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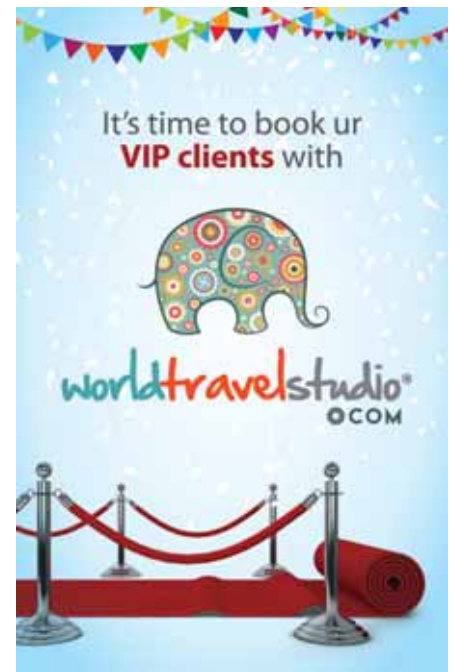
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Leap for Buddhist tourism

The International Buddhist Conclave 2018 was recently inaugurated at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi by **Ram Nath Kovind**, President of India. He also launched a new website on Buddhist tourism.

 **Nisha Verma**

The four-day long International Buddhist Conclave, inaugurated by President **Ram Nath Kovind** was presided over by **KJ Alphons**, Minister of State (I/C), Tourism in the presence of **Kenji Hiramatsu**, Ambassador of Japan to India; **Rashmi Verma**, Secretary, Tourism; and **Satyajeet Rajan**, Director General, Tourism. Along with senior members from the travel and hospitality industry. The conclave was

organised in collaboration with state governments of Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in New Delhi and Ajanta (Maharashtra), followed by site visits to Rajgir, Nalanda and Bodhgaya (Bihar) and Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh).

The occasion was aptly used as a platform to launch the Ministry of Tourism's website on important Buddhist sites - indiathelandofbuddha.in and a new film showcasing Buddhist sites in the country.



KJ Alphons
Minister of State
(I/C), Tourism

Addressing the attendees, Alphons said that India has a rich ancient Buddhist heritage with several important sites associated with the life of Lord Buddha. "The followers of Buddhism around the world have great interest in the Indian Buddhist heritage. The Conclave has been organised to showcase and project Buddhist heritage in India and boost tourism to the Buddhist sites in the country besides cultivating friendly ties with countries and communi-

ties interested in Buddhism. The Conclave witnessed presentations by MOT and state governments, panel discussion between scholars and monks, and B2B meetings between the foreign and Indian tour operators. The Ministry also organised an Investors' Summit during the Conclave to attract investments in developing world-class infrastructure at Buddhist sites," he revealed.

Verma informed that about 500 million Buddhists world-

wide represent 7 per cent of the world's population, making Buddhists the fourth largest community in the world. She said, "Buddhism binds the culture of India with that of countries in the region like Bhutan, China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. We have identified 17 sites in 12 clusters in the country for development under Iconic Tourist Sites Development Project. 

FHRAI Convention in Lucknow



Garish Oberoi
President
FHRAI

The 53rd FHRAI Annual Convention will be held at Ramada Lucknow Hotel & Convention Centre from September 20-22, 2018, amidst a host of networking sessions.

 **TT Bureau**

The FHRAI Annual Convention is set to be held at Ramada Lucknow Hotel & Convention Centre, Lucknow on the theme 'Spiritual

& Wellness Tourism'. **Yogi Adityanath**, Chief Minister, Government of Uttar Pradesh, will be the chief guest at the event. As the most sought-after event in the hospitality industry, the event sees active

participation of leaders from the hospitality sector of India and abroad, including prominent hoteliers and all major stakeholders. In view of its pride positioning as the single largest networking platform

of the hospitality sector in the country, the FHRAI Annual Convention stands today as a privileged platform in networking, knowledge dissemination, and business development for the corporate and industries.

The Convention offers an excellent opportunity for delegates to network with top policymakers, top-notch entrepreneurs, global experts, and distinguished representative. 

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Kerala fighting back

In the week when a brand-new airport and international flights were announced from Kerala's Kannur and Calicut respectively, the state suffered the biggest flood in century. Right from suburbs, airport, roads to resorts, everything saw huge devastation. With the water subsiding now, the airport and highways have re-opened and people are back to putting pieces of their life together. However, the tourism industry is positive that they would be back in business in the first week of September. With an estimated loss of `1000 crore in total for tourism business, of which `120 crore is only because of cancellations, reaching normalcy looks quite far-fetched currently. But, the entire country, especially the travel industry is making sure that things get fine as soon as possible in God's own country, and we hope that the state starts getting new bookings soon.

20 million tourists by 2020?

After crossing the 10 million tourists mark last year, the Ministry of Tourism has set its benchmark to have 20 million tourists by 2020 to India. While this does show the optimistic approach of the government, at the same time we need to figure out how realistic this goal is. In fact, many in the industry are already debating it. While 20 million looks too big a number, the MOT has taken many steps in making it possible including a new marketing campaign; development of infrastructure in dedicated circuits; revamped website; and events along with MOCA's prestigious UDAN scheme. In fact, the recently-held Buddhist Tourism Conclave as well as the upcoming India Tourism Mart in association with FAITH, are big steps taken by the government in boosting inbound numbers. The industry, however, has its apprehensions, and are pinning hopes on ITM and the upcoming international shows to get more business for the country.

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

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Then



Ajay bhatnagar
Sales Manager
KLM

Now



Ajay bhatnagar
Vice President- International Sales
IndiGo

In June 1993 issue of TravTalk, Ajay Bhatnagar joined Inter Globe as their new Sales Manager and was looking after KLM. A veteran in the aviation industry, he has worked with reputed brands through the years. Today he holds the position of Vice President- International Sales at IndiGo.

Then



Sunirmol Ghosh
Director
Indo Asia Tours

Now



Sunirmol Ghosh
Director
Indo Asia Tours

In August 1993, Sunirmol Ghosh, Director, Indo Asia Tours was elected as an Executive Committee member of Indian Association of Tour Operators. At the helm of the same company, he is growing the business manifold and is an active member of IATO as well as PATA India Chapter.

Starlit shines bright

Saurabh Minocha, Managing Director, Starlit Suites, shares that the company is planning to reach a count of 3000 keys by 2020 across various cities in India.



Starlit Suites is on a growth spree and has plans to open four more properties within the next 12 months across India. In fact, the company is planning a pan India presence in the next few years and is working hard towards the goal. Elaborating on their growth strategy, Saurabh Minocha, Managing Director, Starlit Suites, says, "The brand is poised to grow at a steady pace to meet our targeted projection of 3000 keys in India by 2020. We already have various properties in stages of completion, which would be close to 800 keys. Apart from that, we have another 700 keys under construction, which would be on board by mid to late 2019. We are also in advanced stages of



Saurabh Minocha
Managing Director
Starlit Suites

negotiation to develop 1500 more keys."

He confesses that the travel trade would play a major role in achieving the kind of growth they are foreseeing. "We do several tiered activations with our travel partners, starting with pre-launch teaser cam-

paigns and introductory rates to long-term consolidator and series contracts that help position the product in the market at its optimum market driven rate," shares Minocha.

As a company based on the distribution of hotels coming up and being signed on, Starlit Suites has an equal spread among leisure/corporate FIT, family/group leisure and business. "In fact, we also have a fourth dimension, which is the extended stay segment as we are flexible in our product offering to even look after the needs for transient professionals that travel across the country on designated projects with finite timelines. With our hotels coming up in Tirupati, Shirdi and Nainital, we are increasing our footprint in the pilgrimage/leisure travel

market. We will be focusing on business hotels with three coming up soon in Gachibowli Hyderabad, Bangalore and Pune," he claims.

Future Markets

- West: Mumbai, North Goa, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Pune, Navi Mumbai, Lonavala, Mahabaleshwar Daman
- South: Chennai, Pondicherry, Vishakhapatnam, Trivandrum, Mangalore, Mysore
- East: Kolkata, Guwahati, Bhubaneswar
- Central: Bhopal, Indore, Lucknow, Varanasi
- North: Delhi/NCR, Chandigarh, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Jaipur, Agra

Indonesia picks up speed

Despite natural disasters, the Indian market has shown stability in terms of its visitor arrivals to Indonesia.



Anupriya Bishnoi

The Ministry of Tourism of Republic of Indonesia (MoTRI) has recently promoted Indonesia in the India market through a Sales Mission. **Nia Niscaya**, Deputy Minister of Tourism Marketing, MoTRI, says, "MoTRI is promoting Indonesia in the Indian tourism market through roadshows in Mumbai, New Delhi, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.



Nia Niscaya
Deputy Minister of Tourism Marketing,
MoTRI

This is aimed at increasing more transaction of tour packages between the Indonesian and Indian tourism industry through B2B meetings."

Furthermore, Badung, a region with the maximum tourism activities in Bali also conducted a sales mission in conjunction



Sidharto R Suryodipuro
Ambassador, Embassy of the
Republic of Indonesia

with the Ministry of Tourism of Indonesia in Chandigarh, Jaipur, Lucknow and Kolkata.

Niscaya further elaborates, "The Indian market bound for Indonesia has been skyrocketing in the last couple of years. In terms of visitors, the number of Indian visits is increasing Year on Year. From January to August 2018, Indonesia witnessed more than 365,000 Indian visitors. We want this

number to grow." Niscaya informs that the average spend of an Indian in Indonesia is about US\$ dollar 12,000 per visit and the length of their stay usually lasts from seven days to two weeks.

Sidharto R Suryodipuro,
Ambassador, Embassy of the

Republic of Indonesia, is also positive about the growing relationship between the two countries. He says, "We just added an additional carrier from Mumbai to Bali. Flights were earlier thrice a week but now, they'll be four times a week. We are currently

working with one Indonesian carrier to fly to India and additionally, an Indian carrier has shown interest to operate flights from India to Indonesia." The Ministry is taking additional steps to achieve the target by the end of 2018.

Roadshows are a great platform for countries and partners to meet and talk about new itineraries and new destinations. It's encouraging to see people travel beyond Bali. Currently, the biggest challenge is connectivity between the two countries and awareness about the newer destinations. In terms of reacting to the outcome of natural disasters, everything is expected to be back to normal by mid-September.



Sanjay Sondhi
Country Manager
VITO India, New Delhi



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Rail Expert from October 1

The Rail Expert programme that has been in the making for some time now will finally go live from October 1, 2018. **Kunal Kothari**, Regional Manager—South Asia, Rail Europe (RE), shares more details.



TT Bureau

QTell us about the new Expert Programme that RE is looking to launch?

The Rail Expert programme has been on our radar for some years now. It's just that we didn't manage to get it off the block for one reason or another. Maybe we just had too ambitious ideas around it – not only make it good and attractive, but also ensure we got participation from almost every corner of the country. I think we have finally got almost all the boxes ticked.

QWill this be an India specific programme?

Yes and no. The quizzes will be on our global platform where other markets too are running their Expert Programmes. However, each



Kunal Kothari
Regional Manager—South Asia, Rail Europe (RE)

market has its own set of questions, railways partnering, etc, so the one in India will indeed be specific to India. The duration, the period, the prizes, the format, etc is also unique to each market. So while the programme will be India specific, it will be hosted on our global platform and the concept has

been tried and tested by other markets.

QHow can your trade partners benefit from this?

The programme goes live from October 1, 2018. Given it is our first attempt, we decided to keep it short so it finishes by November 30, 2018. During this period, participants have to complete eight modules of 10 questions each. Of course, there will be study material to refer to and answers will only be found in the study material! Then of course, there is a minimum qualification for getting the certificates, and going into a lucky draw for winning the prizes. We will keep the same format for getting our winners for the Fam trip who get an all-expenses paid trip to Europe.

“In October, we will launch the 'Quiz Only' Rail Expert programme for agents across India. It has been a challenging year but agents have been very supportive. In addition, we also plan to do some on-location trainings in some Tier-II and III cities **”**

QWhat are the trade engagement details for the rest of 2018?

Our successful campaign in partnership with Swiss Travel System and Switzerland Tourism – The Swiss Travel Pass SuperStar – is already in its sixth season and our winners for the Fam will be announced by mid-September. In October, we will launch the 'Quiz Only' Rail Expert programme for agents across India. It has been a challenging year but agents

have been very supportive. So despite the challenges, we decided to launch our Rail Expert programme that has been requested for few years. In addition, we plan to do some on-location trainings in some Tier-II and III cities. We are working out the final plans and will roll out the announcements soon. The travel agents have been kind, making one of our learning programmes quite a success which resulted in it going global. We are sure, with only

quiz to answer over a very short period, the participation in our first ever Expert programme will be equally good if not better.

QWhat is the kind of growth that you have seen from the India market?

