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# India to be closer to Asia

The Ministry of Civil Aviation's *Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik* (UDAN) scheme is set to go international with the launch of new flights from Guwahati to Bangkok and Dhaka, thereby reaping the benefits of international ties.



Nisha Verma

The results for UDAN 3 were recently announced and **Suresh Prabhu**, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, revealed that for the first time, international routes had been introduced under UDAN by launching flights from Guwahati in Assam to Bangkok and Dhaka. Both routes will be served by SpiceJet, he said, and added, "It's

going to be a game changer as these connections would bring the Northeast closer to the rest of the world. Resultantly, there will be a tremendous scope for tourism and economic development in the region."

**Rajiv Nayan Choubey**, Former Secretary, Civil Aviation, revealed, "We are happy to announce that Guwahati is now going to be connected with Bangkok and Dhaka."

It was also revealed that SpiceJet had taken a very competitive underwriting of the seats. The per annum VGF would be ₹ 11 crore, which would be borne by the state. The frequency would be seven times a week, while the government has given a flexible template where it will start with three flights a week, set to increase and be finalised within six months. Choubey explained, "Currently, Guwa-



**Suresh Prabhu**  
Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation

hati is getting connected with two destinations at a nominal cost of ₹ 11 crore per annum to the state government."

Elaborating on the need for the new route, Prabhu said that the Northeast, after 1947, had become land-locked and there was only the 'Chicken's Neck' that connected it to the rest of the country. "As a result, the development of Northeast

now depends purely on connectivity, including land connectivity that can be used to go to Myanmar or Bangladesh. A lot of railway projects are also getting executed. Connecting the Northeast with the rest of the world would offer tremendous scope for tourism and economic development. Similarly, the introduction of water aerodromes is a game changer," he asserted. 🐦

## Arzoo plans huge expansion

The company, founded in early 2000, has huge expansion plans and a new vision under the new management led by **Parag Thakker**. Its goal now is to expand its agent base across India.



Hazel Jain

Mumbai-based Arzoo.com is looking at expanding in the B2B arena in a big way. Now promoted by **Parag Thakker**, Managing Director, Arzoo.com, the company has a new management team and a renewed vision. Its goal is to expand its agent base in

India and is looking to boost the strength of its sales teams across India by adding at least 200 sales staff in the first phase. Thakker says, "We have a registered agent base that is upwards of 100,000 and awareness of brand Arzoo is quite high. We're looking to develop our agent base in Tier II, III cities,

and tap into the growth of these emerging regions. Our emphasis lies on empowering agents through technology that is easy-to-use and supported by excellent round-the-clock service."

He says that the company has ambitious plans and the wheels are being set into motion. "We

are foraying into pre-purchased air tickets and rolling out domestic money transfer services, utility payments, and helping power more digital payments through Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AEPS) soon. Our expansion plans have a special focus on expanding the IRCTC agent base," Thakker adds.

Arzoo is also bringing more fixed departure tours to benefit customers by reducing their travel expenditure. "We are planning to increase our specialty offerings by introducing trendsetting holiday packages, themed and special interest tours that will help highlight destinations that have much to discover in terms of photography, adventure, etc.

We have also created fantastic educational and vacation tours to help children gain insight into unexplored aspects. There are a lot of plans in the pipeline but it is too early to reveal them now. All we can assure the agents at this moment is that a lot of exciting surprises from Arzoo are going to come their way soon," he adds excitedly. 🐦

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# Inbound takes centre stage

In a significant step to boost the arrival of tourists in India, the government here has decided to increase the validity of the e-visa from 60 days to one year whilst allowing multiple entries to the country.

TT Bureau

Liberalising the e-visa regime to make India more tourist-friendly, **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has said that the ministry has been working closely with that of Home Affairs to ease e-visa norms for tourists coming into the country. "The government has now increased the duration of stay for foreign tourists holding e-tourist and



Suman Billa  
Joint Secretary  
Ministry of Tourism

“ More than 10 million foreign tourists travelled to India last year; if we add the people of Indian origin to the tally according to the global standard, the number jumps to 14.5 million ”

e-business visas to up to one year with multiple entry, subject to stay stipulations. We are trying to remove several bottlenecks to make it easier for them to travel to India. E-visa has actually been

a revolutionary change in the Indian tourism scenario," he said at the Knowledge Conclave on Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality organised by Global Association of Corporate Services (GACS).

He further informed that since November 2014, India has opened its e-visa service, which is simple and

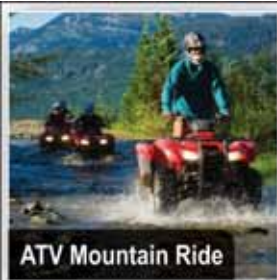
easy to access, to 166 countries. Billa also spoke about the call centre for inbound tourists, which is

Contd on page 32 ▶

## Ashwani Lohani reappointed Air India CMD

Former Railway Board Chairman **Ashwani Lohani** has been reappointed Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Air India. Lohani headed the carrier from August 2017 to September 2017 when he was moved to the Railway Board as the chairman, from where he retired in December 2018. It was during his tenure that Air India made its first operating profit of ` 105 crore in FY17 since the merger of Indian Airlines and Air India in 2007. Touted as the 'Turnaround specialist', Lohani's appointment will be crucial after Air India's failed divestment attempt last year. This year, the government has already decided to transfer over ` 29,000 crore of AI's huge ` 55,000 debt to a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV).

Lohani succeeds Karnataka cadre IAS Pradeep Singh Kharola, who was earlier appointed as the Civil Aviation Secretary following the superannuation of RN Choubey.



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## Where is Indian aviation headed?

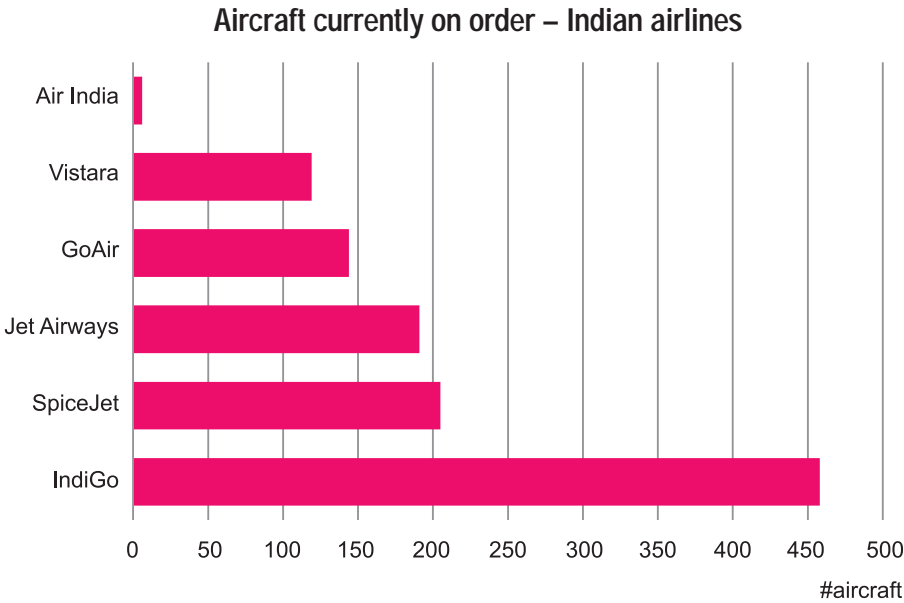
With much being said about India being the fastest growing aviation market in the last four years, the air passenger traffic growth figures by Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in January reached its lowest point in the last 4.5 years. The number of domestic fliers rose 9 per cent on a yearly basis in January, the slowest pace in 56 months, which was the first time it recorded single digit growth since July 2014. DGCA has attributed this slump to the end of tourist season, which wasn't that good for the airlines either. Another factor that contributed to this decrease was airline fares increasing to adjust higher costs. Usually, airlines increase fares to recover the losses they suffered in previous quarters owing to higher fuel costs and a weaker rupee. This hampered the demand further since airlines preferred flying on low PLF than reduce their fares, which according to CAPA would further dampen growth. India, in the last four years, saw an average air passenger growth of 20 per cent, but now it may slow down a bit, with CAPA expecting it to grow at 14 per cent in 2019-20 against the estimated 18 per cent in 2018-19. However, we hope that the regional connectivity scheme and the development of new airports might change these figures going forward.

