

# 1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP

SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

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TRAVTALK

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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- **Alitalia all out to sell Italy** ..... 07
- **Travel Wedding Show: Mantra for more business** ..... 10
- **Tanzania-Mumbai direct begins** ..... 17

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## Do airlines bear the brunt?

Identifying it as a global issue, **Hardeep Singh Puri**, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Civil Aviation, questions why airlines face losses when other industry stakeholders profit.



Kalpna Lohumi

In a recent interaction, **Hardeep Singh Puri**, sharing his opinion, said that everyone in the aviation industry made money and it was only the airline that suffered losses.

"Original equipment manufacturers or OEMs are laughing their way to the

bank even when they produce faulty products. This is something serious; you should not let the aircraft in the sky if you are not sure of the product," he explained.

Puri also shared that if 40 per cent of the operating cost of an airline is aviation turbine fuel, "we are doing something which is not



**Hardeep Singh Puri**  
Minister of State (I/C)  
Ministry of Civil Aviation, Govt. of India

right." He also said that though recalculation in the economic space due to market forces has never been a topic of worry for him, his only concern is that this be done under "genuine market conditions."

He added, "The DGCA knows its job. My instructions to them are simple - there should be no

compromise on safety." Commenting on rising airfares, the minister said, "Airlines are bound by a system where they put on their website the fare range, from lowest to the highest. The minute airfares are capped, it would amount to distorting the system."

Puri also suggested that everyone in the industry

needed to work together and follow rules. "What you are looking at in India is all the coordinates for success of civil aviation, but we have to ensure this success is achieved in an equitable manner and that the private sector is allowed to operate in a system anchored in an overall ambience of fair play," he concluded. 🐦

## TTM: 600 buyers already on board

With attendees registering day-in, day-out, CII Tamil Nadu Travel Mart (TTM) is enroute to showcasing Tamil Nadu as a leisure destination.



Nisha Verma

Scheduled from September 19-22 in Chennai, TTM will show the state in a new light. **Apurva Varma**,

Add'l. Chief Secy. to Govt., Tourism, Culture & Religious Endowments Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, says, "Last year, as many as 250 foreign tour operators

attended. This year, we are preparing aggressively and want to make it better." **S Sundar**, Hony. Secy., Tamil Nadu Travel Mart Society, says, "Tamil Nadu has many

avenues for leisure and wellness; people can also visit for cultural experiences and shopping." Around 600 buyers have already registered for TTM. 🐦



**Apurva Varma**  
Add'l. Chief Secy., Tourism,  
Culture & Religious Endowments  
Dept., Govt. of Tamil Nadu



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Honorary Secretary  
Tamil Nadu Travel  
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# TAAI-NR elects team

For the newly-elected team of the Northern Region of Travel Agents Association of India, educating members on new technology and giving the chapter a facelift are first on the agenda.

 Nisha Verma

**N**eeraj Malhotra, Co-founder and CEO, Ganpati Travels, has been re-elected as Chairman, Northern Region for Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), winning against Anil Kalsi, Managing Partner, Ambe World Travels.

Among other appointments, **Gaurav Dogra**, Founder, Plan Your Holiday, has already been re-elected as Honorary Secretary, uncontested. **Manish Saxena**, Executive



Neeraj Malhotra  
Chairman  
Northern Region

Delhi. On being declared Chairman, Malhotra said,

“We have already set agendas for ourselves and we’d like to complete those in the next two years”

Director, Century Travels, is the new Honorary Treasurer, winning against Anil Bhalla, Director, AA Bee Resorts & Travel. The election was conducted at Shangri-La’s Eros Hotel, New

“I am truly overwhelmed on being re-elected as Chairman and will continue in my pursuit to educate the members of the region and bring technology to them to boost their business. We have already



Gaurav Dogra  
Honorary Secretary  
Northern Region

set agendas for ourselves and we’d like to complete those in the next two years.”

For Dogra as well, it will be another inning with the TAAI-NR team. He said, “There will be a complete facelift in the next two years. There will be more in terms of education, interaction with the media, training programmes, and it will be a revolutionary change. To begin with, there will be a lot of MoUs with state tourism



Manish Saxena  
Honorary Treasurer  
Northern Region

boards as well as educational institutes, where we can employ their students with various travel companies.”

Saxena is the latest addition in the team and will bring in a new perspective for regional members. On being asked about his plan, he said, “I intend to enhance how things can change electronically and through internet services; TAAI Connect is a step towards that.”



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### Why tourism needs a policy in place

The tourism industry serves as a vehicle for national growth, development and employment generation. It also mirrors how the nation is advancing in the global scenario. As a result, the tourism sector requires constant monitoring and understanding. India first formulated its National Policy on Tourism in 1982. Subsequently, the National Tourism Policy 2002 was formulated with the objective of positioning tourism as a major engine of economic growth while ensuring that environmental sustainability is maintained. However, taking into account the widespread, interrelated global developments and advancements, which have had a strong bearing on the tourism sector, a new draft National Tourism Policy was formulated in 2015 with a vision to develop and position India as a "Must EXPERIENCE" and "Must REVISIT" destination for global travellers whilst encouraging Indians to explore their own country. With a new Tourism Minister at the helm of affairs, we hope that the National Tourism Policy will soon see the light of day and we are well on our way to achieve the target of 20 million tourists.

### Whiff of (fresh) air-space for travellers & airlines

On July 16, air travellers and the aviation industry heaved a sigh of relief as Pakistan opened its airspace for all flights after a gap of six months. Pakistan closed its airspace in February after the Balakot strike, adding flight time for passengers and fuel costs for airlines. Fuel expenses constitute 40 per cent of an airline's operational costs and the detour resulted in an increase in fares as well as cancellation of flights. On July 16, Turkish Airlines' Istanbul-Delhi flight became the first to use the Pakistan airspace, followed by Air India's flight from San Francisco to Delhi. As a senior aviation official pointed out, with the reopening of the airspace, operational costs for the US-bound flight may come down by `20 lakh one way, and for the Europe-bound flights by `5 lakh. Now, with the airspace open, we hope that all these benefits will also be passed on to the agent.