The biggest growth of course was in 2015 with over 34 per cent growth and despite global events that slowed down the travel industry in 2016, we managed to be slightly better than the rest of the world as well as 2015. Then again in 2017 we set new high of total sales from this market with 15 per cent growth. Our passenger numbers grew by over 37 per cent in 2015 (over 2014) and by over 10 per cent in 2017 (over 2016). We ended 2017 at € 25M with almost 3.2L passengers.

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Opening in phases from April 2019, Far East Hospitality presents Village Hotel at Sentosa, The Outpost Hotel, The Barracks Hotel and Events Centre. The new getaway will be home and host to a wave of brand new amenities and activities; from dining at exciting F&B concepts, to soaking up some golden rays, there is always something for everyone.



EXPERIENCE SENTOSA IN A NEW WAY

Village Hotel at Sentosa offers an experiential stay for meeting and leisure groups with opportunities to bond and discover the rich culture and heritage of its surroundings. The hotel has 606 cosy guestrooms decorated in sun-washed hues of nature by the sea. For a trendier island getaway, The Outpost Hotel delivers an authentic experience with 193 rooms in a stylish interpretation of colonial black and white design. Its rooftop pool and bar with a picturesque panoramic view is great for evening cocktails, networking and social events. Promising an array of exquisite services, The Barracks Hotel offers 40 premium guestrooms with direct pool access for a dip or lounge amidst the tranquillity and privacy of the heritage buildings.

The adjacent Mess Hall, an ex-military outpost is re-imagined as a global village offering diverse and shared experiences, with new retail and international F&B concepts.

ADVENTURE AND ROMANCE IN EVERY EXPERIENCE

Situated on elevated ground, the Pool Deck presents unique themed pool experiences and various outdoor spaces for all guests. The Pamukkale Pool, inspired by the dramatic cascading pools in Turkey, will be the prime spot to chase the sunset on the island. Against the backdrop of the glistening sea or lush nature, it is the ideal setting for corporate launches, networking and even team building activities.

The meticulously restored Events Centre heritage building and the new Village Square, housed in Village Hotel at Sentosa, provide over 800 square metres of flexible space suitable for hosting small and mid-scale events, from corporate launches to social events. Thoughtfully crafted and designed to reflect the charming uniqueness of its locale, the Revelry Hall at the Events Centre is a beautiful space for meetings, conferences and corporate dinners.

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Australia's growth story

Brent Anderson, Regional GM—South & South East Asia, Tourism Australia and **Nishant Kashikar**, Country Manager—India & Gulf, Tourism Australia, discuss the unprecedented growth of tourist arrivals from India to Australia.



Anupriya Bishnoi from Jaipur

The 16th edition of the recently-concluded Tourism Australia's 'India Travel Mission 2018' (ITM 2018) in Jaipur, brought together 75 Australian tourism business to meet with 87 travel retailers from India in over 6,500 business appointments over three days. The event witnessed participation from 14 first-time seller participants and 20 buyer companies. **Brent Anderson**, Regional General Manager—South & South East Asia, Tourism Australia says, "For the first time, we have seven out of the eight Australian states and territories who have come for this mission. Also, this is the biggest offshore event in terms of Australians who attend the show. With 335,000 arrivals, India is our number one market in terms of growth and arrivals to Australia."

Talking about meeting their objectives, Anderson says, "Back in 2012, we developed 'India 2020' strategy. We are proud to say that two of our three goals have already been realised and we are quite close to achieving the third one. Exceeding the 300,000 arrivals mark as our first goal was already achieved in December 2017; we are now sitting at 335,000. In 2018, we are also looking at a double-digit growth. With this growth rate, half a million Indian arrivals will be achieved by 2020."

Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager—India & Gulf, Tourism Australia, elaborates further on the remaining goals. He says, "We have not only exceeded our goal in terms of the number of ar-



Brent Anderson
Regional General Manager—South & South East Asia, Tourism Australia

rivals but was also ranked as the top six for out-of-region travel for Indians. Looking at the past 10 years, the entire outbound industry has grown at almost 8 per cent with Australia's arrivals alone at 10 per cent growth. The past years have been extremely crucial where the industry is growing at 9 per cent but we



Nishant Kashikar
Country Manager—India & Gulf, Tourism Australia

are growing at 16 per cent. There is a big gap between the pace at which we are growing and the pace of the industry. For the first six months, we have been growing at a rate of 22 per cent. Our 6 per cent growth in the first six months can be attributed to the hassle-free and

seamless visa applications to Australia."

Kashikar mentioned that the third goal is to achieve a spend of \$1.9 billion. "With our current spend of \$1.53 billion, we aim to achieve this goal by June 2019," he said.

Whenever Indians visit Australia, they usually travel to the conventional destinations. Tourism Australia ensured that the trend changes. Kashikar says, "Having increased our focus from a demographic to psychographic targeting, we now target a segment called as 'high value traveller'. This means that a traveller is not only travelling to Australia but also contributing significantly to the Australian economy. The launch of 'Signature

Experiences' in remote locations offers a diverse range of travel options including Australian Wildlife Collection, Great Golf Courses, Great Walks of Australia, Luxury Lodges and the Ultimate Winery Experiences. Tourists will not just travel to the key cities but also visit unexplored destinations which in turn will increase the length of the stay and add further to the economy. We aim to grow by 29 per cent."

Focus Areas

➔ Tourism Australia is focusing on the top eight cities, namely, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, Pune and Ahmedabad

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Rediscovering
a forgotten itinerary

Magnificent temples, rainforests, beaches, rich culture and art forms in South India are major attractions, especially for foreign tourists.



The classical two weeks itinerary of South India during the 70s and 80s used to cover a circuit starting from Chennai, Mahabalipuram, Kancheepuram, Pondicherry, Tanjavur, Trichi, Madurai, Periyar, Kovalam, Kanyakumari, Rameswaram, Chennai. Now this circuit has undergone a drastic change with the emergence of new destinations and introduction of new products over the years especially in Kerala.

During the 90s, Kerala Tourism's introduction with innovative products like backwaters, house boats, Ayurveda and hill resorts like Munnar have influenced the rerouting of this itinerary by creating a new golden quadrangle in Central Ker-

ala like Kochi-Kumarakom-Periyar-Munnar. Kovalam, as a world-renowned and well-established beach destination, continued to attract visitors from across the world all these years. Backwaters played a major role in making God's own country a sought-after destination. Due to the over population of hundreds of houseboats and resorts in this region, tourists started exploring new backwater regions in Kerala, where Ashtamudi Lake in Kollam emerges as a natural choice.

Going back to Tamil Nadu, the south of Madurai rich in

culture and natural beauty largely remains unexplored. There are spectacular temples like Srivalliputtur, Sankaran Kovil, Thenkasi in this circuit.

age of the same is adopted as the official emblem of Tamil Nadu. The train journey through Aryankavu pass of Western Ghats from Shenkot-

km during the day by visiting major attractions like Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple, Srivalliputhur Andal Temple, Sankaran Kovil, Thenkasi

visit to Thangassery Fort and Lighthouse, visit to Cashew Factory, etc. There are authentic Ayurveda centres and modern spas for relaxation in Ashtamudi. The next two days can be spent at Kovalam near Trivandrum. On the way from Kollam, there are attractions like Varkala Beach, Anjengo Fort, Muthalapozhi, Vettucaud Church, etc. At Trivandrum, Sri Padmanabha Swamy Temple, Napier Museum, Sri Chitra Art Gallery are must-see places. One could relax on the famed beaches at Kovalam or try Ayurveda rejuvenation programmes at Spa.

Kanyakumari can be covered on the return journey, if you are completing the journey back to Madurai or making a day visit from Trivandrum. Enroute, don't miss Padmanabhapuram Palace, the largest wooden palace in the world and Suchindram Temple. Be a part of this journey to rediscover the timeless past and enlighten the travellers' soul in you!



The 'Raja gopuram' (Temple Tower) of Srivalliputtur is the highest in South India and the im-

tai to Kollam is a beautiful experience. Attractions on the way include the Senturuni Wildlife Sanctuary, Thenmala Dam and Eco Tourism Project, Palaruvi Waterfalls, Kulathupuzha Sastha Temple and the Hanging Bridge of Punalur.

Kasi Viswanathar Temple, Curtalam Water Falls, Aryankavu Ayyappa Temple, Thenmala Eco Tourism Project, Palaruvi Waterfalls, Punalur Hanging Bridge. The overnight stay can be at a backwater resort in Lake Ashtamudi in Kollam.

One could cover this mystical circuit within three to five days. There is an option to start the itinerary either from Trivandrum or from Madurai. If you are starting from Madurai in the morning by road, you could cover the 250

One could explore Kollam and Ashtamudi in two days with a combination of unique activities and relaxation. Activities include a houseboat ride on Lake Ashtamudi, a half day trip to Munro Island,

Dileep Kumar P I, General Manager, Raviz Hotels & Resorts (The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



Expanding India portfolio

Having made a comeback in India after eight years with a Delhi-Rome flight last year, Alitalia is now planning expansion in India, reveals the airline's global team in an exclusive interaction with TRAVTALK.



Nisha Verma

India is a growing aviation market and is thus a great opportunity for Alitalia, said **Nicola Bonacchi**, Vice President—Leisure Sales, Alitalia. "In terms of our plans in this market, our first target is to cross first year of the Delhi-Rome flight with a good result. The load factor is around 82 per cent. We want to push the business class to achieve the target, increase capacity and evaluate a new destination by adding Mumbai to our

Group Travel

Alitalia has created a new organisation with a dedicated team for business travel to focus on DMC and corporate business

network. We have 24 bilaterals between Italy and India, and there is space for more flights and hence we are looking at Mumbai," he revealed.

Bonacchi added that the airline is currently targeting a Passenger Load Factor of 90-95 per cent, and is taking several steps to reach that mark. "This growth will not only be driven by India but also by European and Italian markets. We are also working with agencies to feed the flight to Delhi currently. With an existing codeshare with Jet Airways, we are evaluating other carriers to bring passengers to Delhi and make them fly abroad with our flights," he claimed.

Massimo Allegri, Regional General Manager, Alitalia, believes that India is a very important and challenging market in the Asia



Pacific region. Talking about the airline's strategy for India, Allegri said, "Our approach is to have a dedicated service in India like we have for other countries. The focus is to offer a great onboard service because we have a dedicated menu and food for the Indian market."

Aircraft upgradation is also in the offing. "If the Indian market

continues with its loyalty with Alitalia, we can increase the frequencies or change the aircraft with higher capacity," he added.

Fabio Bigotti, Country Manager—India, Alitalia, has previously worked in the Indian market. "For me, this is the return because I have already been here as a country man-

ager in 2003. While we have a good load factor currently, we are working to have a profitable line. Hence, we are working specially on the high yield passengers as well as with the travel trade. All agents in India are our partners. We have a strong team based in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kolkata. We have also recently employed new staff for the

Punjab region. Our aim is to maintain good relations with trade and have good results from India," he added.

Bonacchi added, "I have a very good feedback from the market and we want the trade market to represent for us about 65 per cent. We also have incentives and commission for our trade partners who get good business for the airline."

Bigotti also revealed that they have invested a good budget in marketing activities in India and will do a huge campaign in the end of October. "This will be our third campaign in India. We have done a commendable job in roadshows in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata in cooperation with ENIT—The Italian tourism board in India and the Italian embassy," he shared.

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Stay updated even on air

Thai Airways has introduced Live TV and Wi-Fi on selected flights to help travellers remain abreast of the latest news and developments while on board. The airline also has high hopes from the Indian market.



Karishma Khanna from Bangkok

The new Live TV on board is only available in some of the aircraft, especially the long-haul ones, informs **Viset Sontichai**,



Viset Sontichai
Director—Indian Subcontinent
Department – Commercial, Thai Airways

Director—Indian Subcontinent Department – Commercial, Thai Airways. The facility is available on the European,

Australian and New Zealand routes. Passengers from India connect the flight from Bangkok to Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore.

Touted as a unique technology, the Live TV on board helps the traveller to understand what's happening round the world in real-time and enables passengers to watch broadcast television programmes, such as



“We have introduced W-Fi technology and a new aircraft. We usually operate Boeing 787 in Delhi on the late-night flight. We hope to increase the frequency to Delhi and Mumbai in the future”

news channels and sports competitions. Speaking on how it would enhance the experience of passengers on board, Sontichai

explains, “If a businessman wants to know about the world stock market, he can instantly check out the updates. He can

also find out the world gold price or the world oil price in real-time. Even during the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, everyone could enjoy it in real-time.”

Sontichai was also vocal about the Indian market. “We have introduced W-Fi technology and a new aircraft. We usually operate Boeing 787 in Delhi on the late-night flight at 3:00 am in the morning. But since there

was a problem with the 787, we have withdrawn it and replaced with Boeing 207. I believe, in near future we can increase the frequency to Delhi and Mumbai. As our latest addition to our fleet, we will operate our brand-new aircraft Boeing 350 to India and it includes the Live TV and Wi-Fi,” he said.

