
Vivanta by Taj MG Road Bangalore

Skål International Bangalore is a professional organisation of tourism leaders around the world, promoting global tourism and friendship. It is the only international group uniting all branches of the travel and tourism industry. It's members, the industry's managers and executives, meet at local, national, regional and international levels to 'Do Business among Friends'. It has over 15,000 members in 83 countries.

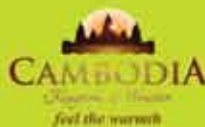
Skål International Bangalore will be hosting the Skål International Asia Congress 2019 in June 2019. Over 200 international delegates are expected to participate in this Congress. It will be a great opportunity to showcase tourism in India especially for Karnataka.

The first Club was founded in 1932 in Paris by travel managers, following an educational tour of Scandinavia. 🇸🇪

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IAAPI

Mumbai

Pradeep K Sharma has been appointed as the President of Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI). He is also the Chairman of Bombay Amusement Ride. He has served IAAPI since its inception in different capacities which includes training, safety and manufacturers' and export promotion committees as its Chairman. He has been instrumental in drafting India's first amusement rides safety standards (code of practice) for BIS on behalf of IAAPI. He joined Essel Group in 1984 and later moved to EsselWorld in 1991.



SaffronStays

Goa

SaffronStays has appointed **Mayank Kinger** as Regional Head—Goa, Coastal Karnataka & Maharashtra. His role will be to facilitate growth and development of SaffronStays' penetration in these regions. Before joining SaffronStays, Kinger had been an entrepreneur running his own F&B venture. He was also associated with a not-for-profit trust which worked closely with special education schools, HIV shelters and palliative care centres for cancer patients in Bangalore. Prior to that, he worked with MNCs as a CRM consultant. Kinger will play a key role in planning and shaping of business blueprints.



Radisson Hotel Group

Singapore

Radisson Hotel Group has appointed **Saurabh Prakash** as its new Vice President—Commercial, Asia Pacific. As a member of the Asia Pacific executive committee, Prakash will oversee all aspects of the region's commercial activities, including sales, revenue optimisation, distribution, marketing and loyalty. With over 15 years of experience, he has worked for industry-leading hotels across Asia Pacific and spent a majority of his career with Marriott International, where he worked in India, Malaysia, China and Singapore. Prior to this role, he was General Manager & Vice President—Asia Pacific, TSA Solutions,



Exotic Heritage Group

Delhi

Exotic Heritage Group has appointed **Vineet Arora** as Vice President - Business Development. Arora is responsible for scouting and implementing expansion opportunities in the field of river cruising; identifying and introducing best industry practices; developing and promoting new concepts, and building new marketing channels in India and different parts of the world. He is also in charge of developing and training a cadre for different aspects of operations of river cruising business and hotels. Prior to this, Arora was Executive Vice President—Sales & Operations at Treehouse Hotels.



Sun Siyam

Delhi

Sun Siyam has appointed **Rakesh Gupta** as Account Director of Sales & Marketing - India. With an experience of over 17 years, Gupta started his career with Cox & Kings, followed by Kuoni, Marina Bay Sands and Hilton Worldwide. He has an expertise on augmenting brand standards for the company. In his new position, Gupta will be responsible for spearheading Sales and Marketing activities for three Sun Siyam properties in Maldives and a property in Sri Lanka. He will be in command for accomplishing corporate objectives, developing business building and brand visibility.



Crowne Plaza Today Gurgaon

Gurugram

Suraj Kumar Jha has been appointed as the General Manager of Crowne Plaza Today Gurgaon. Prior to this, Jha was General Manager with Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport for over four years. Before joining IHG, he served as the General Manager at Hotel Radisson Blu Greater Noida. With a career spanning over two decades of experience in operations, development and business development, Jha brings with him an extensive understanding of the hospitality industry in India. With his customer centric approach, he has helped the teams immensely in further strengthening the rapport with guests.



Radisson Blue Temple Bay Mamallapuram

Bengaluru

Ameet Raj Kundu has joined Radisson Blue Temple Bay Mamallapuram as Director of Sales and Marketing. Kundu is responsible for spearheading the Marketing and Sales function and product and revenue management. He comes with over 14 years of industry experience. In his role, Kundu will provide leadership and functional expertise to drive productivity and results across the company.



Marriott Hotels & Resorts

Kochi

Anoop Joseph has joined as the new Multi Property Director of Sales & Marketing of the Kochi Marriott hotel and the Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport hotel. Joseph has an experience of 13 years in the hospitality industry with an expertise in the sales and marketing function in India and International markets. In his new capacity, he will lead in developing and implementing sales and marketing strategies for both the hotels in Kochi. Prior to his current role, he has previously worked with International Brands like IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group), the Movenpick Hotels and Resorts, The Leela Hotels and Resorts, Accor Hotels Group.



Wyndham Hotel Group

New Delhi

Wyndham Hotel Group has promoted **Ignace Bauwens** to Regional Vice President, Middle East, Eurasia and Africa (MEA). Based out of Wyndham Hotel Group's office in Dubai, Bauwens has led the Middle East and Africa region since 2016. His newly expanded role underlines the Company's strategic plan to unite the broader region, in recognition of the strong economic ties between India and the Middle East. In this new role, Bauwens will be responsible for driving Wyndham Hotel Group's continued growth in both established and new markets across this larger region.



TALKing People

Anand Nair, General Manager, Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere, Kerala – Vayalar believes that one needs to have a fine balance between work and personal time to help maintain a healthy lifestyle and continue to be productive at work. "I love travelling and ensure that I take at least one road trip in India and an international vacation with family every year. As a hotelier, these experiences also offer me wonderful opportunities to learn," Nair said.



Berzin Master, General Manager, Balaji Sarovar Premiere Solapur is of the opinion that a hotel manager is always switched on even when on leave. He believes that balancing this fact is an art and enjoys himself every moment whether he is involved in hotel operations or on leave.



Rohan Sable, General Manager, Novotel Hotels & Resorts, Goa loves barbecuing and grilling during his free time. On travel, Sable mentions, "I have always enjoyed discovering new places. Domestically, my favourite holiday destination is Goa. I also enjoy taking short trips to Mumbai. Internationally, Thailand and Bali top my favourite holiday destination lists."





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With the Indian corporate world opening up to new experiences in terms of meetings and conventions, MiCEtalk gets talking on the finest ideas in business travel. Innovative, magnificent, spectacular are some of the superlatives that these exploits attract. Intended as a guide for business travellers, MiCEtalk is a testimony to how prominent a place India is coming to occupy on the MICE map.

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Virgin direct from Chennai to UK?

Talking about the growth in places like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai, **David Hodges**, Country Manager, India, Virgin Atlantic, says these cities offer some exciting new opportunities for direct flights. He goes on to talk about India as a viable source market for the airline.



Peden Doma Bhutia

QAre you starting any new routes from India?

We have been flying from Delhi for 18 years and it's been a fantastic route for us. We are certainly proud of the heritage that we've brought to this market. We have a partnership with Jet Airways which provides a much greater reach to customers in India and those from UK travelling to India across connections via Delhi to a number of cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, Kerala, Amritsar etc. We are really excited about the growth that we see in India.

QWhat kind of growth are you talking about?

The growth is through our expansion in the partnership with Jet Airways and the codeshare partnership that we have in new cities. I think there is some real opportunity for potentially more direct flights and that's what we are evaluating at the moment. If you look at the growth in places like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai there is some really exciting new opportunities for direct flights. These cities are seeing a lot of growth from both business and corporate travellers. So there's real opportunity in the future going forward in those cities but at the moment our growth is certainly here for our partnerships.

QAre you planning to venture in the Mumbai market once again?

Right now we see Mumbai as a great market to strengthen our partnership with Jet Airways and their three services a day. We got the best Trans At-



“There's a real vibrancy about the Indian economy and that vibrancy translates into how people use technology, which is creating a desire for more people to travel”

to buy our new Economy Delight product which is effectively giving them much more legroom, premium check-in, seat assignment and some other benefits. We see value in that choice for the customer, the Economy Classic product is very similar to what we had earlier for economy, with some extra things like free seat assignment and finally, the Economy Light product is for people who don't want to take check-in baggage and want to have the lowest fare at all time.

QHow big is the market for no-baggage in India?

We've introduced the sales and there's a definitely a market for all three. The market for no-baggage in India might be smaller than most markets but there are still corporates who travel for a very short time.

QWith Indian LCCs planning to fly to European routes, do you think of them as competition?

Any airline that comes into the market and flies on your route is a competitor to some extent, but as the growth of international travel is increasing the potential for low cost carriers to fly long haul is also growing. We offer competitive prices for the service we render. I think people would want to continue to fly with us. Whatever the competition is, I haven't seen an airline that can deliver to the customer what we do. 🐦

lantic connections that you can have onwards from India. Our partnership with Delta Airlines connects places like New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Atlanta and many other cities.

QHow have you fared in terms of passenger load?

The passenger load factor has been very strong in 2017. Our load factors are well into the 80%, which is pretty high, but we need to grow and we see a market that's growing strongly.

QHow viable is India as a source market for you? How important is the Indian travel trade in this?

It's very viable, we see a lot more people wanting to explore, travel and see the world. The Indian market is growing as the economy is continuing to grow. Travel trade is really important for us and through our sales team we are working day to day with the different segments of that market. They will remain important for

the long-term future of Virgin Atlantic in India.

QVirgin has always been at the heart of innovation, being the first ones to introduce flat beds, the first to introduce premium economy and the first to put television at the back of the seats, across all cabins. Now you have introduced three new ways to fly for Economy passengers. Tell us more...

We are always looking at how the customer will benefit and what is the new innovation that can help them. And we looked into the economy cabins in particular to give more choice to the economy passengers. So, what we have done is that we have introduced effectively three different options in the economy section that work for people with different needs and it's quite a big change because while most airlines are looking at how they can cram people into the aircraft we have actually taken some seats out of our economy cabin to give people the choice

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in Delhi

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Austria eyes families from India

Austria has witnessed a steady growth in arrival numbers from India and will continue to collaborate with the travel trade in India to boost these numbers in 2018. This year, the destination will particularly focus on families and leisure travellers, including soft sports activities from India.



TT Bureau

Austria recorded 177,700 Indian tourists in 2017, registering a growth of 20.5 per cent as compared to 2016. In 2017, the destination recorded a total number of 324,400 Indian overnights, an increase of 19.5 per cent over 2016, informs **Christine Mukharji**, Director — India, Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO). She points out that Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Ahmedabad are the key source markets for Austria. "Out of the total leisure travellers, 50 per cent are FITs and the rest are family groups in the age bracket of mid 20s to 60 years. We shall focus on MICE as it is an

important segment and the city of Vienna is fully equipped to host conferences for 10,000 to 20,000 pax. We have also seen a keen interest in soft sports like cycling along the Danube or skiing, etc. Bollywood trails have been made to allow Indians to revisit the shooting locations. We are also focusing on the family segment of travel and most of our marketing is targeted towards women, who we believe are the deciding factors for the annual holiday in a family," says Mukharji.

For Vienna, 2017 was a record year as the city received 7.1 million visitors globally, registering a growth of 3.11 per cent

For Vienna, 2017 was a record year as the city received 7.1 million visitors globally, registering a growth of 3.11 per cent and 15.5 million overnights



Christine Mukharji



Isabella Rauter



Christiane Gasser



Klemens Kollenz



Christian Pfeffer

and 15.5 million overnights. **Isabella Rauter**, Team Manager—Media Management, Vienna Tourist Board, informs that the city welcomed 58,286 Indian tourists, an increase of 8.9 per cent over 2016. The total number of overnights grew by 10.7 per cent to 127,877. "India is one of our top 20 key markets and the fastest growing

one. Besides receiving families, young travellers and honeymooners from India, we will also target the MICE segment this year. Vienna has also been a popular location for Bollywood films. The USP of Vienna is its combination of culture and nature. Along with multiple cultural activities, one can also undertake many outdoor activities,"

said Rauter. He further informed that the destination is celebrating 2018 with the theme 'Viennese Modernism', as a tribute to the four artists who died in the 19th century - Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Otto Wagner and Koloman Moser.

Christiane Gasser, Head of Channel Marketing,

Swarovski Tourism Services, informed that India is the third most important market for the attraction, only behind Germany and Australia. She says, "The year 2017 recorded 90,000 guests from India, which is a huge number for us."

The city of Salzburg recorded 40,937 overnights from India in 2017, registering a growth of 17.39 per cent. **Klemens Kollenz**, Sales and Marketing Manager, Salzburg State Tourism Board, adds, "We will focus on high-end families and honeymooners." **Christian Pfeffer**, Sales Manager, Zell am See Kaprun, informed that the destination will target to promote the destination through Bollywood. According to **Mag Andreas Reiter**, Market Manager—India, Innsbruck Tourism Board, the destination is unique as it combines the alpine and imperial character. ↗

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Luxury ups experiential quotient

With the dynamics of tourism industry changing across segments, the definition of luxury has become very subjective. Tourism industry stakeholders, attending the Travel Luxury Show, discuss how luxury travel is mostly about the overall travel experience and may or may not be accompanied with bragging rights.