## Going sustainable

MakeMyTrip recently achieved the milestone of planting a million trees as part of its CSR activity. While many corporate giants have been doing their bit by contributing to the environment, there is a lot that needs to be done at the planning stage of creating tourism products. In a scenario where profitability in the hospitality and tourism industry is hard to achieve, being sustainable comes at a price. Many brands are putting in efforts to set up water recycling plants, avoiding felling of trees and taking steps to avoid use of plastic. While all these require financial investment, there are owners of individual properties who follow ethical tourism practices and even limit the number of guests to their properties. While it is hard to stay afloat in a scenario which sees new properties mushrooming everywhere, developing sustainable practices does reap benefits, albeit, of a different kind.

# Maximum aircraft for IndiGo

Out of the 1123 aircraft that are currently on order for India, a bulk of them are slated for delivery to IndiGo, according to a recent 'Project Rupee Raftaar' report by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

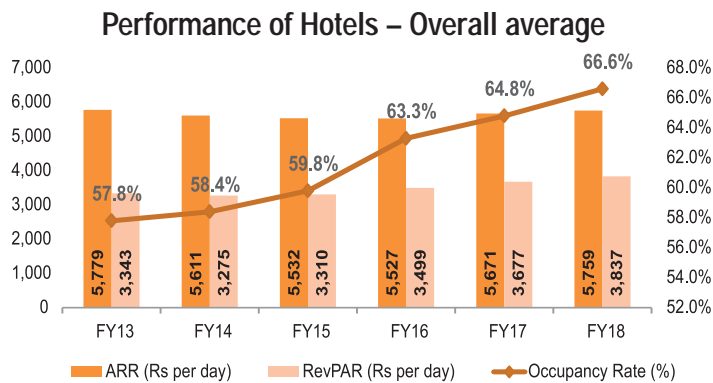


- The numbers are evidence of the optimism and positive outlook for the sector, providing some insights as to the near-term evolution of the market.
- There are range of new and alternative investment and alliance or partnership structures emerging globally which add a new dimension to the industry, as airlines try new and innovative ways to expand their networks and their product offering. In some global markets, the changing industry structure is one of consolidation rather than expansion.

Source: CAPA

# ARR up by 8.5% for 2-star hotels

Despite registering a decline in occupancy rates, two-star hotels witnessed maximum growth in average room rates (ARR) and increased by about 8.5 per cent y-o-y during FY18, according to a report by Hotelivate.



Source: Hotelivate

- Three-star hotels registered a growth of about 5 per cent y-o-y in FY18. Four-star and five-star hotels also recorded a growth of 3 per cent y-o-y each in average room rates. Five-star hotels, however, registered the lowest growth about 1.8 per cent y-o-y in the group during the year. This may be attributed to the gradual escalation of commercial activity in Tier II and Tier III cities as well as increased domestic travel.

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# Flying sky-high with growth

At a time when most domestic airlines are grappling with losses and financial crisis, Air India Express has bucked the trend of a declining scenario with the fourth straight year of net profit.



Manas Dwivedi

Recording a staggering profit in the last financial year, Air India Express is likely to witness similar success this financial year ending March 31, 2019. **K Shyam Sundar**, CEO, Air India Express, says that the airline has been growing continuously for the past four years. "In 2016-17, we saw a whooper of a growth. During 2017-18, we witnessed growth that was an impact of all the new aircraft coming to us over the years. We accumulated 14 per cent growth, we had a higher load factor, and our yields went up by 16 per cent. During 2018-19, we did much better than the year before. We have further intensified our reach and targets. Today, the utilisation of our aircraft is 14 hours a day, which is phenomenal," says Sundar.

The wholly-owned subsidiary of beleaguered state-run carrier Air India, the Express carrier is looking at its fourth straight year of net profit in 2018-19. A strong player in connecting southern India to the Middle East, Sundar says that Air India Express has been successful in setting itself apart from other LCCs in many ways. He says, "We have a 'stage length' of about four hours between landings, which means that we have a very low engineering cost. We have a good booking system and ancillary revenues, which are important financial components for LCCs. To me, the most important thing is operating from non-metro cities and not from Mumbai or Delhi, where you have fuel consumption which you did not bargain for in the first place."

With Tier-II cities being its core market, Sundar says

that Air India Express has always been a niche player and will continue to target newer markets. "Our focus will continue to be on connecting Tier-II cities through international flights. We are not going to bang our heads

Amid all uncertainties, Sundar also spoke of the possibility of expansion of the Air India Express fleet. He said that the carrier is looking forward to inducting new aircraft. Elaborating, he said, "I feel that we need to update the current fleet with

2020, we will own 17 aircraft and only eight will be let out on operational lease."

Currently, Air India Express connects to 13 international destinations (Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Ras Al Khaimah, Dammam, Riyadh, Kuwait, Muscat, Salalah, Doha, Bahrain, and Singapore) from 20 Indian cities (Kannur, Kozhikode, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru,

Chennai, Madurai, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Mangaluru, Vijayawada, Mumbai, Pune, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Delhi, Lucknow, Varanasi, Jaipur, and Surat).

**"We need to update the current fleet with the new 737 MAX aircraft. It opens up a lot of opportunities, including the possibility of plying long-haul flights, accounting for 65 per cent of outbound traffic from India"**

for Mumbai and Delhi, we need metro cities only for strategic reasons. We have recently connected Sharjah and Surat with international flights. The response from this route has been stronger than was expected, even with minimal promotion," says Sundar.

the new 737 MAX aircraft. It opens up a lot of opportunities, including the possibility of plying long-haul flights, accounting for 65 per cent of outbound traffic from India. Currently, we have 25 aircraft of which we have leased out 17 while the rest are owned by us. By



K Shyam Sundar  
CEO, Air India Express



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# Lemon Tree spreads its branches

The Government of India has often shown its enthusiasm for the hospitality industry through announcements and policies, but not much of it has been made a reality. **Rattan Keswani**, Deputy Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels, talks about how the hospitality company has made it big in spite of market turbulence.

 Anupriya Bishnoi

**Q**How was 2018 for Lemon Tree Hotels?  
We did well both in terms of occupancy, which was close to 80 per cent, and in terms of av-



erage rates. Lemon Tree Hotels will be operating 87 hotels with 8793 rooms across 58 cities by FY2021. We opened a few properties as well, including the ones in Dehradun, Pune, Siliguri and Morjim. We should soon be able to open an 'owned hotel' in Mumbai, followed by Kolkata. Then, we should be able to open a managed property in Kalina, Mumbai. We will see more hotels in Aligarh, Jhansi, Coorg, Gulmarg etc.

Udaipur will be another upscale resort substantiating our direction towards attracting high-value leisure customers. We have also signed management contracts in Dubai, Bhutan and Kathmandu.

**Q**Has the IPO turned out to be the way you expected it to?  
So far, yes. In our business, you may have a forecast, but events around you are a risk you can't really fully plan for. There is no stability in the hospitality industry as it can be affected any day, based on local and global events. You can't forecast what's going to happen in the political world.