Thai Airways has set targets for this year in the India market.

“The target for India is 20 per cent compared to the previous year. That means that in the key cities, we can increase more frequency,” Sontichai said. The airline is however planning to start new routes in Tier-II cities of Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Kochi and Guwahati. In the last one year, the airline had approximately only 5 per cent of passenger increase from the Indian market. ↴



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BIAL high on tech

Javed Malik, Chief Operating Officer, BIAL, talks about long-term expansion plans at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru.

 **Manas Dwivedi**

As the operator of Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) is constantly innovating and reinventing itself to provide best possible experiences to travellers. **Javed Malik**, Chief Operating Officer, BIAL, says that they are aiming to increase the annual passenger throughput during peak hours and working on the construction of Terminal 2 and the New South Parallel Runway (NSPR). "The work on the 4000-metre NSPR has begun and is expected to be ready for operation by late 2019. The new runway will cater to all types of aircraft. Terminal 2 will be built in two phases – with Phase-I scheduled for completion by mid-2021," informs Malik.

As part of the interim capacity enhancement




Javed Malik
Chief Operating Officer
BIAL

measures, BIAL has already increased the number of self-check-in kiosks, check-in counters, security check zones, swing gates and taxi parking. "We are currently working on additional gates, self-bag drop counters, auto-tray retrieval systems, e-gates and queue management," he adds.

Talking about new and emerging technologies to

transform the airport experience, Malik says that BIAL is aiming towards providing facilities and amenities that are meant to serve rapidly changing customer needs. He explains, "A digital roadmap for the airport is in the pipeline in partnership with Accenture. We want to introduce more digitally advanced services and products at Bengaluru to ensure that passengers and partners have the advantage of future-forward technologies."

Explaining more about the upcoming Terminal 2, Malik says that the new terminal's interior will reflect the art, tradition and culture of Karnataka and Bengaluru. "T2 is envisaged as a first-of-its-kind – a terminal within a garden – that will blend with the ethos of Bengaluru as a Garden City. The interiors with sustainability are built into the design aesthetics of all our projects," he mentions. 

Insuring travel well

Business trips abroad are always exciting, especially if it's a dream destination. But, there are times when such dreams turn into nightmares, despite the prepared plans.

 **TT Bureau**

Rajesh Chikkon, a seasoned travel industry executive, well-acquainted with the importance of travel assistance and insurance, opted for an adventure sports add-on with TrawellTag Cover-More, based on the itinerary of the trip.

During the last leg of his business trip to Australia, unfortunately, Chikkon met with a horrific accident on a Segway ride at one of the national parks. It was discovered that Chikkon had broken his femur.

The trip coordinator informed TrawellTag Cover-More about Chikkon's incident and he



was immediately airlifted to a hospital for further treatment.


With appropriate care and cashless treatment, Chikkon was discharged and escorted back to India by his brother-in-law, whose visit was also facilitated by TrawellTag Cover-More. Chikkon's wise decision-making coupled with a holistic assistance and insurance plan stood by him through rough times.

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“My adventure trip in Australia was cut short due to a Segway mishap, but TrawellTag Cover-More put me back on my feet, leaving no regrets of the tour”


Rajesh Chikkon

Stitch in Time

 Rajesh Chikkon's wise decision-making coupled with a holistic assistance and insurance plan stood by him through rough times




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



Nikhil Jeet

WorldTalk

Venezuela

The country came to a standstill recently as people tried to deal with its newly introduced currency. Thousands of business closed in order to adapt to the "sovereign bolivar" while many workers stayed at home.

USA

The US-China trade war shows no sign of slowing down with fresh tariffs being imposed this week. Business in both sides of the Pacific are feeling the heat of tariffs.

Vienna, Austria

Vienna is the most liveable city in the world, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2018 rankings. It ended Melbourne's seven-year stay at the top spot last week. New Delhi figured at 112th and Mumbai at 117th position out of 140 cities.

Jakarta, Indonesia

New research says that if unchecked, nearly all of North Jakarta could be sub-merged underwater. Java is right next to the Java Sea and has 13 rivers running through it.

Seoul, South Korea

Seoul has seen its first-ever deaf taxi drivers take to the road this week, thanks to a new software that's been launched to help reduce the local stigma of hiring hearing-impaired people.

Australia

Sprinting legend Usain Bolt has taken his first steps towards becoming a professional footballer after starting an "indefinite" trial with a top division side in Australia. We hope his football career lasts longer the 100m final.

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Incredibly new departures

Sans Incredible Vacations has introduced two new fixed departures – possibly being offered for the first time – a 19-day Diwali package in the USA and a 12-day Christmas holiday in New York with a New Year in Las Vegas. A special Diwali offering to the Canadian Rockies is also on the cards.



TT Bureau

A specialist in customised vacations for North America (USA and Canada) strictly in B2B space, Sans Incredible Vacations LLC has designed multiple fixed departures ex-USA. It has now introduced new fixed departures for the Indian market. Speaking about them is **Nalin Kapadia**, Vice Chairman, Sans Incredible Vacations LLC. He says, "We have recently introduced fixed departures for Diwali in USA



Nalin Kapadia
Vice Chairman
Sans Incredible Vacations

and Western Canada, and Christmas in New York with New Year in Las Vegas. This is probably the first time ever that this has been offered."

Not just this, the company has a strategy to grow further. "We are planning several roadshows and workshops around the country. The first one will be held in Ahmedabad on September 4, 2018. A senior officer from the US Consulate will also be addressing the attendees. This will be a great opportunity for the travel agents to offer readymade products to their clients," Kapadia reveals.

Top North American spots for Indian visitors

According to Kapadia, the most popular cities or tourist spots in the USA for Indian visitors are: New York, Washington, Orlando, Niagara Falls, Las Vegas, Los Angeles and San Francisco. In Canada, the most visited places by Indians are Toronto, Niagara Falls, Banff, Jasper and Vancouver.

Speaking about the new products that are being promoted for the US are fixed departures for 2019 with four options. Kapadia says, "We are introducing a visit to Lake Mammoth and Lake Tahoe in the West Coast, adding a few

more exciting experiences in New York like the Beast Ride as well as Washington which includes the Spy Museum and so on. We will also intensify our efforts in promoting edu-tourism. This will be to Kennedy Space Centre in

Orlando and Johnson Space Centre in Houston." The company is also promoting customised packages to Canadian Rockies and to East Canada. It has special packages for Robotics Classes for all age groups in Toronto.

The USP of the company is that it offers its agent partners something not many tour operators in the industry offer - flexible fixed departures to the US. "Our fixed departures for the US are immensely flexible, allowing passengers to join in

even for a part of the tour. Our passengers have the option of doing only the East Coast or the West Coast. Also, unlike other DMCs, our itineraries are full board and are inclusive of all inter-city land travel," Kapadia says. 🇮🇳

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South Africa in all its glory

About 175 delegates marked their presence at the recently-concluded four-day OTOAI Annual Convention held in Cape Town. OTOAI has held its past conventions in Manila, Bali and Ras Al Khaimah.



Kanchan Nath from Cape Town

The year 2018 holds special relevance to South Africa as it marks the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela. Speaking on the convention, **Mahendra Vakharia**, President, OTOAI, said, "About 175 delegates attended the convention. The line-up of international speakers comprising **Greg Klassen**, Principal, Twenty31 Consulting; **Mallini Singh**, Digital Customer Expert and **Avinash Chandarana**,

Group Learning & Development Director, MCI, was well received by the delegates. Information from the experts about what is happening in the industry and how we can manage it to our advantage was important." On South Africa as the destination for the convention, he added, "Many of the delegates were visiting South Africa for the first time. It was a good opportunity to experience the destination, see it and take back home the marketing and contracting details, so that they can promote tourism to this country."

Elaborating on what's next on the agenda for OTOAI, Vakharia said, "We will continue with workshops and trainings in the different parts of India for members and will start plan-



ning for the next convention. For example, in Ahmedabad, we have tied up with a training institute that is certified by an American certificate of trainers. Training will be free of cost for all our members once a month for about six months."

Himanshu Patil, Vice President and Chairman-Convention,

OTOAI said, "The growing incomes of the middle class, the huge population and the way social media is transforming lives of so many Indians is all impacting travel. Earlier, South-east Asia and Europe were the most popular destinations, but the scenario has changed now. People are keen on going experiential and want to explore

destinations off-the-beaten-track. Today's traveller is knowledgeable and researches all his ideas and plans online before approaching us. That's what also motivates us to be on our toes."

Gurdeep Singh Gujral, Joint Secretary, Co-chairman-Convention, OTOAI stated, "Our

theme this year was highly acclaimed. I also extend my thanks to my OTOAI members for their support and trust they have shown in our team. I am sure our South African sellers will definitely benefit from the table-top meetings and our members got a chance to explore Cape Town and other cities during the post Fam trips."

Game Plan

OTOAI believes in updating its knowledge on a daily basis to stay relevant in business. Co-curated tours and understanding clients' requirements is the need

Kerala rises from ashes

The tourism and hospitality industry in Kerala hopes to get back to normal from the beginning of September, especially with airport, roads and hotels reopening soon.



TT Bureau

After the severe floods in Kerala, the tourism industry is geared to be back in business by September 1, 2018, says **Sejoe Jose**, Chairman, IATO Kerala Chapter. "The airports are expected to be operational by September 1, 2018. Even the roads to various destinations are now open and local people are travelling from one place to another. Roads from Kochi to Thekkady and Munnar are now open. About



Sejoe Jose
Chairman
IATO Kerala Chapter

starting September, but the bookings might not come right now. "Kerala would be ready to receive guests from the first week of September. However, nobody is expecting the bookings to start immediately as it is going to take time. At a recent meeting with KTM Society, we estimated a loss of `1000 crores for the tourism industry, for people directly and indirectly affected. The loss owing to cancellations is estimated to be around `120 crores," he informs.

“At a recent meeting with KTM Society, we estimated a loss of `1000 crores for the tourism industry”

two or three resorts have been severely damaged in Munnar, but apart from that, the rest are fine. However, in Kumarakom and Alleppey, it will take another week for things to open. On the other hand, Trivandrum, Malap-

puram and Cherai are safe. Wayanad in northern Kerala and the coastal sides of Calicut and Bekal are now open," he adds.

Jose insists that tourists would be able to come to Kerala

Jose is optimistic now that life and business would be back on track very soon. "Alleppey and Kumarakom would take a while to regain themselves. Most of the highways are open. Some cleaning requirements exist, especially with the flood water coming up to 5-8 ft in many houses. There is more damage and loss in the suburbs than the touristic sites," claims Jose.

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OTOAI embraces digitisation

Besides gaining knowledge about various tourism products of South Africa, agents agreed in unison that the need of the hour is to change and adopt digitalisation to remain relevant in business.



Kanchan Nath from Cape Town



Guldeep Singh Sahni
Founder Member, OTOAI &
Managing Director, Weldon
Tours & Travels

“The networking as well as the B2B meetings went well. The convention brought all the tour operators together along with the DMCs here in South Africa. One can see the performance of tour operators in the next one year who have to sell South Africa in their itineraries. For the next year's convention, we are considering about 15 destinations. As our priority, we will definitely come out with one of the partners where we think the tour operators need more education and exposure to. As far as digitalisation is concerned, we do not have to panic but act.”



Shravan Bhalla
EC Member, OTOAI & CEO,
High Flyer

“About 175 Indian delegates attended the OTOAI convention. Over and above, more than 70 per cent of them were visiting South Africa for the first time to meet suppliers and gain knowledge in exploring and experiencing the product. It was a great opportunity for tour operators of Tier-II and III cities to explore Cape Town by joining on their pre and post FAMs and explore the beauty of South Africa. We were keen to take visa challenges and encourage the tourist authority to adopt the e-visa mode for a faster and seamless process. We also want to encourage more airlines to enter this market as well as re-launch direct flights to major hubs to enable increase in numbers to this country.”



Ajay Sengar
Chairman—Western
Chapter, OTOAI

“The DMCs at the convention were excellent as they provided us with relevant information and product knowledge. The lectures and sessions were educative for travel agents. It is important for all of us to adopt digitalisation so that we can improve our business. OTOAI did a commendable job by organising its convention in Cape Town. South Africa is a destination to be explored in all its beauty. All the EC members of the association have undertaken a lot of efforts to deliver a successful event. Next year, I think we should head to Australia or New Zealand for the convention.”

“Overall, there has been a good feedback from travel agents from the southern region about the convention. Most importantly, agents liked the destination. Agents were updated about the latest tourism trends and informed well through B2B meetings. We also learnt a lot about the various tourism products that South Africa has to offer. The convention is evolving with each event. In the last few months, a few meetings were held in the southern region. With just 38 members, we are very selective about our members and ensure they are genuine tour operators who are involved in good quality business.”