25 years

TRAVTALK brings to you news and events that made headlines 25 years ago with relevance even today. From the archives, we present the July 1994 issue:

Trav Talk

### Family Album

A golf tournament was held in New Delhi sponsored by Kuwait Airways and Taj Mahal Hotel



(L-R) Arjun Sharma - Sita, Rajiv Bose - American Express and Ranjit Vig - Caair Travels



(L-R) Vijay Katre - GM - Welcomgroup, Larry Malarkar, Vice President (Marketing), The Oberoi. Extreme right is Vikram Kapoor, GM - Park Tours



### TCI Party

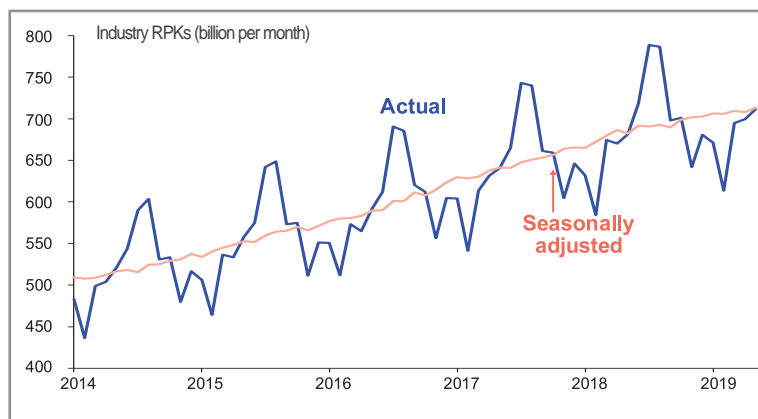
Nari J Katgara - TCI, in 1994 completed 50 years in the industry. A grand celebration took place in Mumbai for commemorating the occasion, where he addressed partners and the trade fraternity for their support in his journey.



## RPKs rise, but marginally

IATA's recent Air Passenger Market Analysis observes that while industry-wide Revenue Passenger Kilometres (RPKs) increased slightly in May this year, the rate of growth was still sluggish.

### Air passenger volumes



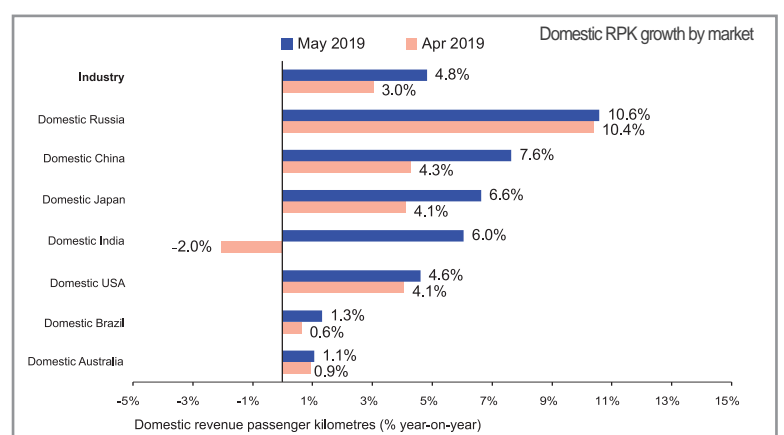
According to the report, industry-wide RPKs ticked marginally higher in May, up 4.5 per cent in y-o-y terms. This is a solid outcome, following the short-lived dip in activity in March, where RPK growth eased to 3.1 per cent y-o-y, but remains below the 20-year average rate of 5.5 per cent.

International RPK growth moderated slightly in May, driven by slower growth in the developed markets of Europe and North America.

After a fall in domestic RPKs in April (down two per cent y-o-y) following the demise of Jet Airways, growth in the India market rebounded sharply in May, with RPKs an even six per cent higher than a year ago.

While it will take some time for the market to adjust to the recent shock, the longer-term outlook for domestic India traffic remains positive.

Stepping back, the long-term trends which underpin air transport demand growth in India look set to continue.



Source: IATA Economics, IATA Monthly Statistics



# Alitalia all out to sell Italy

Riding high on a constant growth in the Indian market, Alitalia will be working jointly with the travel trade to market its presence and Italy as a destination, in order to target the leisure and MiCE segments.

 Nisha Verma

For Lucio Rigo, Country Manager India, Alitalia, the Indian market is incredible and huge for them. "We are doing pretty well at Alitalia because the flight is fully booked for India for guests that like to travel to Italy or connect to Europe or US."

long. However, after their re-entry into India, Alitalia is sustaining well.


When asked about the secret behind it, Rigo said, "It's important that the company is known by the customer, and one has to work on it step-by-step and day-by-day, consistently."

**“ Apart from weddings, Italy is also looked at from a MiCE perspective and Alitalia offers special rates for MiCE groups ”**

Apart from weddings, Italy is also looked at from a MiCE perspective, and Alitalia offers

special rates for MiCE groups as well. "It's a growing segment and Italy can offer

a wide range of destinations, right from the mountains in the North to the seaside in the South. Hence, for companies that need to push their sales, it's a fantastic place to have a MiCE event. Alitalia offers daily flights from Delhi and from there we cover 24

destinations in Italy and one can go anywhere in the country very easily. The incentive is in the price itself because the price of groups is discounted from the public price, or any other price. That's where the groups get an advantage," asserted Rigo. 

There is a very strong Italy demand in the Indian market. The year-on-year (YOY) growth to Rome is more than 50 per cent and to Italy it is about 40 per cent, which is a strong demand. He shared that in May-June-July, which is the peak season in India, Alitalia was fully booked. "It's



Lucio Rigo  
Country Manager - India  
Alitalia

a wish to have this load factor throughout the year. While we are not coming up with any new routes currently, we want to focus on what we have and promote it further," he added.

According to Rigo, the Indian travel agents are quite dynamic. "It's a peculiarity in this market. The travel agents in India are very active and we are making a very interesting incentive scheme for them. If they reach a certain result, especially on the Italian market and the destinations that we have, and we see the growth, they can even have a marketing fund as well. Under this, we do joint marketing activities in the Indian market and that can help to promote and increase arrivals to Italy as a destination. There are commissions as well, but they are linked to the performance. The more they grow, the more they gain," he informed.

A lot of other carriers from Italy did announce entry into India but did not stay for



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# Nepal readies for MiCE

The country has renewed its focus on attracting groups from India and is not just hosting big-ticket events, but building infrastructure to accommodate the numbers.



Hazel Jain

In order to recreate its image as a tourist destination in the eyes of the world, Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has launched a new brand and a new logo for itself. It has declared 2020 as Visit Nepal Year (VNY).



Robin Regmi, Officer (South Asia Unit), Tourism Marketing and Promotion, NTB, who was in India recently as part of its four-city roadshow, said that the tourism board is now actively looking at organising big sporting and

MiCE events in Nepal to draw in the numbers.