Moderator	Participants		
 SanJeet Publisher TravTalk	 Christine Mukharji Director—India, Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO)	 Shoba Mohan Partner, RARE India	 Manish Kriplani Managing Director Baywatch Travels
<i>What according to you, is the definition of luxury?</i>	I believe luxury is about time and experience without considering the monetary aspect. In other words, luxury is not about travelling in First Class or Business Class but the actual experience of the traveller from the moment you start for your trip to the memories you take back home.	Luxury is a combination of the product, its value and the services we get in exchange of the price we pay for it. However, luxury is not just price driven; it has to be more of an experiential journey. It is a feeling of satisfaction where a traveller is at peace with the services provided. Thus, it is very crucial to keep in mind the kind of traveller, one is dealing with.	Luxury can be determined by giving the right product to the right buyer and at the right time to provide an everlasting experience for the client. It need not be accommodation in a five-star hotel or a Business Class flight; luxury exists in every minute detail of the offerings to the client according to requirements.
<i>Is bragging a part of luxury travel?</i>	I would not consider bragging a part of luxury travel, as I cater to very high-end travellers, wherein none of my clients brag about the destination they have already travelled to. Those who brag about their travel are not luxury travellers for me. However, bragging has been a major influencer to increase the luxury travel segment all over the world.	In the luxury travel segment of the industry, travellers brag about the experience they have had during the trip rather than the hotels they have stayed in.	I feel that luxury travellers are fond of bragging. Many times, travellers book their trips to brag about the destination and the activities they'll be doing over the trip, which indirectly influences the growth of luxury travel segment in the country.
<i>Has there been any change in the mindset of Indian travellers with regards to luxury travel?</i>	Luxury travel is not only restricted to outbound but can be domestic as well. An emerging trend which I have noticed is the rise in demand amongst Indians for domestic luxury trips. Short-haul getaways have taken over with a touch of luxury.	I certainly feel that over the years, the mindset of Indians has changed towards the idea of luxury. We do not market ourselves much in the domestic travel domain but the kind of response we have received from the Indian market is immense. Now Indians are looking for luxurious experiential travel and I can foresee the evolution of the travel industry in the country.	I also agree that Indians have changed their outlook towards luxury. Five years ago, travelling in a Business Class flight and staying in a five-star hotel was considered luxury to the Indian traveller which has been completely done away with today. Now, Indians invest time and money in the overall experience and travel repeatedly.
<i>What would you do to sell the luxury segment to Indians?</i>	For us, marketing the luxury segment in India would be to sell the USP of Austria and highlight the kind of products and quality experience which we can offer to meet the demand of this segment. Since Austria has a prominent water element, we would build our promotional strategy keeping in mind this element.	Looking at product specialisation and product highlighting, I would create a deficit for a product and then put a value to it, which empowers me to price the product adequately. We are living in a world where everybody wishes to live with luxury, and creating deficit for it would allow me to put fair value to it.	As a destination management company, we do not market individual products. However, it is the experience we provide to our clients, who further share those experiences in the market and increase demand. Word of mouth promotion also generates interest among other travellers and helps us to market the luxury travel segment to other potential clients.

As told to Simranjeet Singh Arora

IHG bets on Holiday Inn brands

The InterContinental Hotels Group plans to add 43 more hotels to its portfolio by 2021, which will be powered by its Holiday Inn brand family that covers the mid-market segment. They also plan to launch their new 'conversion' brand in the (EMEA) region.



Hazel Jain

Currently operating 31 hotels in India with 5,991 keys, the InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) plans to

add 43 more hotels in the next two to three years. This will add about 7,250-odd rooms to its portfolio. This, says **Vivek Bhalla**, Regional Vice President, South West Asia, IHG, will be powered by its Holiday Inn brand family, which includes Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express, which will form more than 80 per cent of this growth. "We see a lot of growth for midscale hotels in India and I believe we have the best brands to cater to that segment," Bhalla adds.

IHG also has plans to

launch its new 'conversion' brand in the Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia (EMEA) region in Q3-Q4 of

2018. "The brand will be positioned between Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza. The benefit will obviously be for the

UDAN will benefit hotels

According to **Sudeep Jain**, Vice President, Development—South West Asia, IHG, echoed Bhalla's thoughts and said that IHG will definitely bring new lifestyle and luxury brands into India considering that the group has 13 brands in its portfolio and only four are present in India as yet. "So there's still room to bring in nine more brands. But we want to make sure that we do that with the right partners with the right location and the right brand," Jain adds.

He lauded the UDAN regional connectivity scheme launched by the government. "It will encourage more people to



Sudeep Jain
Vice President, Development—
South West Asia, IHG

travel, which automatically means more guests for hotels. India is always getting a big black spot for infrastructure; so this is a step in the right direction – giving access to more places which traditionally were inaccessible to many people," he states.

owners through distribution, revenue delivery and loyalty programme. All these benefits will kick in for our owners who sign up for this conversion brand," Bhalla says.

Luxury segment looks good too

Bhalla feels that IHG's luxury and lifestyle brands also have good potential in India. "Regent was a great acquisition to our portfolio of pre-



Vivek Bhalla
Regional Vice President
South West Asia, IHG

“Moving forward, we would absolutely look to bring in Regent into India – probably in the main metros”

ferred brands. It operates in the upper luxury space. Moving forward, for the right partners, the right location and the right time, we would absolutely look to bring in Regent into India – probably in the main metros. In the longer term besides Regent and InterContinental, our lifestyle brands like Kimpton and Indigo have great potential in the Indian landscape. We have also received interest for our extended-stay brands like Staybridge Suites. So over time, we will look at bringing these in into India as well," Bhalla reveals.

Midscale & upscale

Bhalla sees a lot of tailwinds in the economy as a result of which IHG is focused on both the midscale space (Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express) as well as its upscale brands (such as Crowne Plaza which it has 11 of in India). "We are also excited to have signed the SAMHI portfolio deal where we will have 14 Holiday Inn Expresses being rolled out. Up to eight to nine of these will be coming online this year in key locations to fuel our growth. At this rate by Q3-Q4 next year, we will have up to 50 hotels which will be a landmark for us," he adds.

Pink Sand

TSI Holidays keen on culture tourism

The domestic market of Travel Spirit International Holidays focuses on Rajasthan and Kerala for culture tourism. The company is trying to develop new inbound markets.

TT Bureau

Travel Spirit International Holidays (TSI Holidays) operates a wide variety of exclusive tours and packages ranging from traditional, cultural, heritage, adventure and wildlife, informs **Jatinder Pal Singh Taneja**, MD, TSI Holidays. He explains that the company's operations are spread across neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. "Through our itineraries, we will promote India's festivals like Holi, Diwali, Gangaur etc, which showcase India's culture; handicrafts, and cuisine." Under the festival tourism, various destinations like Mathura, Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala will remain on the top list for the tourists. The company will also promote divine destinations like the Bangla Sahib in Delhi, Golden temple in Amritsar among other des-

tinations. Taneja adds that the Khajuraho temple in Madhya Pradesh is very famous and attracts a lot of tourists. "Cultural tourism also includes promoting cuisines, demonstrating cooking sessions on a private house in Kerala. We promote local cuisines as well which are not particularly famous but needs some attention. We will also showcase the craft of the country and for the same Gujarat, Varanasi, Lucknow remain on the top list for handicrafts."

With newer itineraries for cultural tours, Taneja believes that the tourists would stay longer in India, an average of two to three weeks. The company's domestic market is focused on places like Rajasthan and Kerala.

For its inbound division, the company has been exploring to develop new markets. "The year 2017 was quite positive as we secured a profit of 12-13 per cent," adds Taneja.



Jatinder Pal Singh Taneja
Managing Director
Travel Spirit International Holidays

“With a focus on inbound, the company has been trying to develop new markets. “The year 2017 was quite positive as we secured a profit of 12 to 13 per cent”

TSI currently engages with inbound markets like Europe, South America, Australia and the UK. Taneja points out that the Australian market, which was low last year, has regained its position and is showing promising growth.

To promote and market its products and services, TSI participates in major national and international trade shows and fairs to propel growth. Taneja informs that the company's recent participation includes exhibitions like FITUR, GITB etc. With a strong offline presence pan-India, the company is also developing its

digital portal, soon to be introduced, to increase engagement, adds Taneja. The company has also been recognised by prestigious national and international tourism bodies.



Awarded for effort

■ Dubai Parks and Resorts awarded its top performing Indian trade partners like Cox and Kings, Thomas Cook, MakeMyTrip.com, Veena World etc. in Dubai recently at Rock On, Bollywood Parks. The ceremony was attended by leading luminaries of the travel trade

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IATO elects new team for 2018-20

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) held its election recently at The Ashok, New Delhi and announced the new team for the 2018-20 period. With the post of the President remaining unopposed, voting was conducted for the position of Senior Vice President, Honorary Secretary as well as EC Members in the active and allied categories.



Thailand's tourism shades

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT's) latest marketing campaign 'Open to the New Shades' is set to capture the travel world and yield a tourism bonanza for the host country.



Inder Raj Ahluwalia



Tanes Petsuwan
Deputy Governor
for Marketing
Communications, TAT

“The campaign has been carefully created keeping the future in mind. India is a gigantic market for Thailand. With 1.4 million Indian tourists having visited Thailand in 2017, India is considered to be among the top 10 feeder countries for Thailand. We are now expecting a 12 per cent annual growth in Indian traffic. In 2018, TAT is focusing on promoting new Thai destinations and paying attention to second cities such as Pattaya, Rayong, Chanthaburi, etc. Thailand-India cooperation is the key to the future.”

“The drive has been created to enable guests to enjoy the diverse lifestyles of the Thais. The aim is to open up new markets for visitors which include Thai cuisine, culture and history. It will create greater awareness of and more penetration for Thai tourism. The campaign is a long-term programme of two to three years. India is a very important market for Thailand and their target is to increase this segment by 20 per cent annually, both in terms of numbers and revenues. The Indian market will grow further in the coming years. Once the flights to Thailand start from Tier-II and III Indian cities, the traffic will increase significantly.”



Walailak Noypayak
Executive Director—ASE-
AN, South Asia and South
Pacific Region, TAT



Isra Stapanaseth
Director—India, TAT

“India's importance as a tourism market for Thailand can't be over-emphasised. TAT's new promotional campaign is a significant marketing tool and will act as a further stimulant for Indian visitors as it will open up new destinations and activity options. Those Indians who have seen Thailand's major traditional tourist spots such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, etc will now have the chance to discover other interesting sites.”

“Thailand holds great potential to further tourism growth from India because it is constantly creating new products of interest and value. With Indian tourists now keen and willing to explore new destinations, the new Thai regions opening up for tourism will boost the overall attraction of the country for Indian tourists. Enhancing this is the fact that the overall Thai package is competitively priced.”



CP Sharma
Managing Director, Nep-
tune Travco



Lajpat Rai
President
Lotus Trans Travels

“Thailand's popularity with Indian tourists is based on the fact that the country offers exactly what Indian tourists want. The flying time between the two countries is not very long; the tourism infrastructure is elaborate; there is fun and entertainment; the food is good, and all this is offered at relatively competitive rates. Thailand's 'success story' with regard to Indians, is here to stay.”



Chitra Bhatia
Managing Director,
Aashman Air Travels

“Thailand's myriad attractions will continue to make it a preferred destination for Indian visitors. Backing a good infrastructure that includes good hotels and tourist sites, is a 'positive' attitude that makes the overall product very attractive. The close proximity of Thailand to India is a factor why Indians flock there.”



Vijay Thakur
President
India Vision Tours & Travels

“Thailand's tourism potential is increasingly on the rise. Its diversity, wealth of tourist attractions, excellent infrastructure, especially hotels and relatively competitive pricing make it ideal for the rapidly growing Indian outbound market. From honeymooners to leisure travellers, Indians will continue to favour Thailand.”

Akquasun initiates roadshow



Tourism Malaysia along with Akquasun Group initiated an eight-city roadshow across India covering Lucknow, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Raipur, Nagpur, Pune, Surat and Kochi. Hoteliers, and theme parks from Malaysia participated to showcase the new developments in the country. Akquasun Group is focused in good volumes from MiCE, group tours and FIT travel.



An 'Iconic' destination in Delhi

A state-of-the-art world-class MICE destination — Iconic International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC) — will be unveiled in Delhi in September 2019. **LC Goyal**, CMD, India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), speaks about the most anticipated facility in the capital city.



Jessy type

Delhi, the capital of the Indian subcontinent, lures a large number of conferences and meetings to the city. The Tourism Ministry, along with other nodal bodies, has always strived to elevate the infrastructure status for MICE in the city. In a new development, India Trade Promotion Organisation and the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, have sought to refurbish the present exhibition facility and infrastructure at Pragati Maidan into Iconic International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC), keeping with global trends.

The Pragati Maidan facility in Delhi can become a key facilitator in making NCR a globally competitive Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) destination, feels **LC Goyal**, CMD, India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO).