Manish Kriplani
Chairman—Southern
Chapter, OTOAI & CEO,
Baywatch Travels

“OTOAI convention had some great speakers this year. The subject chosen is also very apt for what is happening back home. The association put its best foot forward in terms of arrangements; it does not seem like it's their fourth convention. Travel insurance now has become a commodity. Everybody can buy travel insurance, what's going to really differentiate is the assistance. The way we are going to differentiate one from the other is the key. How it reaches out to the end customer is going to be through artificial intelligence, where the customer dynamically gets the right product to where he is travelling rather than a static product.”



Dev Karvat
CEO-Emerging Markets,
Cover More

“This is my second OTOAI convention. I must compliment the association in doing a commendable job. OTOAI is an excellent organisation and its going to go to great places. Outbound agents have a lot of common issues that need to be addressed and I think that OTOAI has filled the void to a certain extent. We needed one common voice to stand up and address the outbound trade's concerns and grievances. Digitalisation is definitely the future and its good they are working on this at this point of time; it's only going to help the members. I am taking a lot of knowledge back home.”



Surinder Lidder
Managing Partner
Holiday Bash International



P Pathinathan
Managing Partner, World
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“On the first day of the convention, we got an opportunity to interact with the MPs and the Minister during which we put across the demand for the electronic visa. That was the highlight because it is very difficult to interact directly with the Minister otherwise. The implementation of electronic visa will become much easier for Indians to visit South Africa. The hotel, Taj Cape Town is wonderful, and arrangements were also well done. Coming here till Stellenbosch, one has become familiar with the wine country. Next year, I feel the association should take its convention to Australia. Members of OTOAI will now surely give more business to South Africa.”



K Chandran
Managing Director,
Emperor Traveline

“The OTOAI Convention has created an opportunity to learn more about South Africa. It has been an eye opener to plan and face competition in the era of digitalisation. The involvement of South Africa tourism, Ministry along with the Indian consul has strengthened our confidence to market South Africa in India. The speakers delivered valuable information relevant to our industry's growth. The Fam trip was useful in gaining knowledge about the products ready for sale to the Indian customers. As a south Indian outbound tour operator, I could see more of adventure tour possibilities as adventure activities are not easily available in South India.”



Sandhya Pandey
Director
Network Air

“OTOAI Convention had the right vendors, speakers and senior officials from the South African tourism board. The takeaway was embracing digital technology in the travel business. It was encouraging to learn that travel business is growing rapidly and is poised to grow by \$3 million in about three years. We could feel the close ties of South Africa with India. A direct flight from Delhi to Cape Town will definitely help in this regard. Post-convention Fam tour gave us the chance to see the beautiful spots in and around Cape Town. South Africa has the right mix of culture, natural beauty and hospitable people.”

“My heartiest congratulations to the working committee of OTOAI for zeroing in on the beautiful destination. South Africa entails all possible features that a tourist would look out for in their holiday. I am sure the committee workers of the association must have had their share of challenges in working out the different itineraries, but all in all, the travel fraternity has recognised and understood the potential of this beautiful destination. So, the purpose and mission of OTOAI is well accomplished!”



Shabbir Dalal
Director
Shums Air Travels

“The comment by James Vos, Foster Tourism Minister, South Africa at the inaugural event which highlighted OTOAI Convention as a great opportunity for everyone to network and find out the best practices in the industry, was praiseworthy. He also mentioned the plan of introducing e-visa for travellers to South Africa to boost tourism. The pre- and post-familiarisation trips to different locations was effective to understand and explore the destination. It was a great exposure to meet 30-40 sellers from South Africa with whom we got the chance to meet under one roof, exchange ideas, new concepts and methods.”



Harish Verma
Director
Reisen Tours

“I think the event was brilliant; it went off very smoothly. The place, the business sessions and B2B meetings went really well. OTOAI has gone to such a far-off destination for the first time. South Africa is a beautiful destination to sell, there is adventure, nature, wildlife, deserts and it's also perfect for honeymooners. As far as digitalisation is concerned, we have no option but to start taking baby steps now.”



Chitra Bhatia
General Secretary, OTOAI &
Managing Director, Aash-
man Air Travels



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Skålleagues network & engage

The third edition of Skål International India's National Congress was recently held in Kolkata with an aim to promote tourism and foster friendship among trade,. The association also announced the commencement of three new Skål clubs by April 2019.



5 Reasons

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PHILIPPINES & fun are synonymous

Be it shopping, nightlife, food, beaches, fun and frolic, The Philippines just has an appropriate mix of everything that Indian travellers look forward to during a holiday. Lauding the smooth conduct of Focus Philippines, the travel trade opines on the myriad offerings of the destination.



Kanchan Nath from Goa



Mahendra Vakharia
President
Outbound Tour Operators
Association of India
(OTOAI)

“Focus Philippines reinforces the importance of promoting bilateral networking opportunities between the two destinations. These events always provide an opportunity to update our knowledge and understand if there is a new product in the market which could be further used for marketing to clients. Agents not only networked with old clientele and friends but were always on the lookout for newer opportunities. It's indeed more fun in the Philippines when you send your clients there.”



Guldeep Singh Sahni
Managing Director
Weldon Tours & Travels

“Collectively, there have been some very good sessions between the tour operators and the stakeholders with a healthy exchange of knowledge. The people from the Philippines got to know our interests and requirements. Philippines is a destination that offers everything to families and people who like fun. The country is abundant with casinos, lakes, rivers, volcanoes and beaches. Most of the Indians, while travelling, find themselves comfortable in an English-speaking country. Philippines caters to most Indians' needs of good food and shopping. I think Goa is a beautiful place to interact and gain knowledge in the best possible way.”



Nagsri Prasad Sashidhar
Head—Outbound Holidays
Mercury Travels

“Focus Philippines is important because the word ‘focus’ is what we need to really focus on. To make any event successful, a great deal of focus is required. An event like this, which is a break away from your usual monotony, is of utmost importance. Everyone of us who are here are focusing on only one aspect - to make Philippines a success story. Philippines has just about everything that the Indian audience really wants, be it shopping, nightlife, food, the fun and frolic and the beaches. So, my tagline for anyone who wants a wholesome holiday would be, “Why not the Philippines?”

“Focus Philippines offers a mix of segments with MICE and leisure players from across India. The event is an excellent platform to get insights into the Philippines. The country is beyond exploring Manila and Boracay to Bohol, Palawan and other lesser known destinations. Philippines is a destination where you get everything - nightlife, entertainment, food and various other activities. I highly recommend our agent fraternity to do MICE movements in Manila.”



Sujit Nair
Founder & Group Managing Director
AquaSun Group

“The event has been great for networking that also offered the latest information on different tourism products of the Philippines. Agents are motivated to sell the destination and suppliers got an opportunity to interact with agents to understand the Indian market's requirements. The Philippines is undoubtedly the perfect destination for the Indian market as there is no language barrier, no transportation issue and ample opportunities for shopping and nightlife.”



Riaz Munshi
Managing Director
N Chirag Travels

“Everything at Focus Philippines was taken care of with detailed attention - right from hotels to the airlines. We met with relevant stakeholders to understand the destination well. Honestly, we had no idea about the vast range of offerings in the Philippines. The country's potential is unparalleled. Bohol is just a day trip from Cebu. Similarly, El Nido on Palawan island is another emerging destination. With a lot of information and knowledge from this place, I am confident I will be able to pitch this destination well.”



Daren Memon
Assistant Sales Manager
Thomas Cook India



Naveen Kundu
Founder & Managing Director
Leisure Corp

“When I saw the presentations on all the islands, I was enlightened to know that the Philippines had so much to offer. The sessions, time-slots and the manner in which all the meetings have been planned and scheduled were fantastic. When I am going to do a next MICE session for my corporates, I am going to plan something similar. The Indian MICE market is projected to be the largest MICE market by 2020. I feel that Philippines Airlines has to introduce good fares so that we can sell the destination better.”



Manoj Bhadola
COO
Worldwide Tour Services

“Philippines is a beautiful upcoming destination, especially when the Philippines Airlines introduces a direct flight to Delhi. With a unique flavour and character, I am confident that tourism is going to boom in the Philippines. We had some very good suppliers and informative sessions at the event. All logistics and transfer were very well-organised.”



Vikas Khanduri
CEO
Holiday Merchants

“The way Philippines has created the paperwork for creating an ease for the invitee is absolutely delightful. Currently, we have a via point to reach the country. The destination is an experience in itself. Between Port to Princessa and Boracay, one can go through three UNESCO sites. Manila has convention centres which are next to the best in the world and best accommodates small groups up to 50 passengers. A new and emerging trend among Indians is one of experiential travel and Philippines is perfect for such travel.”

“Philippines is an upcoming destination for which there is a lot of inquisitiveness. Manila in the Philippines has a lot of potential for MICE. The meetings were great as we formed good one-to-one rapport with a lot of suppliers, hoteliers along with exchange of information. For me, it's a very new upcoming MICE destination; so it is a lot of value to me.”



Prashant Kumar Kothari
Director
Good Earth Travel Group

“Manilla is one of the best cities for shopping, MICE incentive groups, casinos, nightlife and everything related to tourism. Different DMCs and hoteliers here are from the Philippines; so the meetings have been very productive. We have gained a lot of information about the destination.”



SMA Sheeraz
Director
Sheeraz Tours

“As a maiden event in Goa for the Philippines, it justifies the tagline that it is more fun in the Philippines. The one-on-one meetings were very well planned as they provided deep insights about the destination and the upcoming tourist attractions. Philippines has been doing really well in the Indian market. I think in 2017, approximately 170,000 people have travelled from India to the Philippines.”



Ranjana Sharma
Chief Executive Officer
Trav N Tours International



Manoj Saraf
Managing Director
Gainwell Enterprises

“When you have something arranged like this in a place like Goa, there is bound to be a focus on the destination. That is precisely what is happening - for 48 hours straight we were all thinking, breathing and talking about Philippines. In a show where there are 20 suppliers, you tend to focus on each and every supplier. They remain etched in your memory, therefore chances are business will happen. If an event is being held in Goa, you are working as well as enjoying.”

“Philippines is an upcoming destination in the Indian market. Beyond promoting Manila, Boracay and Cebu, we need to lay more emphasis on providing exposure to destinations like Palawan, Bohol in the Philippines. The event was very informative and we are very confident selling Philippines actively now. The arrangement was excellent and we are more confident and positive about the destination now.”



Neera Chaturvedi
Senior Manager—Products
& Contracting-FIT, Cox & Kings

Exploring new horizons

With the Tier-II and III cities as the new talk of the town for business expansion, India Travel Award winners discuss their plans of enhancing their presence in the new market.



Manas Dwivedi

★ Best Regional Airline — Silk Air (South 2018)



“Jagdish Ram Bhojwani, General Manager—India, Silk Air talks about expansion in the airline’s product line, saying, “SilkAir is committed to consistently improving itself to ensure quality service and offerings amid competition and changing landscapes. On the product front, we recently introduced five new meals onboard, featuring favourite local delights of countries we fly to. Our complimentary wireless in-flight entertainment (IFE) system, SilkAir Studio, has also recently been enhanced with an extended library of content. With a selection of more than 300 international movies and TV programmes, there’s now something for everyone.”

★ Best Airport — Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru (South 2018)



“Briefing about his plans to enhance service quality and facilities, Javed Malik, CCO, Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) says, “As the operator of the Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, we are constantly innovating to increase annual passenger throughput during peak hours. As part of the interim capacity enhancement measures, BIAL has already increased the number of self-check-in kiosks, check-in counters, security check zones, swing gates, taxi parking, etc. We are currently working on additional gates, self-bag drop counters, auto-tray retrieval systems, e-gates and queue management.”



★ Best Foreign Exchange Aggregator — FXKART.COM (South 2018)



“Abdul Hadi Shaikh, CEO, FXKART.com informs that the company constantly innovates to bring new products to the market which can solve the issues of travel consultants with respect to remitting money for their overseas bookings. He explains, “Our strategy is to regularly launch such products and expand our presence in the online space. To get the visibility and credibility that every travel consultants desire, we are foraying into multiple partnerships which can give us access to travel consultants and help us participate in road shows as well as association conferences.”

★ Best Debut Hotel — Holiday Inn Express & Suites Bengaluru, Racecourse (South 2018)



“Varun Kamra, Director- Sales and Marketing, Holiday Inn Express & Suites Bengaluru says, “We are evolving along with our guests, bringing about fresh experiences to offer. On the same lines we are converting the brand from Holiday Inn Express to a full service Holiday Inn Bengaluru and adding up a freebee dining Indian specialty restaurant- SPICE ART. We are also coming up with a premium TURF VIEW- bar on the 17th floor. Overall the hotel will be a full package for BLEISURE - business cum leisure which is the latest trend for all our smart travellers and guests.”

