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(Fitur) 2019 raises the bar

With sustainability as one of its core themes, Team FITUR 2019 is working hard to increase its domestic and international content to make the trade fair a successful show, informs **Ana Larrañaga**, Director, FITUR.

Manas Dwivedi

As one of the most efficient global meeting points for tourism professionals, FITUR is looking to raise the bar in 2019. Organised by IFEMA at Feria de Madrid, FITUR is scheduled to be held from January 23 to 27. According to **Ana Larrañaga**, Director, FITUR, 880 companies will be taking part this year — an increase of 9 per cent from last year. She expects that the number of attendees will surpass last year's numbers, when

251,000 delegates turned up for the show.

Sharing her expectations and targets from the show, Larrañaga says, "Apart from this increased participation, we expect that the call for professionals will also be a complete success, in line with the improved figures for the tourism sector both in Spain and worldwide. To achieve this, we are also promoting initiatives like strengthening the programme for international buyers, especially in highly-specialised

sectors such as MiCE, for which we are organising the new FITUR MITM - MiCE & Business B2B space.

“ This year, we are organising FITUR MITM - MiCE & Business B2B space for strengthening the programme for international buyers, especially in specialised sectors ”

Talking about the theme of the show, she said that sustainability is one of the main themes of FITUR this year. "We are working hard to enrich and increase its

content, both domestic and international. One of the most innovative initiatives at the show will be the FITUR Cine/Screen Tourism space," she emphasises.

Larrañaga further shares that participation by Indian exhibitors at FITUR has always

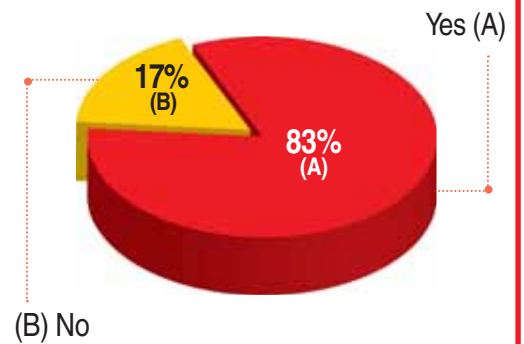
been outstanding. "Last year, India was the FITUR partner, and this gave the country a special position at the fair and led to closer bilateral relations between the governments of India and Spain and shared objectives in tourism-related cooperation. This year, India will also have a major presence at FITUR with 65 companies taking part, including regular exhibitors and co-exhibitors," she informs.



Contd on page 6 ▶

International conventions, yay or nay?

A latest poll conducted by **TRAVTALK** reveals that a majority of travel trade professionals feel that international conventions organised by travel trade associations are informative. Almost 83 per cent of the participants felt that such conventions are crucial for educating trade and networking with the fraternity while the remaining 17 per cent find these conventions irrelevant.



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GPS to script its growth story

With a new mantra in 2019, Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) is looking to strengthen its base with the EcoConnect and KIT Talk programmes. In conversation with TRAVTALK, **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, Managing Director, GPS, shares his plans and targets for this year.

 Manas Dwivedi

QWhat new can we expect at GPS in 2019?

GPS has completed six successful years of growth and continues to grow. From a single-city event, it has now grown into a multi-city show. We are proud to announce that GPS is the only event in India which has successfully reached to over 8,600 travel professionals from 700 cities across India, who have been benefitted from both the B2B meetings and our educational programmes.

The core focus of GPS since its inception has been to educate and empower the travel fraternity. This year, we will be tweaking our format and create a forum called KIT Talk by GPS (Knowledge – Inspiration – Training). This will be launched at GPS Nagpur with our partner Brand Value.



Harmandeep Singh Anand
Managing Director
Global Panorama Showcase

EcoConnect would be an economical format of GPS with the one-day exhibition format, reaching out to an audience within 100 km of the event city. GPS EcoConnect events are scheduled between August-December 2019 in Indore, Vizag, Jaipur and Guwahati.

QWhat is the update on EDWIN and other initiatives of GPS this year?

As GPS' educational initiative for the travel trade, we are planning to do at least four

EDWIN (Educational Destination Workshop – International) programmes in 2019 and are in dialogue with various partners and destinations. We are open to discussions with new destinations, which are looking at venturing into the cash-rich Tier-II and III city agents. EDWIN destinations and programmes will be announced in due course but we will definitely be returning back with EDWIN@Ladakh, EDWIN@SEA, EDWIN@Bali and EDWIN@UK, amongst others in 2019.

QAhead of the seventh edition of GPS Nagpur, can you brief us about the number of pre-registrations for the show?

As on date, we have received registrations from over 800 buyers across Central India covering Vidarbha, Marathwada, Khandesh, Chhattisgarh and parts of Madhya Pradesh. We are expecting over 1000

buyers and close to 100 exhibitors to exhibit more than 150 products and services at GPS Nagpur. Across all eight GPS events, we would expect an attendance of over 600 exhibitors and close to 10,000 buyers in 2019.

QWhat are your areas of focus in 2019?

Our core focus would be on health this year. We have partnered with OXXY as our Health on the Go Partner. Going to start off at GPS Nagpur, they will run health camps, free of cost for our attendees during the B2B sessions.

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TRAVELTALK

VIEWPOINT

Revival of Air India on the cards?

After a failed disinvestment attempt of Air India last year, the Government has decided to reinstate the process in the second half of 2019-20. Meanwhile, they will focus in selling some of the airlines' subsidiaries and thus monetise assets. It is believed that Air India is thinking of earning around USD 1 billion (about ₹ 7,000 crore) from the sale of the national carrier in the next financial year. This move comes after Air India could not find a buyer last year following the government's decision to initiate the disinvestment process. Later, there was a revival plan being worked upon for the national carrier, which is now heading towards disinvestment again. With a debt burden of ₹ 55,000 crore, we wonder what's in store for the national carrier ahead.

Expectations from exhibitions

With the New Year comes a new season of a spate of exhibitions for the travel trade industry, and the movers and shakers of the fraternity are making sure that they make the most of it. Right from traditional travel exhibitions that happen on a grand scale in major cities, to the ones like Global Panorama Showcase (GPS), that targets agents from Tier II and III cities. Apart from that worldwide shows like ITB and ATM are also rolling out the red carpet for the global travel industry. While business and networking will be the prime focus in the coming months, industry players will be looking at new products, destinations and even technological innovations to ease the booking process. Catering to these demands, these exhibitions have dedicated pavilions and even discussions on these subjects where they involve stakeholders to have a healthy discussion. We hope that exhibitions keep working on the needs of the industry and help them stay relevant in the changing times.

FITUR 2019 focuses on MiCE

▶ Contd from page 3

FITUR 2019 will present the Dominican Republic as a partner country.

According to Larrañaga, FITUR has experienced real surge in growth in the last four years, where the international tourism fair has grown consistently, paralleling the healthy state of the tourism industry worldwide, with double-digit growth rates in many destinations. "In the last edition, participation at FITUR grew by 8 per cent overall, coinciding with the improved figures for the tourism sector both in Spain and worldwide. Above all, the increase in the international presence at the fair has been especially relevant, and already represents a 54 per cent share of the total FITUR participation," she explains.



Commenting on the growth of inbound tourism in Spain and the traffic from India, she says, "The latest data indicates that more than 82 million tourists visited Spain in 2017, and in 2018, we expect to break the record again. Regarding the source market, as with other destinations, European countries are the leaders because they are closer and have easier transport connections, and within that sector, the United

Kingdom, Germany and France. On the other hand, Asia as a source market for Spain, and particularly India, has grown continuously. Specifically, in 2017, tourists from India increased by 35 per cent, with 141,000 visitors. We don't have the data for 2018 yet, and the effect of India being a FITUR Partner, but the growth both as a source country and as a destination for Spanish tourists, is confirmed by the increase in

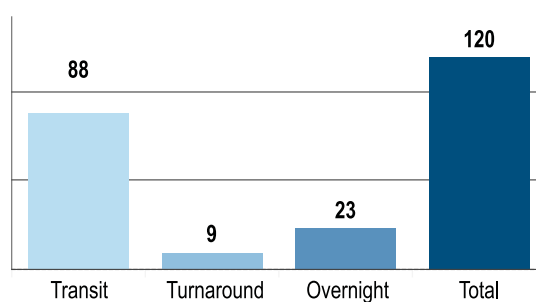
spending by Spaniards abroad by 12.3 per cent."

In its quest to promote key segments, FITUR 2019 will contain a new B2B area focusing on MiCE tourism. FITUR MITM – MiCE & BUSINESS, organised in collaboration with the MITM Events specialist company GSAR Marketing, will offer a tool for meetings between professionals and exhibitors. ↴

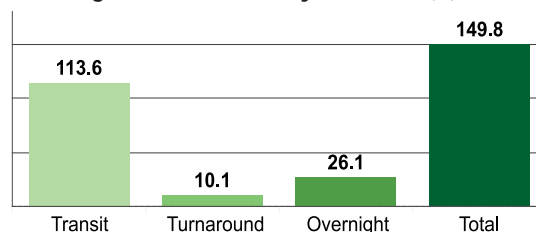
India 12th in Asian cruise list

India ranks 12th of all Asian cruise destinations with just 2 per cent of Asia's total calls, according to a latest report titled 'Asia Cruise Trends' commissioned by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

Port Calls in 2018

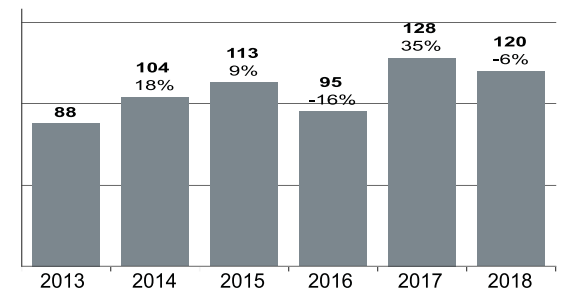


Passenger Destination Days in 2018 (K)

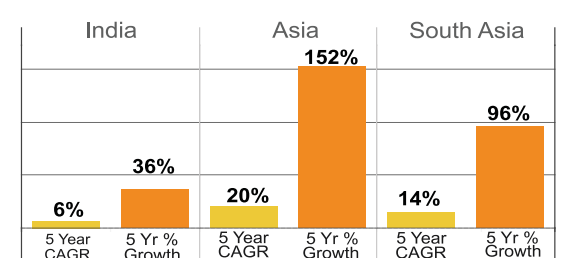


Port Calls by Year

With YOY Variances, 2013-2018



2013 vs. 2018: 5 Year CAGR & Total Growth



- India hosted 120 calls at its various ports in 2018, a 6 per cent decline from 2017. 88 of those calls are Transit, or 73 per cent of the total.
- Mumbai sees the most calls at 48, followed by 32 in Cochin. India's five-year CAGR and five-year growth are 6 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively.