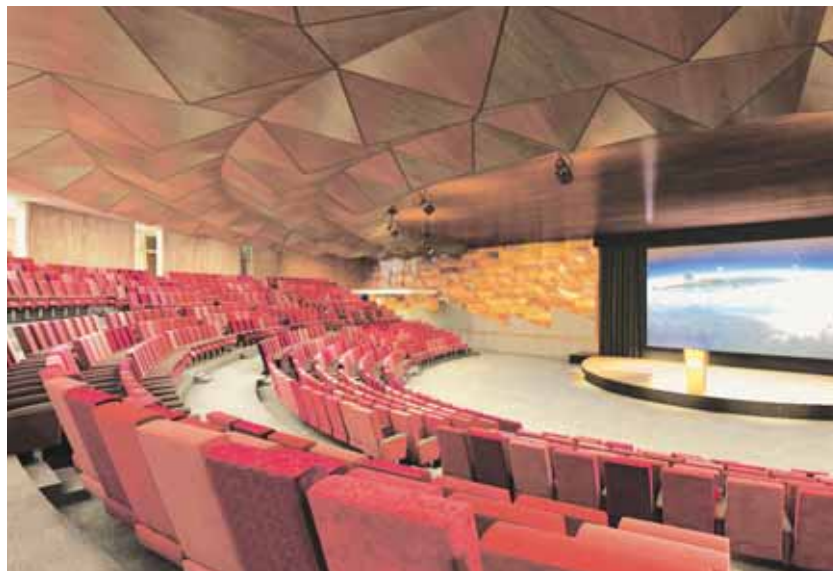
The USP

The location of the site and connectivity to and from it are the unique selling points of the convention centre. Goyal says, "This is going to be a state-of-the-art, world-class MICE destination and will be on a par with the best in the world. It is a very comprehensive complex that we have designed and will be functional by September 2019. The USP is that the complex is situated in the heart of New Delhi."

The new complex is 18 km from the international airport and approximately 2.5 km from Connaught Place, which is the main hub of business and leisure activities.

"This is a natural resource that has been created to be optimised for stakeholders inside and outside the country; it is meant to enhance trade, exports, and the tourism industry as a whole," he adds.

Infrastructure to encourage use of public transport is also



basement as well. It's all integrated in terms of accessibility. We will outsource key services of the centre, like kitchen, food and beverage units, etc. We will initiate cuisine facilities and 22 F&B units."

An iconic landmark

The convention centre has been canvassed considering the rich heritage and cultural diversity of India. "We have taken inspiration design from Rashtrapati Bhawan and the Parliament. The art work will be miniature and will depict the country. I am in touch with young artists from pan India



an added advantage. The integration of metro stations at Pragati Maidan, Indraprastha, etc., along with bus stops, foot-over bridges, local railway stations, skywalks, and subways will ensure seamless interchange.

“The new complex is 18 km from the international airport and approximately 2.5 km from Connaught Place, which is the main hub of business and leisure activities. This is a natural resource created to be optimised for stakeholders inside and outside the country”

Speaking about plans for an integrated infrastructure to decongest roads, Goyal says, "To reduce congestion around Pragati Maidan and for people to enter the complex, we sought help from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing on their schemes, through which we initiated a new link tunnel between Purana Qila Road/Mathura Road and Ring Road. This would decongest the East-West link. Similarly for the North-South link, we have supplemented cycle tracks and service roads for free movement of traffic on Mathura Road between W-point intersection and Sunder Nagar."

The tunnels will be connected to the complex basement parking exit and entry

points for a capacity of 4800 vehicles. The comprehensive traffic decongestion is a ` 923 crore project.

Optimal Capacity

The convention centre is 120 m wide, 185 m long, and 32.4 m high. It spreads across 50,000 sqm. Goyal says, "This landmark has aesthetic architecture. It is a huge convention centre with a unique architecture. In a single format, it can accommodate 7000 pax." The complex will also house an amphitheatre which can be used for cultural evenings for 3000 pax. The 11 exhibition halls measuring 297,687 sqm will be under a two-phased redevelopment strategy. Phase-I

will have six exhibition halls with a total area 151,687 sqm, informs Goyal.

The halls will have operable partition walls to support multiple use for required space arrangements. The halls will also be used for wedding receptions as well, he says. The 600-capacity auditoriums will be used for showcasing movies and other forms of entertainment, he adds.

Hotels and F&B

The Iconic centre aims to provide space for three to five-star hotels of an area of 3.7 acres. There are also plans to initiate F&B kiosks. Goyal says, "There will be tunnel connectivity towards the complex hotel

for the same. We are looking at painting a huge canvas of possibilities to enable us to focus on unique interiors and artwork inside convention centre." The second phase of the project will be initiated in 4-5 years.

Dwarka convention centre

Phase-I of Dwarka Convention Centre has been finalised; it will have two exhibition halls and will be span across an area of over 80,000 sqm. The centre will be also unveiled in 2019. Goyal says that the convention centre in the capital of the country will help generate more revenue and will also bring crucial events and exhibitions to the complex.

Offerings Galore

- Unique façade: Structure on a raised platform (5.4 m high)
- 7000-seat Plenary Hall in single format with divisible partitions
- 22 meeting rooms of 50-500 pax capacity
- Support facilities such as reception, language room, storage room, medical room, etc.
- Exhibition lawns with three open-air amphitheatres
- F&B street with break out spaces
- Large musical fountains with laser and mist shows
- Children's park
- Outdoor video walls
- Kiosk/digital way finders to track location, events/activities
- Public address systems
- Solar AV panels for power

Standing tall in heart of India

Despite the advent of new properties in the region, Eros Hotel New Delhi, Nehru Place, with its robust presence in the capital, continues with its growing streak this year.



TT Bureau

Leading a legacy of more than 20 years, Eros Hotel stands as a true icon of Indian hospitality, remarks **Davinder Juj**, General Manager, Eros Hotel Nehru Place, New Delhi. "The hotel offers state-of-the-art 218 guest rooms and suites with a banqueting space of 25,000 sq ft area which can accommodate up to 2000 guests. Our conference and banqueting facility is designed to present a mélange of style and grace. The fine dining options in the hotel offer a host of fascinating cuisines and diverse culinary experiences.



Davinder Juj
General Manager
Eros Hotel Nehru Place, New Delhi

Located in the business district of South Delhi is the biggest USP of the property, claims Juj. However, competition is high in a market like

guests and clients feel due to our long-time presence is our biggest advantage over many new hotels. We believe in Indian hospitality values, and our staff is our biggest strength."

He adds that a big aspect of their business is to engage with the trade. "We believe in a symbiotic relationship with our travel agents, who open us up to new FTOs and this is driven through an enticing business proposition for our partners, after which sales follows inevitably. Familiarisation trips to showcase our product and services is key to gain confidence of tour operators. Furthermore, we promptly attend to any feedbacks which keep us constantly engaged to FTOs for a

strong working relationship," he shares.

Talking of their growth last year, he says, "2017 has been the year of consolidation where the hotel has seen improvement in all key indicators. Surge in business that came in 2016 did carry through in 2017. However, 2018 has been buoyant as occupancy and pricing saw an increase."

“The sense of belonging which our guests and clients feel due to our long-time presence is our biggest advantage over many new hotels”

'Healthy Self', our spa offers various healing treatments along with facilities like steam, sauna and individual jacuzzis. It has an aerobics studio, gymnasium, functional training area, an outdoor pool as well as a salon. Apart from this, we have a nine-hole Putting Green especially designed for golf lovers," he reveals.

Delhi. Juj says, "Competition is the best thing to keep high standards in hospitality industry. We deal with it by proactively knowing our guests' and business partners' expectations and exceeding them. The sense of belonging which our

Preferred Hotel

Located in the business district of South Delhi is the biggest USP of the property, while competition is high in the market.



India shines at 25th ATM in Dubai

India's presence at the 25th Arabian Travel Market held at Dubai World Trade Centre, included state tourism boards, hotels, tour operators and technology providers. ATM 2018 adopted Responsible Tourism – including sustainable travel trends – as its main theme.



Covering travel for a decade

Dev Karvat, CEO-Emerging Markets, Cover-More, shares how travellers as well as agents look at travel insurance differently. Today, it is much more than a visa-related document. He also shares what makes them stand out in these times of tough competition.



Nisha Verma

According to **Dev Karvat**, ACEO—Emerging Markets, Cover-More, the way travellers and travel agents look at travel insurance has changed considerably in the last few years. "Earlier, for the travel agents, travel insurance was merely a visa related document. Today, as we see people facing issues outside the country, we observe the growing importance of travel insurance. Travel agents clearly understand that their customers should not face trouble with travel insurance policy. In the last three years, agents have grown to understand the customer needs for travel insurance, and now focus on whether it covers adventure sports, self-drives or even a pre-existing ailment. In an effort to enhance the knowledge of travel agents, we conduct travel agent engagement programme in about 20 cities every year, where we work very closely with the counter staff and try to educate them on how this is of importance to the customer."

Karvat says that what makes their company unique is the fact that their business is purely driven by travel agents. "We work only with trade and don't do any direct business. Now, apart from focusing and continuing to support the travel trade, we've expanded our business slightly and have partnered

Travellers 'cover'

The company has been growing well for the past five years. Its business is purely driven by travel agents

with a few airlines who are exclusively selling us. We've also got two OTAs who are supporting us. Hence, we've got our global technologies to India and plugged them into the e-commerce business," he shared.

Talking about the growth, he shared, "We've been growing well over the last five years. It's not just revenue

growth or profits for us. If we are able to do something different and add value to the industry as well as to the customer who is travelling, we will be able to derive ultimate satisfaction. We've been able to achieve that

by adding five different types of cover, which a customer can avail. We are also doing a lot with our corporate business. If we continue doing

all this, growth will automatically follow."

He added that the Indian domestic business

ness has been doing extremely well. "The travel industry is growing by 20-25 per cent ever year. I would like to focus on domestic travel in the next couple of years as we

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"We've been growing well over the last five years. It's not just revenue growth or profits for us. If we are able to do something different and add value to the industry, we will be able to derive ultimate satisfaction"

assistance. We have a team of 500 people across the country, whose livelihood is supporting the travel agents, which is something that no other company in India does currently."

Talking about how Cover-More is different in terms of offering travel insurance for places for which travel advisories have been issued, he said, "We, as an organisation, try to cover as many places and countries as we can. Apart from a few countries that we don't cover, we make sure that we support the customer and bring them back home safe even if there is a travel advisory or emergency situation in a country. That's our duty and we'll continue doing that," he said.

On competition, Karvat said, "We are solely committed to selling travel insurance and giving medical

NYC & Company organise networking evening in Mumbai

NYC & Company, the official destination marketing organisation for the five boroughs of New York City, invited a select group of travel agents in Mumbai for an evening of cocktails and meet **Makiko Matsuda Healy**, Managing Director—Tourism Market Development, NYC & Company who was in the city for a quick visit. The evening also involved a quick run through of some of the new tourism projects that are taking shape in New York, particularly the new hotels that have come up, new attractions and the airport that is getting an upgrade. Making this short presentation was **Christopher Heywood**, Senior Vice President—Global Communications, NYC & Company, who also took questions from the agents. There were about nine agents from eight agencies who focus on leisure FIT and group holidays to North America.



For the spirit of competition

Continuing with its agenda to inspire the spirit of sportsmanship among the travel trade, Emirates organised a cocktail evening for the much-awaited curtain raiser programme of Emirate Trade Cricket Tournament 2018, to be held in November in Mumbai. The cricket trophy was unveiled in the networking event in the presence of all the team members.



Buying behaviour shifts online

ITC Hotels is increasing its footprint to new destinations in India and focusing on increasing interaction with popular source markets beyond the UK and the US.



TT Bureau

According to **Manish Tolani**, Head—Sales, ITC Hotels, the company is focusing on building new hotels in India and managing them. The company is expanding its footprint in various parts of India, including Rajasthan. "Our most recent addition has been the

our perspective, the source markets for India have changed over the years. The bulk tourists come from the big two markets — UK and the US, but the share of tourists from other source markets is also increasing. If you look at the way our hotels are placed, the business hotels are our large boxes. MiCE,

weddings and corporate segments give us enormous amount of business followed by our leisure footprint," adds Tolani. He also further points out that under the leisure category, the company offers some properties like ITC Mughal, Agra, ITC Rajputana, Jaipur, ITC Grand Bharat, etc.



Manish Tolani
Head, Sales,
ITC Hotels

“Though personal interactions are important, most of the decision making is taken online and eventually bookings are also made via internet”

WelcomeHeritage Hotel, Pahalgam in Kashmir. The next two hotels in the pipeline are ITC Kohenur in Hyderabad and WelcomeHeritage Hotel in Amritsar this year," says Tolani.

Speaking about the most evident change in the travel industry in past years, Tolani says that buying behaviour has changed much. He explains that in the present scenario, listening to customers' voice is the most crucial one. "Though personal interactions are important, most of the decision making is taken online and eventually bookings are also made via internet."

Tolani, however, feels that there is a fair amount of positivity in their business. The company is increasing its room inventory, opening up new markets and destinations in India with new properties in Bhubaneswar and another one to be launched in Bhuntar in Himachal Pradesh. "From

David Beckham inaugurates charity race at The Parisian Macao

CELEBRITY WATCH

Sports star David Beckham officiated the inaugural Light The Night Run charity vertical race in support of Macau Special Olympics held at The Parisian Macao's half-scale Eiffel Tower.