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



“Vicky Ray, Director, Nexus Travels plans to design itineraries for a number of new and exciting destinations, mainly out of which covers most of California for the Indian market. “Destinations like Palm Springs, Monterey, Santa Monica, Anaheim and High Sierra are in the offing. We are also working on Destination Vancouver and other emerging locations as well. We are currently not planning any expansion as we want to focus more on expertise in particular destinations so that we can run our B2B operations in Tier-II and III cities efficiently,” he said.”

★ Best Mid Market Corporate Hotel — Ramada Bangalore (South 2018)



“Talking about expansion at new destinations, Sachin K S, Director—Sales & South Head Travel Trade, Ramada Bangalore says, “We, at Royal Orchid hotels, have started expanding our properties to Tier-II and III cities. We have already embarked on our journey to add 15 new properties in India with focus on the smaller cities. Our sales team is strong and we want to make sure that we have presence in all the cities. We are looking forward to have 100 properties by 2020.”

★ Best DMC- South East Asia — TravelBullz (South 2018)



“Talking about two new destinations, Amit Paul Singh, General Manager, TravelBullz says, “Two major initiatives are slated for this year. We are opening two new destinations, Singapore and India by the end of this year. We have been leading in outbound travel in India for our destinations; it’s about time we get the India inbound and domestic business right. We are also starting our own in-house technology to take care of our growing technological needs.” With a good team taking care of all the Tier-II and III cities, TravelBullz’s reach to smaller agents and town is extensive, informs Singh.”

★ Best Destination Management Company — STHI Holidays India (West 2017)



“Elaborating on his company’s plan to enhance presence in Tier-II and III cities, Gagan Kumar, Director, STHI Holidays India shares, “Day by day, we are increasing the number of passengers from Tier-II and III cities with support of our partners. We are keen to educate our agents in Tier-III cities through our knowledge sessions, roadshows and workshops with support from tourism boards. He further says, “Moving forward, we are looking to expand our business to new destinations like USA, Canada and some island countries.”



Global trends in travel & tourism

The Indian inbound industry gave a thumbs up for Tourism PowerHouse – an initiative by PATA India Chapter, held recently in New Delhi, claiming that the event brought to light the current scenario of Indian tourism whilst suggesting the road ahead.



TT Bureau



VK Duggal
Former Director General
Tourism

“The entire concept of the event is to introspect—where we were, and most importantly, to chart the roadmap. Eminent speakers and panelists at the event shared global knowledge not only about Indian tourism, but also on how tourism has grown in different countries. It is time for broadly marketing India as a tourism destination as within India, segments of particular interest exist like niche tourism. It is important for us to move forward with the times.”



Captain Swadesh Kumar
President, Adventure Tour
Operators Association
of India

“It's a great opportunity for the industry to understand the data and learn how to increase our business manifold. Today, India needs a quantum jump, and we cannot keep on walking. Tourism PowerHouse is a great opportunity to first learn, sit down and then discuss on ways to move further. What was interesting were the multiple knowledgeable sessions and discussions. Hopefully, we will have some positive recommendations for the Government of India out of this.”



Pronab Sarkar
President, Indian Association
of Tour Operators

“Tourism PowerHouse is an eye opener in terms of what lies in future, how small operators are going to work and if tour operators are going to survive under the present circumstances. Today, with the explosion of technological advancements, online companies are increasingly on the rise. The projected figures of having 30 million tourists by 2030 is going to give a big boost and annual increase of 9 per cent growth has displayed a positive note. I feel that SMEs and small operators get a good boost out of these sessions.”

“The speakers at the event enlightened us with some great sessions on both the days. I was particularly impressed by the digital marketing session. There was a lot to learn from everyone—right from **Mario Hardy**, **John Koldowsky** as well as **Rashmi Verma**. The speeches were power-packed and very relevant for all the attendees. I must complement PATA India Chapter for this wonderful programme and initiative.”



Subhash Goyal
Honorary Secretary
Federation of Associations
of Indian Tourism &
Hospitality

“PATA's first-ever Tourism PowerHouse brought together both national and international experts. This helped us get both sides of the story, right from internal and external standpoints. The event enabled us to closely observe innovation trends in the industry where mobiles continue to rule the roost. Discussions about Artificial Intelligence, chatbots and ways to use big data were useful in making us aware of predicting people's needs and requirements.”



Matthew Powell
Managing Director—Middle
East and South Asia,
Travelport

“Tourism PowerHouse was well structured, short, crisp and very direct. This, according to me, is the way forward. A lot of relevant subjects are being covered. We've got a great overview on data and where the industry is forecast to be. We also saw some of the impacts of technology as well as the disruptors. This summit also touched upon crucial subjects like sustainability that is very critical to the growth of tourism in today's times.”



Arjun Sharma
Managing Director
Select Group



JK Mohanty
Chairman & Managing
Director, Swosti Group

“PATA India Chapter has put a lot of thought in putting together the Tourism PowerHouse. Eminent speakers from India as well as from outside were invited to shed knowledge on global trends in the travel trade. We did learn about the changing scenario globally in the travel and tourism industry. The initiative brought inbound leaders from around the country together to learn and exchange knowledge.”



Sunirmol Ghosh
Director
Indo Asia Tours

“Our first-time experience in such an event exposed us to what the international market is all about. We have listened to experts who have vast knowledge in guiding people on how to develop tourism for the next generation. New trends exist in the inbound market with more millennials coming to India. Inbound travellers are looking for experiences rather than just the sightseeing options. Earlier, people used to visit for three weeks but now, they are even coming for 10 days.”



Anil Parashar
President & CEO, InterGlobe
Technology Quotient (ITQ)

“Tourism PowerHouse is a great initiative to get the best of brains across the globe together under one roof. The platform allows to share their vision, both in terms of the way forward, technology and the best practices that the Indian fraternity can adopt. The platform also increasingly makes us learn how to move forward in business and grow for the future.”

“Tourism PowerHouse by PATA India Chapter is an excellent initiative. In fact, the most important aspect of the event is that it is very informative for the attendees. Professional speakers shared a lot of information which is useful for the industry. An event like this is much relevant in today's times when everything is going digital, where by the time you make your next cup of coffee, the customer is already gone.”



Mukesh Goel
Director
Oriental Travels

“Tourism PowerHouse is a great step in educating the Indian tourism industry. The speeches and the presentations at the event were evocative of a lot of research work. It was good to listen to how digital technology is leading the way forward and how one can counter it, embrace it and take things forward through it. The event also talked about how to be cautious on various notes on digital technology.”



Sunil Gupta
CEO
WelcomHeritage

“It was a great pleasure for me to attend this event as it was very informative and knowledgeable. Tourism PowerHouse has highlighted the myriad aspects of tourism promotion. In fact, **Rashmi Verma**, Secretary, Tourism, in her speech, covered all the potential points of development of tourism in India and abroad. It was a great learning experience for us and will help us in strategising for the future.”



CP Dhakal
Secretary—Tourism & Civil
Aviation Department, Sikkim



Rakesh Mathur
Co-Founder and Secretary,
Ecotourism Society of India

“Tourism PowerHouse was an extremely informative event backed with insightful data and powerful inferences on what lies ahead. However, one of the most important learnings from the event was about sustainability—whether it was in the luxury tourism segment or millennials, I am glad to know that sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint has become a key factor today when people decide to travel by thinking on how to travel, what experiences to gain and ways to involve the community.”

“Tourism PowerHouse by PATA India Chapter is an extremely good platform for the travel and tourism industry in India. I am fortunate to be a part of this event and attend the knowledge sessions and panel discussions. This will definitely help us as far as Northeast India is concerned. Keeping this knowledge gained in mind, we will make our packages accordingly. It's a great move to bring the tourism industry in India and outside together on one platform and facilitate an exchange of ideas.”



Arijit Purkayastha
Koyeli Tours & Travels
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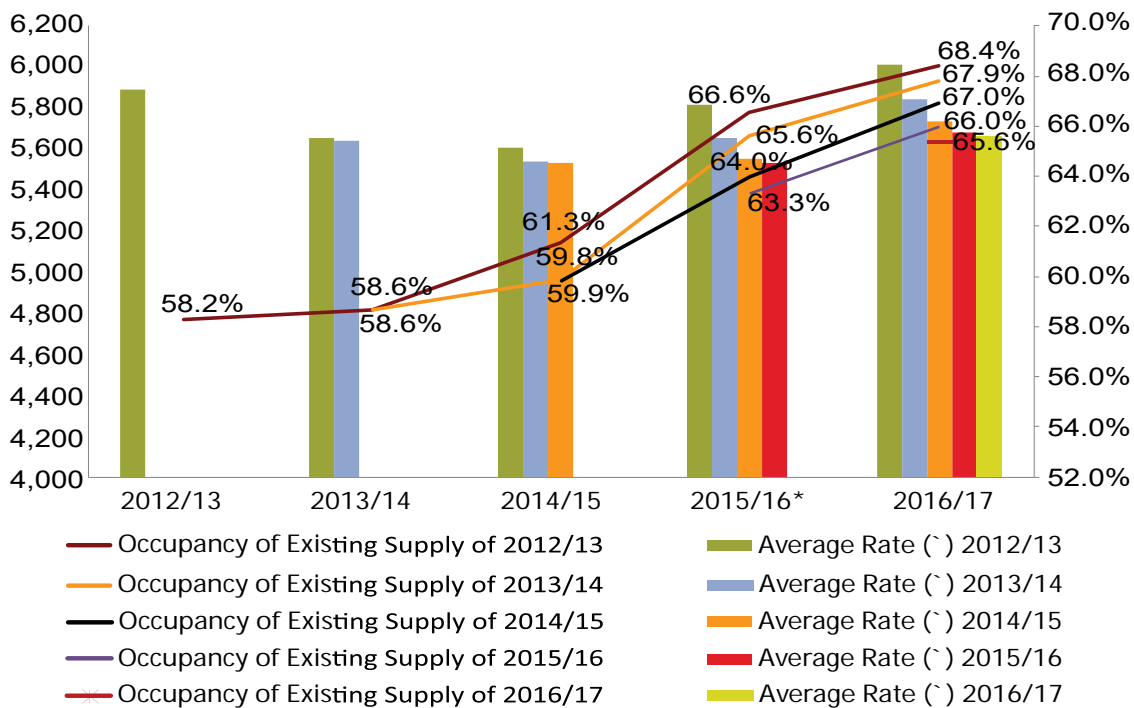
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For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com

65.6% occupancy for hotels

The nationwide occupancy for all branded hotels was 65.6% in 2016-17. The hotels that have existed since 2012-13 achieved 68.4% occupancy last year, according to a report by HVS Global Hospitality Services.

Performance of existing hotels (2012/13 – 2016/17)



* The 2015/16 supply has been modified to exclude the performance of irrelevant supply.

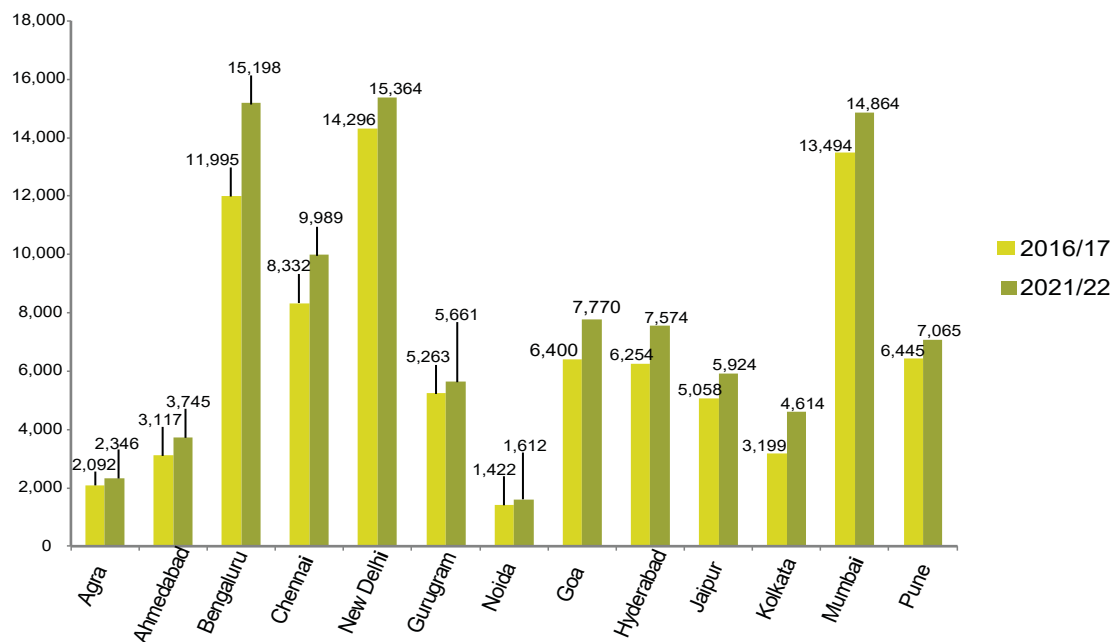
- Hotels that have been operating since 2013-14 clocked 67.9 per cent occupancy in 2016-17.
- On the average rate front, while India’s ARR was ` 5,658 in 2016/17, for hotels in existence since 2012/13, the ARR last year was more than ` 6,000.