Source: Asia Cruise trends

Internship is the key to success

Marina Ambrosecchio, President & Co-founder, UET Italy, recently hosted an Indian delegation of academicians, led by Thokchom Radheshyam, Minister—Education, Labour & Employment, Manipur, to Palermo. She talks about how she helps her students adapt to the constantly evolving demands of the travel industry.



Peden Doma Bhutia from Sicily

Q How did your institute, European University for Tourism (UET) Italy, come into being?
The European University for Tourism (UET) Italy was founded in 1993. Today, 25 years later, we are operating three branches within the country – in Milan, Rome and Palermo, where each campus boasts of around 400 students. For 25 years, UET has successfully completed the training of professionals in the tourism sector and offers students opportunities for job placement.

for my students and human resources in general.

Q With technology, tourism players need

to constantly adapt to the expectations of a younger demography of consumers. Amidst this rapidly-changing landscape, how difficult is it to produce quality talent? What's the

most important advice to your students?
The tourism sector is in need of highly specialised professionals who are used to working within an international context. As tourism is a global

phenomenon, the quality of standard applied has to be the same everywhere. This is the greater force that drives our curriculum at the institute. We ensure that even during the education offered in our

universities, we train students to offer the same standard of quality for all guests. Internship is a very important step in that direction as it gives students a hands-on training about real situations. ↴



Marina Ambrosecchio
President & Co-founder, European University for Tourism (UET) Italy

And 12 years ago, we also started a branch in Shanghai and in the last three years, I have been working very closely with Indian universities and have signed agreements with Amity University, Panjab University, Chandigarh University, ITTM, Himachal Pradesh Technical University and Indira Gandhi University.

Q With a foothold in China and India, do you plan to expand to other countries?
My objective is to help my school go international, thereby giving my students job opportunities, not just in Italy but also in other countries. I'm interested in collaborating with institutes all over India, particularly East and South India.

I also have my sights set on Eastern Europe, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. In Nigeria, we are cooperating with international hotel chains to offer them services of the best quality. My dream is to venture in Dubai, as I feel that after the year 2020, Dubai can offer a lot of job opportunities

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'Jalesh' for 1 million guests

Touted to be the first premium cruise line brand sailing under the tricolour, 'Jalesh' can bring about a paradigm shift in the way Indians perceive cruising after it sets sail from Mumbai in April 2019.

 Hazel Jain

Essel Group's new cruise line business, Zen Cruises, has launched India's first premium cruise line called 'Jalesh'. The first ship under this brand – the Pacific Jewel – is a 70,285-ton, 1,900-passenger liner purchased from P&O Australia and will be christened 'Karnika' on April 19, 2019 in Mumbai. Jurgen Bailom, who came onboard as the President and CEO, Zen Cruises, in August 2018, says, "She is a beautiful vessel. She will be refurbished by March 2019 and will make its first sailing on April 17, 2019 from Mumbai to Goa. We are already taking bookings for sailings from Singapore and more guests will join from Colombo after which she will sail up to Mumbai. We already have a load-factor of



50 per cent and have sold over 50,000 cabins so far." It will have 680 crew members on board.

'Jalesh' is taking bookings directly via Zen's website as well as through its sales business partners. "We have already started working with several sales business partners and many more will be added. We want to make it a level-playing

field and anyone can become our partner, so we will not have PSAs or GSAs. There are many cruise veterans in the business and we have given pre-allocations to our partners. We plan to sell approximately 100,000 cabins in 2019 and are very happy with the results. The cruise market in India is so big that there is space for many more cruise lines," Bailom adds.

Speaking about future milestones, Bailom says that Zen aims to offer the cruising experience to one million guests in the next three to four years. After arriving in India, it will first sail from Mumbai to Goa for few months, followed by a couple of high seas sailings and then just before the rainy season starts, the ship will make its way down South via Goa, Kochi and Mangalore, to Colombo and then

work its way to Chennai and Vizag. It is going to spend a few sailings in the east and then sail all the way to Singapore in the monsoon season. Later, around mid-September, the ship will come back to Mumbai the same way it went to Singapore.

During Christmas and New Year, Zen is looking at sailing to Dubai and back to Mumbai. Bailom reveals that they will look at adding new ports in 2020 like Diu and Porbandar. 'Jalesh' Cruises will also offer on-shore excursions across port cities including Chennai, Kochi, Mormugoa, Mumbai, Vizag and international locations including Abu Dhabi, Colombo, Dubai, Muscat, Penang, Ras Al Khaimah and Singapore.

The product has been positioned as 'very affordable' at approximately Rs 10,000 per

person, per day, which includes meals and basic beverages. Bailom is keen on tapping the weddings and MiCE segments. He says, "We are getting a lot of support from the Mumbai Port Trust and the Ministry of Shipping. All the government officials I have met have been very positive. Positioning cruising on the map of India is going to be a joint effort by the ministry, the ports, the state and the cruise company." 

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MiCE jewel of Jaipur: JECC

The MiCE market is one of the fastest growing segments in India and Jaipur, as one of the favourite tourist hotspots, provides everything a business traveller wants. In conversation with **Aashish Vyas**, General Manager, Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre (JECC), on the finer points of the exhibition centre.

 Kanchan Nath

Q Please tell us about the MiCE facilities available at JECC.

Spread across 42 acres, JECC consists of two air-conditioned exhibition halls with column-space of 1,00,000 sq ft each, an exquisite convention centre featuring a ballroom of 12,000 sq ft along with 14 break-away rooms split across two levels. This facility also has open-air venue options of 50,000 sq ft lawn, an expansive outdoor exhibition area. The ballroom and halls are equipped with avant-garde sound acoustics that solves noise and sound related issues and gives optimum clarity. Hi-speed internet offers seamless connection while the high-end AV setup supports every meeting's aspiration.



Aashish Vyas
General Manager
Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre

Q Which major MiCE events did you host in 2018? Any projects in line for 2019?

JECC has been able to establish its identity on a national level by hosting some of the biggest exhibitions and conventions such as 12th Jewellery Association Show, Smart City Expo, Federation of All India Caterers, 15th Jaipur Jewellery Show, CORCON, Unveiling

Infinity by Art of Living, GrainEx Expo, 67th Annual Conference of Neurological Society of India (NSICON), Bacardi NH7 Weekender and Sunburn Arena concerts, and many other government and private events.

10th India Stonemart 2019, Great Indian Travel Bazaar 2019, Crossblade, IPF Kurti Expo, 13th Jewellery Association Show, 16th Jaipur Jewellery Show, Decor India, 15th Asia Pacific Congress of Clinical Biochemistry (APFCB) 2019, Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI) 2019, etc, are few of the events that will be organised at JECC in 2019.

Q How do you bid for major national and international conferences and events?



We have been associated with all the major PCOs and exhibitors at both international and national level. JECC also keeps an eye on international RFPs that come from time-to-time. Since JECC is equipped to handle and cater to all kind of international events, we at JECC leave no

stone unturned to bid for them.

Q What are the challenges for MiCE in India?

Lack of world-class exhibition and conference infrastructure are the key challenges. In order to attract MiCE business and promote their respective cities, governments of many coun-

tries offer subsidies to exhibitors and conference organisers which is widely absent in India. Another major challenge is the higher taxation policies, which has led to loss of MiCE business to the neighbouring competitors. India surely needs to develop itself as one of the most lucrative destinations. 



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17	Antarctica and Falklands - Southern Hemisphere Adventure	2019: Oct 26 2020: Mar 14
17	Antarctica - White Christmas with Penguins	2019: Dec 13

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Hazel Jain



Himanshu Patil
Director
Kesari Tours & Travels

“I've always been passionate about self-drive holidays and adventure sports. I usually prefer a SUV to navigate across long distances and have driven up to the North Pole, which remains one of the most challenging and memorable expeditions of my life. Reaching the North Pole with my daughter has been one of my best self-drive adventure tours so far. We completed our quest to explore and celebrated our journey all the way up to the end point of Norway.”



Louis D'Souza
Director
Tamarind Global

“A recent trip I took was called 'Finding Pho' in Vietnam and was a culinary tour tracing experiences from the North of Vietnam – Hanoi through Hoi An down to the South ending at Ho Chi Minh. I like to experience any place with my taste buds. It included guided street food trails in Hanoi which has some amazing street food available at throw-away prices. The experience of walking through markets selling fresh produce, digging into authentic Vietnamese dishes washed down with locally brewed beers and watching the famous egg coffee shop in Hanoi make frothy coffee, has to be experienced to be understood.”



Param Sidhu
Chief Operating Officer
Atlas Travels Online

“Riding to and in Leh is something that can never be explained, its mentally challenging and exhausting but it comes with such a sense of achievement that it compensates for all the weariness. It's a bikers' paradise and my most memorable trip till date. I have done various road trips by car, like driving from Delhi to Goa not once but twice, to Spiti valley, and Manali or to the hills countless times, to Jaisalmer. My last trip was to Sardar Sarovar Dam as I wanted to see the Statue of Unity. I rode from Mumbai to Ahmedabad which was roughly 600 kms one way covered in about eight hours.”

“I cycle about 30 kms every day with my wife when we are in Canada in the summer. We also go on cycling trips and one tour that stands out is riding in the Kettle Valley Rail (KVR) Trail in Canada's Okanagan region – a wine producing region. My wife and I went on an 80-km cycling trip here, which has some amazing scenery. The first time we did this in 2017, I had tears of joy because of the sheer beauty and the experience of riding here.”



Mernoz Shastri
Director
Mazda Travel

“I love experimenting with food even when I am on holiday. I find cooking and eating good food immensely therapeutic. I normally keep aside at least half-a-day during holidays to find and meet the 'creators' of amazing food they are famous for – it could be learning how to make the best sushi at a local Japanese restaurant, spicy khasta kauchauri in Chandni Chowk, the best rabdi in a small shop in Moradabad or learning how to make the best achaars from traditional families in Bihar.”