**Q**What works better for you, Greenfield or brownfield projects?  
Both work for us. The crucial part that remains is location. Greenfield projects take time but are easier to work around, with architects and interior designers, and help reach the full potential of brand specifications. When you undertake



a brownfield project, you become a little limited and may not be able to tweak it too much. Obviously, in the present business scenario, anyone would want to put up a hotel as quickly as he can, because the next three to five years look promising with a choke in supply and increase in demand. This is the best

time for anyone to get the best result, before the supply cycle begins again.

**Q**Which are those government policies that keep bothering you?  
I don't think the government really looks at this industry beyond some great announcements. The industry, by and

large, has been trying to do whatever it can by itself. Some changes are visible, such as the announcement of GST, but the rates are not helpful both for the industry and for the customer. The government does acknowledge that the hospitality industry provides employment, but I don't think much gets done to facilitate that bit. 


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# 'ABC' changes the travel scenario

Disruptive technologies such as 'A'rtificial Intelligence, 'B'lockchain, and 'C'hatbots are reinventing the travel wheel, says **Dhruv Shringi**, Co-Founder & CEO, Yatra.com. He also talks about the major achievements of the online travel agency in 2018.



Manas Dwivedi

## Q How did the previous year fare for Yatra in terms of growth?

The year 2018 was a positive one for the tourism sector at large, with travellers from all across the world investing exponentially in creating memorable travels. It was an important year for Yatra as well, as we continued to grow our corporate side of the business. Recently, we acquired the corporate travel business of PL Worldways to strengthen ourselves in the southern markets of India. We also recorded growth in the hotel business and entered into a partnership with Agoda to offer our domestic inventory to their global travellers. Additionally, we introduced the flexi-stay option in hotels,

which allows an individual to book mid-budget and premium hotels with the 'anytime check-in/check-out' facility, while only paying for the time they actually use the room.

Yatra also launched an exclusive travel programme, Privy, aimed at the discerning traveller. It offers curated luxury experiences backed by unmatched knowledge and service of a travel advisor who customises the holiday or business travel as per an individual's needs and preferences.

## Q What, according to you, are the growing technological needs and demands of Indian travellers?

With travel becoming more experiential than functional,

OTAs like Yatra are personalising their offerings as per customer preferences. Based on consumers' buying patterns, we push relevant offers to them, recommend options for their stay, etc. Big Data, cloud technology, and personalisation are impacting the travel industry by offering customer

“Voice-based bots are revolutionising the way people interact with travel service providers and aggregators, and are ushering in the era of personalised travel assistants accessible via multiple devices”

insights that were not available previously. Chatbots, AI, voice search, and other enabling innovations are what each brand will be turning to in the coming days.

Customers are pampered for choice when it comes to travel platforms, and each brand needs to be intuitive about the changing needs and trends and act on solutions before others to be at the top of the game. At Yatra, we continuously study customer behaviour and buying

patterns to understand their needs and preferences and provide services based on the same.

## Q How is technology changing the way Indians are travelling?

Disruptive technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, chatbots and blockchain are reinventing the travel wheel. Voice-based bots are revolutionising the way people interact with travel service providers and aggregators, and are ushering in the era of intelligent, personalised, omnipresent travel assistants accessible via multiple devices and in multiple languages. Search queries are becoming more conversational and with the help of voice search, the search engines understand the meaning and intent behind a query to be able to deliver best results.

Today, technology is revolutionising the way we work or do business. Big Data, cloud technology, and personalisation have a profound positive impact on the travel industry. With this new information, a business is at a better position to provide customised services, enabling a better experience for the end customer.

## Q Where does technology rank in today's travel trends?

In this day and age, where technology is the big bet of the day, consumers are spoilt for choice. New technologies help in improving customer experience and allow OTAs like Yatra to deliver the best possible service and experience to the end customer. Big Data is one such important concept that helps us to crunch data to bring out insights that can help improve customer experience, using a mix of segmentation, personalisation, and supply-side insights. Business, these days, is also using Augmented Reality (AR) for immersive experiences to enable the

customers to have an almost 'real-time' experience.

Today, AI has also become a powerful tool and by integrating it with our online search and booking process, we have been able to deliver relevant messaging based on context and traveller propensity. Blockchain technology is another evolving technology that helps reduce cost and improve efficiency.

Lastly, Internet of Things (IoT) is another big concept in technology and is likely to dominate 2019. It enables a business to collect data and can be deployed automatically to reduce cost and improve the experience for customers, without the need for human interjection.



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## Dusit visits Mumbai and Kolkata



Dusit Hotels & Resorts completed a two-city roadshow in Mumbai and Kolkata in January, with a big delegation comprising eight hotels from Thailand, Bhutan, Philippines, Abu Dhabi and Nairobi. The roadshow was led by **Barbara Leung Maradik**, Corporate Director of Sales & Marketing—Global Sales, Dusit Hotels.



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# Adventures, wildlife & rural tourism

**Yuvraj Padole**, Deputy Director—Events and Marketing, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, talks at length about plans put in place to attract more tourists to the state. Better and increased connectivity, a plethora of accommodation options, and development of new destinations are all being considered to meet the objective.



Kanchan Nath

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is keen to attract travellers who have a heart for adventure, wildlife and rural tourism. In light of the same, a number of activities, including homestays, trekking, bird-watching, etc., are being introduced in the state. Elaborating on these new, niche areas of focus, **Yuvraj Padole**, Deputy Director—Events and Marketing, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, says, “Generally, when on a holiday, one is very relaxed, but we have started a new concept of ‘active holidays’. Here, for every member of the family, we have some kind of activity planned. These are soft adventures like hiking, trekking, camping, bird-

watching, cycling, etc., inside the buffer zones of national parks. We are promoting this as experiential tourism, where tourists can go in for homestays, stay in villages, experience rural tourism and get a first-hand experience of the local culture.”

## Connectivity and logistics

In 2018, the state registered a growth of 15-20 per cent over the previous year, says Padole. “In 2017, we received 7 crore domestic tourists and around 4.5 lakh international tourists,” he comments. Speaking about connectivity, he adds, “Recently, IndiGo and SpiceJet announced new flights from Bhopal that will be connecting to Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Shirdi, Jaipur, Delhi and Mumbai. Con-



**Yuvraj Padole**  
Deputy Director—Events and Marketing,  
Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board

nectivity of the five airports in Madhya Pradesh has also been increased. Around 425 trains cross Madhya Pradesh every day, and so, it’s very well connected by rail as well.” Padole also mentions that all state roads, village roads, and roads that lead to remote destinations have been



tarred and widened, making it easier to travel by road within the state.

## MPSTDC hotels

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC), headquartered in Bhopal, offers a wide range of accommodation options. Padole elaborates, “We have over 70 hotels under MPSTDC. We keep adding hotels

and boutique properties to our portfolio. Recently, we launched a wellness resort at Sailani Island near Omkareshwar. Other new properties include one in Rajgarh and another close to Indirasagar Dam in Hanuwantiya.”

## New destinations

As new properties get added, new destinations develop as

well. Padole says, “We have opened Sanjay Dubri National Park, which is very popular now. Then, we have Satpura National Park and Kuno Palpur National Park, where we are trying to relocate some tigers.” He says that the state is also looking to develop areas near the capital, Ratapani being one of them. “These places will become good attractions for domestic as well as international tourists, because 30 per cent of the land area in the state is covered with forests and the entire region is very scenic. Besides that we also have three UNESCO World Heritage sites – the monuments and temples of Khajuraho, the Buddhist monuments at Sanchi, and the rock shelters of Bhimbetka,” he comments. 🐦

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# IRCTC aims big with new offers

With plans to launch special train tour packages for the summer inbound market, IRCTC is soon going to unveil packages on the new tourist train currently plying on the Buddhist circuit.