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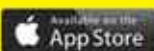


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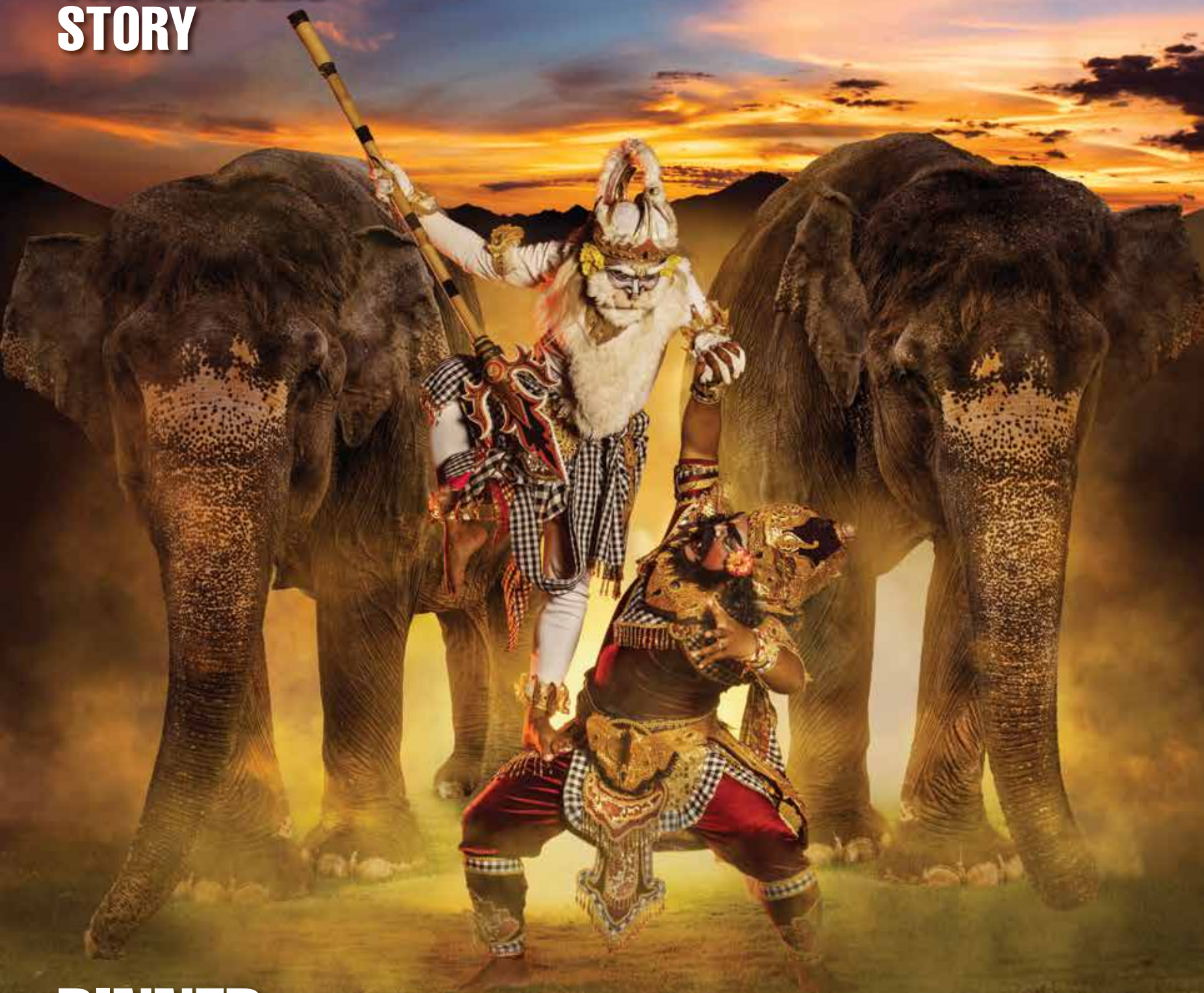
For the discerning traveller

Pages 32

**HOLLAND ON
TWO WHEELS**

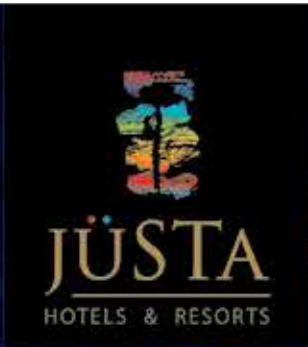
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Experiential^{talk}

IS IT REMOTE ENOUGH?

Mainstream doesn't cut it anymore. How much it costs doesn't matter. They don't care if everyone is doing it. All they ask is, 'Is it unique and isolated?' Mature travellers are not only seeking experiences, but they have already started to discriminate between experiences in favour of the ones that are off the beaten track, difficult to find, never-heard-of places and things to do. In short, something that doesn't come in the top 10 Google search. This in turn is prompting operators to look hard for products and activities that not many in the market are offering.

An unfortunate turn this new wave is taking is that social media influencers are being trolled for showcasing 'secret haunts' online for fear that these dearly-loved spots of locals will see a stampede of such travellers looking for Instagram-worthy places. Fortunately, such incidents are rare and lie on one end of the spectrum. But they indicate the growing demand for places is a trend that is slowly being defined as luxury.

The truth is that by and large, travellers have become explorers and discoverers. Whether it is just being part of a sustainable environment or wanting to race on an F1 track onboard a cruise liner in the middle of the ocean, it is the experience that matters – not so much the cost or the destination. The India market is slowly moving towards this trend but there is still a large percentage of Indians who continue to enjoy their annual holiday in Thailand or Dubai. These numbers balance the scale and allow others to pursue their dream holidays, except that this niche of travellers doesn't want to 'lose themselves' or 'escape life'. They just want to experience everything.

HAZEL JAIN

EDITORIAL
Devika Jeet
Peden Doma Bhutia
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Amrita Ghosh

DESIGN
Raashi Ajmani Girdhar

COVER PICTURE:
Bali Zoo

NEWS IN BRIEF



DINNER IN THE SKY TAKES OFF IN THAILAND

Dinner in the Sky Thailand features the world's only suspended high-altitude dinner table where 22 guests with specially equipped safety belts are seated securely at a height of 50m. The entire system is suspended by a 200-tonne European telescopic boom crane where diners can enjoy a four-course gourmet meal with astonishing views of the Bangkok skyline.



Race track on the mega-ship Norwegian Bliss

Guests will be able to put the pedal to the metal for the first time aboard a North American-based cruise ship with a two-level electric car race track. The longest at sea at nearly 1,000 feet will rev up the hearts of all who race around her many twists and turns with four speed settings, reaching up to 30 miles per hour – with a special 'turbo boost' available on each lap. Norwegian Cruise Line's 16th ship – Norwegian Bliss – will make its maiden voyage in June 2018 and will sail to Alaska and the Caribbean with select voyages to the Mexican Riviera.



Niraamaya Retreats opens in Nagaland

Niraamaya Retreats has announced its expansion to Nagaland with lease of Classic Inn, a boutique property in Kohima. The property has a total of 12 accommodations.

Detox vacation in Igatpuri

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has proposed to develop a wellness hub in Igatpuri by creating wellness zones providing a range of treatments including yoga, ayurveda, reiki and physiotherapy. Igatpuri is a paradise for nature lovers. It has a few tallest peaks of the Sahyadri range and is situated on the NH3 Mumbai-Agra highway, 130 km away from Mumbai. It also has a Vipassana Centre.

Sustainable acco in New Zealand

Eco-conscious travellers, rejoice! A new accommodation has opened in Glenorchy, a small settlement near Lake Wakatipu in the South Island region of Otago, New Zealand which meets the most rigorous of international sustainability standards. Besides providing comfortable accommodation, the founders behind Camp Glenorchy hope to inspire and share learning about new standards in sustainable tourism. It is a 40-minute drive from Queenstown along one of the country's prettiest routes and is the setting off point for some of the country's best hiking trails, water-based adventures on Lake Wakatipu and access to two national parks. Camp Glenorchy's accommodation comes in a range of budget options from the seven cabins, to two bunkhouses and seven powered RV/campervan sites.



Great Australian Train Journeys

Safir Tours, a DMC in Melbourne, has announced the promotion of the Great Australian Rail Journeys for 2018-19 in the Indian market. The packages combine the Legendary Ghan train that departs Adelaide for Alice Spring on an overnight journey where guests can experience gourmet meals. The train is an all-inclusive journey from the time you step on with the rugged landscape of South Australia and the Northern Territory unfolding before you. Step off the train into the remote reaches of northern South Australia. If you are travelling north bound, warm yourself with a morning cuppa against the backdrop of an outback Marla sunrise.



Overlanding in India

Voyages Overland was launched when its founders Bhairavi Sagar and Col Jaidev Singh Rathore wanted to share their love for a different kind of travel. Overlanding is a form of long-distance travel by land that covers offbeat locations, with camping as the principle form of accommodation. It has introduced first-of-its-kind overlanding trucks in India. The passenger truck, 'Bonnie' is air-conditioned and comes equipped with a mini-fridge, personal lockers and roof seats.



Cape Town Ziplines is back

SA Forest Adventures announces the reopening of its Cape Town Ziplines, one of Africa's longest and highest Zipline tours based in Cape Town. It is one of the longest zipline tours in Africa with a total tour length of approximately 2.3 km. The excursion gives a birds' eye view of Cape Town. It is conveniently located near Kirstenbosch Gardens and a 15 minutes' drive from the V&A Waterfront. Cape Town Ziplines form part of the SA Forest Adventures Adventure brand.



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Holland

on wheels

They are as ubiquitous as the country's prominent tourist attractions and perhaps the best way to experience The Netherlands – on a bicycle.

ELLONA PEREIRA



When one speaks of the Netherlands, the immediate images that come to mind are its windmills, canals, tulips, wooden shoes and cheese. But it has much more to offer - villages and cities, castles, country houses and its beautiful nature. There is no better way to discover the country than on a bike.

Netherlands has earned a reputation of being a great cycling destination. This country has many well-defined cycling paths. The infrastructure is geared for cyclists with sign-posted cycle routes. Besides, the distances are short, landscape is flat, and cyclists have their own crossings and their own traffic lights.

Holland has a moderate climate; so it is rarely too hot or too cold to ride a bicycle. However, the best time for cycling is from May to September. It is always advisable to check the weather before planning your trip.

LET'S GO DUTCH

Cycling is also an integral part of the Dutch culture so much so that according to a local anecdote, toddlers are taught how to cycle before they are taught how to walk! Special seats are attached to the bikes making it convenient to travel with kids. One of the leading brands for cargo bikes is based in the Netherlands and has become the international leader for family cargo bikes. Thanks to innovative technology, more bikes are coming in the market for people who are disabled.



Netherlands has earned a reputation of being a great cycling destination. This country has many well-defined cycling paths, short distances and flat landscape



To get an absolute view of Holland on the bike, don't miss cycling inside Hoge Veluwe

National Park whose bike paths run through the forest's woodlands



“Every Dutch person owns at least two bikes. There are more bicycles than people in the Netherlands. Whether you are an amateur cyclist or want your kids to explore the country cycling, Holland attracts all kinds of Indians”

NISHANT PATEL
Managing Partner,
The Grand Vacationist

If you are in good health, there is nothing stopping you to get on a bike in the Netherlands. All you need is a three-speed bike. If you want to explore rough terrains, you can opt for a mountain bike.

DIFFERENT ROUTES

For junction routes, there is a sign with the number on each junction, which also has a map so you will always know where you are and where the other junctions are in relation to your current location. Cycle junction maps are available at local tourist information offices. There are over 7,600 bicycle junctions throughout Holland. Themed routes are usually 30 to 50 kilometres long and are sign-posted using hexagonal signs.

The national long-distance cycle network, also called the LF routes, are perfect for multi-day cycle trips. These routes represent a combined length of 4,500 kilometres and were developed especially for longer bicycle tours and holidays.

There are also international routes which don't end at the border and have options to cycle on to Belgium, Germany or Great Britain. With various road signs along all the routes, it is impossible for a cyclist to be lost. Also, rest assured that cycling is safe here as the Dutch are so used to cyclists that they pay particular attention to them even during traffic.

CYCLISTS WELCOME!

The Dutch take cycling so seriously that it is ensured that the cyclists' needs are being catered to. Places that carry the 'Fietzers Welkom!' (Cyclists Welcome!) sticker ensure that cyclists are given a warm welcome. At cycle-friendly hotels, you can fill up your water bottle, charge your electric bike, use a bicycle pump, get a tyre repaired or get a first-aid

kit. They also sell or provide cycle maps. You will always receive a warm welcome, even when you turn up in wet rainwear or muddy shoes! Cycle-friendly accommodation providers also offer cyclists somewhere to stay for just one night. What's more, there is always somewhere to park your bike safely. In case you need professional assistance, you will find a bicycle repair shop in most places.

Another important question: Where do you park your bicycle? One can park their bike anywhere except in a place where it clearly specifies 'No Bike Parking' and ensuring that it is in no one's way. In city centres and at train stations, you have an option of guarded bicycle parking with the former also offering the facility of bicycle lockers. Basically, you find bikes parked everywhere in Holland!

EXPERIENCE HOLLAND ON A CYCLE

To get an absolute view of Holland on the bike, don't miss cycling inside Hoge Veluwe National Park whose bike paths run through the forest's pristine woodlands, dunes and meadows. You will get a chance to see some wild boar, horses and deers that still roam freely around the park which will excite nature lovers.

One can cycle alongside Texel's coastline and complete the island's entire western shore within a day. The windmills at Kinderdijk, recognised as a UNESCO heritage site, is easily accessible by bike.