Among them is the Nepal Tourism Investment Summit to be organised in January



(L-R) Udaya Bhattarai and Robin Regmi

2020 and a cycling event that focuses on sustainable mobility. He said, "We are also looking at hosting international conferences in Janakpur, the birthplace of goddess Sita. We want to repackage the destination as a perfect place for MiCE and weddings."

Currently, Nepal (through Kathmandu) is connected to five Indian cities. Sharing this was Udaya Bhattarai, Manager, Tourism Products & Resources Development,

NTB. He said, "To welcome bigger numbers and groups, Nepal is investing in the hospitality sector, and brands like Marriott and Aloft have already entered Nepal. This means that we will be able to welcome big groups for weddings with the addition of 3000-4000 new beds."

# Weddings in Okinawa

Japan is looking to tap the Indian wedding segment by showcasing Okinawa as a new destination. The plan is to achieve a 20 per cent growth from the India market.



TT Bureau

Japan National Tourist Office (JNTO) recently organised Okinawa Wedding Seminar in New Delhi in a bid to showcase Okinawa as the ideal wedding destination for Indians on the lookout for new wedding locations. Led by JNTO and Okinawa prefecture, the seminar had in attendance 35-40 influential wedding planners from the Delhi market. Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Yusuke Yamamoto, Executive Director, JNTO, Delhi Office, said, "Most Indians know only Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Osaka. We wanted to introduce Okinawa to the Indian market, hence, last March, we invited some wedding planners and got good response. This time, we hosted a seminar to give them more information."



Yusuke Yamamoto  
Executive Director  
JNTO, Delhi Office

He asserted that as a destination, Okinawa is equipped

well as many restaurants and activities like snorkelling, etc. People in Okinawa can speak English very well, and hence the interaction is very good. Even connectivity to the destination is great," said Yamamoto.

Apart from that, the tourist office is also focused on promoting the northern region of Japan in India. Claiming that last year Japan received 150,000 Indian arrivals, Yamamoto said,

**“Okinawa has a beach, a number of five-star hotels, and connectivity to the destination is great”**

to handle Indian weddings. "There are many hotels there, especially five-star ones, hence capacity is not a problem. Okinawa has a beach as

"This year, we are expecting a 20 per cent growth on last year's number from India, since we are already seeing an increase."

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■ Gujarat to come up with heritage tourism policy, records 14% growth in 2018-19

■ Eight more airlines join Hahn Air's network

■ Government launches website to help Jet Airways staff find jobs with other private airlines

■ GoAir flies 13 lakh passengers in June 2019, rated best on-time performance

■ MoT sanctions ₹ 14 crore to develop pilgrim facilities at 25 religious sites

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# Travel Mantra for more business

## WEDDING SHOW

Travel Wedding Show, held in Mumbai from July 13-14, facilitated around 2,000 meetings between exhibitors and planners and generated multiple leads. At the end of day two, participants had also secured their participation for future editions of the show.



The sixth edition of Travel Wedding Show, the B2B meetings platform for buyers and suppliers in the wedding segment and tourism stakeholders, took place over two days in Mumbai at The Westin Mumbai Garden City from July 13-14, 2019. It recorded more than 1,900 meetings in total.

Day one saw 31 exhibitors interact with 31 wedding planners over pre-scheduled table-top meetings. The second day followed a similar pattern but with 30 tour operators, who also do weddings.

**Tekla Maira**, Director, Luxury Sales - India, AccorHotels Luxe, Accor, said, "Day one was very interesting. There were people from Tier-II and III cities who we would actually



(L-R) Udaya Bhattarai, Tekla Maira, Rajeev Jain, Emre Kirazci, and Sanjay Rai

never have been able to access. Besides the fact that we had some good opportunities, it was important to understand what people from different cities require."

The show, organised by PLG and DDP Exhibitions, managed to bring out some interesting trends emerging in the wedding segment. The first day's session ended with a power-packed panel discussion where industry

experts deliberated on why Indian weddings are going international. This was moderated by Rajeev Jain, Director, Rashi Entertainment, and the speakers included Sanjay Rai, EVP (Sales), Oberoi Hotels & Resorts; Emre Kirazci, Director of Sales & Marketing, Sofitel Bahrain Zallaq Thalassa Sea & Spa; Udaya Bhattarai, Manager, Tourism Products & Resources Development, Nepal Tourism Board; and Maira.

**Sanjay Rai** said, "This is a great initiative. The statistics are staggering in terms of the great Indian wedding market opportunities. So, from that standpoint, creating a platform where there are potential buyers and sellers is a great initiative."

**Rajeev Jain**, who has been attending this show since its first edition, said, "The organisers are very serious.

They want the actual buyer to come to the table and meet the actual seller, and this is making this wedding show bigger every year."

**Emre Kirazci**, who was showcasing Sofitel Bahrain Zallaq Thalassa Sea & Spa, felt it was a phenomenal show. He said, "This is my third year of attending the show and I have never gone back without a lead." 📌

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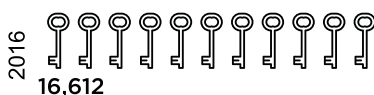
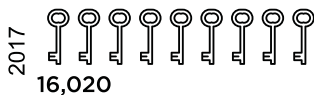
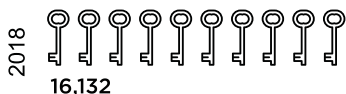


# International hotel inventory dominates

India Hospitality Industry Review 2018 by HVS ANAROCK reveals the skewed relationship between domestic and international hotel companies, where though the former signed more properties in 2018, the latter signed up for more rooms.

## Brand Signings (2016 to 2018)

### By Keys



### By Properties



Over 2016 and 2017, new hotel signings in the country remained in the region of 170 signings, but in 2018, the industry set a record with signing of 201 hotels containing 19,128 keys, signalling a strong growth in investor sentiment.

However, the quantum of rooms signed by all mainstream hotel operators dwarfs in comparison to the aggressive growth marked by the outlier companies such as OYO, who alone in 2018 signed more than 120,000 keys, a whopping 700 per cent higher than all the others put together.

## Brand Signing 2018 : International v/s Domestic\*

### By Properties



### By Keys



\*Domestic hotel companies are defined as those of Indian origin and headquartered in India.

In 2018, domestic hotel operators signed more hotels than their international peers though due to the significantly lower key count, the international operators have garnered the higher share of total keys.

Analysis of the past 3 years suggests that a new normal has developed. International operators are continuing to grow unabated, building larger format of hotels compared to majority of their domestic peers who continue to sign much smaller inventory hotels. In 2018, international hotel operators also signed more hotel keys than their domestic peers.