Nishith Saxena
Founder & Director
Cruise Professionals

“Whenever I am on a holiday, I prefer staying in homestays. I like to engage with them and build meaningful relationships as it is the best way to get an insight into the culture and the food, of that destination, but also the local economy. We have stayed with a Kashmiri family that trades in saffron, a Goan family in their beautiful Portuguese bungalow and even a family in Kerala in their traditional home. We even host them at our home when they visit Mumbai.”



Shivdatta Wagle
Director
Meandering Vacations



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Indian weddings on JA's radar

Set to open a new property at its flagship JA The Resort, JA Resorts & Hotels will now lay emphasis on the Indian wedding and MICE market. It had also hosted an Indian wedding planners' conference last year.

 Nisha Verma

JA Resorts & Hotels is all set to open a new property at JA The Resort, formerly called JA Jebel Ali Golf Resort. The resort is spread over 128 acres of land and already has JA Beach Hotel with 235 rooms and suites. It also has JA Palm Tree Court, an all junior suite property with 208 keys. "Next year, we will be opening our third hotel on the site — JA Lakeview Hotel with 348 rooms aimed at catering towards the demand of the resort," revealed William Harley-Fleming, Complex General Manager, JA The Resort.

Not just in Dubai, the resort also has properties in Maldives and Seychelles. "In Dubai, we are one of the biggest beach resort properties with the golf course on site and more than 35 differ-

ent experiences including indoor pistol shooting, horse riding and a host of other activities for multi-generational families. Over time, we've grown from Dubai and expanded overseas to Maldives and Seychelles," shared Fleming.

He claimed that they have witnessed growth from India for all their properties. "The Indian market has been a key focus for us. We are starting to see some good tractions from the market. At JA The Resort, we have seen the figures double year-on-year with the positioning of the Indian market now within our top 20 key destinations and key feeder markets for the resort. I am confident it would be in the Top 10 in the years to come," he added.

Speaking about JA Manafaru, Maldives, Fleming revealed, "JA



William Harley-Fleming
Complex General Manager
JA The Resort

Manafaru has worked extremely well for us in the Indian market. We've had some high-profile cricketers and celebrities stay with us, which has really positioned the resort as a true luxury resort in the Maldives. The direct connectivity now from the major cities in India to Male has helped and it will continue to grow. We are very positive about the Indian market next year."



Christopher Tutty
Director of Sales
JA Resorts & Hotels

The resort is also considering properties within the Indian Ocean, mentioned Christopher Tutty, Director of Sales, JA Resorts & Hotels. He added, "We are seeing growth across several of our properties. Some are growing faster than the others. We are seeing a stronger growth in the Maldives."

After the success of the Maldives property in India, Tutty wants to recreate the same buzz in Seychelles too. "We are using some of the tactics used in Maldives for JA Enchanted Island in Seychelles whilst working closely with both airlines and Seychelles tourism board. Air Seychelles has direct flights from India into the Seychelles. We've had several meetings with them and we are looking at activations moving forward into 2019."

This year, the focus for them would be to grow the wedding and MICE segment from India. "One of the key focuses at JA Resorts & Hotels this year is to grow the wedding market from India. India's fantastic connectivity to both Dubai and Abu Dhabi would certainly aid the growth of the wedding, MICE and conference market

from India. We have a fantastic conference centre at the resort as well as great outdoor spaces that can be used for big dinners, conferences, events and team building activities," said Fleming.

In fact, the resort has even hosted an Indian wedding planners' conference at JA The Resort last year. "We had put on a whole mock wedding where more than 500 people experienced a wedding atmosphere and met our key managers." 

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Europamundo big on destinations

With a new brochure ready for 2019, Europamundo Vacations has already geared up for 100 per cent growth again, powered by an online learning tool and a number of destination-specific itineraries.



Nisha Verma

For Europamundo, the Indian market is one of the many possibilities, according to Alejandro de la Osa, Director Commercial, Europamundo Vacations. "We have been working in this market since three years. The growth is incredible and we are happy to see the confidence of trade in Europamundo. In fact, we have grown 100 per cent every year in the last three years. All the regions in India, including metros as well as Tier II and III cities are recording good numbers," he informs.

The company works with a few select partners as distributors for their products. Osa shares, "We select the best players in each market and provide them the products, who further take them to travel agencies. The

work they are doing in India is great, as followed by our commercial team in India."

Heading the India operations is Aparna C Basumalik, Country Head, Europamundo Vacations, who claims that Europamundo is trade-friendly. She mentions, "We understand that there are last-minute cancellations. However, there are guaranteed departures, which means that even if we don't have enough people, Europamundo will not cancel the tour. Taking care of the human aspect is important and our tour leaders have now been trained to handle the Indian way of touring. On tours where we don't have Indian meals, people find themselves at ease because we make arrangements for them to visit Indian restaurants. If not, they are welcome to try international cuisine as well."



Alejandro de la Osa
Director Commercial
Europamundo Vacations

Basumalik also claims that Europamundo stands out because they can offer a variety of tours with 365-days departures, which enables people to travel to Europe throughout the year, resulting in the agents having a product to sell round the year.

Osa further adds, "There are three aspects that make us dif-



Aparna C Basumalik
Country Head
Europamundo Vacations

ferent from others. Firstly, we provide guaranteed departures and never cancel. Secondly, flexibility is our big USP. And, our third strength is the way we design our itineraries and offer customers the best tour to explore a destination."

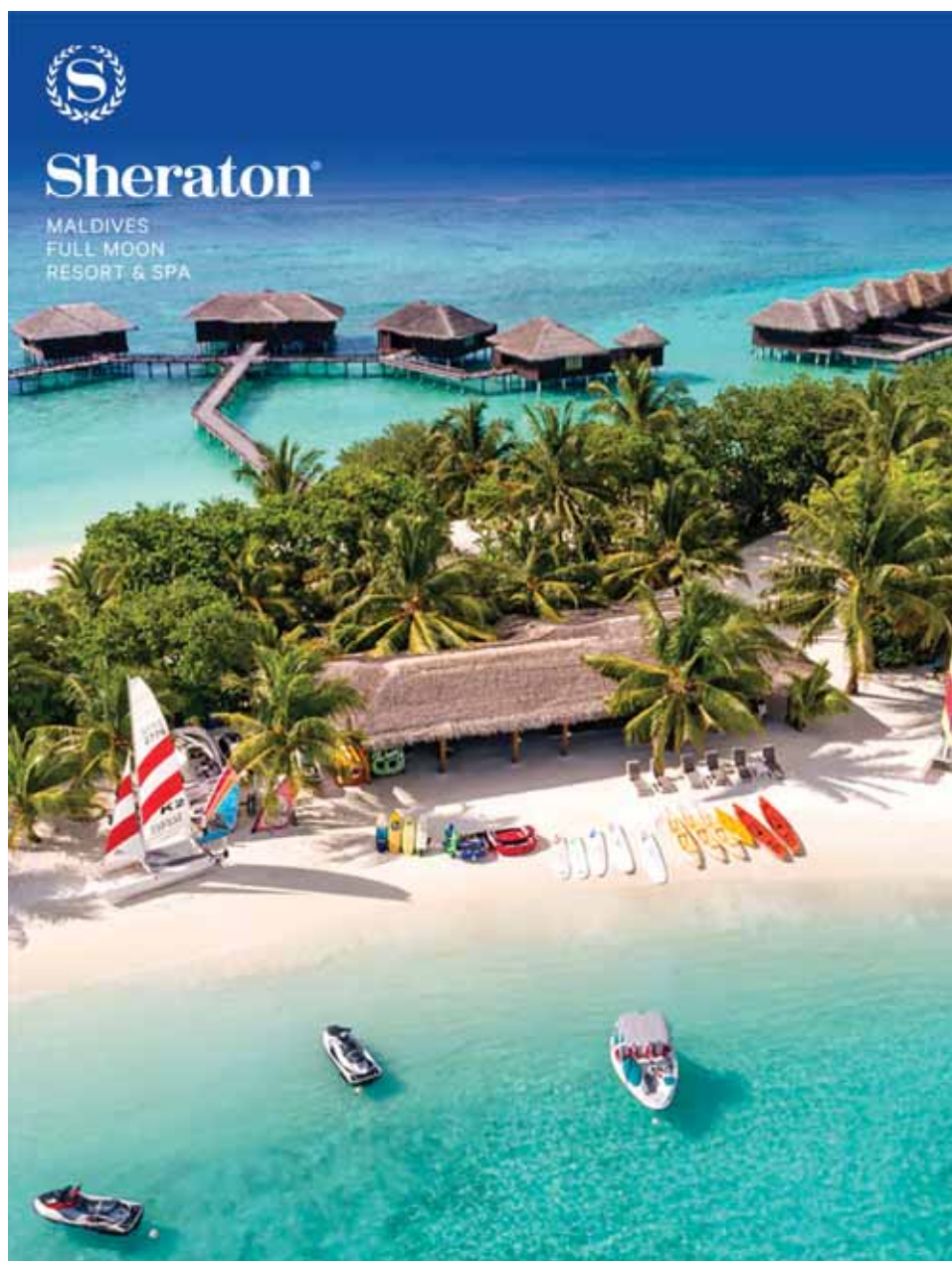
Elaborating more on flexibility, Osa reveals that they have modified their products for

the Indian market. "In all the markets we operate in, we have grown by listening to the trade. We don't provide the product, but it is provided by the trade and their suggestions. One should listen to their customers to know the next step they need to take. During the last season, we included special Indian products with Indian meals thinking of the Indian travellers and the trade's requests. In the next brochure, we will bring special Indian meals for tours in Spain and Portugal," he shares.

Basumalik also said that they are even educating the trade online. "One of our biggest initiatives that we take with the trade is the Academia programme on our website. It is a self-learning tool which lets you book a tour online. Once the tour is confirmed,

agents can generate a visa letter, bookings, videos of destinations, etc. Hence, it is a complete tool to handle any Europe-guaranteed departure itinerary," she informs.

Europamundo also participates in roadshows with European destinations to reach out to agents. "For us, the focus is travel trade, and hence we partner with tourism boards and train the agents. This year, we've got itineraries for specific regions — Germany, Spain, Italy and France. People want everything on a platter, and for such intricate itineraries and demands, Europamundo has a solution. For 2019, we are ready with a bouquet of about 300 products and a total of about 8000 itineraries. We are geared up to have over 100 per cent growth this year as well," she claims. 🐦



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Mosaic pins high hopes on 2019

After achieving efficient occupancy in 2018, Mosaic Mussoorie has tied up with Preferred Hotels & Resorts to accelerate better positioning of the hotel in the market.