TT Bureau

With tourism being the second-most revenue generating business for the Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) with a contribution of 27 per cent to the overall revenue last year, **Rajni Hasija**, Director—Tourism & Marketing, IRCTC, is expecting the tourism revenue to increase by 11 per cent this year. "IRCTC is perhaps the only company providing tour packages ranging from ₹900 a day to ₹900 a day, which itself clarifies the varied tourism offerings of the company. We

products which IRCTC is currently working on. She informed, "We have been planning to launch special train tour packages for the summer inbound market. We will soon launch two to three tour packages on the new tourist train currently plying on the

Buddhist Circuit. The circuits planned are Golden Triangle Circuit, Northeast Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Jain Circuit and so on. The tourist trains we are planning to launch in the next tourist season would also increase our capacity in handling large groups of

domestic tourist. We are also expanding our tourism business to new domains such as cargo handling, Forex and B2B for air ticketing where we will create a network of business partners or agents to ensure that air tickets are easily available to the public."

"Realising the potential of the two great navigable rivers — the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, IRCTC is soon launching river cruise tour packages with private players in the market to enhance the luxury offering for tourists. The company is soon launching a dedicated portal



for offering ticketing services to customers for events as sports, shows and concerts. IRCTC has already tied up with Madame Tussauds in Delhi for ticketing," she further said.



**Rajni Hasija**  
Director—Tourism & Marketing  
IRCTC

expect to achieve a 10-15 per cent growth in the forthcoming year along with a total turnover of around ₹440 crore during the current financial year from tourism business," she said.

Talking about recent developments, Hasija said that IRCTC's presence in the government sector has improved in a significant manner. "At present, we are operating special tourist trains for five states including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The operation of state special tourist trains for Delhi and Bihar is in the pipeline. We have recently launched a swanky, new state-of-the-art deluxe train comprising LHB coaches on the Buddhist circuit. Through various improvements in the IRCTC air website and IRCTC air App, we are also offering complimentary accidental insurance coverage of ₹50 lakhs for all air passengers who book tickets through IRCTC. All domestic tourists who are availing IRCTC tours are also insured for ₹10 lakhs," Hasija informed.

Further, she also spoke about a slew of measures and new

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# Eyes on cross-border tourism

The fourth edition of Bengal Travel Mart, held in Siliguri, witnessed up to 800 participants. Also seen in good numbers were delegates from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, as the mart sought to establish increased tourist movement between the state and the three countries it shares its border with.



TT Bureau

Bengal Travel Mart 2019, organised by Eastern Himalayas Travel and Tour Operators' Association (EHTTOA), witnessed packed halls each day. With 85 buyers and 88 sellers from across the country and the world, close to 2000 meetings were conducted during the three-day event. Cross-border tourism with neighbours Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh was the tone of the event. EHTTOA had also recently signed an MoU with Nepal Association of Tour & Travel Agents (NATTA), the premier travel association of Nepal. This was a first-of-its-kind between India and Nepal, and is considered to be a major step in the promotion of cross-border tourism. Similar agreements may also



soon be seen with Bhutan and Bangladesh. "Panel discussions were held to analyse the position of Bengal in the global economy," shared **Sandipan Ghosh**, General Secretary, EHTTOA. Other associations

attending the mart included IATO, ADTOI, ETAA, ATOAI and international associations like Hotel & Restaurant Association of Bhutan (HRAB), Pokhara Tourism Council (PTC) and Tour Operators Association of Bang-

ladesh (TOAB) among others. Active participation was also seen from Ministry of Tourism and the tourism boards of West Bengal, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, etc. Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and re-

gional associations - Lataguri Hotel Owners Association and Alipurduar Tourism Council - were also present.

Over the past four years, Bengal Travel Mart has managed to accomplish significant growth in tourism in the region. "As a result, Eastern Himalayas has seen a significant growth since its inception in 2016. After the fourth edition, we can safely say that this growth will benefit tourism," claimed Ghosh.

Besides cross-border tourism, another area of focus of the Mart was homestays. Riding on the back of a recent and significant surge in the number of homestays in the region, Bengal Travel Mart aimed to further utilise this shift to

develop rural and conventional tourism here.

Speaking of the success of this edition, Ghosh concluded, "This was perhaps our best edition ever. We would like to specially thank Montana Vista, the venue partner, for its great hospitality. Overall, it was a great event and it definitely lived up to its reputation of being one of the largest domestic travel marts of eastern India."

In the next edition, the mart will work to get more international players involved and host more technical sessions where concrete discussions can be held. Involving major hotel chains from around the world and getting some game changers from across the country is also in the pipeline. ➔



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# Vistara to add new routes in 2019

While oil prices were a dampener for most of the aviation industry last year, **Sanjiv Kapoor**, Chief Strategy and Commercial Officer, Vistara (TATA - SIA Airlines), believes that 2019 will be a good year of growth for the airline with new domestic routes, and perhaps even international ones if permission from the government comes through.



Nisha Verma

Oil prices spelled misery for the Indian aviation industry in 2018 when they touched record-high levels for several months during the year. "In rupee terms, they were as high as they've ever been. The last time it reached that high was in 2013, and that was a very bad time for the industry. While there were challenging times, the good news is that on the revenue and non-fuel cost fronts, we made significant progress. Now that oil prices have reduced, the outlook is brighter for the industry," said Kapoor.

This year, a couple of new domestic destinations will make it to Vistara's roster. "We will be announcing a few new do-

mestic destinations soon, and we'll be adding two to three more destinations throughout the year. We also expect to add 10-12 aircraft in the next fiscal year, until March 2020, which would include two Boeing 787s and a couple of Airbus A-321s," he revealed.

While the '0/20' rule to commence international operations have been met by Vistara, they are still waiting to fly international as the approval from MoCA is pending. "Apart from adding domestic routes, we will start international routes, once we get the nod from the government," he claimed.

Vistara also recently launched a retro-themed VT-ATV aircraft to pay tribute to JRD Tata, the founder of TATA Airlines.



Sanjiv Kapoor  
Chief Strategy and Commercial Officer,  
Vistara (TATA - SIA Airlines)

"With this launch we wanted to appeal to the emotions of people. We wanted to make an impact on the wider global audience and also lay claim to our heritage. This launch coincided with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tata and the timing was just right. What we market as a retro flight is when the crew puts on that special

classic retro uniform and we do special things on board to commemorate the flight, making it special for the passengers," Kapoor shared.

While Vistara is not part of MoCA's UDAN scheme, Kapoor

day, or is it a situation where multiple carriers, multiple flights can operate. That kind of analysis is constantly done. We believe that many of these underserved city pairs do require service, but we may not be the right airline for it be-

well. However, the minute a second airline starts operating on that route, it becomes tougher. Thus, we need to keep all that in mind when we plan a network," he added.

Sharing his view that the Indian aviation industry is in the early stages of growth, Kapoor said, "Compared to our population and the size of our economy, the industry is still small and the potential is huge. Challenge lies in the infrastructure to support that growth. Adding new airports under UDAN, a bigger challenge to solve is in the metro cities and at the large airports, as they are just hemmed in and there is no space to expand. Hence, we need more land for new airports. The solution to this needs to come fast." ✈️

“We expect to add 10-12 aircraft in the next fiscal year, until March 2020, which would include two Boeing 787s and a couple of Airbus A-321s”

believes that they can fly to Tier II, III cities if the demand is there. "There is always going to be latent demand between two points that are not served. The question is how much that demand is and if it is enough for one carrier, one flight a

cause the fares and price that are expected of those markets may not be suited to our business model. Having said that, if there is an unserved city pair that has demand for 150 passengers a day and the airline starts operating, they will do

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# Albatros takes flight with Sapphire

Albatros Travel, in partnership with Sapphire Ventures, recently organised its roadshow in India. A Sunday brunch in Mumbai was hosted to kick off the journey that was graced by **Neliswa Nkani**, Hub Head—Middle East, India and South East Asia and **Alpa Jani**, Trade Relations Manager, South African Tourism. The roadshow was concluded in Delhi where partners were thanked over an evening of cocktails.