A perfect place for youngsters to explore by bike is the Amsterdam Forest which is probably the best park for cycling in the world. Three times bigger than New York's Central Park, it has 50 kms (30 miles) of smooth, wide, tarmac cycle paths, dedicated to cycling only.





Exploring EILAT

The resort town of Eilat in south of Israel is situated along the turquoise waters of the Red Sea. It is home to some of the world's most spectacular coral reefs and breathtaking water sports.

Swim with the friendly dolphins at Dolphin Reef where you can enjoy the company of bottle-nosed dolphins. A half-hour swim with the dolphins will cost you approximately 300 shekels (\$75).

A must-see attraction in Eilat is the Underwater Observatory Marine Park for an amazing view of the underwater world of the Red Sea. It has an array of aquariums, including a shark tank, turtle and stingray pools, plus, underwater observatories to take a peek at life beneath the waves.

When in a beach town, one cannot escape the pristine corals observed during snorkelling and scuba diving. Windsurfing, kite surfing, water skiing, stand-up paddle boarding and parasailing are other activities offered in Eilat.

Head to the Coral beach and dive in the Red Sea. If you're not keen on diving, you can snorkel as well and explore a magnificent combination of various types of corals and an abundance of colourful tropical fish.

For those who do not want to dive or snorkel but still want to explore the mysteries of the seas, you can always Snuba – an Israeli invention

that is a cross between snorkelling and deep-sea diving whereby one breathes through a tube connected to a tank carried on a rubber boat. If a sea adventure is not your cup of tea, go jeeping in the Negev Desert where you will see the change in terrain and wildlife in their natural habitat.

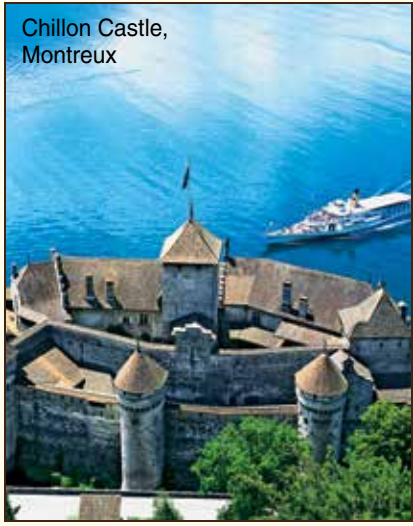
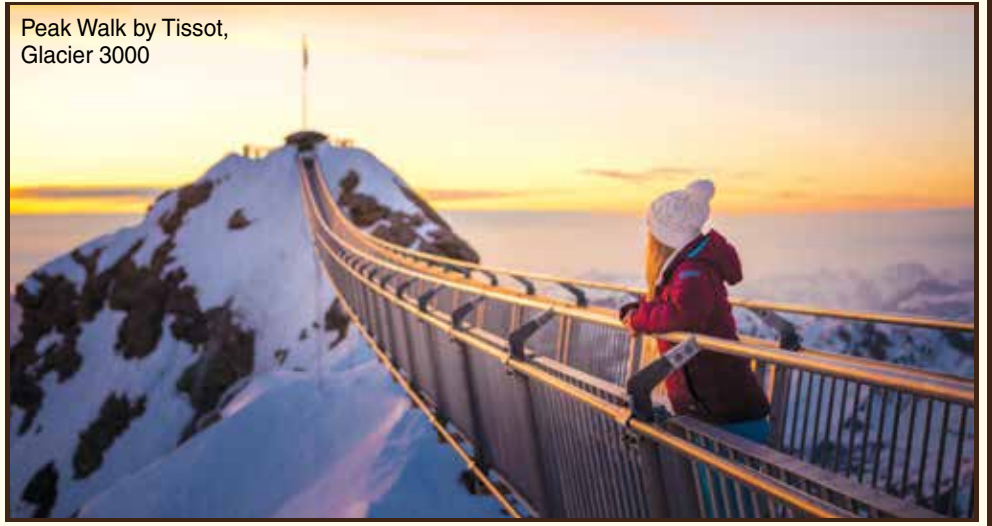
If you're adventurous and fancy hiking in desert scenery, head to the Red Canyon (west on Road 12). The Red Canyon itself is approximately 150 metres long and 2-3 metres wide, reaching a height of 30 metres. Why is it called the Red Canyon? Well, the canyon is mostly deep red sandstone, with shades of red, purple and white.

Visit Timna Park to the north of Eilat for a chance to check out the geology of the region amidst amazing mushroom-shaped pillars of rock, more red sandstone cliffs (Solomon's Pillars) and the world's oldest copper mine (dating back some 6000 years). During Sukkot, the park is also host to an amazing hot air balloon festival.

If you're in the mood for the ultimate adrenaline rush, go tandem skydiving for a once-in-a-lifetime experience over the Eilat skies. Go shopping at Eilat and pick up the best brands and products at tax-free rates!



A must-see attraction in Eilat is the Underwater Observatory Marine Park for an amazing view of the underwater world of the Red Sea with its array of aquariums

Chillon Castle,
MontreuxPeak Walk by Tissot,
Glacier 3000

Chaplin's World, Vevey

Olympic Museum,
Lausanne

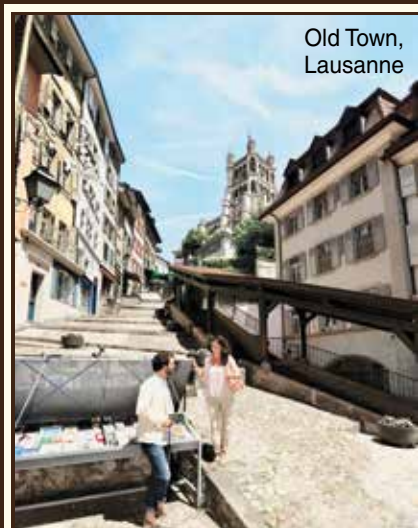
Switzerland's hidden gem Geneva Region

Located in the French-speaking part of the country, the Lake Geneva Region gracefully blends history, culture, cuisine, wine and music seamlessly to offer vacationers a complete travel experience. For the creative, music-loving traveller, there is Montreux – the pearl of the Swiss Riviera and home to the renowned international jazz festival. For the food connoisseur, Lausanne – one of the leading gastronomic regions in the world has renowned star-studded chefs, and for the wine lovers, Lavaux has one

of the largest vineyard regions in Switzerland.

MONTREUX

Montreux is nestled between the stunning backdrop of the Swiss Alps and Lake Geneva, and is a stylish yet traditional resort town with near-perfect climate. Its boulevards are lined with flowers, sculptures, Mediterranean trees and grand Belle Époque buildings. At Montreux's famous promenade, you could spend some quiet time reflecting on life while gazing into the crystal-clear still water or stroll down the lake to catch

Old Town,
Lausanne

GoldenPass Line



Lavaux Vineyards

From its snow-capped mountains to crystal-clear majestic lakes, inarguably, Switzerland is a much-favoured holiday destination for Indians. But even the most renowned places have a few secrets and Switzerland is no exception.

Freddie Mercury
Memorial, Montreux

The Lavaux vineyards between Montreux to Lausanne are home to Chasselas white grape. Named UNESCO heritage site in 2007, it is an ideal place to sample Swiss wine

stunning reflections of the picture-perfect Château de Chillon on the serene lake.

One of the most sought-after attractions in Montreux, the medieval 13th century castle Château de Chillon was owned by the House of Savoy. It houses frescoes, haunting interiors and Gothic dungeons, the latter of which were the subject of a poem penned by Lord Byron, 'The Prisoner of Chillon'. The poet directly references the château in the line, "There are seven pillars of Gothic mould/In Chillon's dungeons deep and old..."

Another must-do from Montreux is Chaplin's World—a museum dedicated to Charlie Chaplin, the artist and the man. Admirers of the iconic star can visit this 14-hectare estate on the slopes above Vevey, where Chaplin lived with his family. His former home, now a museum, showcases his cinematic journey through multimedia displays, movie clips, recreations of film sets, photos and other memorabilia like the legend's trademark hat and cane.

LAUSANNE

Situated just a few minutes away from Montreux is the city of Lausanne with its quaint old-town, beautiful cathedral, lake-facing promenade as well as a variety of museums. The Olympic Museum celebrating athletes and the history of the Olympic games make it a must-see attraction. Lausanne is also one of the leading gastronomic cities with traditional as well as avant garde new-age restaurants.

LAVAUX

The Lavaux vineyards between Montreux to Lausanne are home to the Chasselas white grape. It was named a UNESCO heritage site in 2007 and is the ideal place to sample Swiss wine. You can tour the vineyards on the mini train – Lavaux Express – or just walk or bike through it, visiting and sampling the best of Lavaux wines at the many locally-owned cellars. The trip would be incomplete without a train journey on the Golden Pass Line. The train's large windows offer panoramic views of the changing landscapes of the region.

go glamping in India

A perfect marriage of luxury and camping, glamping in India has evolved over the years to cater to the growing demands of seasoned travellers. It is not only offered by big hotel brands but also independent companies.

NISHA VERMA

Whether it is the big hotel brands like Taj Safaris' Banjaar Tola at Kanha National Park and The Oberoi Hotels & Resorts' The Oberoi Vanyavilas in Ranthambore or independently-owned companies, the glamping market in India is definitely

getting adequately populated with creative products at inspiring locations. These luxury camps offering five-star comforts in remote locations, often in the middle of nowhere, introduce their guests to local life, wildlife safaris, local festivals, CSR activities, as well as sustainable practices.

THE ULTIMATE TRAVELLING CAMP (TUTC)