TT Bureau

Registering healthy growth in terms of revenue last year, Mosaic Mussoorie is looking to focus on enhancing its average room rate (ARR) by upgrading standards and services. Talking about new developments in 2018, Arun Khurana, Cluster General Manager, Mosaic Hotels, Noida and Mussoorie, says, "The hotel has opened its new bar known as Charcoal, which has been the biggest announcement to kick-start 2019. Further, we are hoping to increase the food and beverage revenue as well."



Arun Khurana
Cluster General Manager
Mosaic Hotels

Located on the Mall Road at Picture Palace, Mosaic Mussoorie gives guests an opportunity to explore city's local offerings around the area. The hotel also arranges heritage walks, so that tourists can see some of the best known places of city like Camel Back Road, Lal Tibba and Char Dukan.

Keeping in mind its responsibility towards environment, the hotel has developed a green bio wall with abundance of plants at the entrance, which is also an eye-catching attraction for every traveller.

For the New Year, Khurana rides his hopes on a number of advancements and prominent travel trends throughout the year. He believes that this year will

see a good influx of international visitors with increased emphasis on health and well-being. He also believes that need for seamless technology and sustainability will rise in 2019 with massive destination promotion and introduction of new roles for the hospitality staff.

Discussing the challenges faced by hotels, Khurana says that it is important to upkeep your game by ensuring a balance in demand and supply in order to remain active and visible in the market and have a better edge than your competitors. "The hotel industry is

becoming versatile; having said that you are sitting in a diverse market, where the competitors are offering different products, which means a traveller gets varied choices. It is very crucial to upgrade your product from time to time, which gives a fresh feeling to the guests

who come back to us as our repeated clients," he explains.

Sharing his views on using technology in the hospitality industry, Khurana tells that the approaching digital arena has given a better chance to every hotel to increase its reach.

"Hotels need to make sure their offerings are up-to-date and user-friendly. At business meetings and conferences, travellers expect hotels and conference centres to have high-quality technology equipment and a knowledgeable support staff," he concludes. 






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Going solid, steady and strong

DS Group wants to concentrate on quality over quantity for its hospitality division, despite increasing competition. With plans to open three properties in the future, the company is tracing a steady growth path.

TT Bureau

Being at the helm of many segments like FMCG, hospitality, rubber, tobacco, dairy, agro-forestry, among others, DS



Nikhil Vahi
Senior Vice President
—Hospitality Operations &
Development, DS Group

Group is leaving no stone unturned to grow further ahead. Nikhil Vahi, Senior Vice President—Hospitality Operations & Development, DS Group, is ensuring that the hospitality also traces a growth path. “We can focus and concentrate on the hospitality division which is certainly aiming to make inroads into the main stream of Indian economy again after having gone through a brief period of economic dullness in past couple of years,” claims Vahi.

After having delivered successful products like The Manu Maharani Nainital, Namah Corbett, Radisson Guwahati and Crowne Plaza Jaipur, the

hospitality division is getting ready with a new property. “We will be opening a 120-keys brand-new property at the Kolkata Airport which has been signed up with IHG and shall soon be operational. DS Group has also recently developed a

“ We at DS group believe in creating the best hospitality experiences and comfortably slip into the top spot and leave it to others to try and match up with them ”

health villa, Swasthyagram, at Manesar, Gurgaon to rejuvenate the mind and body using natural therapies amidst a serene atmosphere. Additionally, the group has plans of setting up properties in Dehradun, Ranthambore and Goa.”

Vahi insisted that the growth in business at DS Group has

been healthy and robust. “Our properties especially Namah Corbett, The Manu Maharani Nainital, which are internally managed, have left no stone unturned in extending their hospitality. Namah has also featured thrice in the last four

years or more for operations amongst the Top 25 Hotels of India listed by TripAdvisor,” added Vahi.

Talking about inbound tourists at their properties, he said, “The share is currently 6 to 7 per cent, but of those who have stayed include the Ambassador of Germany as well.

Our other two properties are located in main cities and are being managed by international chains like IHG and Radisson which have a fair number of international travellers.”

However, with international chains expanding in India, competition is on the rise. “India has a huge portfolio of properties and currently with our limited number of properties, we shall take some time to come into the national reckoning, but we at DS group believe in creating the best and comfortably slip into the top spot and leave it to others to try and match up with them. Whether it is hospitality of Namah or the taste of Pulse Candy or the originality of Catch Spices, we appear at the top of each segment we operate in. Our core belief in creating not just the hotel but

unique memorable experiences for our guests, has been our biggest strength.”

To promote its brands, DS Group intends to reach out to every potential client by using all possible platforms. “Whether it is digital or print media or social platforms, we are present everywhere. We also attend all major travel exhibitions and events, apart from being present on professional platforms like HOSI and Hotelivate,” informed Vahi.

He concluded that they have a great product to offer. “Travel agents and tour operators have experienced the product, personally as well as through their clients, and they find it easy to sell. We make focused efforts to look after the interest of all concerned—the tourist, the hotel and the agent,” said Vahi.



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MGM on 'energy' drive

Macau's first integrated resort operator was recently recognised for its uncompromising efforts towards sustainable development through energy reduction.



As Macau's first integrated resort operator to receive ISO 50001 Energy Management System certification in 2016 for MGM Macau property, MGM has been recognised for excellence and leadership in the use of energy management to improve building performance over the years. Peter Chan, Vice President—Facilities Management, MGM, was invited as a speaker for a seminar, titled

impacts on the environment. Its dedication integrates environmental considerations into all operational practices, from its supply chain, to its facility management and guest rooms. In 2017, the company reduced energy consumption by 34 per cent, compared to

its 2008 baseline, through various energy-saving efforts. Since 2013, MGM has decreased greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption and water consumption by 16.4 per cent, 16.7 per cent and 10.9 per cent, respectively. ↴



Peter Chan
Vice President—Facilities Management, MGM

'Energy Saving and Emission Reduction: A Management System Approach' to share MGM's success stories and project milestones with the industry.

During the seminar that was jointly organised by Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre as well as Office for the Development of the Energy Sector, Chan pointed out that MGM has successfully achieved energy reduction via the ISO 50001 Energy Management system, with no sign of rebound. The energy data collected from the MGM Macau property was crucial to the design of the company's new MGM COTAI, which led the property to achieve the China Green Building Design Label Three-Star Certification.

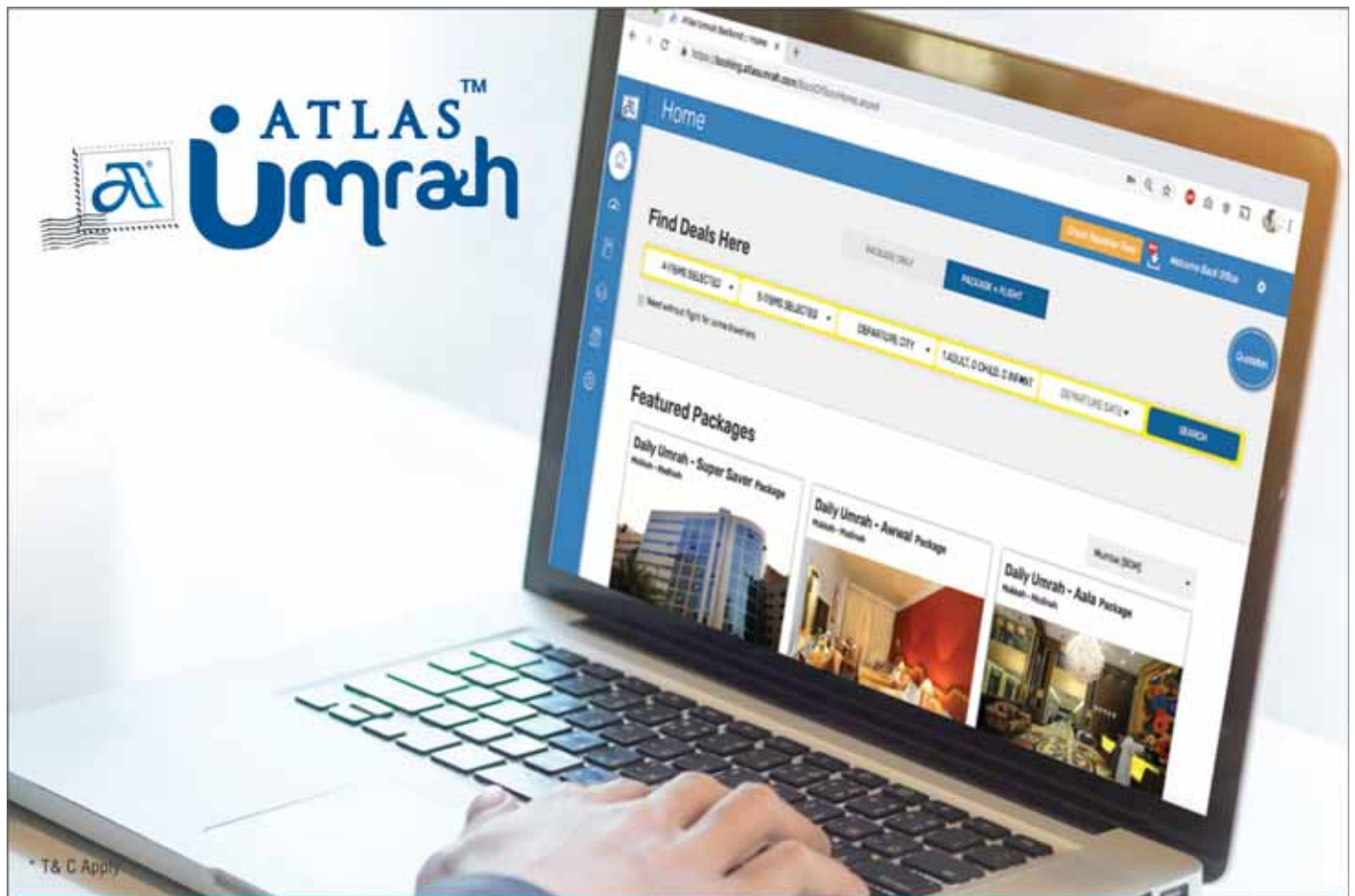
In April 2018, MGM COTAI has become the largest property and the first mega-size complex project in Macau to achieve the China Green Building Design Label Three-Star Certification, which is the highest and most prestigious ranking in the label. The accolade recognised MGM's commitment to designing a property with environmental sustainability at its heart.