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# Cozmo to ease travel bookings

In keeping with changing trends, Cozmo Travel is devising cutting-edge technology tools to enable the trade to function smoothly and meet the needs of the modern-day traveller.



TT Bureau

Growing leaps and bounds from just one branch in Mumbai to the present 21 branches across major Indian cities, Cozmo Travel has covered every aspect of the industry from UAE visa processing to global visa, domestic and international packages, air ticketing and travel insurance, etc. **Praveen Nair**, Chief Operating Officer, Cozmo Travel, says that they have been striving to provide excellent service throughout this journey. In addition, the company will soon be launch-

well as business travellers, and will soon be featuring new, contemporary tools for the B2B trade, in turn catering to a traveller's needs.

Reiterating the importance of TravTrolley for the B2B market, Nair insists that it will be a

one-stop travel shop for large-scale and even small-scale B2B trade. "It will empower the users to take quick decisions, as comparisons for air tickets, hotels, insurance and many other travel-related services will be readily available. It will also enable them to skew

their margins according to their respective clients. In a way, TravTrolley is a modern-day, technology-equipped tool for even a novice," he explains.

Nair believes that besides travelling to regular destinations like the Far East or the Middle East,

CIS countries and offbeat destinations like Eastern Europe, Iceland and Scandinavian countries have gained momentum amongst young travellers, who are more bent towards exploring the unexplored. "Middle Eastern countries like Bahrain and Oman have lately picked up



cozmo travel world

tempo amongst new-age travellers. Bali, too, is fast gaining popularity." Nair says that such a trend is building confidence amongst the trade to introduce more lucrative packages. ✈

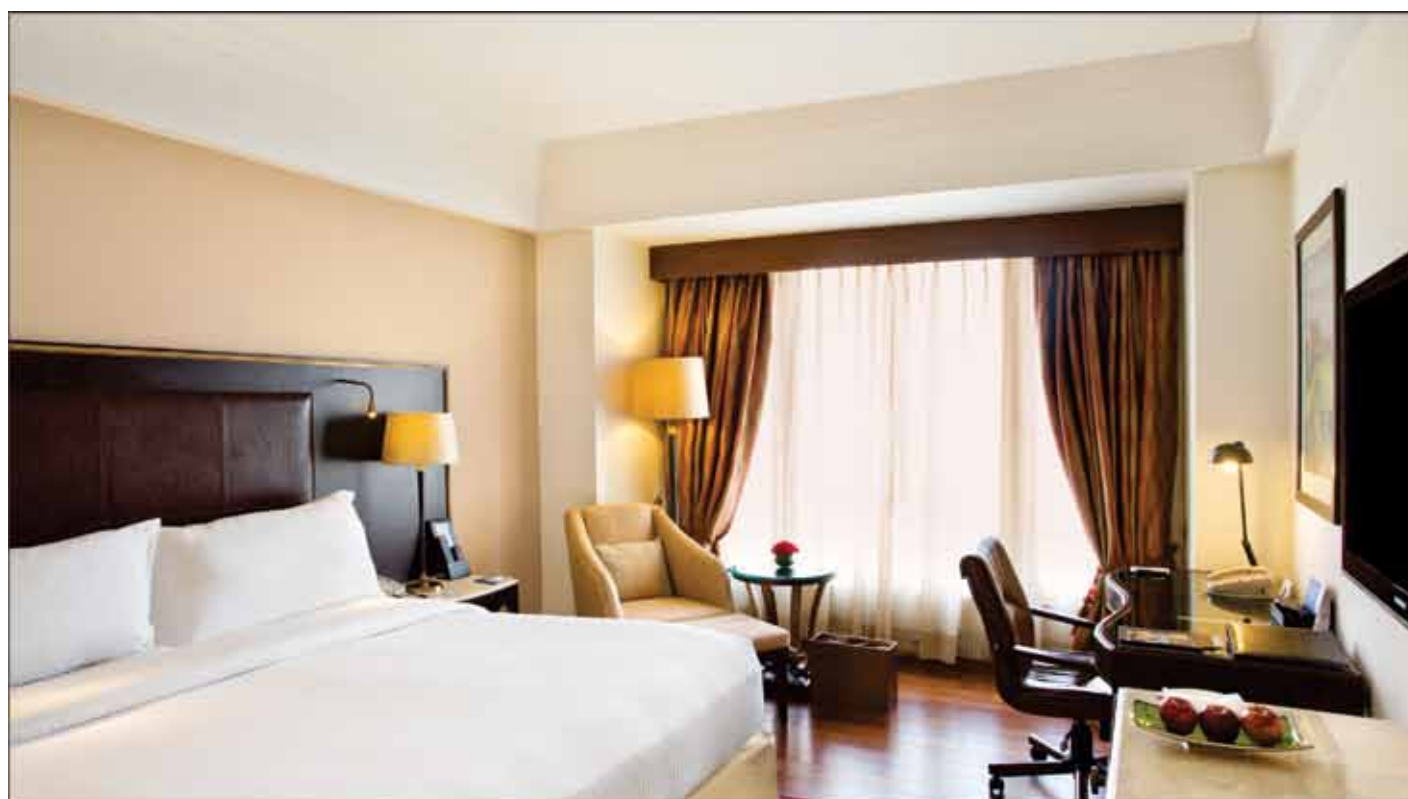


**Praveen Nair**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Cozmo Travel

ing a brand-new concept in the travel trade for visas and air ticketing. "The products will surely bring a sense of assurance to travellers. The new offerings will be based on years of work and care being paid to the needs of a modern-day traveller who is also a consumer of advanced technology," he says.

The products, says Nair, will target the travel insurance and car rental market aggressively in the upcoming fiscal. "Cozmo would be making an entry into the rent-a-car space in trade by bringing out attractive packages for the industry and corporate sector alike. Corporates would be catered to by experienced and trained staff for their day-to-day needs," he says. The company will also be focusing on the hotel segment where it sees immense potential. "Our intricate designing of tailor-made packages would fulfil their needs end to end," he adds.

As a new entrant into the trade, Cozmo Travel has always worked to meet the requirements of leisure as



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# Flying afar with

India is Europe's number four long-haul market and among the larger markets, Italy grew the fastest with a 77 per cent increase in seats to India in 2018. After a successful year of operations on the Delhi-Rome route, Alitalia now plans to penetrate deeper into the India market.



Kanchan Nath

Having completed a year of operations on the Delhi-Rome route, Alitalia is now bullish on the Indian market. Elaborating on the performance of the airlines, **Nicola Bonacchi**, Vice President—Leisure Sales & International Markets, Alitalia, said, "The first year closed with about 83.5 per cent load factor. Our focus now is to increase the Average Coupon Value (ACV) with a strategy to penetrate as much as we can as well as increase our share for European destinations and the US market.

"The competition in this market is very strong. We have been working hard to become the top carrier for Italy. We have changed the on-board service

for the Delhi-Rome flight from November by adding more dishes from the Italian menu whilst trying to be in line with the Indian culture. We are trying to understand the market well and respond to the needs of customers accordingly," he added.

Bonacchi further adds that the airline is trying to create a long-term partnership base in India. "We are trying to not just work point-to-point from Delhi to Rome but also expand our network and leverage on our hub Rome—one of the first airports in Europe. Last year, Alitalia closed with a good result; we increased our revenue by 7 per cent. Currently, we have a daily flight on the Delhi-Rome route and once we have a better ACV, we will



**Nicola Bonacchi**  
Vice President—Leisure Sales & International Markets  
Alitalia

consider and evaluate to open more routes."