Source: HVS Research

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# 'Green' light to tourism

WTM recognises and felicitates those players in the tourism industry who are making a difference by reducing the negative and embracing the positive.

TT Bureau

World Travel Market (WTM) recognises responsible tourism practices and initiatives replicable across the travel and tourism industry, as an inspiration for others.

It hosts the Responsible Tourism Awards to showcase great examples in practice, to educate others and challenge them to do better. In its 15<sup>th</sup> year, the event seeks to award the most inspiring companies and organisations from around the world.

This year's six categories include Wildlife & Nature Conservation, Carbon & Greenhouse Gases, Benefiting Local People, Transparent Reporting, Plastics, and Coping with Success.

A panel of expert judges will select a longlist of finalists

and winners will be announced at WTM London on November 6, 2019, as part of WTM World Responsible Tourism Day.

Talking about the idea behind the awards, **Professor Harold Goodwin**, responsible tourism advisor



to WTM London and chair of the judges, said, "The ambition of WTM World Responsible Tourism Awards is to find and recognise examples of tourism business and organisations which are taking responsibility by reducing negative impacts and increasing positive ones."

Highlighting the importance of recognition for those who are

making a difference, he said, "Through the awards, we seek to inform, educate, inspire and challenge others to step up and take responsibility; do more to make tourism better for communities and their natural and cultural environment; as well as make better places for people to live in and visit."

Sharing his view on the initiative, **Simon Press**, Senior Director, WTM London, said, "I am delighted to be launching the WTM World Responsible Tourism Awards 2019. I always enjoy judging the awards as they highlight the best responsible tourism practice in the industry. The awards are a firm fixture of WTM World Responsible Tourism Day – the largest day of responsible tourism action in the world – and I look forward to celebrating the success of the winners and finalists."



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# Gokulam ups trade share

Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa is reaching out to the trade in many ways and will actively participate in travel shows and organise Fam trips for tour operators.

TT Bureau

Putting sustainability in focus, Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa is today creating its own niche in the booming city of Bengaluru. Talking about the property, Akash Gupta, General Manager, Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa, says, "We are competent, focused, and professional in our approach to our decision to launch a new brand in Bengaluru. We firmly position ourselves as a niche, homegrown brand providing value for money."



Akash Gupta  
General Manager  
Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa

Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa is located close to the airport, perfect for those who like to

check-in without having to brave city traffic. "Part of the Preferred Hotels & Resorts Lifestyle collection, guests can book us globally at competitive prices. We have 182 rooms and suites, as well as wellness options, F&B options, and venues to host events of all types," informs Gupta. Gokulam Grand has also added a few green initiatives.

For travel agents, they plan blitz in all the feeder markets twice a year. "We plan to up the travel trade contribution from two per cent to at least 10 per cent a month. We have planned Fam trips, and with more properties coming up in Kumarakom, Calicut and Munnar, these trips would be highly effective. The group also plans to participate in trade fairs and the hotel is also engaged with online MICE event management companies," he shares.



# More from Goldstone

The young boutique hospitality management company will soon expand its footprint to Goa, Chandigarh, Ghaziabad, Patna, Deoghar and Ranchi.

TT Bureau

Goldstone Hotels is a young boutique hospitality management company launched with a vision of creating the right connect between requirements and offerings, whether it is for the guest or its associated owners. With an emphasis on quality rather than quantity, all Goldstone hotels feature extensive facilities for leisure and business travellers, and are renowned for their unique character.

Inderjeet Singh, President and Co-founder, Goldstone Hotels & Resorts, shares expansion plans of the company and says, "In a short span of seven months, we have seen spectacular growth in our portfolio. We acquired seven properties, mostly in exotic or spiritual



Inderjeet Singh  
President and Co-founder  
Goldstone Hotels & Resorts

He adds that the company intends to grow at the same pace but without compromising or overlooking the aspect of doing justice to each property under its flagship and ensure good reputation, good maintenance and good financial returns for its owners.

"The vision of Goldstone Hotels is to mark its

**"The vision of Goldstone is to mark its presence in Tier-II and III cities, and offer services at the local level"**

destinations. Currently, we have properties in Dehradun, Dhanaulti, Nahan, Vrindavan, Amritsar, and Vadodara. We will soon have our footprint in Prayagraj, Patna, Deoghar, Ranchi, Ghaziabad, Goa, and Chandigarh."

presence in Tier-II and III cities, and offer services at the local level in these cities and introduce them to happenings around the world either through technology or high service standards," says Singh.

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# Tanzania-Mumbai direct begins

Air Tanzania, along with Tanzania Tourism, will get active in the India market to promote the destination and bring in more numbers. The recent launch of the direct flight between Dar es Salaam and Mumbai is an example of the country's growing interest in the Indian outbound segment.



Hazel Jain

Air Tanzania recently launched its maiden direct flight from Dar es Salaam to Mumbai on July 18, 2019. This is the seventh international route for the airline and the first outside Africa. The recently-acquired Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner departed the Julius Nyerere International Airport for Mumbai at 7.30 pm local time and arrived in India early morning. From Mumbai, it departs at 05.50 hours on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

The new route will help cut the travel time spent by passengers who had to

historical background as well as the relationship between the two countries. There is a huge business volume between Tanzania and India, so this was the right decision supported by numbers," he said.

Tanzania Tourism will visit India to promote the destination further in August. Air Tanzania will operate two types of aircraft on the route depending on the number of passengers – a wide-body Boeing 787-800 which is a

very modern aircraft, and a brand-new regional jet Airbus A220-300. The Boeing will take around five-and-a-half hours, taking off from Mumbai at 6.30 am and landing in Dar es Salaam between 8-9 am.



Ladislaus E Matindi  
MD & CEO  
Air Tanzania

connect through Nairobi, Dubai, and South Africa. On this inaugural flight was a delegation from Tanzania visiting Mumbai to promote the product and meet key travel agents.