MGM strives to find innovative ways to minimise its

Indian tour operators hit a six in Perth



Cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle met 17 Indian inbound tour operators who visited Perth recently for a familiarisation trip, supported by Tourism Western Australia. It coincided with the first-ever international test cricket match between Australia and India at the new Optus Stadium, where the Indian agents enjoyed watching the first day of play and got the opportunity to meet Bhogle.



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beyond non-air

To overcome challenges being faced by agents, TAFI will now focus on partnering with more non-air products to be able to extend more benefits to members.

TT Bureau

The new team of Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) that came onboard in September 2018 has decided to increase its focus on partnering with non-air products to be able to offer more benefits to its member base. **Jitul Mehta**, Chairman, TAFI Western India, tells that the traditional stream of revenue for most TAFI agents, which is through ticketing, has been dwindling. This makes it pertinent for the committee to look for more avenues through which it can add more value to its members.

Mehta says, "The forte of TAFI since its inception has been ticketing and air products. The past committees at TAFI Western India had started to include non-air products that could be added to our member portfolio.



Jitul Mehta
Chairman
TAFI Western India

We have increased our focus on this and taken it forward. We are now interacting and partnering with hotels, car rental companies, overseas DMCs, foreign exchange providers, travel insurance providers, visa facilitation centres and cruise lines, among others, to increase the visibility and reach of a TAFI WI member. The feather in our cap was the agreement signed with a leading hotel chain in India – IHCL – to provide credit

facilities to interested TAFI WI agents at reasonable terms."

He adds that the new team's main focus is to give more exposure and knowledge to members so that they can increase their business and generate better revenue. "We will focus more on product and destination updates through tourism bodies and DMCs. We will invite them to attend our WI meetings, so our members can interact with them and sell the destination. We will also arrange destination study tours for our members," Mehta informs.

He also tells that the team works closely with the Pune and Gujarat Chapters. "In the coming months, TAFI WI members will see lot of support from their association that will help them create a positive business environment," he says.

LATAM gains India pace

Having recorded double-digit growth from India in 2018, LATAM Airlines is now focusing on promoting South American countries in the country.

Nisha Verma

South American carrier LATAM Airlines recently organised a workshop for the travel trade in New Delhi, where it not only showcased its products but also educated travel agents and operators about the destinations in South America, like Peru, Chile, Brazil, etc. Present on the occasion



Marcio Ma
Account Manager—South Asia
LATAM Airlines

"The travel agents are our main clients who are responsible for most of our revenue, besides helping us reach out to our clients"

was **Marcio Ma**, Account Manager—South Asia, LATAM Airlines, who shared that India has been a great market for them in terms of growth.

Talking about the event, he said, "We had a good turnout for the

event and saw in presence a lot of agents. The idea is to always showcase the destinations of South America using LATAM as the airline to get there."

Ma also talked about the airline's introduction of new

routes. He added, "We always try to evaluate new destinations and routes. We have recently implemented some new routes in the US and in the Europe. The idea is to always keep trying to find new ways to connect India to South America."

Ma attributes the airline's growth in the India market to the efforts of the travel agents. He said, "The travel agents are our main clients who are responsible for most of our revenue. It is via travel agents that we can reach out to our clients. Therefore, they are integral and very important to us."

He claimed that 2018 was a good year for the airline from the India market. "We have attained double-digit growth, and this is in line with the industry growth," concluded Ma.



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June

July

August

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KLM
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September

October

November

December

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Trade foresees growth in 2019

Geared up to set the ball rolling, the travel trade welcomes year 2019 with high hopes and aspirations. Industry experts share their plans, initiatives and expectations for the new year.

TT Bureau

“There is a lot happening in the UK and we are still trying to find the right balance. 2019 is going to be a fabulous year for us, considering the Cricket World Cup is scheduled to be held in England and Wales. According to the trade, thousands of people have already bought tickets for the same, and very few are left in the market. There are loads of MICE movements that we are hearing going for this too.”



Vishal Bhatia
Country Manager
VisitBritain

“During the next year, we aim to further grow our network (Amman and Istanbul are on the anvil), introduce record number of modern fleet and greatly enhance the on-ground customer service at our main hub with the opening of the newly-expanded and upgraded airport terminals in Addis Ababa and near completion of our own Ethiopian Hotel near the airport. The new year will bring several upgraded projects that will become fully functional.”



Tadesse Tilahun
Regional Director, India
Subcontinent, Ethiopian Airlines

“I am confident that 2019 will be exceptional for the travel and tourism industry due to the emerging trends. The industry has plans to tap the potential in the Tier-II and Tier-III destinations in the country. Our vision and mission is to understand the demand of the newer segments and showcase our country at its best. We also would like to grow along with the projects introduced by the state and union governments under the public-private module.”



Pazhani Murugesan
Managing Committee
Member, Travel Agents
Association of India



Tejbir Singh Anand
Vice President, Adventure
Tour Operators Association
of India

“The momentum has picked up well since September 2018. Adventure tourism is a buzz word around and our every client, whether it is an agent or an institution; we have seen a growth in our sales. In 2019, we are looking to focus more on education sector. So, along with adventure, we are curating a lot of programmes which engages people into learning. It's all about ecotourism and responsible tourism as we are also looking to focus on local communities.”



Rajan Sehgal
President, IGTA and
Managing Committee
Member, TAAI


“Currently, the tourism industry is going through a tough phase. We all have to work positively with the right set of mood and attitude to overcome these shortcomings. India is currently lagging in attracting foreign tourists to the country. We need to come up with initiatives to improve the infrastructure. Earlier, ticketing was the only main source of income for travel agents but now there are a number of ways to engage yourself in different activities.”



Ravi Gosain
MD, Tourism Enterprises &
Treasurer, IATO

“2019 would be positive for both inbound and outbound tourism. For inbound, the relaxation of visa will be a great move. We have asked the government for long-term and multiple entry visa for tourists to visit frequently. For outbound, the dollar is coming back to normal as compared to the rupee. At our company, we are expecting to add more DMCs to represent and focus on sports tourism.”

Contd on page 34 ▶


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Leveraging 2019 for growth

Pinning new hopes and targets for the new year, winners of the recently-held India Travel Awards and India MiCE Awards share their expectations and business expansion plans for 2019.



TT Bureau

★ Fastest Growing Mid-Market Hotel Brand — Vinnca Hotels



“Vinnca Hotels’ growth plans are primarily focused on Tier II, III and IV markets, informs its Director, Snehal Kulshreshtha. “We opened a number of new properties in 2018 and many more are expected to start functioning in 2019. We saw the inception of V by Vinnca Mundra, V by Vinnca Bhuj and Vinnca Village at Rockhill Adventures & Resorts, Kolad in 2018. We are looking to welcome Citadel Hotel and Conventions by Vinnca, Hyderabad; Vinnca Indeevara Retreat Vythiri, Wayanad, Kerala; Vinnca Woodvillas Beachfront Resort, Shrivardhan, Maharashtra; Vinnca Hotel, Kodinar and Indecampus Dehradun (a students-only facility) to our family this year. We are looking to increase the number of hotels to 11 by March 2019 and targeting almost 20 hotels by December 2019,” he shares.”

★ Most Trending Destination — VisitFinland



“VisitFinland re-entered the Indian market after a break of several years in 2018 and the destination has received tremendous response from both B2B as well as B2C segment, according to Sara Sodhi Juneja, Country Head — India, VisitFinland. She says, “In 2019, we are looking at good growth in numbers for Finland as a destination. Our plans for 2019 are focused on educating Indian travel trade and consumers about the Finnish summer experiences along with showcasing the Finnish Lakeland and Archipelago region. We will be hosting our first roadshow in Delhi and Mumbai in February.”



★ Best Luxury Travel Website — FABgetaways.com



“With 2018 as its first year of operations, Raaj Bajaj, Founder and CEO, FABgetaways.com, is delighted to see the overwhelming response received from the industry. “It was indeed a great experience to have more than 57,000 members sign up with us from across the country. We are now excited to see how this year shapes up for us. We have new destinations being added, new partners with whom we are working closer than before, and a growing team that gives us space to continuously look at improving our offerings for our growing member base. Whilst expansion is on the lines, we would make sure we build a trusted member base and have our brand name out as the go-to e-commerce platform for luxury travel in the country.”

★ Best Luxury Wedding & MiCE Resort — Ananta Udaipur



“Sudip Raha, General Manager, Ananta Udaipur, is proud to have grown in terms of inventory in the last one year with addition of 40 new keys in the hotel. “We have started a multi-cuisine restaurant from where you can have a panoramic view of the Aravali range. To meet the demand of upsurging MiCE business, Ananta Udaipur has come up with an additional new banquet hall and an attached lawn. All these developments are because of the constant growth in revenue over the years. In 2019, we are expecting an increase of 15 per cent growth in the revenue over current financial year.”



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Sarovar sets eyes on Middle East

While sharing the story of its making, **Ajay Bakaya**, MD, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts, talks about all the hard work behind establishing the chain in East Africa. Take a sneak peek into the plan and much more.

Anupriya Bishnoi

With a humble beginning in Tanzania years ago, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts has been international for almost 20 years now. Elaborating more on its making, **Ajay Bakaya**, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts, said, "The owners were staying at our Marine Plaza Hotel in Mumbai and asked us to run a hotel for them in Tanzania. That's how we started, almost 20 years ago. We got serious about Africa and even more precisely, English-speaking East Africa about 10 years ago. We have had our hits and misses. The environment there is indeed more challenging as compared to India. Unlike India, where people

to go to the Middle East, where we've had a very little success, but now we are working harder than before. Hopefully, we will have something in the Middle East to bridge between India and Africa. We can bring in business from both sides."

Shedding light on the influx of hospitality brands in India in recent times, Bakaya says that India is still undersupplied. "We have seen a hotel's rooms go from 45,000 to 150,000, which is extremely poor for a country like India. That number is bound

to grow. The economy is improving, and you have double-digit growth of tourists coming to the country. Guests finally get good choices of hotels and good rates with all the internet war going on and eventually will churn the best of most

hotels. Everyone needs to operate smarter and give better experiences."