Alitalia is offering competitive rates for business travellers and making new agreements with them, informed **Emiliana Limosani**, Vice President—



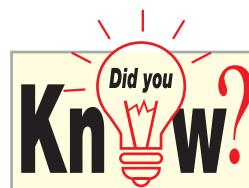
**Emiliana Limosani**  
Vice President—Global Business Travel Sales & Commercial Partnerships, Alitalia

Global Business Travel Sales & Commercial Partnerships, Alitalia. "Currently, we have 70 per cent leisure and 30 per cent business travellers travelling with us. We are working to increase the number of business travellers as we want to balance the

two segments. As a number of Italian companies are operating in India, it's important to connect them. Further, it provides good connectivity with the rest of the world to North America and South America—destinations useful for business travellers in India. In the last three months, we signed 50 corporate agreements and are now starting to renew them with the TMCs. So, we are working very closely with them to grow this market."

Sharing plans of global expansion plans, Bonacchi mentioned, "In May, we will open a new destination in Washington DC. The route will be important for leisure and corporate travellers as well as for government movement. We have also reopened the route to Toronto

and we reconfirmed destinations in the US market like New York, Miami, Chicago and Mexico City. We will also increase our penetration into South America. In Chile, we will increase with a double daily flight to Saint Paulo. Soon, we will also open Costa Mirada in Sardinia."



IRCTC has modified the itineraries of Maharajas' Express from the forthcoming season. From 2019-20 onwards, there will be three itineraries of 6 Nights/7 Days and an itinerary of 3 Nights/4 Days



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# Corporate Alliance eyes inbound

Recalling his long career in the travel industry, **Kapil Kumria**, Chairman & Managing Director, Corporate Alliance Group, shares the growth story of his company while elaborating on the plan of expanding into different verticals.



TT Bureau

Growing manifold since its inception in 1997 to serve various arenas of the travel and tourism industry, Corporate Alliance Group, part of the Corporate Alliance Group, has come a long way. "I started my professional career in 1985 and the last 33 years in the industry have been an

amazing journey. Since we started Corporate Flyers in 1997, we have expanded into various verticals over a period of time. We started from Delhi as one unit and moved on to expand to Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Chandigarh, and Ahmedabad. Over the period, we ventured into different verticals. We now have an event company - Eventz Unlimited - which we started back in 2004. It really complements our business very well where we handle the segments of corporate travel and MiCE. So, the event company takes care of in-house corporate events apart from separate individual events. There have been many remarkable feats that we have achieved in this journey," says Kumria.

After expanding into events, Corporate Alliance Group ex-

panded its reach to corporate high-end gifting with Memento Worldwide. The group has a marketing company, White

to any particular destination by one corporation was done by us and I think, we have set a record with it. We once took

**“For outbound, we are operating our business from six Indian cities for almost 100 groups. Our MiCE business is very active in Mumbai and Ahmedabad”**

Horse Marcom, and inbound tour company known as India Best Tours.

Talking about Corporate Flyers' business, Kumria says that the company operates around 100 groups. "For outbound, we are operating our business from six Indian cities for almost 100 groups. Our MiCE business is very active in Mumbai and Ahmedabad. One of the largest movements

more than 4000 people to Canada. For another company, we took 4500 people to Singapore and also about 5,000 people to England for the T20 cricket World Cup in 2009," he claims.

The last one year, adds Kumria, has been pretty decent for his company. "In 2018, we witnessed growth. Going ahead, the year looks more promising than the last,

which was riddled with issues such as the GST. We also struggled with our corporates on the GST front, but now it is settling down. This year, we are trying to make our mark in conferences. We have been getting good numbers for incentive groups, but we are trying to set up a dedicated division where we will work on India conferencing. We have diversified into weddings with our event vertical and have been doing exceptionally well there. We have also

worked with celebrity and destination weddings. On that front, we have rapid expansion plans. We are planning to go big on inbound since we have always been a stronger outbound agency," concludes Kumria.



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# 'Exciting times for the sector'

**Jaideep Dang** has recently been appointed to spearhead JLL's hotels and hospitality business as its Managing Director. Providing an in-depth analysis of the industry here, he explains why, now is the right time for potential investors to make the most of an undersupply of rooms in the country.



Anupriya Bishnoi

## Q Tell us about your new role at JLL.

I have worked with JLL previously, between 2004 and 2011, in different func-



tions. So, in a way, I know the preamble of this business. In my earlier stint, we had built a robust consulting practice and provided best advice to the country's leading hotel owners and operators. Clients trusted JLL's value proposition and our offerings. Over the years, the industry has grown significantly. There are many more hotels, segments, and stakeholders in the business now as compared to the times when I used to work here. I now have a wider audience to serve to. I am committed to focus on hotel transactions, hotel operator searches, and other advisory services. I want to create quality and value both for the practice as well as the clients.

## Q Where is JLL looking to grow its business in the hotel space?

Apart from top metropolitan cities, a lot of investment is now happening in Tier-II cities. Data also shows that most international brands have penetrated into cities such as Lucknow, Kanpur,

From a number-of-rooms perspective, Tier-I markets will continue to rule. So, we will focus equally in both these markets. We will also focus on new growth areas in the subcontinent as well as enhance our business in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan.

“Hotel development around office campuses, metro rail corridors, airports, industrial corridors, and pilgrimage cities could offer lucrative returns to the investor”

Ludhiana, Jamshedpur, Ranchi, and Surat. Improved air connectivity has fuelled growth in domestic travel and as a result, new resort destinations are opening up. We look forward to working in these new markets.

## Q What's your take on the undersupply of hotels in the country?

A smart hotel investor/developer, who understands the hotel business, can take great advantage of this undersupply situation.

An upward trend in office market absorption across business cities will further fuel occupancies and will encourage investors to build hotels especially as part of mixed-use developments. Hotel development around office campuses, metro rail corridors, airports, industrial corridors, and pilgrimage cities could offer lucrative returns to the investor as well as hotel operating companies.

New branded hotel supply is also adding up, albeit cautiously, which is a healthy scenario for new hotels as they look into the future to accommodate this growing demand. Nearly 65 per cent of this new supply in the last few years has been in the mid to upscale segments. A

large part of the new hotel supply is part of mixed-use developments. With land prices rising, this trend of mixed-use hotel developments will be the future.

## Q The Indian hospitality industry remains challenging. How does JLL ease the burden?

Fast paced innovations and market disruptions are keeping the stakeholders on their toes. Owners, investors, brands – all require continuous advice. At JLL, we have always believed in providing the right advice to a client, which empowers him to plan right, finance right, develop right, and operate right. We aim to be the most trusted consultant and transaction advisor to real estate developers, funds, banks, and hoteliers. ↴

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# ATM launches a week of firsts

The organisers of Arabian travel Market (ATM) have launched Arabian Travel Week, set to cover four big industry events, namely, ATM 2019, ILTM Arabia, CONNECT Middle East, India and Africa 2019 and ATM Holiday Shopper, from April 27-May 1.



TT Bureau

Arabian Travel Week has been launched as the new umbrella brand comprising four co-located shows, which includes ATM 2019, International Luxury Travel Market Arabia (ILTM) Arabia, CONNECT Middle East, India and Africa 2019 – a new route development forum launching this year and ATM Holiday Shopper, a new consumer-led event.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director—Middle East, Arabian Travel Market, said, “The success of both ATM and ILTM Arabia has provided us with the platform to not only introduce two new events for 2019 but also create a travel week which

destinations from around the world to over 28,000 buyers and travel trade visitors. The event will focus on cutting-edge technology and innovation, integrating the theme across all show verticals.