Leading his team was Hon. Eng. Isack Aloyce Kamwelwe, Minister, Ministry of Works, Transport, and Communication, The United Republic of Tanzania. Along with him was Ladislaus E Matindi, MD & CEO, Air Tanzania, who said that he is expecting to start with a load factor of 70 per cent and go up with time. "This is our first destination outside Africa and we have chosen it purposely because of our

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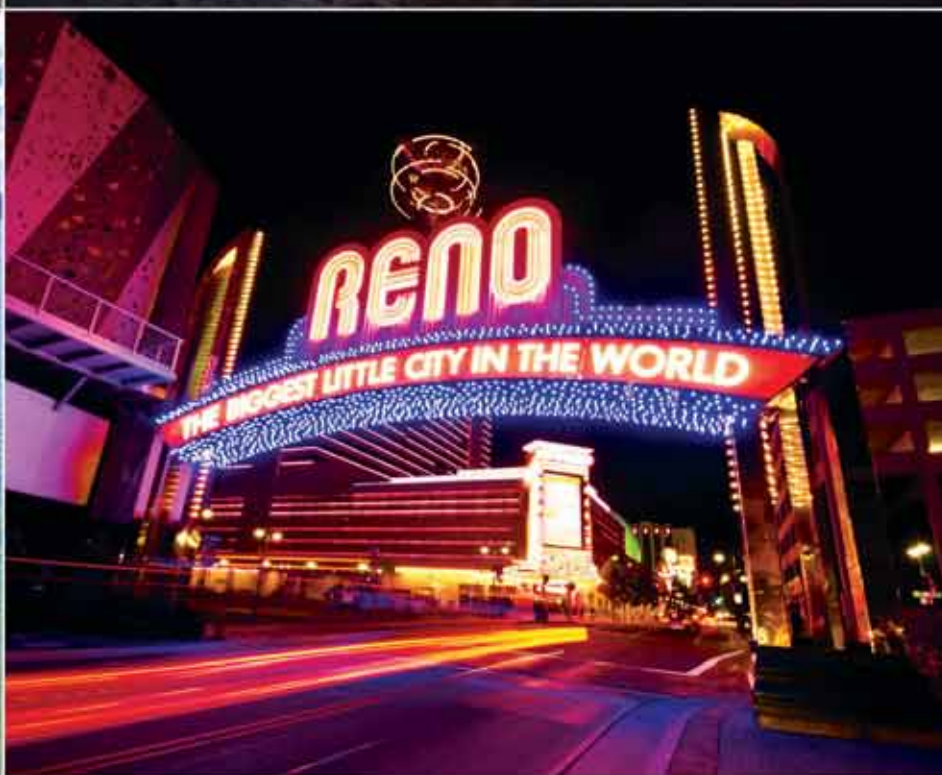
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Did you know, under special circumstances, those travelling to Tanzania can get the visa on arrival if the airline allows boarding. Another way is to get an e-visa by applying for it online.









  
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# Nepal welcomes one and all



The three-member delegation from Nepal Tourism Board was in India recently, meeting key travel trade in Mumbai. It showcased its 'Visit Nepal 2020' campaign and interacted with key outbound agents requesting them to help Nepal regain its lost glory in terms of tourism. The Board is now actively looking at organising big sporting and MICE events as well as festivals to draw in the numbers.





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# Skål Delhi raises a toast to Datta

Skål Delhi recently honoured **Sanjay Datta** for being elected as President, Skål Asia, at an evening of cocktails and dinner hosted at The Suryaa, New Delhi. The dinner saw in attendance senior members of the industry who came together to congratulate Datta on his win and celebrate the occasion with the fraternity.



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# SriLankan strengthens ties

**Chinthaka Weerasinghe**, Manager - Northern India, SriLankan Airlines, highlights India's importance for the country in the aviation and MiCE segments, as India continues to be its number one source market.



Vartik Sethi from Sri Lanka

Though tourism in Sri Lanka may have taken a setback post the Easter Sunday attacks earlier this year, the country continues to brave the adversity.

"Sri Lankan tourism, like the country's flag carrier, is resilient and the country is all set to welcome tourists. Given the stable situation, a number of countries, including India, have removed travel advisories as well," says Weerasinghe.

He adds that the tourism minister of Sri Lanka together with the Tourism Board,

**"SriLankan Airlines has increased flights from New Delhi, indicating that the country is safe for all"**

promotions. "With our network of 11 cities, we

are able to handle pan-India MiCE groups to Sri Lanka

and the Maldives," adds Weerasinghe. SriLankan Airlines has also partnered with domestic airlines in India in offering special arrangements for through-ticketing and check-in from Tier-II cities.



**Chinthaka Weerasinghe**  
Manager - Northern India  
SriLankan Airlines

SriLankan Airlines, and the Sri Lanka Association of In-bound Tour Operators hosted a twin-city roadshow to let the world know that the country was now safe to travel to. Weerasinghe says, "SriLankan Airlines has increased flights to Sri Lanka from New Delhi, indicating that the country is safe for tourists and other travellers. India is the number one source market for the airline with 20 per cent of all revenue generated for the network."

As much as 90 per cent of business from India is through travel agents, and this distribution channel remains number one channel for the airline in the Indian market, he claims.

The airline is now focusing on B2B roadshows related to MiCE events and has also partnered with Sri Lanka Convention Bureau on joint



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# RAK showcases its beauty

The emirate of Ras al Khaimah (RAK) recently conducted a second round of training workshops with the travel trade in India in the Western cities of Ahmedabad, Pune and Mumbai. Earlier this year, it had held similar workshops for select agents in Delhi, Jaipur, and Kolkata. The aim was to reach out to select operators to showcase the destination and highlight the new products.



## Agents and the Seychelles air

Holidays Box, in partnership with Air Seychelles, recently conducted its first Fam trip to the East African island nation of Seychelles, for agents to experience the nation in depth and gain knowledge of its offerings.



## Let's all go to Tanzania!

Air Tanzania launched its maiden direct flight from Dar es Salaam to Mumbai on July 18, 2019. This is the first international route for the airline outside Africa. We share glimpses from the launch...







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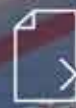
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


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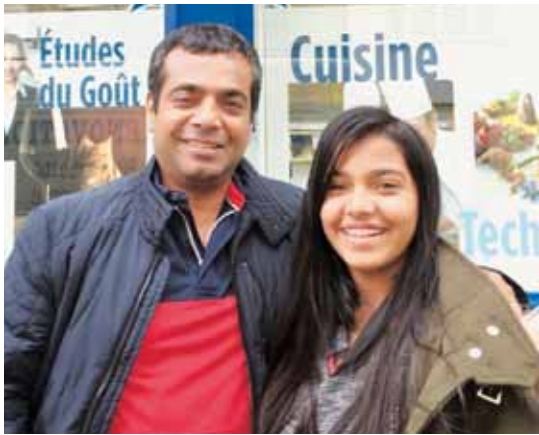
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# Exploring self through travel

In this column, **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, MD, Weldon Travels and an industry veteran, shares a glimpse from the lives of travel professionals away from their work commitments. This time, he talks about **Himanshu Patil**, Director, Kesari Tours and Vice President, OTOAI, whose life has been a thrilling adventure.