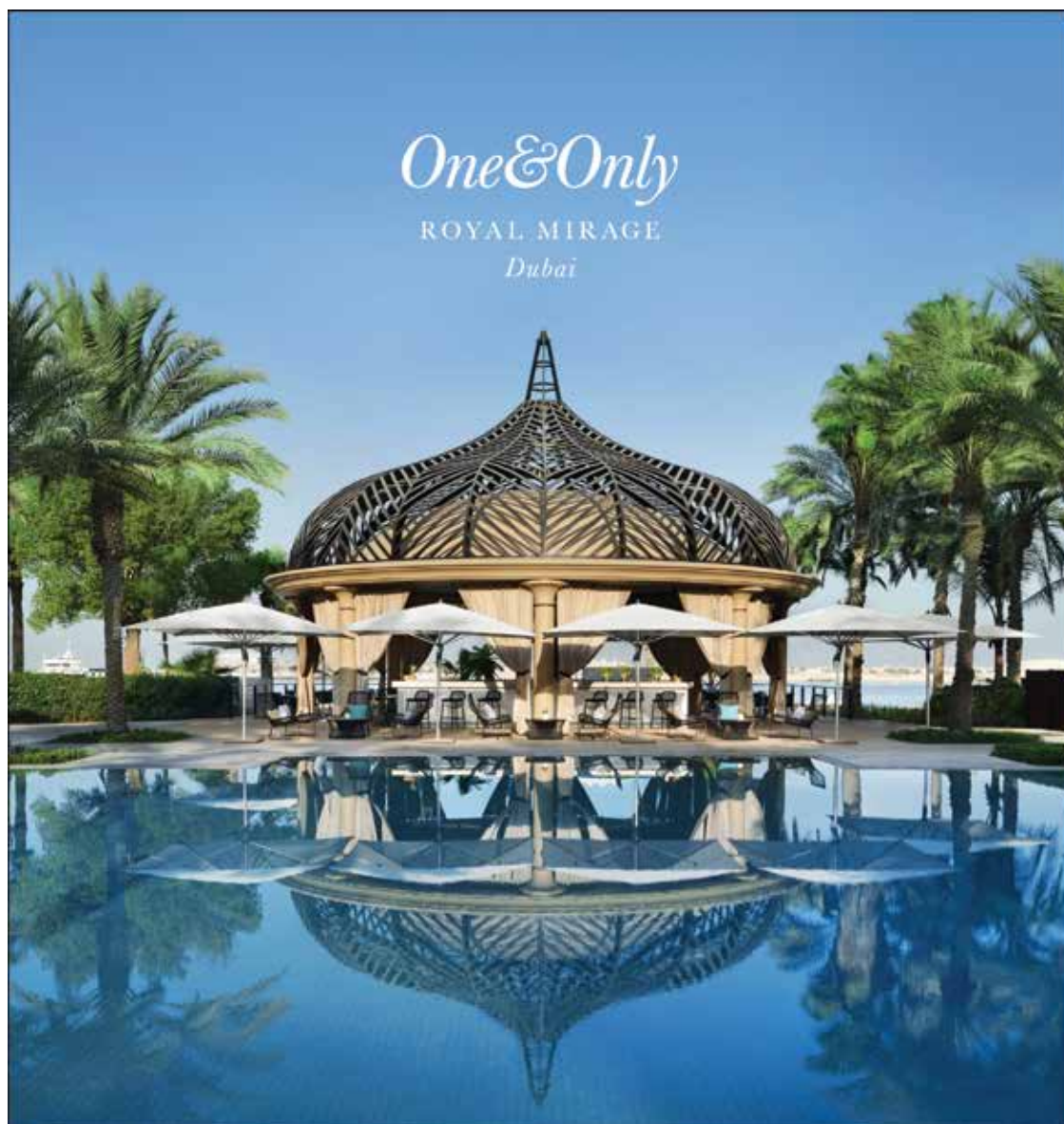
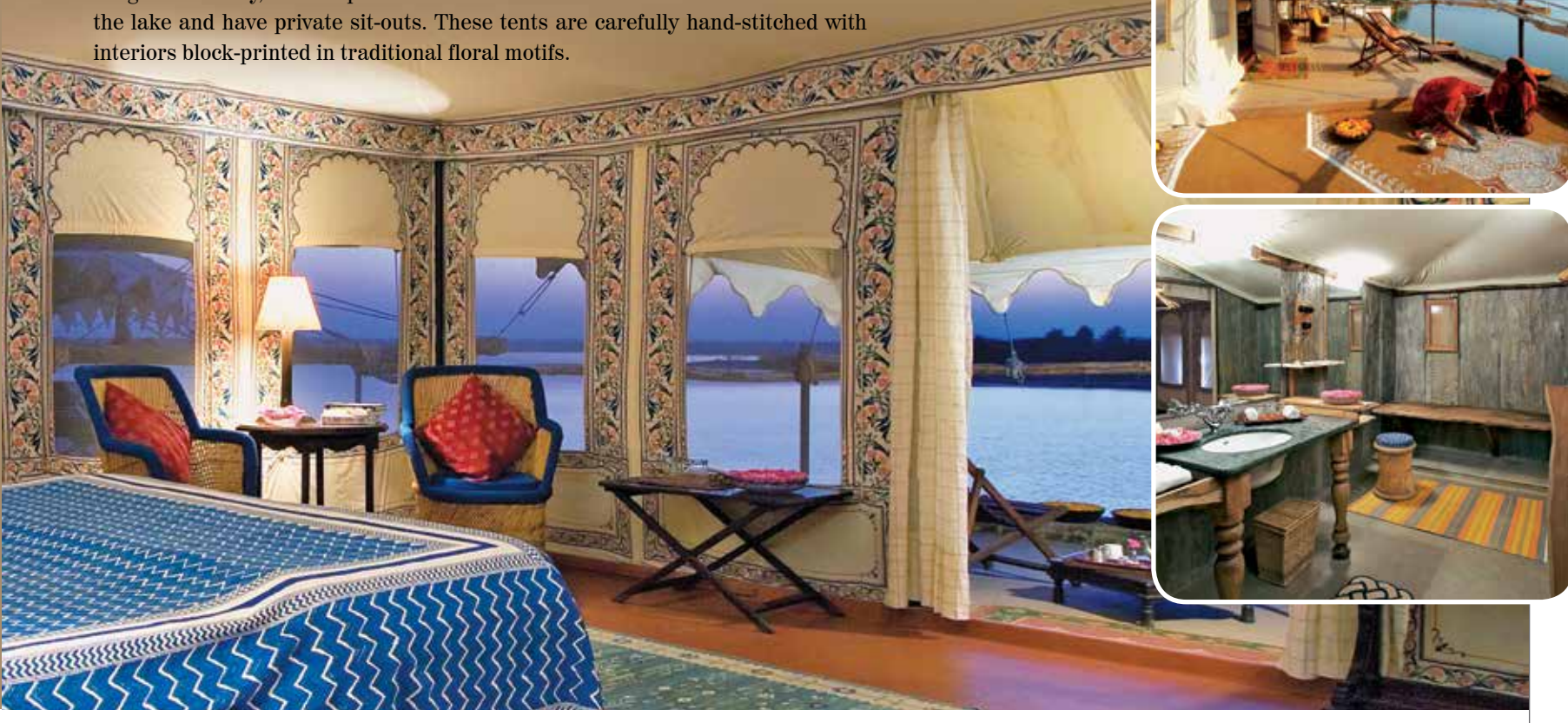
TUTC can easily be called the torchbearer of glamping in India, not only because it offers all the accoutrement of a super-luxury stay in a camp but also because of the moveability of its camps. Every year, the camps are pitched in some of the most beautiful locales around the country. Currently, TUTC has four camps—Chamba Camp, Thiksey and Diskit in Ladakh, Kohima Camp in Nagaland and the Jaagir Lodge in Dudhwa.

As its first venture in the wildlife lodge category, TUTC's Jaagir Lodge in Dudhwa will be open till June 15, 2018. Guests can discover the fascinating land of the Terai, the marshy jungle between the Himalayas and the great plains of India. They can choose to explore the secrets of the wild in the forest reserves of Dudhwa, Katarniaghat, Kishanpur and Pilibhit. With a fixed structure, this property has a variety of options ranging from luxurious rooms, suites, and villas. Guests can enjoy jungle walks, big-game safaris, bird-watching trips and visits to local villages. TUTC is set to open another camp in Hampi soon.



CHHATRA SAGAR, RAJASTHAN

Chhatra Sagar luxury camps pay ode to the late 19th century Royal, Thakur Chhatra Singh of Nimaj and his ambitious project of creating the Chhatra Sagar dam. This dam was later used to create Camp Chhatra Sagar for dignitaries visiting Namaj. It was his great grandchildren who recreated these camps and opened them for guests. Today, the camp has 11 tents on the dam and two on the hill. All of them overlook the lake and have private sit-outs. These tents are carefully hand-stitched with interiors block-printed in traditional floral motifs.



FABULOUS EARLY BIRD TREATS

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*Terms & conditions and black-out dates apply.

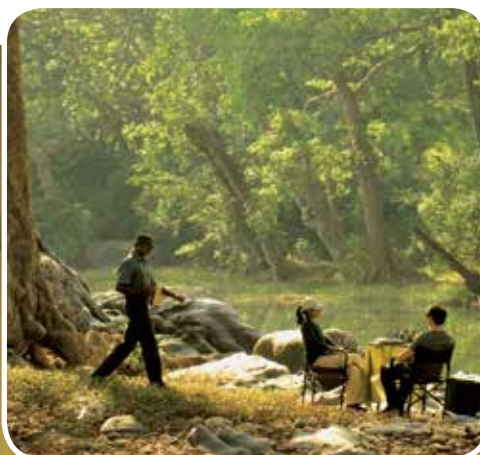


JAMTARA WILDERNESS CAMP, PENCH

Leave the city life behind, as you drive up to Jamtara Camp and embrace the calmness in the air. This unique camp is situated in the village of Jamtara, near Pench National Park. Each of the 10 luxury tented rooms overlooks the forest and is designed to feel light and open. Guests can roll up the front panels of the tent and bring the outside in. Sleep inside the tent or even outside on the patio. Go one step further and book one of the machaans set up in the middle of the farms for you and your partner. These starbeds offer the ultimate romantic experience. Each of these machaans have four-poster beds, fitted with mosquito netting. A majority of the revenue generated from this experience is given back to the farmer. Visit the Jamtara village and experience the rural life up, close and personal.

BANJAAR TOLA, KANHA NATIONAL PARK

The opulent tented suites at Banjar Tola at Kanha National Park beckon even the most puritanical camper. The stilted tents of each of the jungle lodges have spectacular glass doors that open out to a floating verandah that offers picturesque views of the Banjar river and the core zone of the national park. Plush interiors with bamboo floors, raw timber furniture and canvas wardrobes give a classy camping experience. Each lodge has a cosy sitting area with a small library.



THE OBEROI VANYAVILAS, RANTHAMBORE

Just ten minutes away from the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, The Oberoi Vanyavilas, Ranthambhore, offers the quintessential Oberoi luxuries with an opportunity to see the Royal Bengal tigers in their natural habitat. The property is spread across 20 acres of lush, landscaped gardens, housing indigenous plants and birds. Spot wildlife at the nearby watering hole from the observation tower while sipping champagne at sundown. There are specially curated Oberoi Experiences which include jungle safaris, Chambal River Safari, spa, dining under the stars or by the lake, and cooking class with masterchefs.

EXPERTS' SPEAK



"Something about having the outdoor next to the skin of your tent brings out the sense of wild and free in you."

SHOBA MOHAN
Founder-Partner, RARE India



"The idea behind introducing luxury mobile tents was to offer the pleasures of being close to nature."

RAJNISH SABHARWAL
COO, TUTC



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EXPERIENCE like no other

There is a thirst for understanding destinations on a deeper level through authentic experiences and connecting with the locals, says

GAVIN TOLLMAN, Global CEO, Trafalgar.

HAZEL JAIN

WHY IS EXPERIENCE SO IMPORTANT WHEN ONE IS TRAVELLING?

In an ever-busy world, we are constantly searching for something, with the most precious commodity now being time. When we take a break, we want to feel differently to have that sense of connection. The value proposition for travel has changed. We now have a desire for a deeper understanding and appreciation of where we are going, who we are meeting and what we are encountering. We have changed from being passive to active travellers.

WHAT TRAVEL TRENDS DO YOU SEE EMERGE IN INDIA?

Traditionally, we know that India has tended to have shorter lead times when it comes to booking holidays – sometimes as late as 10 days! That said, like many places, we are seeing shifts in booking patterns to the point that the ‘pattern’ is not fully determinable. We are also noting a shift towards in-depth exploration of a destination – truly uncovering the local way of life. There is more emphasis now on immersive cultural experiences – living the local way of life and gaining a different perspective of differing cultures beyond the obvious. Some of the destinations remain favoured like France and Britain. The way in which Indians are consuming travel is changing as we observe a growing thirst to uncover the real thing when it comes to understanding local customs and culture and feeling a real connection with its people.

ARE INDIANS TRAVELLING TO NEWER DESTINATIONS NOW?

Europe and Britain are perennially popular with a growing number of Indian travellers choosing to visit the Balkans. We are also seeing a spike in bookings for our North America and Canada national park trips and to Latin America – Costa Rica, for example.



There is more emphasis now on immersive cultural experiences – living the local life and gaining a different perspective of differing cultures beyond the obvious

WILL BEING MINDFUL OF THE ENVIRONMENT WHILE TRAVELLING BE A BIG PART OF EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL?

We are seeing Indian travellers slow down the pace and take holidays that really enable them to get to know a destination in depth. There is a thirst for understanding the destinations on a deeper level with authentic experiences. More guests are seeking sustainable travel experiences and we are responding to that by expanding the breadth of our JoinTrafalgar initiatives.

In North Ireland, Trafalgar helped build a new sustainable Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre. From working with the National Trust in the UK to help sustain sites of historical significance to helping to preserve the ancient art of weaving, our initiatives to

support local communities and help our guests reduce carbon footprint have clearly resonated.

IN WHAT WAY DOES TRAFALGAR PROMOTE 'EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL' TO INDIANS?

We ensure that we are making a difference – both to the communities we visit and to our guests. Our focus is to deliver meaningful experiences.

From staying in a property that is more than a bed for a night – such as a castle in Ireland or a converted watermill in the South of France, to shopping with a chef at the local market in Florence and heading back to his restaurant in Tuscan Hills to prepare a sumptuous feast with him. Our 'Be My Guest' experience offers an opportunity to dine with locals at their homes.



Amble beyond the ORDINARY

Serene Experiences represents international luxury hotels and resorts, catering to the outbound market from India. Below are its four distinctive properties offering unique experiences...

DAIOS COVE LUXURY RESORT & VILLAS, Greece



PANOS ALMYRANTIS
General Manager, Daios Cove
Luxury Resort & Villas, Greece

LUXURY BEYOND MEASURE

Set against the visual drama of a secluded bay, Daios Cove Luxury Resort & Villas is nestled on a hillside on the beautiful northern coast of Crete. From every angle, the views are sublime: the calm turquoise sea in a quiet cove, spectacular verdant slopes, lush terraced gardens, a yellow crescent of private beach, and a wide expanse of azure sky. Then there's the interior and exterior design. Daios Cove is minimalist and modern with a carefully created designer style. Its elegant and sophisticated architecture has been crafted from the natural environment. Daios Cove blends beautifully into its picturesque rural surroundings.

Our stylish rooms are deluxe open-plan doubles and beautifully designed and furnished with a lush, fresh, ergonomic contemporary look. The GOCO Spa Daios Cove Experience lets you explore a carefully crafted collection of spa, fitness and wellness experiences designed to inspire the overall well-being. Equipped with advanced body scanners, the spa's wellness activities include sessions with our resident Master of Yoga from India and expert visiting practitioners.

EUROPE TOPS THE CHARTS

People who visit us are well-travelled and enjoy exploring destinations, cultures and food. They are people who look for new experiences while enjoying the comfort we provide. We are proud of having built a solid guest base. United Kingdom, Germany and France are the leading markets at Daios Cove.

DESTINATION OF ADVENTURES

Our exclusive collaboration with Land Rover provides a great opportunity to explore mountainous areas in the luxury of the latest Land Rover models. Guided tours offer an opportunity to experience the wild side of the island. A guided boat trip on our brand-new RIB boat would thrill those who love exploring the surroundings in the luxury and safety that Techohull offers. Golfers will not be disappointed by the newly redesigned 18-hole Cretan Golf Club that is only 20 minutes away from Daios Cove.



Daios Cove is minimalist with a carefully created designer style. Its elegant and sophisticated architecture has been crafted from natural environment



CHALET ROYALP HÔTEL & SPA, Switzerland

COME ONE, COME ALL

Chalet RoyAlp Hôtel & Spa is a member of Leading Hotels of the World and Healing Hotels of the World. An hour and half from Geneva and 45 minutes from Lausanne, it is open all year round with direct access to the slopes in winter and golfing in summer. It has 63 rooms and suites and 30 residences. The Spa by RoyAlp occupies an area of 1,200 sqm and includes six treatment rooms including a Duo Suite for couples, an outdoor terrace in summer, a private spa, sauna, jacuzzi and hammam, a fitness centre, a large heated swimming pool with a fireplace, multi-sensory showers, a tea room and a relaxation room, with personal coaches on request.