He also told that Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Mumbai are the cities that have the domination of clients for Sarovar,

ranking first, second and third respectively. The hotel chain is also planning to come up with its properties in Gorakhpur, Katra, Dehradun, Dahisar, Jammu, Goa, Dibrugarh, Morbi, Junagarh, Dalhousie, Bodhgaya and Jalandhar. 




Ajay Bakaya
Managing Director
Sarovar Hotels and Resorts


know who we are, in Africa, unfamiliarity among masses was a hindrance. We had developed some excellent hotels but lost them after two or three years. We are operating in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania); we have opened in Lusaka (Zambia), and have one project coming up each in Auxum, Ethiopia and Somaliland.

How does he choose where to lay the net? The answer is, "Honestly, I don't. Opportunities come to us, we talk and wherever we feel we can add strong value, we go ahead."


Talking about his obsession with Africa, Bakaya said, "I think it's because we understand the continent more than our competition. The potential is colossal. We choose youngsters both in terms of designing and development and in areas of operation to go to Africa. We would love



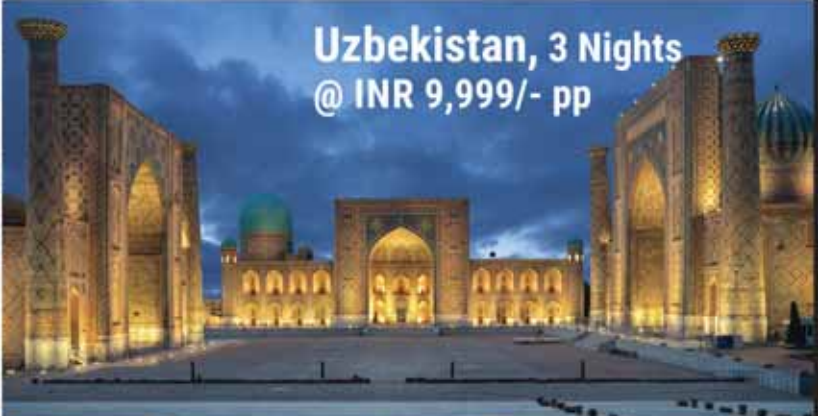
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Fostering healthy competition

Guideline Travels and Dream Cruises jointly organised Dream Cruises Cricket Cup at the Astro Turf, NSCI Club, Worli in Mumbai. The games were a perfect opportunity for agents to network in a fun-filled manner. This was followed by cocktails and dinner.



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What 2019 has in store for trade

► Contd from page 29

“ We covered agents from almost 700 plus cities at the eight events we concluded in 2018 and we managed about five EDWINs. While we announced Eco Connect in 2018, it is set to be active in 2019. Apart from the eight GPS cities that we have got a foothold in, we'll be having four Eco Connect cities—Visakhapatnam, Jaipur, Indore and Guwahati—that will be added in the portfolio. It would be a one-day event each. We will also increase the portfolio of the EDWIN programmes to about six in 2019. Hence, one would see around 18 events of GPS, EDWIN and EcoConnect this year. ”



Harmandeep Singh Anand
MD and Founder, Global Panorama Showcase

“ With the continuous efforts from the Ministry of Tourism and Government of Kerala, the demand and number of tourists are regaining the momentum in the state. We are expecting a much better performance with double growth in 2019. Whatever we lost in 2018, we hope to definitely compensate that in 2019. Next year, we are looking to work hard and promote cruise tourism around the region connecting Kochi, Mumbai, Maldives and other destinations. I expect cruises to do extremely well in 2019 as it is one area where we can add more numbers in the business. ”



Riyaz UC
Managing Director Spiceland Holidays

“ 2018 was a very good year for the Minar Group in terms of growth. We are very happy with what we did and we are looking forward to better options in the coming years. The company is leaving no stone unturned to do better, keeping in mind that we have to reach 20 million inbound tourists in 2020. We are expecting to venture into many new territories. Apart from this, we are taking part in all the major travel marts, whether they are luxury or normal. We believe that in the coming year, we should enhance our business. ”



Madan Kak
Chief Operating Officer Minar Travels



Komal Seth
Director LINKIN Reps

“ 2018 has been a good year. In terms of clients, we begged one new client this year but we've sustained momentum. Overall, the company has performed well. As a company, our policy is to keep our current clients happy, and then pitch in for more accounts. India is a great market, which is evident with the fact that many tourism boards and hotels have invested in India. Outbound tourism is on a growth path, and I think demonetisation or black money has not affected the market at all. In 2019, we hope that we all do well, the airlines perform better, the tickets become cheaper and the hotels go on full occupancy. ”



Ian Banerjee
Director Global Anchor Cruises

“ The year coming is interesting as India is going on the cruising map with its very own luxury cruise. While this is news for the domestic market, I am sure that this development will also grow the cruising appetite for the outbound cruise market. Besides this, we have also seen a spike in expedition cruise queries and so would believe to see a growth in polar and soft adventure cruise demand. We are conservatively looking at a 25-30 per cent growth in our sales for the year 2019. ”



Kishan Biyani
Managing Director Ark Travels

“ Overall, the year 2018 has set a benchmark for Indian cruise industry. Indian market is still noted as a new and upcoming market for travellers looking for cruise vacation. But, cruising as trend is gaining momentum and prospects look much brighter than ever. The cruise industry worldwide is expected to see annual pax growth rate of 6.5 per cent by 2019, which will largely be driven by capacity, new ship and more local ports and newer destinations. At Ark Travels, our aim is to touch golden mark of 100,000 pax next year. ”

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Welcom2019: Aims & targets

For WelcomHeritage, the year 2019 is not only about new properties on the anvil but also a shift in focus to social media and digital promotions to target both inbound as well as domestic tourists.



Referring to 2018 as a rewarding year, Sunil Gupta, CEO, WelcomHeritage, informs that they not only signed new properties under the aegis of the brand, but also registered a reasonable growth over the last

year. He said, "Last year, we flagged a 19th century Heritage property — WelcomHeritage Ashdale in Nainital, besides another nature resort with a private waterfall in Coorg — WelcomHeritage Ayatana. We always thrive to create the best experiences of Indian culture

for our customers and that is what has favoured us in 2018. Another interesting aspect in our hotels was the trend of family holidays, reunions, etc, besides the conventional MICE and inbound segment."

Going forward, the hotel

endeavours to add more unique and offbeat destinations. "Since it takes time to restore a heritage property, we target to add at least three to five new destinations every year. As a strategic move, we aim to expand our horizon in the south and Northeastern

regions of the country. Currently, we have about four or five new properties for evaluation this year that will help the brand expand its footprints across India," he said.

WelcomHeritage is set to open three properties in 2019.

"One would be near the forest reserve of Tadoba, close to Nagpur, and the other property is in Jaisalmer. The third property scheduled for flagging is in Udaipurwati, Rajasthan," claimed Gupta.

Gupta believes that the hospitality industry is made up of tourism, and hence a consistent brand identity is essential. "It's important to ensure regular brand awareness in order to inspire customers to use your services repeatedly. Repeat customers bring in huge revenue, thus marketing strategy must be a blend of maintaining relationships with existing customers in order to look out for new ones."



Sunil Gupta
CEO
WelcomHeritage

He revealed that they have also adopted the new-age technologies and mediums to reach out to the globetrotters. "We are present on social media and have digital media activities in place to reach out to these new-age travellers. The need of the hour is to stay abreast of the latest technological advancements, but for heritage properties located in offbeat destinations, this continues to remain a big challenge because of the non-availability of certain trained resources.

Travel trade is an integral part of the industry, according to Gupta. "Since our forte is heritage, we enjoy a special relationship with inbound tourists. We are also in the process of promoting our hotels in the US, the UK, Scandinavian and Oriental countries through publishing our destinations in allied brochures and tour itineraries marketed by tour operators in these regions. We are also focusing on domestic tourism by tying up with key wholesale operators."

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Held alongside a one-day travel mart, the conference brings together international experts at the forefront of the travel industry from both public and private sectors to discuss the opportunities and challenges of the adventure travel industry under the theme *'Rejuvenate Your Soul Through Travel'*. **Speakers include:**

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Aiming for a hole-in-one

Boasting of Pune's only 18-hole private golf course, the Oxford Golf Resort is an only-suite property targeting golf enthusiasts, weddings and big-ticket MiCE events.

 TT Bureau

The Oxford Golf Resort, Pune boasts of the city's only 18-hole private golf course, a Leadbetter Golf Academy, an all-suite hotel and a leisure sports facility set amidst 136 acres of open landscape. Its location serves it well as it is in close proximity to Pune city. This one-of-a-kind resort nestles within the city limits. A casual 30-minute drive from any part of the city is its biggest USP and a huge location advantage. It is a city hotel in a resort setting which in itself is a big draw for guests.

Speaking about this is Anirudh Uttam Seolekar, CMD, Oxford Group, who says, "It is an all-suite hotel par excellence with star categorisation at city pric-



Anirudh Uttam Seolekar
CMD
Oxford Group

es. It is in a valley with fresh, unpolluted air and an all-green golf view. We are tapping regular corporate visitors, holiday makers, as well as families. We can cater to each segment of travellers as the Oxford Golf Resort has all the capabilities of conducting events and business board meetings as well as welcoming holiday visitors and daily corporate travellers. We plan to tap them through event management companies, corporate marketing, fairs and online promotions."

He also feels that the property is the most sought-after wedding destination that offers an enclosed capacity for 1,000 guests and at least 5,000 guests outdoors. The company plans to engage the travel trade for this property. "It will be a global story and no specific city or town has been highlighted in our marketing plans. For the travel trade, if the client's destination


is Pune then it is going to be only Oxford for them as it offers the best value proposition. For clients who proactively check the internet prior to booking, it is the responsibility of the travel agents and OTAs to give a clear picture with real-time photos and the

complete advantages of the property. It makes for a more positive impact in the long run. Once they experience a stay at the Oxford Golf Resort, we are certain that the client will be completely sold on us, our venue and our hospitality," Seolekar adds. 

An enchanting Champagne soirée





The beacon of French Hospitality in India, Sofitel Mumbai BKG – the flagship property of the AccorHotels Group, organised a Champagne Soirée in an exclusive collaboration with Atout France and Air France. The event was conducted at the hotel's outdoor venue and was accompanied by live musical performances and a vibrant art exhibition.