Source: HVS Global Hospitality Services

Mumbai tops in hotel occupancy

Mumbai is leading in terms of hotel occupancy (74.2 per cent), according to a recent report by HVS Global Hospitality Services.

Proposed branded hotel rooms across major cities (2016/17 – 2021/22*)



* The supply for 2021-22 has been computed by adding the active future supply to the existing base of rooms in 2016-17

As expected in the second year of the up-cycle, all major markets tracked witnessed an increase in revenue per available room (RevPAR) except Agra. Interesting to note, Noida saw the highest year-on-year growth in RevPAR (16.0 %), followed by Hyderabad (11.4%) and Ahmedabad (10.7%). Noida displayed the lowest occupancy (56.9%) and Ahmedabad, the lowest average rate (3,840), the study said. All 13 hotel markets depicted an increase in occupancy leaving Pune (-0.7%), even as some markets saw a lower growth (Bengaluru and Mumbai at 0.4% and 0.6%, respectively).

Source: HVS Global Hospitality Services

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South African Tourism

Mumbai

South African Tourism has announced **Neliswa Nkani's** appointment as the Hub Head for Middle East, India and Southeast Asia. A South African citizen, Nkani will now assume reigns and spearhead the national tourism board's initiatives in India. Nkani comes with holistic tourism experience that includes marketing, strategic government relations, negotiating, tourism, sales and investment facilitation. She will be instrumental in helping the South African travel industry understand the Indian market better, and in encouraging tailored destination offerings to cater to the tastes and demands of travellers from various regions across India.



Airbus India

Delhi

Airbus India has appointed **Anand E Stanley** to succeed Pierre de Bausset as President and Managing Director. Pierre and Anand will work through a transition before the new appointment takes effect on October 1, 2018. Stanley brings a wealth of international experience in Sales, P&L management, M&A, Aftermarket and Manufacturing. His knowledge of the Indian market will deepen Airbus' commitment to the local aerospace and defence industries, and will drive its indigenisation to boost India's economic growth. He will pursue the consolidation of Airbus businesses in India with a view to further reinforcing the position of the group for long-term success and growth.



Abercrombie & Kent

Delhi

Dr Amit Sharma assumes charge as Vice President—Contracting & Product Development for Abercrombie & Kent. With over 16 years of experience in travel and tourism, Sharma's role extensively involves dealing with vendors and buyers for inbound tourism. He spearheads negotiations, contracts, product development and quality control. He has a PhD in Management in Sustainable Development and MDP Alumni of IIM Calcutta.



The St Regis Mumbai

Mumbai

The St Regis Mumbai designated **Sachin Mylavarapu** as its Hotel Manager. Mylavarapu brings with him 17 years of experience in hospitality. He joined as EAM—Food & Beverage of India's first St Regis in May 2015 and has since been an integral part of the successful launch of the brand in India. He played an important and vital role in positioning the iconic brand as 'The Best Address' and as market leader in revenue and reputation over the last three years. Mylavarapu graduated from IHM Hyderabad and holds a Masters in Hospitality Administration and Revenue Management from Cesar Ritz, Brig in Switzerland.



Clarks Inn

Delhi

Rahul Malik has been appointed as General Manager—Operations at Clarks Inn Group of Hotels at the Corporate Office. A hospitality professional and a visionary with expertise in business, strategic maximisation of revenues and overall profitability with the utilisation of available resources, Malik's experience spanning over 18 years, encompasses Sales and Marketing, Rooms Division, Guest Relationship Management and Pre-Opening assignments. He has worked as Head—Sales & Marketing at Golden Tulip Hotels as well as other prominent brands like Pride Hotels, ITC Fortune Hotel, Radisson Hotel Group with Park Plaza, Park Inn and Country Inn & Suites Gurugram.



The Ritz-Carlton Bangalore

Bengaluru

The Ritz-Carlton Bangalore announced the appointment of **Amitabh Rai** as its new General Manager. Rai will be responsible for ensuring that guests depart with memories of a truly exceptional hotel experience, reflective of the brand's iconic legacy worldwide. With over 25 years of experience in business and hospitality, Rai has worked in multiple hotel properties in India. He started his career in 1993 as an Assistant Manager Front Office and within a span of 10 years, became the General Manager at The Oberoi Grand due to his driving passion for hospitality and people. He is a graduate from St Joseph's College for Arts & Sciences, Bangalore University.



Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru

Bengaluru

Fredrik Blomqvist is the General Manager of Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru scheduled to open in the 'Silicon Valley of India' in the latter part of 2018. Helming the pre-opening team of this much anticipated Four Seasons property in the Indian subcontinent, Blomqvist is looking at positioning this uber luxury destination as a futuristic hub in the city of Bangalore. As a Four Seasons veteran, he has worked with Four Seasons across the globe - Dublin, Philadelphia, Guangzhou, Chiang Mai, Jakarta, Shanghai and now Bangalore.



lebua Hotels & Resorts

Gurgaon

Mamta Pall has been appointed as Director of Sales—South Asia of lebua Hotels & Resorts. In her current role, Pall will be responsible for handling the sales of the properties under the lebua Hotels & Resorts portfolio, Bangkok's best performing luxury hotels, Tower Club at lebua and lebua at State Tower, and boutique hotels in India, lebua Lucknow and lebua Corbett. Prior to lebua, she was heading the India Global Sales Office of Rotana Hotels at Outbound Marketing for five years. Pall has been associated with brands like SOTC Kuoni, TUI and Uniglobe, during the course of her career, and has handled all senior management roles in Sales & Marketing.



Lords Hotels & Resorts

Mumbai

Kajal K Chandan has been designated as Marketing Manager of Lords Hotels & Resorts. In her current role, she is responsible for implementing marketing and advertising campaigns, development and execution of marketing programmes, communications and promotions for all the brands, working with vendors and key internal departments on assigned projects, participating in industry related seminars and awards, and proposing and implementing hotel specific marketing strategies to promote revenue growth. Prior to this, Chandan worked with Ginger Hotels, Tata Enterprise and Pride Hotels and Resorts.



TALKing People

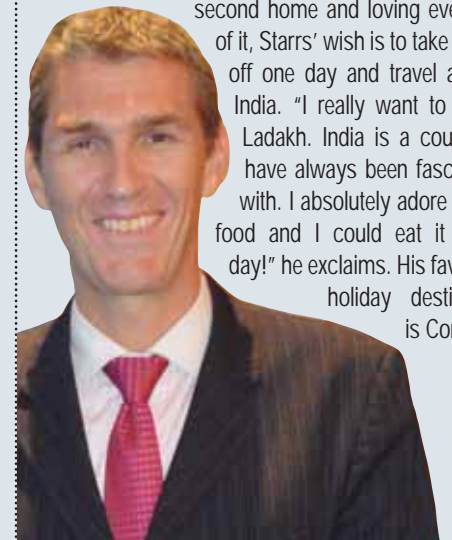
To execute things with perfection is the motto that **Davinder Juj**, General Manager, Eros Hotel Nehru Place, New Delhi, goes by. "A smooth execution based on detailed planning is always soothing, but it's also important to ensure whatever has been planned is put into execution for best results," he says. Juj loves visiting the English countryside when it comes to international travels, and in India, he prefers being home. "Goa is my preferred choice of destination. Good weather and the choice of activities available makes it very lively and relaxing," he claims.



Gaurav Rege, General Manager, Jehan Numa Palace Hotel, loves to run and indulge in work-out. He has run the yearly half marathons for the past three years and preparation for this gruelling 21-km run itself is a motivator for him. He says, "The workouts that form part of the preparation process are a wonderful de-stresser. The most precious time of the day is reading out stories to my six-year-old daughter." His most memorable holiday moment was a few years ago in Vizag on a beach holiday with his wife.



Paul Starrs, Chief Commercial Officer, Oman Air, is a towering figure at 6.4'. But he is down-to-earth and loves to travel. A Scot who has made Oman his second home and loving every bit of it, Starrs' wish is to take a year off one day and travel across India. "I really want to go to Ladakh. India is a country, I have always been fascinated with. I absolutely adore Indian food and I could eat it every day!" he exclaims. His favourite holiday destination is Corsico.





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Aviation gives wings to tourism

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has been working closely with the Ministry of Tourism to begin flight operations to 34 tourism sites across India.



TT Bureau

Speaking at a joint press conference with **KJ Alphons**, Minister of State (I/C), Tourism, **Suresh Prabhu**, Minister of Civil Aviation said that the aviation industry has reached a growth rate of 20 per cent for almost four years. "With the growth, people's expectations are also growing faster. We are trying to cater to the growing demands of all the states, passengers and aspirants of flying." Also present at the press briefing were **Jayant Sinha**, Minister of State, Civil Aviation and **RN Choubey**, Secretary, Civil Aviation.

Talking about working with Ministry of Tourism, Prabhu said, "We are working with MOT to identify destinations which are attractive to tourists and where air connectivity is an issue so that we can provide that. We are working to identify hotspots for tourism across India, where we can identify air connectivity to exploit its true potential, so that India continues to get more tourists in the process. Every tourist brings in 15 jobs on site or off site, and therefore this is a very important sector. As

the Minister of Commerce, we have identified tourism sector as one of the dominant service sectors."

Alphons added, "We have given a proposal to MOCA

Prabhu also updated the press about the upcoming Calicut Airport in Kerala. "The DGCA has approved all the safety considerations to start operations from Calicut Airport. Also, there will be operations

to be an embarkation point for Haj operations. The MOT has taken that up with the Ministry of Minority Affairs."

In fact, Choubey informed that Calicut Airport will have a



“We are working to identify hotspots for tourism across India, where we can identify air connectivity to exploit its true potential, so that India continues to get more tourists in the process”

Suresh Prabhu
Minister, Civil Aviation

to link unconnected tourism destinations, especially the iconic sites. I have given a list of 34 sites on which fixed wing aircraft can fly and three destinations on which helicopters can fly. MOT will pay for it after getting money from Ministry of Commerce and pay to MOCA for the same."

of wide-bodied aircraft from this airport, owing to demand," he claimed.

Sinha added, "Saudi Arabia airlines will commence its operations for A330 as well as for B777 from Calicut, and they have been given technical go-ahead for the same. In fact, from next year, Calicut is likely

new international arrival block, which is being constructed by AAI at a cost of ₹ 120 crores. "When the construction of the block is completed, the total capacity of the airport will go up from 3.5 million passengers per annum to 5 million passengers per annum," he claimed.

MOCA revealed that another airport in Kerala—Kannur, will also start operations from October 1, 2018. In fact, there will be international operations from this airport as well. Choubey said, "Kannur is going to be connected to Abu Dhabi by Jet Airways; to Dammam by GoAir; and to Doha by IndiGo. These three international flights will be commencing anytime from the winter schedule."

Kannur Ops

✦ Kannur, will also start operations from October 1, 2018

✦ Kannur is going to be connected to Abu Dhabi by Jet Airways; to Dammam by GoAir; and to Doha by IndiGo

✦ These three international flights will be commencing anytime from the winter schedule



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04



No-visa to
be a game
changer

07



Accor
strong in
Chennai

11



Racing
on Indian
tracks

10 happy years for ibis

ibis Gurgaon Golf Course Road Hotel celebrates its 10th anniversary with a new spirit and energy. **Jean-Michel Cassé**, Chief Operating Officer—India and South Asia, AccorHotels, talks about ibis' growth in India.



TT Bureau

Over the years, AccorHotels' economy brand, ibis hotels has marked itself as one of the smart-economy hospitality brands in the country. One of its first properties in India, ibis Gurgaon Golf Course Road Hotel celebrated its 10th anniversary and the company announced a slew of new initiatives with a cultural movement and a new food concept.

ibis Events

The hotel has planned several events and promotions which include serving popular food items and hosting 10 children with their guardians for a fun-filled and eventful stay in association with Hope Foundation

Speaking about ibis' growth, Cassé, says, "The past decade for the ibis brand in India has been very exciting. This would not be possible without our partner InterGlobe Hotels

a joint venture with InterGlobe Hotels (IGH). Today, with its convivial, cool, contemporary, caring and proactive spirit, ibis has grown to 18 hotels across 12 cities and caters to over

experiences with ease at every touch point. Adding to this, ibis is rolling out a new food concept at Spice It, its food and beverage offering across all ibis hotels in India. Inspired by home and street food, Spice It will now serve a revamped menu that provides comfort food with a twist while reflecting various Indian cuisines.

of close to 3,000 rooms and several more under development, our partnership has energised the smart economy segment that has set a significant benchmark which identifies with the new resurgent India. We are committed to remain on course to grow the network and be a catalyst in the Indian growth."