**H**imanshu Patil has a modest background and hails from village Mathane situated three hours from Mumbai. His father started this business as a group tour company when Patil was a kid of 13 and that's when he began helping him. "Earlier, we would farm vegetables and rice. When I was 16, I started conducting tours in the domestic market as a tour leader, and would take people from Maharashtra to Nainital, Kashmir, etc. I always found adventure destinations fascinating. Every year, we would develop two or three new group tour destinations and I was the one who used to head those. Since I love adventure, I used to go and explore the place and set the path for future tours. That's how I explored the world,"



he shares as he fondly speaks of his initial days in the business.

Travelling has also made Patil passionate about driving, and he makes it a point to do that every time he travels. "Wherever I go in the world, I like to explore it behind the wheel. I don't usually drive

through freeways, but I prefer scenic routes that showcase the countryside and its people. I have driven down to North Cape, the farthest point of Norway, with my daughter. I make it a point that every year or twice a year, I take a self-drive holiday and that helps me explore offbeat destinations," he adds.

In fact, Patil is planning one such self-drive tour from India to Europe, and is presently working on covering the distance in a shorter span of time than most. "People have earlier done it in 45 days; I am looking at completing it in less time. I am thinking of travelling from Mumbai to London," he says.

Another thing close to his heart is fitness, and being passionate about running, he often participates in marathons. "With time, I moved from being a tour leader to taking up a managerial role, and this impacted my fitness. Hence, I started running and eventually took to marathons. I started with half marathons in Mumbai and Delhi, and then graduated to full marathons around the world. I have completed four of

the world's major marathons—New York, Berlin, Chicago, and Tokyo. My next targets are London and Boston, which I will complete in 2020. In fact, it is fun to see so many people travelling in groups for world marathons," he adds.


Keen on adventure sports, Patil has done skydiving and scuba diving at Great Barrier Reef, and has already travelled to 100-plus countries. His aim is to visit them all!

Besides adventure, Patil also loves to cook and explore food trails. He has even attended culinary classes at Le Cordon Bleu, Paris, with his daughter. "Every time I travel out of India, I take up a food trail with a few friends and research the local cuisine of the place," he adds.

Patil has travelled the world but is not one to forget his roots. He wishes to eventually go back to a life, post retirement, where he can do gardening and follow a self-sustaining lifestyle. "I started travelling a couple of years after we ventured out of our village, and that's when I realised where the world was heading. Travel has impacted my life in a lot of ways and made me look at things from a different, broader perspective in both my personal and professional lives," he concludes.



Guldeep Singh Sahni



# For sale



Total Area of resort	Approximately 4 Acres
Number of cottages	20 Swiss cottages

A Nature Resort, located 6kms from the main Uttarkashi town on the way to Ganotri on a four-acre lush green estate at an altitude of 1150 Mts. Situated right on the riverbanks of River Ganga (Bhagirathi) it is surrounded by high mountain cliffs. It is an ideal location for Family Holidays, Weekend Getaways, Corporate Team Building programmes, and to indulge in various adventure activities like a short trek to Ayana Devi or Nachiketa Tall, adventure activities at Adventure Park, Rock-climbing, Rappelling & Jamaring.

It is also an ideal place for Yoga and Meditation. A small local temple at the river edge adds to the ambience of the Resort. There are many opportunities for day trips, such as a hiking trip to a nearby village, a Day trip to Gangotri with your family or a Day trip to Harsil.

For more details, write to us at: [devika@ddppl.com](mailto:devika@ddppl.com)

## Running Nature Resort in Uttarkashi





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# EVENT TALK

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## AUGUST 2019

TTF	Ahmedabad	1
IITM	Bengaluru	2-4
GPS	Kochi	6-7
Azerbaijan Destination Training	Chennai	7
India International Hospitality Expo	Greater Noida	7-10
IITM	Chennai	9-11
ADTOI Convention	Ahmedabad	16-18
Bahrain Tourism Roadshow	Kolkata	21
GPS	Kolkata	21-22
Bahrain Tourism Roadshow	Ahmedabad	23
Karnataka International Travel Expo 2019	Bengaluru	25-27
Meeting & Incentive Forum - The Americas	Chicago	25-28
Qatar Tourism Workshop	Mumbai	26
Incredible India Roadshow	Hanoi	26
ACTE Global Summit	Macau	26-27
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Mumbai	27
Qatar Tourism Workshop	Bengaluru	27
Incredible India Roadshow	Manila	27
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Ahmedabad	28
Qatar Tourism Workshop	Delhi	28
IBTM China	Beijing	28-29
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Delhi	29
Incredible India Roadshow	Jakarta	29
GPS	Pune	29-30
12 <sup>th</sup> Convention India Conclave	Kochi	29-31
Tourism Fiji roadshow	Chennai	30

## SEPTEMBER 2019

India Sales Associates B2B Roadshow	Chennai	3
India Sales Associates B2B Roadshow	Bengaluru	4
Beijing International Travel Mart	Beijing	4-5
India Sales Associates B2B Roadshow	Kolkata	5
India Sales Associates B2B Roadshow	Delhi	6
TTF	Surat	6-8
Azerbaijan Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	9
IMEX America	Las Vegas	10-12
Azerbaijan Tourism Roadshow	Bengaluru	11
Switzerland Travel Experience	Delhi	11-12
35 <sup>th</sup> IATO Convention	Kolkata	12-15
Switzerland Travel Experience	Chennai	13
Azerbaijan Tourism roadshow	Mumbai	13
TTF	Mumbai	13-15
Travel Luxury Show	Jaipur	14-15
Skål International World Congress	Miami	14-21
Switzerland Travel Experience	Kochi	16
GNTD Roadshow	Mumbai	16
Seychelles Tourism Roadshow	Chennai	16
Switzerland Travel Experience	Bengaluru	17
GNTD Roadshow	Pune	17
Seychelles Tourism roadshow	Ahmedabad	18

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## ASSOCIATION TALK

# Promoting Kolkata for MiCE

IATO Convention Chairman **Pronab Sarkar** has said that the convention will showcase Kolkata as a destination for MiCE tourism.



Manas Dwivedi

A head of the 35<sup>th</sup> IATO Convention scheduled in Kolkata from September 12-15, preparations are on full swing. In a recent Executive Committee meeting, the Association announced that **Pronab Sarkar**, President, IATO, will chair the convention, while **Rajnish Kaistha**, Hony. Joint Secretary, IATO and **Debjit Dutta**, Chairman, West Bengal Chapter, IATO, will be co-chairmen.