On the other hand, CONNECT Middle East, India and Africa, set to be held from April 30 to May 1, 2019, will bring together airports, airlines and aviation suppliers in an exciting format where attendees will go for formal one-to-one pre-arranged

meetings, engaging industry seminars as well as social opportunities to cement relationships with existing clients and engage with new ones.

The ATM Holiday Shopper, to be held on April 27, will showcase

over 30 travel and hospitality exhibitors from regional and international destinations who will be offering the best travel discounts and deals exclusively for consumers at the show.

The International Luxury Travel

Market Arabia (ILTM), now in its third year, is an exclusive event for those looking to attract HNW travellers from the Middle East to their destination. ILTM will allow luxury suppliers and buyers to connect via one-to-one pre-scheduled appointments. ↓




Danielle Curtis  
Exhibition Director—Middle East  
Arabian Travel Market


encompasses the Middle East's inbound and outbound markets for general leisure tourism and luxury travel as well as providing a dedicated networking forum for the region's top airline specialists, aviation authorities, tourism boards, airports and tour operators.”

A World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) has revealed that the direct contribution of travel and tourism to the UAE's economy is predicted to rise 4.1 per cent per annum to AED 108.4bn by 2028.

“Building on these figures, we are confident Arabian Travel Week will be a key driver in bringing top international destinations to the attention of the Middle East's travel trade and consumers and equally, marketing the Middle East to overseas tour operators and travel professionals,” added Curtis.

This year, ATM will showcase over 2,800 products and






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It is still an offbeat destination for the Indian market. Over the years, Indians have travelled mainly to mainstream European countries. Hence, this would be a niche product to promote for the travel agent and offer amazing experiences and activities to their clients. Moreover, the region is a wonderful destination for travel experts in the **MICE and Corporate Travel Segments** as it can offer a completely awe-inspiring experience.

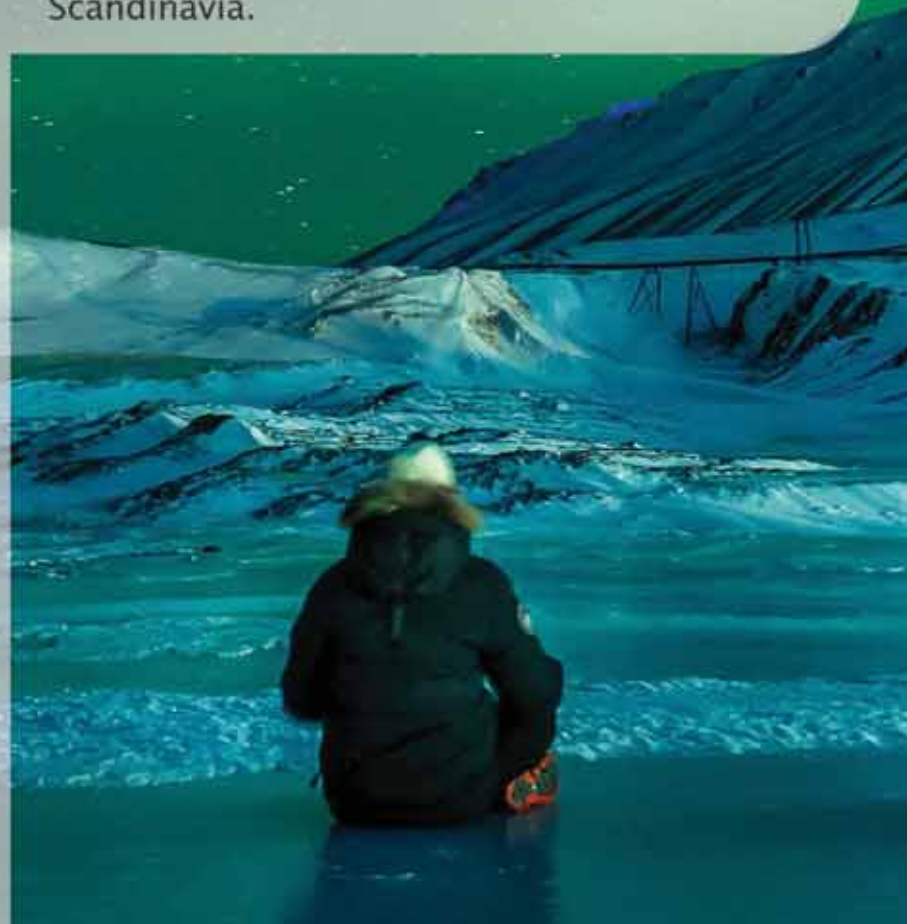
## DIRECTOR'S SAY

Speaking about the changing landscape of Indian outbound, **Rajesh Kakade**, Director, **Red Carpet Travels AS**, says, "With changing times, Indian tourists have grown into mature travellers as they have started to do their own research with the help of technology now available to them easily. Online resources are available to them that help them learn about newer places that they want to visit. There is more 'word of mouth' publicity with previous experience backing it up which gives them a clearer idea about the activities they wish to engage in." What is great is that the **Scandinavian Tourism Boards** are putting more and more efforts to make their presence felt in the Indian market. Also, internet has made the world smaller, giving the traveller a sense of security and therefore they are more confident about travelling, experiencing and discovering offbeat destinations than they would have been a few years ago

## WHY CHOOSE US?

One of the major advantages of choosing Red Carpet Travels AS is the 24x7 local support that they extend to their agent partners across the market. **Kakade** adds, "Red Carpet employs professionals who have years of experience, not only in product knowledge but also personal travel experience which enables us to showcase our clients with more detailed information and quality product. We strive to offer cost-effective and valuable itineraries to our clients by understanding their requirements. We do not compromise on quality and work hard to ensure that our clients only receive the best."

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# to increase 737 MAX fleet

SpiceJet is all set to induct up to 20 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, reveals **Ajay Singh**, Chairman and Managing Director at the airline. He believes that it is their commitment to maintaining a bottom line and getting a high yield that's keeping them afloat in the volatile market of aviation.



TT Bureau

SpiceJet recently began operating between Delhi and Hong Kong, and Hyderabad and Jeddah. Singh said that the airline will be announcing several new international destinations, but denied having any upcoming plans for introducing flights to London or Western Europe for that matter. "As far as Western Europe is concerned, we can do that in one stop from India, using any country with the fifth freedom right. As of now we believe that it is not as profitable as operating direct flights, but we will keep looking at them and wherever



**Ajay Singh**  
Chairman and Managing Director  
SpiceJet

there is an opportunity, we will explore the same," he shared.

Claiming that SpiceJet is the largest player in Ministry of Civil Aviation's (MoCA's) UDAN scheme, he added, "The UDAN 3 routes were al-

located recently, and SpiceJet was given a large number of routes. We will be starting some of them very soon. In fact, some of those flights could be open for sale as early as this month."

With the induction of new aircraft in its fleet, Singh believes that the airline is on the road to significant growth. "In December alone we inducted 13 aircraft and had a load factor of over 92 per cent for 45 months in a row. We've had profitability in 17 of the last 18 quarters. Going forward, 2019 is looking much better because oil prices are down. In fact, SpiceJet is inducting a number of these fuel-efficient

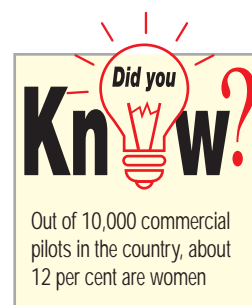
Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. We have received 12 of them. We will be adding close to 20 planes through the course of this year. Some of them are leased, while others are from our own squad. Adding these aircraft reduces the cost because they consume 20 per cent less fuel and the engineering cost is also 30 per cent less. This induction will be good, since the inherent demand for these is incredibly strong," he said.