"Our association with IGH has enabled us to be the leader in the smart economy segment. We hope to continue our relationship with IGH to create even greater opportunities for the ibis brand in India"

(IGH). Our association with IGH has enabled us to be the leader in the smart economy segment. As we look ahead, we hope to continue our relationship with IGH to create even greater opportunities for the ibis brand in India."

AccorHotels launched the ibis brand in India in 2008 with ibis Gurgaon Golf Course Road in

100,000 travellers from India and abroad.

To mark this milestone, ibis launched 'ibism' earlier this year. A cultural movement, ibism celebrates ones' individuality, uniqueness and is designed to be inclusive. It was inspired from the changing demands of travellers for unique and personalised

Talking about its partnership with AccorHotels, **J B Singh**, President and CEO, InterGlobe Hotels, shares, "ibis' evolution since its inaugural launch in 2008 has been remarkable. InterGlobe Hotels is a unique joint venture between InterGlobe Enterprises and AccorHotels that has driven sustained growth and expansion. With our current network



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PATA powers a full house

PATA India's first-ever Tourism PowerHouse recently opened to a packed gathering at The Park, New Delhi. The initiative aimed to bring the minds of the tourism industry's leadership together to fully tap India's tourism potential, in line with global best practices.



For more pictures, turn to page 6 ▶

No-visa to be a game changer

With a no-visa scheme for Indians, Serbia is all set to boost the arrival numbers from India, claims **Vladimir Maric**, Ambassador of Serbia to India.



Nisha Verma

Vladimir Maric, Ambassador of Serbia to India, believes that India is currently one of the fastest growing outbound markets in the world, and this is what they currently want to leverage. "Serbia is a country where tourism is a significant aspect of our economy. Having maintained very strong relations with India since the time of Jawaharlal Nehru, we are keen to work with the country on a long-term basis with an aim to increasing the number of Indian travellers to

Serbia in the future," he said.

A great step in this direction was taken last year when Serbia abolished the visa for Indians visiting Serbia. "We have abolished visas for Indian citizens in September 2017. This means that Indian citizens do not require a visa of any kind—no e-visa, visa on arrival and applications that need to be filled prior to the trip or any fee. As an Indian citizen, one only needs to pick up the passport, book the flight and hotel, and make the trip. That's all that is needed," he informed.

In fact, Maric said that until last year, they did not even have a separate statistical record for India, as the number of arrivals was very low from here to

Serbia. "However, as of this year, we keep records for Indian citizens as a separate group and in the first quarter, we have 2000 Indian visitors, which is a considerable number for a country of our size. We only have a population of 8 million people. However, the way things are proceeding, I would sound slightly ambitious if I say that we would be happy with 10,000 arrivals from India in 2018," he added.

Apart from the no-visa regime, Maric put forth his opinions on Serbia as a destination. "We have a lot to offer in our cities. Belgrade, the capital, has been

connected with Nijhawan Group.

Commenting on the same, **Yogeeta Sharma**, PR & Marketing Manager, Nijhawan Group, said, "Recently, we did an ad hoc activity with the

“Serbia’s abolition of visas for Indians since September 2017 means that they do not require a visa of any kind—no e-visa, visa on arrival and applications that need to be filled prior to the trip. As an Indian, one only needs to pick up the passport, book the flight and hotel, and make the trip”

voted as one of the top tourist destinations in Europe. We have a very vibrant and dynamic night life, affordable prices and great value for money.”

However, what is needed now is to make Indians aware of the offering in Serbia, said Maric. For the same, national tourism organisation of Serbia organised a Fam trip for Indian journalists to Serbia in asso-

national tourism organisation of Serbia. The three-night four-day trip allowed visitors to explore all the activities and sightseeing which are suitable for all the age groups in India. There is a need for awareness among the Indians about Serbia.”

Maric informed that the tourism authority coordinates on a regular basis with the travel trade in India. Apart from that,

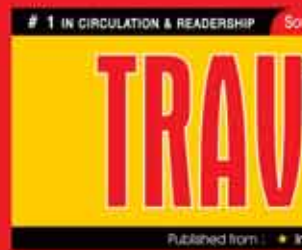
they are also looking at having Indian films to be shot in Serbia. "There is a 25 per cent cashback on shooting films and advertisements in Serbia. In fact, with no visa required for the staff and crew, shoots can be planned early without any hassle. The producers can get in touch with the filming centres in Serbia as well since we have good pre and post production teams," revealed Maric.

In fact, 2019 would see a lot of activities by Serbia in India,

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as the tourism board will be appointing a representative in India next year, revealed Maric. ➔

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The Society of Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) India held its members meet recently in Delhi. In a presentation,

Vikas Suda, SITE India Chapter Vice President—Events & Operations, highlighted the advantages of being a SITE member and how the association works on enhancing the skills to educate its members. Also present at the event was Nitin Sachdeva, who shared insights from the programme and details of the

Apt SITE for millennials

SITE Young Leaders Conference is scheduled to be held in Las Vegas in October this year.

SITE Young Leaders Conference set to be held in October. "It's a programme for people who are under the age of 35 or have less than five years of experience or aspirants in the incentive travel industry. The programme helps people gather basic knowledge of what incentive travel industry is all about - make lifelong connections," he informed.

Sachdeva informed that SITE is dedicated towards empowering the members. "SITE helps young leaders to get education like CIS (Certified Incentive Travel Specialist) or the next level of Certified Incentive Travel Professional (CITP) for those who have more than 10 years of experience. Education is the core of the association."



Nitin Sachdeva
Executive Director—Venture
Marketing and Co-Chair, SITE
Young Leaders Program

60

and
staying
strong

Aeroflot celebrated 60 years of flight operations between Moscow and Delhi. **Kidisyuk Sergey**, General Manager—India, Nepal & Bangladesh, Aeroflot, talks more about the airline and the roadmap ahead.



TT Bureau

As the largest airline of the Russian Federation, Aeroflot has completed 60 years of flight operations between Moscow and Delhi. While rejoicing its achievements, **Kidisyuk Sergey**, General Manager—India, Nepal & Bangladesh, Aeroflot says that the airline has created a strong transit network between Europe and Asia over the years.

Terming Delhi as one of the priority destinations, Sergey mentions that Aeroflot has been extremely committed in its operations between Moscow and Delhi. "Currently, we operate two daily flights between Moscow and Delhi on Airbus A-330 which hosts approximately 600 passengers every day. Apart from Delhi, Mumbai is on our priority list. We are also considering destinations like Goa and Kolkata for operations," he added.

Talking about achieving milestone in 2019, Sergey says, "Apart from celebrating 60 years of regular services in India, we are also celebrating our company's 95th anniversary this year. We will plan certain programmes for all our travel partners to celebrate this event."

On the airline's growth, Sergey explains, "We are quite satisfied with our growth in India in last one year. The volume



Kidisyuk Sergey
General Manager—India
Nepal & Bangladesh

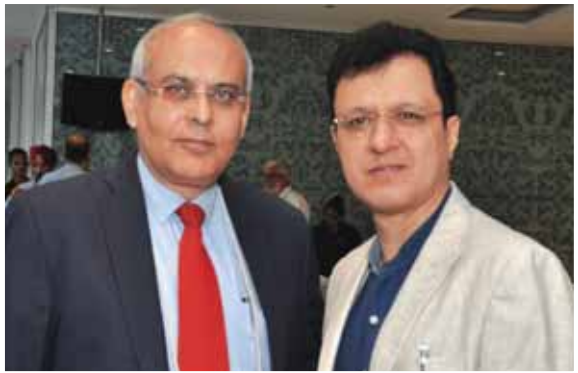
of sales has significantly increased around 70 per cent higher in comparison to numbers of previous year. The minimum payload factor was also around 70-80 per cent."

Sergey applauded the airline's association with its travel partners, their support and asked for cooperation in the future. "All our travel partners are very crucial in providing business to us. We are associated with some popular travel operators of the industry and also looking to plan certain programmes and commission for our top Indian agents," he added.

New Network

Apart from Delhi, Mumbai is on Aeroflot's priority list. The airline is also considering destinations like Goa and Kolkata for operations

PATA optimises India story



Accor strong in Chennai

Jayakrishnan Sudhakaran, Cluster Director—Sales and Marketing, Chennai region, AccorHotels, shares what makes his region unique. Chennai witnesses the maximum number of business tourists.



Anupriya Bishnoi

Q Tell us about the strong footprint of Accor in the region.

AccorHotels has a strong footprint in Southern India and more specifically in Chennai. In Chennai, AccorHotels opened their very first combo property recently- Novotel ibis Chennai OMR at Shollinganallur, on the arterial Old Mahabalipuram Road, OMR to its patrons (which houses several campuses of India's IT giants including, TCS, Infosys, Wipro, Cognizant Technologies and a few others). This



Jayakrishnan Sudhakaran
Cluster Director of Sales and Marketing
Chennai region for AccorHotels

is after four years of Novotel Sipcot and ibis Sipcot launch in Sirisiri. In between, the ibis Chennai City Centre on Anna Salai, right in the centre of the business district of the city was also launched, which is now a landmark in the city. In other words, AccorHotels has a property relevant to the location with amenities appropriate and tariffs at different price points. With the opening of the Nandanam property,

AccorHotels will have the largest room inventory among the global hospitality majors

in Chennai. Apart from this, Kerala will also see AccorHotels' footprints getting

stronger. Thus, all four South Indian states have multiple hotels in their key cities.

plus years. Medical tourism is a new frontier scaled for over 20 years, especially with

Q What are your strategies to be a leader in the market amidst competition from others?

AccorHotels offers very unique and engaging membership programmes Le Club & Accor Plus, launched more than 20 years ago. Members of this expansive travel, dining and lifestyle programmes enjoy access to over a 1000 restaurants, 700 hotels, resorts and holiday options in 18 countries in Asia Pacific Region and a total of 4,200 properties all over the world. Besides, amenities ensuring a comfortable stay, international levels of service and security, amazing culinary options support an attractive, multi-price point proposition.

Q How unique is Chennai than the other South Indian states?

Chennai is the biggest gateway for inbound international travellers into India. Once the biggest city of South India and now facing strong challenges to this from Bengaluru, Chennai enjoys several challenges not witnessed in other parts of India. Traditionally, the hub for auto components, textiles and leather, Chennai emerged as the Detroit of India with several global auto majors homing in on Chennai. Information Technology was the next paradigm to help Chennai grow. A thriving and vibrant MSME sector is yet another plank to grow Chennai. In recent times, medical tourism is a new frontier with internationally acclaimed hospital chains extending globally recognised standards in healthcare.

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Q How has the hospitality industry evolved in South India?

Chennai witnesses the maximum number of tourists into India driven by business sector besides the leisure travellers and medical tourists. Traditionally, Chennai has been a globally recognised light engineering hub since the 1960s with automotive sector homing in on Chennai with the advent of Ford and Hyundai some 30 years ago. IT industry added a bigger boost to the business segment of travellers over the last 25

globally renowned hospitals providing state-of-the-art healthcare services. Chennai witnesses the biggest music season anywhere in the world with over 10,000 concerts and performances happening over a 90-day period commencing from mid-October and ending mid-January. This period has led to the emergence of bed and breakfast options, homestays besides affordable hotels. This 90-day period is probably the best season for all hospitality players with almost the entire inventory of rooms being sold out.

MICE at Accor

↳ Banquet facilities at various Accor properties can cater to a select group of 20 to a larger 250 plus group

↳ The hotel's strategic locations, combo properties, attractive price points, offsite catering capabilities, indoor and outdoor options are significant advantages that few rivals can boast of

Riya's unique connect

Riya Travels and Tours has seen an impressive website growth of around 15-16 per cent year-on-year. Now in its 11th year of being active in the B2B space, Riya Group is seeing a lot more of its partners coming online and this has a lot to do with the unique features that the company has introduced on its portal.



Hazel Jain

Riya Travels has always attempted to introduce new features and developments for its agents, reveals **Manoj Samuel**, Director, Riya Group, whether it is offline or online. He says that the company has seen its B2B website grow aggressively over the years. "On a year-on-year basis, it has roughly been around 15-16 per cent growth. It has been 11 years now and we can see a lot more of our partners coming online. Currently, we have around 30,000 partners online," Samuel reveals.