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Finns get ready for holidays

Nina Vaskunlahti, Ambassador, Embassy of Finland in India and Sara Juneja, Country Head—India, VisitFinland recently hosted a Christmas get-together for travel agents in Delhi. The trade let their hair down and networked amidst a fun-filled atmosphere.



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Offbeat US excursions in focus

Red Carpet Travels will focus on promoting offbeat locations and excursions in the new year, and this is already reflecting in their US itineraries that include untouched locations and novel activities.



TT Bureau
 This year, Red Carpet Travels will launch 'free and flexy' USA cost-saver fixed departures, which will help even the mid-sized travel agencies to promote and sell the USA. Sharing more insight into this plan of action, Rajesh Kakade, Director, Red Carpet Travels, says, "We want to channel all our energy into promoting offbeat locations and excursions. To this end, we will be introducing unique city breaks to increase the FIT market segment."

The company has designed customised itineraries by incorporating several new places and locations from the west and east coast. Their itineraries



Rajesh Kakade
 Director
 Red Carpet Travels

include untouched locations like Napa Valley, Lake Tahoe, Mammoth Lakes, Salt Lake City from the west coast, and Mohonk Mountain House and Sarasota from the east coast.

Red Carpet Travels also offers offbeat attractions such as Gulliver's Gate and National Geographic Encounter: Ocean Odyssey — both of which are in New York. NatGeo Encounter: Ocean Odyssey features awe-inspiring sea creatures, with their immersive technology giving travellers a chance to play with sea lions, a 3D show of a majestic, life-sized humpback whale and an opportunity to learn about the incredible experiences of National Geographic's Ocean Explorers. Gulliver's Gate, meanwhile, features a miniature form of the entire world.

Kakade adds, "Simultaneously, with the help of our business partners, we are also ecstatic

about featuring Chicago and its key architectural pieces. Self-driving options within the US is also on offer." He goes on to say that such diverse offerings are bound to help travel agencies learn about offbeat locations, which will help them

“ We want to channel all our energy into promoting offbeat locations and excursions. To this end, we will be introducing unique city breaks to increase the FIT market segment ”

increase their profitability. "The 'free and flexy' fixed USA departures will increase the probability of conversions they see in their clients. Our goal is to make the USA a more competitive market and subsequently increase tourism

from India and the footfall rate in to the USA from various markets," he informs.

For this, the company is developing in-house counselors who will educate the travel partners.



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Kashmir records lowest footfall in 7 years

■ In 2018, Kashmir reportedly witnessed lowest ever tourist footfall in the last seven years, recording only 8.5 lakh



Zahoor Qari
Chairman- TAAI
J&K Chapter

domestic and foreign tourists visiting the valley in total.

This was a decline of about 23 per cent from 2017, which saw around 11 lakh tourists visitors to Kashmir. Zahoor Qari, Chairman- TAAI, J&K Chapter, said that the figures are by and far correct, and blamed the decline to negative media coverage about the state on electronic channels.

“The decline in the number of tourists to Kashmir is because of the uncertainty projected by electronic media around the country. The smallest of incidents in the remotest part of the state is being highlighted in the media, which is not even close to the tourist sites in the valley.”

The low visitor numbers happened despite the state actively participating in national and international travel trade shows as well as undertaking promotional initiatives to boost the numbers, Qari said, “We even arranged a Fam trip for the media to Kashmir, but that also did not work. Instead, there were negative coverage on mainstream channels about Kashmir.” However, he said that the local agents received good number of bookings from travel agents for New Year, especially for Gulmarg and Pahalgam.

OTOAI's thumbs up to 2018

The Outbound Tour Operators Associations of India (OTOAI) organised the Annual Members' Meet at Kylin Experience, Aerocity, Delhi to commemorate the association's achievements and milestones in 2018.



Manas Dwivedi

Riding high on a fruitful year, OTOAI members recently gathered at the Annual Members' Meet in Delhi. Talking more about the agenda of the meeting, Mahendra Vakharia, President, OTOAI, said that he felt extremely happy to meet industry friends. “The meeting intended to highlight what all OTOAI has been doing in the past one year,

“Our aim has always been to create opportunities for members to network and get an exposure about newer destinations”

along with its future plans and networking. This was the second members' meeting to take place in Delhi. We had the last meeting exactly one year ago, when the new OTOAI team took over the charge in November 2017,” he informed.

Briefing about the array of activities which the association organised in 2018, Vakharia said, “Over the last year, different regions did different interesting activities. Our major focus was to increase the membership drive and I am happy to say that we have had 10-15 per cent increase in the membership of OTOAI since we took over. I want to thank all the current members for

supporting us as well as the new members.”

“In terms of activities, the southern region has been undertaking workshops, seminars and destination training. In the western region, we con-



Mahendra Vakharia
President
OTOAI

ducted training programmes in Gujarat with a professional certified trainer. In the northern region, the team organised similar soft skill workshops for frontline women staff,” he further said.

Talking about the association's plan for 2019, Vakharia held his trust on spreading out far and wide within India with more members. “We are looking to expand, especially in

Chennai and eastern parts of the country. We are also going to have interesting activities in Mumbai and Gujarat soon. In terms of activities, our aim has always been to try and create opportunities for the members to network and to get an exposure to newer destinations. We are heavily focusing on Tier II and III cities since we are experiencing a lot of spurt in membership from smaller cities,” he concludes.

Around 190 members registered for the meet, which received a huge reception for industry stalwarts and trade fraternity. The association also held up a board meeting before the meet, where the executive team discussed about plans to conduct the next convention. OTOAI is looking forward to conduct next members' meet in Ahmedabad. ↴





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Skål debuts in Srinagar

With 21 members joining from Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh region, the Skål Srinagar club elected **Mohammad Ibrahim Siah** as its first President and **Nasir Shah** as its Secretary.



TT Bureau

One of the largest tourism clubs in the world, Skål International India launched its Srinagar Chapter in order to connect the northernmost state of the country with tourism leaders around the world to promote Jammu & Kashmir's tourism potential at global level.

With 21 members joining from Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh region, the Skål Srinagar club has elected **Mohammad Ibrahim Siah** as its first President and **Nasir Shah** as its Secretary. Apart from Skål India National board members and club presidents from different parts of the country, Dr Syed Abid Rashid Shah, District Development Commissioner, Srinagar; M Saleem Beg, State Convener, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage; Mahmood Ahmad Shah,



Ranjini Nambiar
National President
Skål International India

Former Director — Tourism, Kashmir; **Sheikh Ashiq Ahmad**, President, Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry and **Rakesh Gupta**, President, Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industries attended the launch ceremony in Srinagar.

Speaking on the occasion, **Ranjini Nambiar**, National President, Skål International India, praised the beauty of Kashmir, saying it was neces-

sary to have Srinagar chapter in its fold, which has so much to offer in tourism. She said, “We will promote the Jammu and Kashmir globally as there are lots of people who do not know about the beauty of this place. Skål World President and other international members are excited to know about the launch of Srinagar Chapter, owing to its unparalleled beauty. We will soon roll out Srinagar chapter opening news in our next Skål newsletter that would send a positive note to over 15,000 members worldwide and help dilute travel advisories to a great extent.”

Nambiar further said that there are a number of travel advisories worldwide about Kashmir, regarding safety and security in the state. Siah thanked the members for electing him and assured to take tourism in J&K to new heights. ↴

Atlas Umrah for online bookings

To widen its reach across the country, Atlas Umrah launched India's first online Umrah booking portal in 2018. It has also launched five categories of Umrah products that can be combined with international holidays.



TT Bureau

With over 33 years of industry experience and having serviced more than 300,000 pilgrims across India, Atlas Umrah is one of the largest national Umrah brands in the country. Talking about the growth and success of the company, Hasan Patel, Director, Atlas Umrah says that his company has invested a lot in building scalable technology platform which enables them to distribute Umrah packages. "On the online platform, we will provide login to regional businesses to serve as Atlas Umrah booking centres. The booking portal allows them to search, choose and sell a variety of Umrah packages online with ease," he informs.



Hasan Patel
Director
Atlas Umrah

Over the last three decades or more, Atlas Umrah has developed a large set-up in Saudi Arabia. Through the online booking portal, booking centres can easily select from over 350 departure dates from 14 cities in India. On the company's unique offerings, Patel shares, "One of our specialties is that we do not require a minimum group commitment from our booking centres. They can pick from any date available online and the tour requirements will be fulfilled by our 50-member operations team in Saudi Arabia. Understanding each customer's needs, one can choose from a variety of pack-

ages that suits their budget."

Kick-starting 2019 on a high note, Atlas Umrah has launched five categories of Umrah products that can also be combined with international holiday destinations. Explaining

“ The booking portal allows them to search, choose and sell a variety of Umrah packages online with ease ”

his plans further ahead, he says, "We have groups for Turkey with Umrah, Dubai with Umrah,

Jerusalem, Baghdad, and many more. Our large distribution capabilities and pre-purchased

inventories guarantee the best deals for our customers. In the future we will look to add many more destinations and departure cities from India."

"With the online Umrah system, Atlas Umrah's B2B

channel partners can add a new product to their business that can be managed with ease. Partnering with a national Umrah brand will be a unique proposition that will allow them to grow further," he further adds. ↴

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Alitalia Roadshow	Delhi	18
MP Tourism Investors Meet	Delhi	18
Business and Luxury Travel Mart (BLTM)	Delhi	18-19
Global Panorama Showcase	Nagpur	20-22
ASEAN Tourism Forum	Thailand	22-26
Switzerland Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	23
National Tourism Bussan Fair	Tokyo	23-24
Outbound Travel Mart (OTM)	Mumbai	23-25
Fitur	Madrid	23-27
Nijhawan Group Networking Party	Mumbai	24
TTH Expo	Surat	26-28
Kenya Tourism MiCE Roadshow	Mumbai	28
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FEBRUARY 2019

Kenya Tourism MiCE Roadshow	Bengaluru	1
Tourism Ireland Roadshow	Delhi	1
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ANTO Workshop	Delhi	7
South African Tourism Roadshow	Kolkata	7
South African Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	8
BIT MiCE 2019	Milan	10-12
CAPA India Aviation Summit 2019	Delhi	12-13
CAPA India Airport Summit 2019	Delhi	14
PATA ATRTCM 2019	Rishikesh	13-15
TTF	Bengaluru	15-17
TTH Expo	Rajkot	15-17
Business Travel Show	Olympia, London	20-21
TTE	Olympia, London	20-21
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Indian Hotels Company Limited

Mumbai

Anmol Ahluwalia has been appointed as General Manager, North Goa and will now take charge of two hotels - Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa and Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa. Prior to this, Ahluwalia took over as the General Manager of Taj Wellington Mews, Mumbai in 2015. He is a Hotel Management graduate from the Institute of Hotel Management, Mumbai and holds an Advanced Diploma in Hotel Management from The Oberoi Centre of Learning & Development.