TRAVELLERS ARE WELCOME THROUGH THE YEAR

The hotel enjoys high season during the winters (Christmas, New Year till February). Families can enjoy dedicated facilities for children with direct access to snow and mountain activities. During the medium season, (December to March), the hotel welcomes families to experience tailor-made packages. In the low season (April to mid-June and October to November), attractive packages are offered to the Indian clientele. The Chalet RoyAlp Hôtel & Spa is surrounded by five most exclusive international schools with more than 800 pupils every year. As a result, it is a preferred place to stay for parents who come to visit their children.

MAKING PRESENCE FELT

We provide an overview of the property on our website, with offers and activities available in our region. We are active on social media and digital marketing campaigns. International travel fairs are also important.

VISITING AROUND

Villars-Gryon-Les Diablerets is a family mountain destination accessible by public transport using the Swiss Travel Pass. Within 30 minutes from Villars, you can find nearly everything associated with Switzerland - lakes, mountains, cheese and chocolate-tasting, private schools, luxury shops, golf, tennis, cable cars and panoramic trains, fine gastronomy and farm food, Lavey thermal baths, as well as a glacier.



MICHAEL GIROD
Resident Manager
Chalet RoyAlp Hôtel & Spa,
Switzerland

Naresh Chandnani, Founder and CEO, Serene Experiences, has over 30 years of hospitality experience in sales and marketing and strategic business and brand development. He has extensive, talent and associations in the hospitality industry to increase business from the Indian market for these properties.





GUIDO FIORENTINO
Owner & CEO
*Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria,
Sorrento, Italy*

GRAND HOTEL EXCELSIOR VITTORIA, Sorrento, Italy

TAILOR-MADE EXPERIENCES

We tend to customise our guest experiences, both on the hotel ground and the surroundings. For instance, we organise pizza cooking lessons with our chef, and guests can taste the pizzas they make themselves. We have organised tours to the most ancient tailors in Naples to let guests have their tailored shirts or shoes, as well as private tours with our yacht along the Amalfi coast and Capri island or a helicopter tour.

BEST MARKETS

Our clientele is mostly leisure. Our main markets are USA, UK and Italy, with a good mixture of all other markets.

DINE IN LUXURY

The Excelsior Vittoria is a unique iconic family hotel, 184 years in the same family and well-positioned in the luxury travel segment. We have three restaurants; one is a Michelin-starred gourmet restaurant, Terrazza Bosquet, with traditional local Italian cuisine and a vegetarian menu as well.



HOTEL CAESAR AUGUSTUS, Anacapri, Italy

JUST WHAT GUESTS WANT

For foodies, we offer the opportunity to tour the kitchen garden with our chef and pick the ingredients for two dishes which guests can then prepare for dinner with the chef's help. Early risers can even accompany the chef to local fishmongers to select the fish.

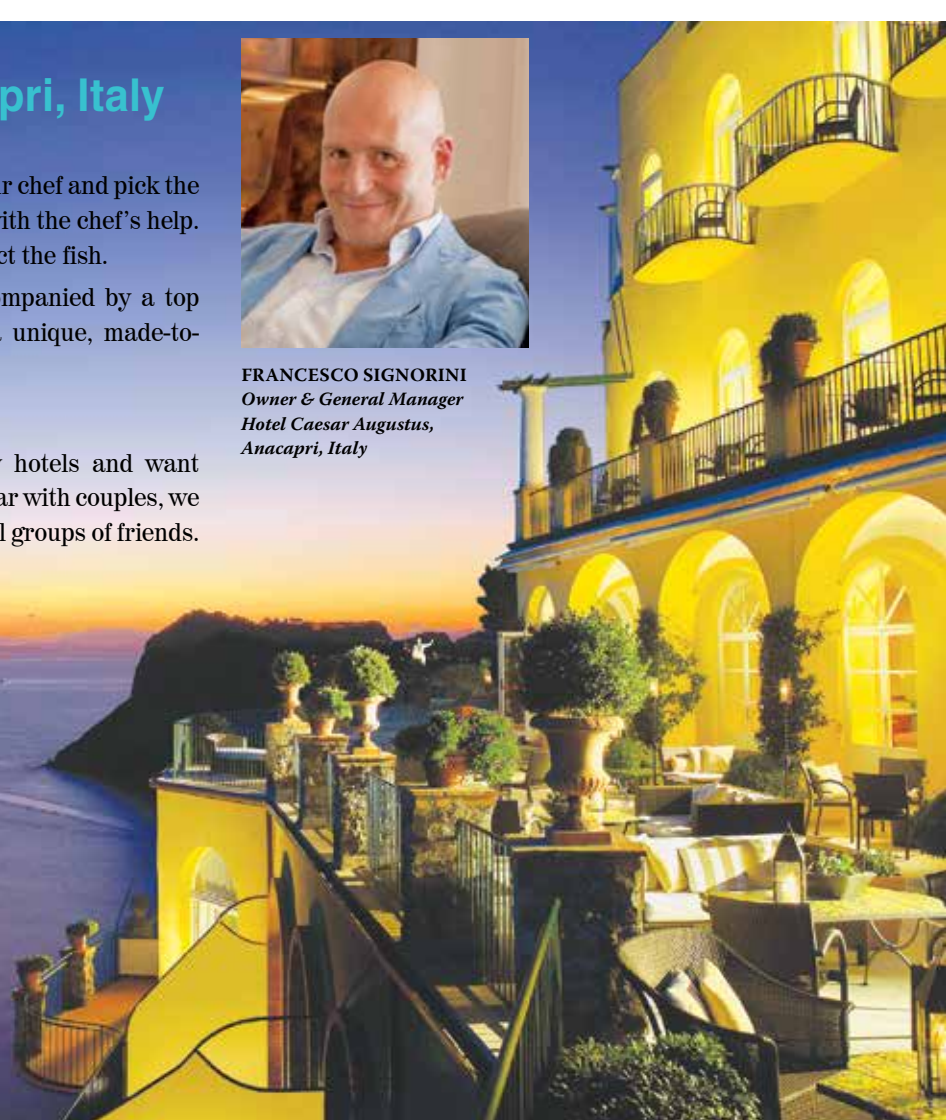
Agents can request our Sandal Experience, whereby they are accompanied by a top member of staff to the local sandal maker's workshop and have a unique, made-to-measure pair created for them while they wait.

11 OR MORE ONLY

Today's travel-savvy guests are less interested in branded luxury hotels and want something unique with a local touch. Although we continue to be popular with couples, we have a lot more multi-generation bookings as well as requests for small groups of friends.



FRANCESCO SIGNORINI
Owner & General Manager
*Hotel Caesar Augustus,
Anacapri, Italy*



Before heading to dinner at Gayo Restaurant, visitors continue the tour with a visit to the Sumatran tiger, sun bear exhibits & nocturnal animal encounter session

Dinner with the Elephants

As the day cools, the sun sets and twilight takes over, an adventure unfolds on a magical island with Bali Zoo's latest attraction – Dinner with the Great Elephant.

It is the first activity of its kind where visitors can observe the gentle giants bathe and experience feeding them before sitting down to a buffet dinner at Gayo Restaurant next to the Sumatran Elephants, followed by two inspiring cultural dance performances.

Upon arrival at Bali Zoo in the evening, visitors first pass through a spacious Deer Park exhibit featuring a collection of Bawean, Sitatunga, Kijang Timor and Javan Rusa deer. From the zoo, they take a short double-decker bus ride to 100-year old traditional Sumatran buffalo house. After disembarking at the grand two hectare Kampung Sumatra wildlife exhibit area, they can participate in the Elephant Encounter session that includes taking photos and feeding dozens of Sumatran elephants that are currently classified as critically endangered by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

Before heading to dinner at Gayo Restaurant, visitors continue the tour with a visit to the Sumatran tiger, tapir and sun bear exhibits as well as a stop at the nocturnal animal encounter session located at the nearby waterfall

area. Dinner is served from 6:30 to 9:00 pm. After choosing from a variety of soup, salad and grilled items from the buffet, they are seated at a table just a few metres from a herd of six elephants adorned in colourful fabrics inspired by the decorated royal pachyderms of India, all accompanied by their mahouts in traditional Sumatran costume, and perfectly set up for photo opportunities.

At 7:30 pm, the troupe of elephants will lead in the performers for a Saman dance (the Dance of a Thousand Hands) before temporarily exiting the area at 8:20 pm. Saman is a fast-paced traditional dance from the Gayo ethnic group of Sumatra that is usually performed to commemorate important occasions. The elephants return at 8:30 pm with a parade leading in the performers for the next attraction – a 20-minute fire dance inspired by the legendary great battle between the Hanuman, the monkey god, and Ravana, the great King of Lanka, as told in the Hindu epic poem, the Ramayana. The programme ends at 9:30 pm with a photo session with the troupe of elaborately attired dancers. A perfect conclusion and souvenir moment for an elephant dinner date!

THE BEATLES

Story

EXHIBITION



THE BEATLES
Story EXHIBITION
HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

If Liverpool has Anfield for football lovers, the Beatles Story at Albert Dock is mecca for lovers of John, Paul, George and Ringo. There is also a relic of Joan Lennon.

Follow the beat of the BEATLES



'The Beatles Story' is the world's largest permanent exhibition devoted to the lives and times of the rock band located in their hometown of Liverpool on the stunning UNESCO World Heritage site.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

'Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away.'

Sitting in the sweltering April heat of Delhi, this Beatles ditty seems profound, especially when it feels like only yesterday that, aboard the yellow submarine, we turned the pages of The Beatles Story!

Ever imagined what it would be like to watch George Harrison sit with a pint at the Cavern Club or hear Paul McCartney and John Lennon play on the opening night of the Casbah Coffee Club, the place where it all began? The Beatles Story has some stunning replicas of these places that have become so synonymous with the Fab Four. If Liverpool has Anfield for football lovers, the Beatles Story at Albert Dock is a mecca for lovers of John, Paul, George and Ringo. And occupying pride of place is Brian Epstein, rightly called the Fifth Beatle. Brian, who was the band's manager, will always be remembered for introducing the four young lads of Liverpool to a global audience.

What's more, there's also a replica of John Lennon's 'the White Room', which featured prominently in his immortal song 'Imagine'. If, while listening to 'Walls and Bridges' or 'Double Fantasy', you have ever marvelled at Lennon's skills on the piano, then you'd love to see his last piano which is now on display at the museum, along with his iconic granny glasses.

The museum serves as the perfect chronicler of every significant development in the band's history leading up to The Break Up of 1968, and tracks how each goes on to start his own individual career.

After you have had your fill of The Beatles Story, don't forget to pick something up for The Beatles fans back home. The Fab4 Store at the museum has one of the largest collections of official Beatles merchandise and memorabilia in the world. So, once you are done with your visit, make sure you get some of those T-shirts,

CDs or limited-edition merchandise for them. Don't forget to get something for yourself as well – a little souvenir to remind you of your very own magical mystery tour!

THE BEATLES AND THE YOGI

Fifty years after The Beatles arrived in India, the museum is celebrating their time in Rishikesh with a special exhibition. Titled 'Beatles in India', it opened on February 15, 2018 and celebrates the 50th anniversary since The Beatles travelled to Rishikesh to the Ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Here you will witness never-before-seen memorabilia, imagery



DID YOU KNOW?

Paul McCartney used the working line 'Scrambled eggs, oh my baby how I love your legs' for the song Yesterday as its music was written before the lyrics. Also, Penny Lane in Liverpool experienced constant disappearances of its street sign ever since the 1967 hit of the same name.

and personal accounts from people who were there with the band in 1968.

A sitar used by Ravi Shankar is on display with the new immersive area, loaned to The Beatles Story by the Ravi Shankar foundation. As George Harrison's mentor, the sitarist's influence on the band ultimately helped to popularise the use of Indian instruments in 1960's pop music. The exhibit will also include photography from Paul Saltzman who photographed The Beatles during their stay. He is responsible for some of the most iconic and intimate images of the Fab Four in India.

Spa your stress away

Spas are no longer considered a luxury, thanks to the growing awareness among people about wellness. Three hotels with renowned spas talk about the unprecedented growth of this sector.

ANUPRIYA BISHNOI



RITU JOSHI
Executive Housekeeper
Fairmont Jaipur

Ritu Joshi Executive Housekeeper, Fairmont Jaipur

At Ruhab, the hotel's spa, we offer a range of therapeutic massages by trained professional therapists using products that are natural and sustainably sourced. One of the signature experiences includes creating customised treatments based on 'doshas' as per the 'Three dosha theory' in ayurveda. These 'doshas' represent three elements representing mind, body and the environment. Our upcoming Willow Stream Spa to be introduced in 2020 will feature unique Indian and international treatments.

SPA IS A NECESSITY

Spas were once considered to be an indulgence. This perception is beginning to change as spas are becoming

a way to destress. Modern-day spas are not just limited to steam rooms and massages. Weight management, physical fitness and sports, beauty treatments, relaxation and stress relief, meditation, yoga and procedures or treatments using conventional or alternative medicine like ayurveda are gaining prominence.