**Pronab Sarkar**  
President  
IATO



**Rajnish Kaistha**  
Hony. Joint Secretary  
IATO



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



Sharing details on the plan of action, Sarkar informed that a number of interesting events are lined up this time. "A grand opening ceremony to the event will help showcase Kolkata as a sought-after city for MiCE

tourism and put West Bengal on the path to growth in tourism. There will be business sessions as well as networking luncheons and dinners providing an optimal mix of business, knowledge, and entertainment," he said.

Though the theme for the convention has not been finalised yet, Dutta insists that the focus will be on Durga Puja, in full consultation with

West Bengal Tourism and the State government. He added, "We have made numerous plans to promote new and niche tourism products not just in the city but in the state and across eastern India as well. We are working to boost tourism in the region."

To facilitate this, Sarkar added that the focus will be on digital marketing, improved connectivity, creating synergy

among eastern states for tourism promotion and marketing, charting out unexplored destinations, listening to the new generation of tourism professionals, addressing the issues of taxation, and promoting cruise tourism in the state. "Presentations by state governments and ideas of the Ministry of Tourism will form the core aspects," he shared. 📌

# 'Explore India' this year

'Explore India - Experience India' is the theme of ADTOI's convention in Ahmedabad this year, which will look to promote new destinations in India. ADTOI requests all states to join in.



Nisha Verma

Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) is set to organise its ninth convention-cum-exhibition, supported by Gujarat Tourism as host state, from August 16-18, 2019 at Hyatt Regency Ahmedabad. Sharing details on the theme of the convention and the programme this year, **PP Khanna**, President, ADTOI



and chairman of the convention, said, "The theme of the convention is 'Explore India - Experience India', and the main idea is to promote domestic tourism by



**PP Khanna**  
President, ADTOI and  
Chairman, ADTOI Convention 2019



**Anil K Rajput**  
Joint Secretary, ADTOI and  
Co-chairman, ADTOI Convention 2019



**Sanjay Saxena**  
Co-chairman  
ADTOI Convention 2019

encouraging people to explore their own country. We mainly want to promote Statue of Unity and other heritage sites."

Khanna also revealed that this year's programme will not only delve on challenges faced by domestic tour operators, but will also deliberate on promoting the state via private

entrepreneurs. "We will be talking about investment policies under the PPP model so that hotels and tour operators can benefit," he shared.

To this, **Anil K Rajput**, Joint Secy., ADTOI and co-chairman of the convention, added, "This convention will not only give a chance

to see Gujarat in new light, but will also help promote the state the right way."

Talking about Gujarat, **Sanjay Saxena**, Co-chairman, ADTOI Convention 2019, said, "Gujarat has a sea coast, desert, and historical monuments. We would like to emphasise on culinary tourism also." 📌





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## RAKTDA

### Ras Al Khaimah

**Raki Phillips** has been appointed as CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA). Phillips brings to the table wide-ranging industry experience, which will aid Ras Al Khaimah's goal of becoming one of the fastest growing destinations in the world. He will be responsible for implementing the authority's recently-announced Destination Strategy 2019-2021, which aims to attract 1.5 million visitors to the emirate by 2021 and three million by 2025. In his new role, Phillips will also be supervising key projects, with notable development projects on Jebel Jais including multiple zip lines, hiking trails, etc.



## VFS Global

### Mumbai

**Belson Coutinho** has joined VFS Global as Chief Marketing Officer and will be responsible for driving the company's global marketing and branding strategy across its vast network of 147 countries spanning five continents. He joins the management team to support the organisation's growth and business plans and will also manage overall customer service, quality, information services, and loyalty in his role. Prior to VFS Global, Coutinho was Senior Vice President at Jet Airways, heading the airline's global marketing, digital, social media, e-commerce, loyalty, and Voice of Guest strategy.



## Goldstone Hotels & Resorts

### Noida

**Vipin Sharma** has been appointed as Vice President – Technical at Goldstone Hotels & Resorts. He brings with him more than two decades of experience in planning and execution of MEP services for hotels, working out detailing in terms of architecture, services and interior requirements for smooth operation of hotels with emphasis on energy conservation. Sharma looks after all hotels of the Goldstone group at the corporate level for operations as well as projects. His responsibilities include complete operation and maintenance, cost monitoring, etc.



## Clarks Inn Group of Hotels

### Gurugram

Clarks Inn Group of Hotels has appointed **Ranjeet Singh** as Corporate General Manager - Sales. In his new role, Singh will be responsible for promoting more than 55 hotels and resorts of the group across India under the brand names Clarks Inn, Clarks Exotica Velvet, and Clarks Residences & Clarks Premier. A Hotel Management Graduate from IHM PUSA and B.Com. from Osmania University, Singh has an experience of 25 years in the hotel industry. He has worked with some of the prominent hotels like Savoy Suites, Heritage Retreat – Jaipur, The Bristol, Ramada BMK Gurgaon, The Heritage Village Manesar & Goa, and more.



## Sofitel Mumbai BKC

### Mumbai

Sofitel Mumbai BKC has announced the appointment of their new General Manager, **Vikas Kapai**. Having led prominent hotels in the country, Kapai comes with over three decades of hospitality experience and an eye for the future of not just the property but a sense of how hospitality is changing in the country. His past experience includes work with brands such as Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott and Oakwood Asia Pacific, where he has often played a key leadership role, turning around the properties on significant performance metrics with his leadership capabilities and meticulous attention to detail.



## The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel

### New Delhi

**Ashish Kumar Rai** has been appointed as General Manager of The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, New Delhi. With more than 20 years of experience in the luxury hospitality space, he holds an impressive track record in managing successful and diverse hotel operations. Rai began his career with The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts as a Management Trainee and thereafter served as General Manager at various hotels such as The Taj Umaid Bhawan Palace Jodhpur, The Leela Mumbai, and The Westin Mumbai Garden City. His last assignment was with SUJAN group as Vice President.



## Crowne Plaza Pune City Centre

### Pune

**Bharat Ratanpal** has joined as General Manager at Crowne Plaza Pune City Centre. He has worked in the hospitality industry for over 16 years and was Director of Sales and Marketing at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu for over two years on his last assignment. Prior to this, Ratanpal spent 12 years with Hyatt Hotels, working with numerous upscale and luxurious properties including Grand Hyatt Mumbai, Grand Hyatt Goa, and Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa (now ITC Grand Resort & Spa). In the new role, Ratanpal will look after all aspects of hotel operations.