Sterling Holiday Resorts

Chennai

Sterling Holiday Resorts announced the appointment of **Manish Jain** as Chief Finance Officer. Jain will be responsible for Sterling Holidays' finance, accounting, tax, insurance and treasury functions. A Chartered Accountant and a Company Secretary by qualification, Jain is a seasoned finance professional with over 26 years of experience in the hospitality and manufacturing sectors. Prior to joining Sterling, Manish held the position of Finance Director at Fassco International Pte in Abu Dhabi and as CFO at Roots Corporation (Ginger Hotels). He was associated with Taj Hotels for over eight years.



Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa

Chennai

Subhashish Dutta has been appointed as Director of Finance at the Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa. Bringing with him over eight years of experience from the industry, he will be leading the finance division at the property. His task entails ensuring smooth functioning of the finance department along with investigating ways to improve profitability and analyse markets for business opportunities. Dutta started his career in the hospitality industry with Goa Marriott Resort & Spa in 2011, and comes full circle with his latest mandate as Director of Finance at Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa.



Meena Bhatnagar has been appointed as the General Manager at Taj Wellington Mews, Mumbai. She previously held the position of Executive Housekeeper at Taj Lands End, Mumbai. A Commerce graduate, Bhatnagar holds a Diploma in Hotel Management from Delhi University and a Bachelor of Education from Anamalai University. She has over 30 years of experience in hospitality and joined the company in 2004 as an Executive Housekeeper at Rambagh Palace, Jaipur.



Hyatt Regency Delhi

Delhi

Hyatt Regency Delhi has announced the appointment of **Kunal Dewan** as the Director of Sales & Marketing. Dewan possesses a broad knowledge base of the hospitality industry and brings more than a decade of experience to the role, where he will be responsible for the daily sale efforts and overall positioning of the hotel. After obtaining his post graduate diploma in international hospitality from Les Roches, Dewan began his career as a management trainee. Prior to his role at the Hyatt Regency Delhi, he was Director of Sales & Marketing at The Westin Pune Koregaon Park at Marriott International.



Shangri-La's – Eros Hotel, New Delhi

Dehli

Shangri-La's – Eros Hotel, New Delhi designated **Rajan Malhotra** as Director of Sales and Marketing. A post graduate diploma holder in Business Administration, Malhotra has over 16 years of experience in hospitality industry. Malhotra will be responsible for planning and implementing the sales and marketing strategy, optimising the hotel's revenue and market share, and will continue to establish the hotel as a preferred destination for guests in the heart of the city. He has worked with some of the leading hotel brands and luxury hotels.



Ritesh Sharma has been appointed as General Manager at Taj Santacruz, Mumbai. He previously held the position of General Manager at Taj Falaknuma Palace, Hyderabad. Sharma holds a degree in Hotel Management from SRM Institute of Hotel Management, Chennai and undertook the Executive Management Program from S P Jain Institute of Management. He has also attained the Six Sigma Black Belt certification from Indian Statistical Institute. Sharma started his career with IHCL 18 years ago, in the Front Office department at Taj Coromandel, Chennai.



Parvinder Bual has been appointed as General Manager at Taj Falaknuma Palace, Hyderabad. Prior to this, Bual held the position of General Manager at Taj Madikeri Resort & Spa, Coorg. A Hotel Management graduate from the Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Parvinder joined IHCL in 1997 in the Front Office department at Taj Mahal, New Delhi. In 2005, he moved to Taj Palace, New Delhi as Front Office Manager and thereafter was appointed as Rooms Division Manager at Taj Campton Place, San Francisco. In 2008, he returned to India as Front Office Manager at Taj Mahal, New Delhi and by 2010 grew to the position of an Executive Assistant Manager—Palace Services at Rambagh Palace, Jaipur.



Shaun Cooper has been appointed as the General Manager at Taj Madikeri Resort & Spa, Coorg. In his previous role, Shaun held the position of Director of Rooms at Taj West End, Bengaluru. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the Institute of Hotel Management Goa. Shaun joined IHCL in 2005 in the Front Office department at The Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai. He joined the pre-opening team of The Gateway Hotel IT Expressway Chennai as Front Office Manager in 2012, before being elevated to the position of Operations Manager at the same hotel.



TALKING PEOPLE

Devendra Parulekar, Co-founder, SaffronStay, likes to de-stress by playing tennis. "I also enjoy reading non-fiction books like autobiographies, motivational, thought leadership, etc. One thing that people don't know about me is that I am scared of heights. To overcome this fear of mine, I have now started trekking and hiking," he reveals. Parulekar's memorable holiday moment was his honeymoon 17 years ago when his father had gifted him a stay in a Director's Special colonial bungalow at Fort Kochi. His favourite destination in India is Ladakh and Barcelona abroad.



Arjun Raj Kher, Brand Head, Hitchki, loves to catch up on some good reads during his idle time. "Also, the most convenient way to de-stress for me is a good session of workout at the gym. I am extremely passionate about my work and the brands that I work on and am constantly working towards taking each one to the next level. People call me a workaholic, but I am just pursuing my passion," he confesses. Kher fondly recalls his first-ever trip to Thailand with friends many years ago.



Sipping a glass of Beaujolais and listening to Bob Marley, a good game of badminton, spending time with family and going on cruising expeditions keep **Amit Kumar Sharma**, General Manager, Amanora The Fern, going. He shares, "My first ever trip to Thailand with my friends and the white-water rafting trip in Rishikesh in the lap of Himalayas are two of my most memorable holidays so far. However, I do enjoy visiting Udaipur and Krabi."





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Village Hotel at Sentosa

Perfect for families and leisure or business groups, the 606-room hotel captures all that is special about Sentosa's Sun, sand and sea. Decorated in ocean-hue, the hotel's modern architecture juxtaposes against the splendour of the heritage buildings.

Be amazed by an archipelago of four themed pool zones – Children's Play Pool, Lazy River Pool, Adventure Pool, and Pamukkale Pool. Bask in the thematic gardens and relax in its manicured surrounding. From intimate parties to large corporate events, there is always a space suitable, from the cosy Sea View Deck to the 480-people capacity at The Commune.

The Outpost Hotel

Designed for discerning adults and couples, this upscale hotel boasts 193 guest rooms with contemporary industrial chic aesthetics and clean crisp lines inspired by black and white design. The exclusive rooftop Sky Pool and bar is great for cocktail sessions, candlelit dinners and intimate celebrations where you can feast your eyes on picturesque views of the sea and sunset. A unique Land Rover limousine service is at your beck and call to take you to adventures and back.

The Barracks Hotel

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The future is here in India

Dr Dinesh Keskar, Senior Vice President—Asia Pacific & India Sales, Boeing Commercial Airplanes, who was recently in India from Seattle, feels that despite its idiosyncrasies, the India market is 'super special'.



Hazel Jain

QWhat is Boeing's 20-year forecast for India?

This year we are saying that India will need 2,300 airplanes in the next 20 years and the value of that will be USD 320 billion. Of these, there will be more single-aisles for LCCs and the domestic traffic, and only 15-16 per cent will be wide-body airplanes. Clearly, India is a country of single-aisles.

QWhat kind of aircraft will these new planes be?

About 84 per cent of that will be the Boeing 737 MAX and the A320s, and the remaining 16 per cent will be wide-bodied airplanes like the Dreamliners and the 777s which have been flying in India for a long time which is traditionally for the long-haul markets. The compounded growth rate for India in terms of passenger numbers is the highest in the world at 4 per cent over the next 20 years! So India will have high traffic growth in the next 20 years than anywhere else in the world.

QHow big is the India market when compared with the rest of the world?

India is one of the biggest. It has grown in double-digits for the last 50 months – nowhere in the

world do you see that. The Navi Mumbai airport is good, and the new ones in Noida and Pune will help this growth a lot. When we say 2,300 airplanes are going to be delivered into India in the next 20 years, and the world will take about 41,000 that tells

airlines need to do is make sure that the fares they charge is covering up these costs. The fares itself will be a function of multiple things but one of the key aspects would be the exchange rate in India (which has improved from `74) and

10-15 times per cent lower to make a break-even cost. That is going to be crucial for airlines going forward. Right now, airlines are stimulating growth by reducing fares. Personally, I would prefer reduced growth if it guarantees profit. But all I can say is that India is super special.

“The compounded growth rate for India in terms of passenger numbers is the highest in the world at 4% over the next 20 years**”**

you that more than 5 per cent or one in 20 new airplanes that will be built whether it is Boeing or any other company, will be for India. So India is a substantially important market today which wasn't the case just a decade ago. The passenger growth in India will be one of the highest in the world because flying is not luxury any more.

QWhy is it that the airlines are not making money despite this growth?

This is because there has not been that much profit being generated in this market which concerns me. There are many components that go into the cost of an airplane operation – cost of the airplane, the ownership, pilots and flight attendants, mechanics, ground handling, etc. What the

fuel prices (which is the lowest in the last 14 months). While these are helping the situation currently, in the long term you don't know where these two parameters will go. So the airlines need to make sure that fares are such that they at least cover the cost. We think the fares in India are roughly

QAre the Boeing 737 Max safe?

We continue to assure people that it is a safe aircraft. A lot of people are flying it today. We have delivered more than 280 airplanes and every airline across the world is flying them. We will obviously wait for the final report on the incident that happened to see if anything needs to be done. But right now everything is okay. ↴



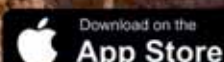
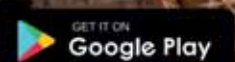
New airplane deliveries to India through 2037 by size:

Airplane type	Seats	Total deliveries	Market value
Regional jets	90 and below	10	<\$1 billion
Single-aisle	90 and above	1,940	\$220 billion
Widebody	200 and above	350	\$100 billion
Total		2,300	\$320 billion



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