Speaking about the added benefits that Riya is offering

its agent partners, he says, "Riya has always tried to come up with new features and developments for our agents. We have recently added travel insurance on our online portal which was otherwise only available offline. We also have Queue Ticketing, a transactional module where travel partners can queue their PNRs to us, retrieve the PNR on this module and issue the ticket through our IATA-accredited website. This benefits the travel partners to retain their segments and earn commission on these tickets. There is no dependency of sending email and calls for ticket issuance, or any other manual interference. Refunds



Manoj Samuel
Director
Riya Group

and cancellations will also be accepted from this module." Through 'Queue Ticketing', agents can do ticketing without depending on anyone from the company.

Riya Connect adds value
Riya connect started as a lone flight seller and today, it offers a bouquet of travel products under one roof. It also offers a range of ancillary services like real-time ticketing status

everything easy for our agents. We have something called the ancillary services which nobody else in the industry has. It has services like meals, baggage, etc – everything other than your

given them an option to do it separately once the main booking is done," he says.

This is also online and there is no need to call up the call centre for this or call the airline or travel agent through whom the booking has been made. Riya also has travel insurance on Riya Connect and is working on a few other things that will be added soon. "We will soon be coming up with new trade activities. We also have plans to add new features to Riya connect and promote Riya Business Travel. We have also decided to try a lot of new things this year," Samuel adds.

“We have Queue Ticketing, a transactional module where travel partners can queue their PNRs to us, retrieve the PNR on this module and issue the ticket through our IATA-accredited website”

with the convenience of seat and meal selection. "We are not stopping here; we are constantly trying to come up with new things to make

main booking. Today, we are dealing with B2B so when they do the booking they don't waste their time in doing the baggage, meals, etc. We have

Kesari gives back to society

To commemorate its 34th anniversary, Kesari Tours organised a mobile blood donation camp on the office premises. The company also organised lunch for its staff members and donated study kits to children from Sion Hospitality, rain jackets to the traffic police, and even gave away free tours for this year's SSC toppers to Kashmir in September-October this year.



IATO discusses convention

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) recently hosted a luncheon meet at Le Meridien, New Delhi with an aim to update its members about the 34th Annual Convention set to be held from September 6-9, 2018.



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Park's cultural journey

The 12th edition of 'The Park's New Festival 2018' is set to be held across Chennai, Bengaluru, Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad from August 30 to September 21.

 TT Bureau

The Park Hotels and Prakriti Foundation brings a bouquet of commendable performing arts across music, dance, comedy and dramatic theatre with 'The Park's New Festival 2018'. Kick-starting in Chennai, the 12th edition of this annual cultural rendezvous is set to be held across six cities over a period of almost a month and will culminate in Hyderabad. The artists include:

Stories by Hand by Preeti Vasudevan

Stories by Hand is a solo work through stories which



storytelling dance-theatre interweaving east and west, past and present, the mythic and the everyday. The show is experienced through three clustered themes of relationships, the dancing body and death.

hoods, Rajiv Rajaram and Utsav Chakraborty aim to take through the everyday absurdities that voice-over artists endure and the impact it has on their lives. In a time of fake news, family WhatsApp groups and absolute polarisation, two men will stand up and try to make you understand the greatest weapon that is used by our fellow Indians.

To See or Not to See: A talk by Ana Lamata

Ana Lamata, PhD in Contemporary Art History, has largely focused her research on the resonances between art and science. To See or



challenging again our conceptions of reality, art can play a vital role in decoding these discoveries, questioning conventions and just helping us see.

Two Sides of Karma by IndoSoul

IndoSoul is a leading band from Chennai that has extensively performed across the country and in USA. Led by violinist and singer Karthick Iyer, the band has been in the scene since 2012 and its third album, 'Two sides of Karma', is a testimony to their success. They believe in making music that is Indian at its core and global in its sounding. The songs from the album premiered in USA in 2017. Seeking to broaden his horizons, Karthick Iyer



started playing in the Indian film industry, with AR Rahman, D. Imman, Devi Sri Prasad and other notable music directors.

He composed a song for a Bollywood movie along the way, as well as jingles for multiple TV ads.

Sept 11: 7 PM	Noise Over Artists: A stand-up comedy show by Rajiv Rajaram & Utsav Chakraborty	The Park New Delhi
Sept 12: 7 PM	Stories by Hand by Preeti Vasudevan	Shri Ram College of Commerce
Sept 13: 4 PM	To See or Not to See: A talk by Ana Lamata	The Park New Delhi
Sept 13: 7 PM	Two Sides of Karma by IndoSoul	The Park New Delhi

are personal, mythical, and social and are narrated through the continuous placement and displacement of gestures affected by memory. Stories by Hand takes the hand gestures of Bharatanatyam as the basis for a

Noise Over Artists: A stand-up comedy show by Rajiv Rajaram & Utsav Chakraborty

Featuring two voice over professionals who have been creating more noises than voices since their child-

Not to See is a reflection on how, at the beginning of the 20th century, the discovery of X-rays changed the way the world was perceived and the notion of reality itself. Today, when new technologies are

TAT promotes golf in Thailand



Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi recently organised a trip for TAT lady golf ambassador Vani Kapoor to Thailand to play golf alongside other Indian golfers at The Lady Golf Challenge 2018. The tournament was organised at Alpine Golf and Sports Club, Pathum Thani, Bangkok. The tournament was a part of the Lady Golf Challenge project, a joint effort between TAT's overseas offices and local agencies to promote the ladies special month (August) in Thailand as the month for the Women's Journey Thailand campaign, a way of commemorating Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's birthday on August 12.

Racing on Indian tracks

Enterprise Holdings, with its three distinct brands—Alamo Rent A Car, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, and National Car Rental—is looking at India as a potential market.



TT Bureau

As the largest global mobility provider in the world, Enterprise Holdings has customers from countries all over the globe. "We understand that customers have different needs and expectations which can range from savvy business travellers to honeymooners and family holidaymakers. We have an uncompromising focus on customer service and offer an unrivalled choice of vehicle types including small, mid-range, high-end and even exotic cars. As our customers appreciate a simple and hassle-free service, we ensure that our branches are

easily accessible from airports to nearby cities. We also offer different language reservation tools, check-in kiosks and a membership service for those looking to expedite the process," says Jay Hasler, Director International Sales—Asia, Enterprise Holdings.

Operating at more than 10,000 fully staffed neighbourhood and airport branches, the company is present in more than 90 countries and territories worldwide. "We are currently focusing on the global expansion into the Asia Pacific region after our continuous success in EMEA and Latin America. In Asia Pacific, we currently service customers in Australia, New Zealand, Guam, Saipan, Palau and Cebu for all our three brands and are looking to expand further into Southeast and Northern Asia," reveals Hasler.



Jay Hasler
Director International Sales—Asia,
Enterprise Holdings

Hasler believes that self-drive is the best solution to manage both time and budget wisely, compared to other methods of transportation. "Indians who want to avail the services of Enterprise Holdings can contact STIC Travel Group, its GSA in India. "Customers can

contact our local representative office throughout India, travel agencies, or use their online reservations tools at Alamo.com, Nationalcar.com and Enterprise.com," explains Hasler.

He adds that it is very easy for customers to rent a car outside

location. Customers are then encouraged to contact us for further information, and we are happy to answer any questions they may have regarding their rental needs outside of India."

For different markets, the business structure and partners

“Customers can contact our local representative office throughout India or use online reservations tools at Alamo.com, Nationalcar.com and Enterprise.com”

India. "Firstly, customers need a valid driving licence and method of payment such as a credit card. The minimum age can vary and some countries have a maximum age to rent too, so it pays to check the specific terms and conditions depending on the

may vary, reveals Hasler. "We work with international travel and affinity partners, in addition to many leading global OTAs so that they offer our products to their customers worldwide. We are also frequent flyer partners with various international airline companies including Jet Airways

India so that members can earn air miles by renting cars from us," he adds.

Regarding their plans for the Indian markets, he shares, "We aim to expand our brand awareness in the Indian market and showcase the benefit of self-drive. Furthermore, we hope to grow all channels and segments of the industry we service for, especially in the leisure market with recent growth of the younger generation travelling on holiday, educational trips and visiting friends. We continue to strive to be the best car rental company in the world and continually invest in our services, products and technologies. Our goal is to be the total transportation solution for travellers worldwide, and ensure they enjoy the self-drive experience, whatever the purpose of their trip and wherever the destination may be."

India Plans

With continuous investment in its services, Enterprise Holdings aims to expand its brand awareness in the Indian market and showcase the benefit of self-drive



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Boosting domestic tourism

The first edition of Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM), organised by Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) along with Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, in Jaipur witnessed around 200 buyers and 200 hosted buyers come under one roof for B2B meetings.



From Rare to Peach

Rare India has launched a new entity called Peach, under which the team would work for new tourism products, fairs and events in terms of development, promotion and marketing.

 Nisha Verma


One of the first projects under Peach is Gobindgarh Fort, recently showcased in Delhi for agents by Deepa Sahi, erstwhile actress and developer behind the project. She has produced and developed the shows at the fort. The fort belonged to Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab and showcases stories of his valour through 7D experiences and virtual reality wonders.

Shoba Mohan and Sowmya Vijaymohan, Founder Partners, RARE India and Peach, said that Peach would be focusing on handholding and developing new projects, events, fairs and experiences in the tourism space. Peach would be different from RARE as it will not be delving into the representation of boutique, independently owned properties, which fall into the RARE aesthetics. Vijaymohan added, "For us, Peach would give more bandwidth to play around in regions we can promote. At Peach, we can handhold, help curate and make sure that the guides are up to the mark for projects like Gobindgarh Fort. The idea is to add value to any travel in the Indian subcontinent."

Sahi informed the agents about the Gobindgarh Fort and said, "We wanted to use technology to promote our culture and we had put up this proposal to recreate the experiences via high-end technology. We wanted to share what has happened in our civilisation and history, making sure that it's not boring but engaging. With this idea, we have put up two

shows—one is a 7-D show and the other is a projection show. It showcases the history and struggle of Amritsar. We are also going to have a holographic show on the spirit

of Punjab. The project is in the PPP model with Punjab government as they have provided the space while the investment and development has been taken care of by us.

We want to make this a world-class hub." In terms of packages, Mohan added that the product is ideal for the inbound market. 



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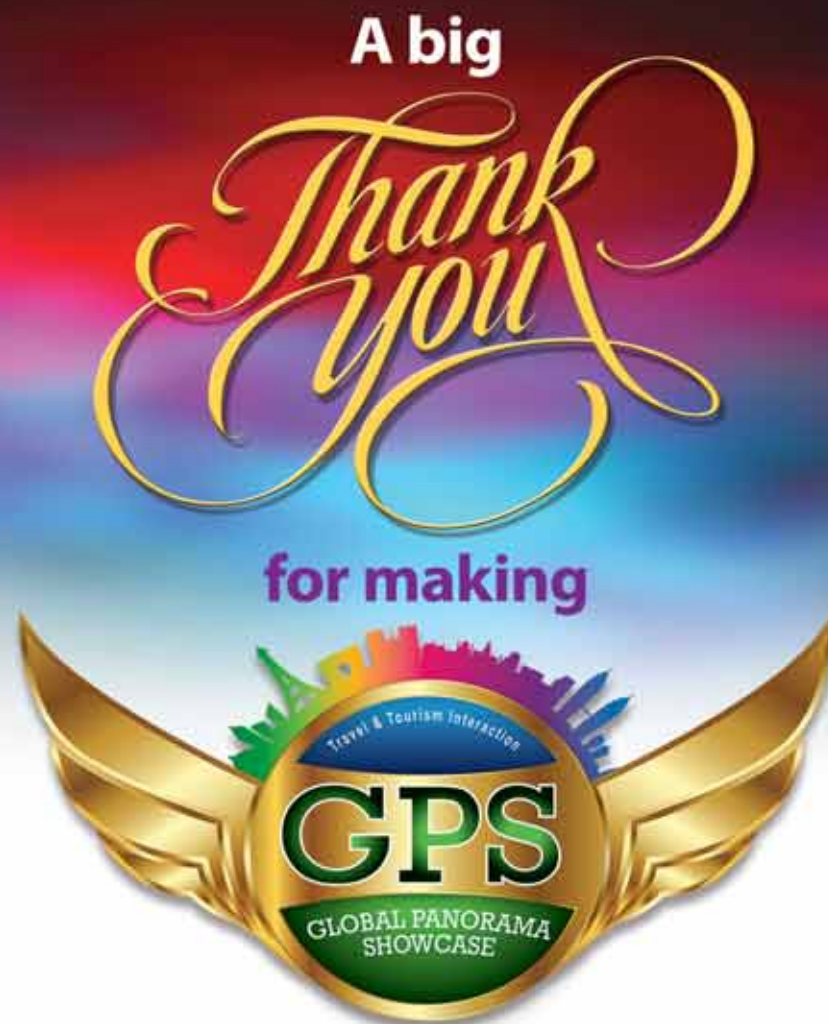
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