## Alila Diwa Goa and The Diwa Club by Alila

### Goa

Alila Diwa Goa has appointed **Suveer Sodhi** as General Manager for Alila Diwa Goa and The Diwa Club by Alila. Sodhi has over 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has worked with Hyatt Regency Pune, Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, as well as Aman Resorts, and had an entrepreneurial stint during which he set up his own F&B concept. In the new role, Sodhi will oversee the entire operations of both Alila Diwa Goa and The Diwa Club by Alila, including guest and colleague satisfaction. He will also play a crucial role in combining the Alila and Hyatt systems and making Alila Diwa Goa a part of 'World of Hyatt'.



## Novotel Imagica Khopoli

### Khopoli

Novotel Imagica Khopoli has appointed **Sachin Malhotra** as the new General Manager. He comes with over 18 years of experience across hospitality functions and specialises in hotel operations with an avid interest in F&B. In the new role, Malhotra will spearhead business operations, overall implementation and business development at Novotel Imagica Khopoli, ensuring its growth and expansion through innovative strategies. He brings with him an extensive array of proficiency and a deep understanding of operations.



## Royal Homotel Suites

### Dahisar

**Vishal Baid** has been appointed as General Manager at the 112-key Royal Homotel Suites, Dahisar, in Maharashtra. Baid has an experience of close to 17 years in the hospitality industry with expertise in operations management and strategy planning. He moves from Majestic Court Sarovar Portico, Navi Mumbai, to Royal Homotel Suites, Dahisar. In the new role, his responsibilities will include overseeing operations of the hotel, ensuring revenue and guest satisfaction targets are met, and providing effective leadership to team members.



## JW Marriott Pune

### Pune

**Abhirath Sah** has been appointed as Director of Sales & Marketing at JW Marriott Pune. In the new role, he will be responsible for overall functioning and growth in market share of the hotel, and will spearhead a team of professionals while developing sales and revenue strategies for segment-wise growth. With a vast experience and deep understanding of the hospitality sector, Sah joins the hotel from The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, where in his capacity as Director of Sales & Marketing, he was in charge of driving the core sales and marketing strategies. He has worked with hospitality brands such as Sheraton and The Leela.



## Novotel Pune Viman Nagar

### Pune

Novotel Pune Viman Nagar welcomes **Varun Marwah** as the Director of Sales & Marketing. An industry expert, Marwah has an experience of nearly 14 years in the hospitality industry, converting strategic vision into measurable results at various hotels. In the new role, he will be responsible for maximising hotel revenue through result-oriented sales and marketing strategies, as well as exploring business opportunities through events, conferences, and meetings. Prior to joining Novotel Pune, Marwah, who began his career in 2004, was Cluster Director of Sales at ibis Pune Viman Nagar and ibis Pune Hinjewadi.





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Manas Dwivedi

With a vision for enhancing the tourism sector in the state, Kerala Tourism has formulated 'Tourism Vision 2025' to serve as its guiding force, believes **P Bala Kiran**, IAS, Director, Kerala Tourism. He says that the state tourism department has rolled out a string of innovative products and projects to achieve its ambitious growth target. "One of these is the ₹325 crore Malabar river cruise project in North Kerala. Christened Malanadu-Malabar Cruise, the project will link eight rivers and backwaters of Kannur and Kasargod districts, and construction of its modern boat terminals will commence soon. The jetties will also be equipped with advanced facilities for tourists. With the functioning of Kannur International Airport, the cruise project would attract travel and adventure enthusiasts to the state," he says.

**New destinations and products**  
Kerala Tourism is planning to leverage new destinations in different geographical areas

To double foreign tourist arrivals and increase domestic arrivals by 2021, Kerala Tourism has rolled out a string of products to rebrand itself to 'The Land of Adventure'.

and widening the canvas of offerings. Destinations in focus in North Kerala include Wayanad, Kannur, Kozhikode, Thrissur, Malappuram, and Palakkad. With the aim to increase the geographical spread of tourist arrivals to the state, Kerala Tourism has planned to promote its Malabar region aggressively. Plans are

Ashtamudi Lake and Munroe Thuruthu are scheduled to be transformed into centres of water sports and adventure tourism. The launch of Jatayu Earth Centre – the world's largest functional bird sculpture – together with an adventure zone, a virtual reality museum and a state-of-the-art ropeway to reach the destination, would

tion project in India. "Another offering in the historical space is the Spice Route Project that rekindles the 2000-year-old sea link and shares cultural and culinary legacies with 30 countries. The State government aims to promote the state in a responsible manner globally," he informs.

### Digital presence

With the latest travel technology, Kerala Tourism has begun serving tourists and other stakeholders of the industry with digital techniques. "For instance, a high-tech digital facility known as 'SMILE Virtual Tour Guide' provides information on 40 Malabar attractions, ways to reach them, an opportunity to plan tours, and fix reminders and alarm notifications besides finding accommodation and booking rooms," he says.

**“One of the projects is the ₹325 crore Malabar river cruise project, linking eight rivers and backwaters of Kannur and Kasargod”**

also in place to develop theme parks, light & sound shows at Bekal and Kannur, and musical fountains in various picturesque districts of the state.

The State tourism department has also been working on developing action and water-based adventure activities such as river rafting, trekking, and paragliding for vacationers. Bala Kiran says, "For the first time in Kerala, Ashtamudi Water Sports Centre offers aqua parasailing.

be a tipping point for the state's tourism. The objective is to rebrand Kerala as 'The Land of Adventure'."

To promote nature-based tourism in the state, the tourism board has identified eco-tourism destinations in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts as part of promoting them as adventure tourism destinations.

For history buffs looking to transport themselves to another era, Kerala has the Muziris Heritage Project, where the remains of a once-thriving port frequented by Arabs, Romans, and Egyptians as early as the first century BC are preserved across 25 museums. This is the largest heritage conserva-

### Infrastructural support

❖ The operation of an international airport at Kannur will help Kerala Tourism establish the Malabar region, which shares boundaries with Coorg, Coimbatore and Mysuru, as the new tourism gateway to the state.

❖ Kerala has secured the Centre's approval for a ₹91.72 crore project to improve tourist amenities in 147 pilgrim centres of different faiths across the state. The project will be implemented as part of the Pilgrim Tourism Third Circuit Development Plan under which basic infrastructure in major Hindu, Muslim, and Christian pilgrim centres in all the 14 districts will be created by demarcating them into seven clusters.



P Bala Kiran  
IAS, Director, Kerala Tourism

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