PERFECT SPA ROOM

Designing a spa room is both an art as well as a science. It not only helps in creating an aesthetic atmosphere but also impacts the senses for a stress-free environment. For example, colour schemes in a spa are critical. Our focus is to ensure that spaces feel open and get plenty of natural light for scents to help create a relaxing effect.



Ralph Radtke

General Manager, Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul

The most unique experience in our spa is the VIP Turkish Bath's hamam treatments. Hamams not only serve for cleansing and relaxing the body but are also venues for socialising and celebrating, especially among women, who would chat, feast on home-made foods and sing or dance during their hamam outings. At Sanitas, the Turkish bath session comforts and nourishes the body in the traditional oriental manner. It's warmth and exotic aromas recreate the luxurious atmosphere of Turkish bath enjoyed by the sultans. We also have our signature hamam treatment called 'Sherazad', where the body is carefully rubbed with a textured mitt and

covered with the fragrant froth of soap to revitalise the skin. In addition, special aromatic oils and circular massage movements are used to refresh the muscles while attention is paid to the scalp, hands and feet.

PRODUCTS USED

We use dermo-cosmetic brands which produce high concentrate of effective ingredients, especially those which contain plant stem cells for younger and healthier skin. It has different product series for different skin problems such as pigmentation, anti-aging, moisturising and purifying.



RALPH RADTKE
General Manager
Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul



Sanjeev K Nayar

MIH, General Manager WelcomHeritage

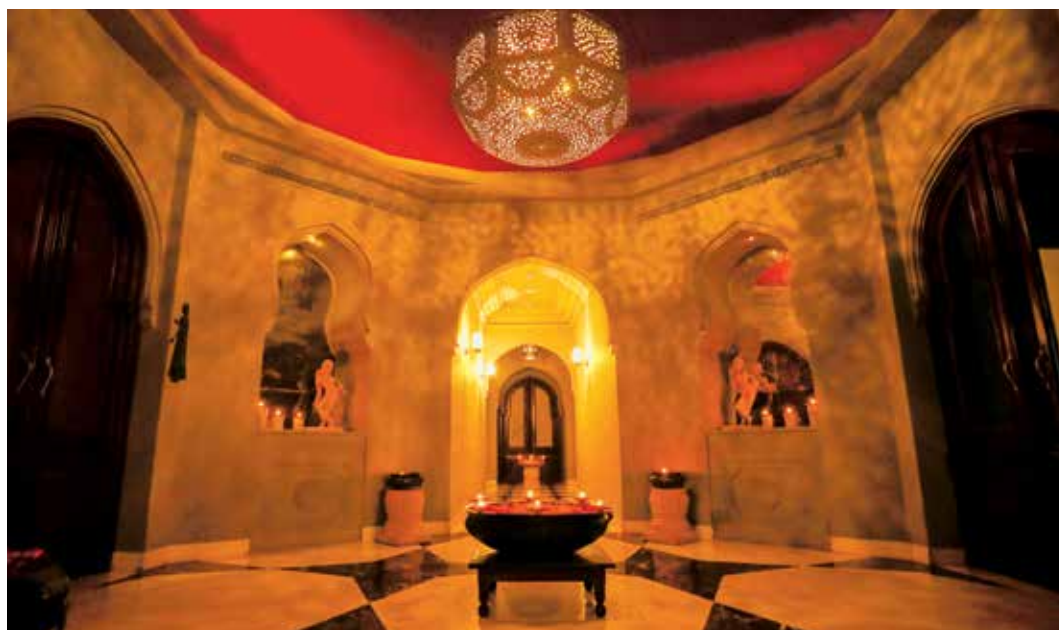
Select WelcomHeritage properties that have a spa on premises endeavour to create the perfect spa experience topped with royal touch with exquisite fragrances, soothing music, soft lighting and relaxation areas to provide guests with a relaxing ambience. Our properties have created a personal spa experience offering outstanding treatments that reflect a fusion of traditional and international therapies. All spa experiences at these properties have been carefully crafted to stay true to the traditional style that was available to the royalty of a bygone era.

SPAS GAIN FOOTHOLD

Today's hectic lifestyle has necessitated the relaxation of the body and mind. Earlier, spas were visited occasionally but over the years travellers are becoming more and more interested in utilising these services. This has resulted in mushrooming of city spas in major cities. The easiest way is to escape to a picturesque location and get a rejuvenating experience which not only soothes the body but also the mind. Spa is one of the best ways to relieve stress-related diseases and illness.

ADHERING TO NATURALS

All our hotel spas use products that are carefully selected to complement the environment. We are



committed to use natural ingredients like rose petals, jasmine flowers, milk, saffron and honey that offer proven benefits.

SPA STRUCTURE

For a perfect spa room, there should be peace, natural light and soothing colours on the walls, alluring fragrances to stimulate the senses, relaxing treatment furniture and a professional spa therapist.

If a spa room has dim light, soft music and an attendant who speaks local language, experiences are already enriched.



SANJEEV K NAYAR
MIH, General Manager
WelcomHeritage



A Cypriot Experience

Cyprus is a small island with a long history that has been influenced by three different cultures by virtue of it being located at the crossroads of three continents – Europe, Asia and Africa.



HAZEL JAIN

Mighty Aphrodite! With a rich culture that spans thousands of years, Cyprus – Aphrodite's birthplace – is among the oldest civilisations in the Mediterranean. Situated at the crossroads of three continents – Europe, Asia and Africa – the island's unique geographic position has played an important part in its turbulent past. Cyprus gets its Greek roots from the Mycenaean Greeks who introduced and established their civilisation here. After that, many other cultures followed including the Assyrians, Egyptians, Romans, Franks, Venetians, Ottomans and even the British who left behind their impressions.

As a result, Cyprus today is like a mosaic of different cultures. That is why it makes for a fascinating destination to explore and experience.

Even today, the largest EU groups by nationality settled in Cyprus are Greeks, British, Romanians and the Bulgarians. Fortunately, language is not a problem here as English is widely used throughout the island as a common language. The island has a very high proportion of English speakers because it has been part of the British Empire for over 80 years, with almost 80 per cent using English as their second language. Many Cypriot educational institutions have a British university affiliation. But Greek and Turkish are the official languages.

FOOD IS A SOCIAL EVENT

Since Greek is the largest ethnic group in Cyprus, a lot of people speak Greek. The architecture is similar and so is the weather. Food is Mediterranean and follows a lot of norms that Greeks do such as the ritual of sharing food on a table. Fresh local cuisine is an important part of the island's culture, and is intrinsically linked with every social event,

from family gatherings and special occasions to religious festivals – each marked with its own distinct delicacies and recipes.

From hearty meat dishes and specialty cheeses to unique desserts of carob and grape, the Cypriot cuisine is an exotic blend of Greek and Middle Eastern cultures, sprinkled with remnants of ancient civilisations such as indigenous Roman root vegetables or old Phoenician delicacies. A 'Mediterranean diet' is considered to be of the healthiest, thanks to its abundance of heart-healthy olive oil, pulses, lean meat, local herbs and freshly grown fruits and vegetables.

PRAY AND PARTY IN AYIA NAPA

While Larnaca is where all international flights land, the main cities where tourists throng are Nicosia – its capital – and Limassol. Ayia Napa, a Mediterranean resort town on the southeast coast of Cyprus, is the party place and is known for its beaches. The name is derived from a Venetian-era monastery of the same name that is located in the centre of the town, next to the square that today has become the clubbing centre. The magnificent stone church of Agios Lazaros, one of the most remarkable examples of Byzantine architecture in Cyprus, lies over the tomb of the saint.

The town of Agia Napa shuts down during the winter – the hotels close down for repairs and maintenance and the restaurants down their shutters. But come April and the entire town blooms as a rose bud. Tourists and locals gather in the main square, music is blasting, and restaurants and bars do amazing business. Entertainment takes a front seat and the entire place is buzzing with no place to move.

NICOSIA

The capital is the largest city on the island of Cyprus. The country's most important museum is here, with its impressive archaeological collection. It has more than 15 museums! The Old City of Nicosia is worth a visit and the best way to truly discover it is on foot.

Unfortunately, Cyprus is split in two when in August 1974, the second Turkish invasion resulted in the capture of approximately 40 per cent of the island. The Green Line can be seen across the cities of Larnaca and Nicosia where army has check points.



DID YOU KNOW?

Cyprus also has many wine routes. Its rich wine history has been alive for almost 6,000 years. Visitors can take any of its seven routes to experience Cypriot hospitality and be introduced to the world of Cyprus wine. These include 41 modern wineries that currently operate on the island.



One size doesn't fit all

Understanding that the way people fly economy is changing; Virgin Atlantic unveils new ways to fly economy as part of its multimillion-pound investment in the cabin for the new traveller.

DEVIKA JEET



The seven bedrooms with well-appointed suites and luxurious bathrooms offer views of the gardens, some with sit-outs and others with bay windows (gokhras)



Sir **Richard Branson**, founder of Virgin Atlantic has been famously quoted for saying, “If we continue to judge ourselves by our ability to fit in, we will never stand out”. Taking inspiration from this popular quote, Virgin Atlantic has continuously introduced innovation in the skies and its three new ways to fly Economy is a testament to just that.

Providing more value and more choices and recognising that one size doesn't fit all, from Spring 2018, Virgin Atlantic will introduce ‘Economy Delight’, ‘Economy Classic’ and ‘Economy Light’ tickets. The three new and innovative ways to fly will allow customers to choose the product that suits their budget and travel style – but never compromise on inclusive food and drink, unrivalled service and inflight entertainment.

Economy Delight will offer the leading Economy product of any UK airline. Customers will enjoy a seat with 34-inch legroom, priority check-in and boarding as well as advanced seat assignment. Economy Classic will now offer free seat assignment, providing extra reassurance for families and groups. The new Economy Light ticket will always offer Virgin Atlantic's lowest fare, thereby making long haul travel affordable and accessible for millennials, and customers jetting off on city breaks.

Making Economy rich again, **Craig Kreeger**, Chief Executive, Virgin Atlantic, says, “I'm really proud we are flying in the face of how airlines

are operating at the moment, cramming more seats in and losing the romance and joy of flying. We're about giving more, not taking away. The way people fly Economy is changing, customers want more value and more choices. They want an affordable Virgin Atlantic experience and the millennials in particular, tell us that they want a cheap entry point product.”

Unveiling the biggest change to the Economy cabin in over a decade – launching three new ways to fly, and a host of innovations on the ground and in the air as part of a wider £300 million investment. Virgin Atlantic customers can afford to be choosy and still travel in the UK's leading economy cabin.

“We always want flying with Virgin Atlantic to be more special than other airlines, and we'll never compromise on excellent service, industry leading food and drink and cutting-edge inflight entertainment. Regardless of which Economy ticket our customers are travelling on, they'll be able to enjoy all this onboard,” adds Kreeger.

Continuing with their promise to pamper passengers, Virgin Atlantic has also partnered with leading British candle maker Rachel Vosper to create a new scent called ‘Air,’ designed to evoke wellbeing and inspire future travel.

In 1984, Branson announced to the world that a high quality, value for money airline will service their demands. “When I started Virgin Atlantic, I wanted to challenge the status quo and make flying amazing; and that holds true even today,” he adds.

Luxurious homestay at Deogarh

Nestled on the edge of the Ragho Sagar Lake at Deogarh, Dev Shree is an amalgamation of modern and traditional.

ANKITA SAXENA

Dev Shree in Deogarh is a stately home, constructed in a traditional *haveli* style with deep verandahs and elaborate courtyards. The property promises a luxurious homestay in the middle of nowhere.

EXPERIENTIAL STAY

The sun rising over the Gokul Fort at the far end of the *haveli* streams through the palm trees on the swimming pool. The interiors of the property are airy and spacious, and the décor has a contemporary twist. The seven bedrooms with well-appointed suites and luxurious bathrooms offer views of the gardens, some with sit-outs and others with bay windows (*gokhras*). Sitting in the verandah with the lawn stretching out to the shore of the Ragho Sagar Lake is an ideal bird watching spot. The central courtyard has been described as a 'Moroccan Kasba'. At this *haveli*, friendly staff cooks up a homely Indian



meal with local Mewari specialties to treat the taste buds. **Shatrunjai Singh Chundawat**, Owner, Dev Shree Deogarh, explains, "The accent is to serve meals as prepared in Indian homes and an effort is made to keep away from dishes served in restaurants. The menu is drawn up daily taking guest preferences into consideration. We try to offer local produce which is seasonal and fresh. With a small kitchen garden, our farms supply most of the vegetables and food grain."

ACTIVITIES GALORE

Activities at the property include an artisan walk through the village, a guided walk from Dev Shree to the main shopping street coursing through the artisan alley passing the potters street and farmers houses; a lake walk; culinary workshops; yoga classes; rural train ride from Phulad to Khamblighat across the Aravalli range; bird watching; day trips to the famous Jain temples of Ranakpur, Kumbhalgarh Fort, Chittorgarh Fort, etc.

The seven bedrooms with well-appointed suites and luxurious bathrooms offer views of the gardens, some with sit-outs and others with bay windows (*gokhras*)





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CHARTER RATE: 7-nights/8-days charter rate **\$99,750** plus **\$415** per person in weekly port and conservation fees

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