Addressing the issue of internet on board, Singh added, "All our Boeing 737 MAX aircraft are equipped to provide internet on board. As soon as we get a clearance

from the government, we will begin. In fact, we can start those services tomorrow."

Insisting on the need of having MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) facilities in the country, he said, "Given that India is the fastest growing aviation market in the world and we are adding such a large number of aircraft in the next few years, I think it's really important that we service our aircraft, repair components within our country, and have the technical skills, the manpower, the wherewithal, and the market for it. We should start doing it and we should not shoot ourselves

in the foot by having taxation structures, which are unviable for us to service our airlines within India. I think we need to find a solution to ensure that our MROs get a level playing field with those across the world, and of course, we try and incentivise them to do more business in India." ↴



## Gatwick flies high on technology

**Stephen King**, Head—Airline Relations, London Gatwick Airport, was in New Delhi for the CAPA India Aviation Summit, and shared how the airport could be the perfect hub for Indian carriers, with its technologically-advanced framework and quick get-through for passengers.



Nisha Verma

London Gatwick is one of Europe's biggest airports. Throwing light on what makes it special, King said, "London Gatwick Airport is UK's second airport that 46 million passengers travel through and one of the reasons we love the airport is because it is so close to London."

Currently, London Gatwick Airport has 230 routes. "We have over 50 long-haul routes as well. We have a wide range of airlines operating and the biggest one is EasyJet, which is a major low-cost airline in the UK and connects to over 100 destinations from Gatwick. Emirates and Qatar Airways also fly three times a day; British Airways has a big presence and so does Virgin Atlantic," said King.

He also revealed that they were now looking at India for new connections to London Gatwick. "We've had new routes to China start last year and we are seeing more of our destinations expanding. We have more passengers coming from India as well

because they are using those airlines. Although we don't have a direct flight from Delhi

or Mumbai, passengers are travelling via Dubai or Doha to Gatwick," he said.

Sharing his view on growth in passenger traffic from India, King said, "In the last five years, the market has expanded much more, with so many airlines and so many people travelling. We really want to be a part of that, giving passengers more opportunities to come to the UK. Hence, we are speaking to airlines across India to encourage them to consider launching flights to Gatwick because we offer convenience and good facilities to passengers, while also being a great airport for airlines to operate in. We have lots of things that will benefit Indian passengers and Indian airlines. Our airport charges are reasonable and we have tried to make the airport as efficient as possible. Both LCCs and Full Service Carriers (FSCs) are also very successful at Gatwick."

King revealed that they use technological advancements at every stage to enhance the customer experience. "Technology underpins everything we do! We have many e-Passport gates, where passengers can get through without having to queue up. We are looking at technology not only on the passenger side, but also at how it can be used on the airfield to make sure that as soon as the

In fact, they have a programme called Gatwick Connect, which further enhances the passenger experience. "Gatwick Connect is a great self-connection proposition, which we have developed in the last five to six years and fine-tuned to make it a great passenger experience. Through this programme, we wanted to enable passengers to connect between those airlines that operate from Gatwick, like LCCs that may not

hotel accommodation, food, and they are booked on the next available flight to their destination. There is a small cost that they pay for that connection, but it is cheaper since one is usually buying from two LCCs," shared King. The process for bags has also been made easy with Gatwick Connect, with a desk and staff available for assistance in boarding the next flight.

Talking about expansion plans, he said, "In October, London Gatwick came up with a new masterplan where we have three different options to connect and enable us to grow. One of them is continuing to use a single runway, which is the busiest single runway in the world. We are looking at how to expand the new technology to increase the number of passengers, and other ways to grow within our current airport footprint, current assets, and our standby runway." ↴

“We have more passengers coming from India. Although we don't have a direct flight from Delhi or Mumbai, passengers are travelling via Dubai or Doha to Gatwick”

planes land, they get straight to the gate and passengers get off. When they are ready to depart, it's an easy journey to the runway and we use technology to try and make that process as smooth as possible," he shared.

have any interline relationship. Passengers can buy protected connections on Skyscanner or some of the other metasearch engines. So, if there is a problem with either flight, the passenger is protected and we would make sure that they get





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# Talent for sustainable growth

Advocating the need for sustainability in generating and retaining jobs in the tourism sector, **Eun Ji Tae**, Department Officer—Regional Department of Asia and the Pacific, UNWTO, highlights why this is the need of the hour.



Manas Dwivedi

It is essential that pertinent and effective policies take shape in the tourism in-



dustry and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), being the nodal advisory agency, promote responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism. During a knowledge session on employment in the tourism sector, Ji Tae said that the issue of jobs and sustainable tourism was a point of debate around the globe. "For the India market, sustainability is very important because it is one of the biggest markets in the world, leading in growth. The Indian market is very important, and we do hope that now that India is hosting the World Tourism Day for

'tourism and jobs' in 2019, it will take the lead in advocating jobs in tourism, so that the sector not only becomes a

“For the India market, sustainability is very important because it is one of the biggest markets in the world, leading in growth”

'job creator' but also a tool for sustainable jobs," she said.

Being sustainable, though essential, wouldn't mean much if there were no one to implement the practice. Elaborating on this thought, she said, "Sustainable development in tourism is irrelevant when you have a product, when

you have natural or cultural heritage, but you don't have people to run it. I think, India could lead the case and set an

example of how an excellent policy is put in place for tourism as well as employment. That can then be the root for sustainable development across the whole world."

Ji Tae also said that certain events cannot be stopped or abandoned, and the world needs to certainly face these

facts. "Although we don't want to put a certain number to this advancement, it is important to mention that within a few years, one out of five jobs created will be in the tourism industry. By 2028, one quarter of the entire employment will be working in the tourism industry, which will include hospitality accommodation, transportation, as well as other services." She reiterated that beyond this rosy picture also lay facts that cannot be left ignored by the industry. "It is true that the tourism industry is friendly for women, youth and minorities to work in, but the question is how sustainable it is," she said.

Pointing out a huge gap in what the industry needs and what our talent requires, Ji Tae said, "It is good that tourism is creating employment, but we are not very good in retaining talent. At the same time, the industry voices its need for a skilled workforce. We need a whole new set of training programmes and facilities. When we discuss tourism, employment and better future for all, I hope that we discuss real challenge as well." She added that it is important to delve on how tourism can sustain continuous growth with this talent. "Let's face the fact - without talent, without good leaders, there is no success," she said. 🐦

# IATO for e-visa fee reduction

Industry-wide concerns and a proposal to reduce e-visa fee for foreign tourists coming to India were just some of the many topics discussed at IATO's luncheon meeting in Delhi.



TT Bureau

In a bid to make India a more lucrative destination for foreign tourists, the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has demanded reduction in e-visa fee to \$25 from the current \$100. IATO also demanded that the fee not be hiked till India reached the targeted 20 million foreign tourist arrivals. At the bimonthly meeting, key issues, the association's activities, and future events were also discussed.



Speaking to members on key subjects, **Pronab Sarkar**, President, IATO, stated his demand for reduction of the visa fee and

the need to make the process a smoother one. Keeping in mind the recent announcement of relaxation in visa norms and

fee by Thailand and Indonesia, Sarkar said that the Indian government also needed to take steps in a similar direc-

tion. Sarkar also put forth his demand for extension of the visa-on-arrival facility to more countries, a service that is being provided only to Japanese and South Korean nationals as of now. He also demanded a reduction in visa fee for South Asian countries.

Sarkar further spoke of the need to provide visa-on-arrival facility to senior citizens as well, while also delving on issues related to capturing of biometric details. During the



meeting, IATO felicitated **Ashwani Lohani**, former Chairman, Indian Railway Board and bid farewell to him.

**Rajiv Mehra**, Vice President, IATO, informed attendees that IndiGo had agreed to extend special prepaid excess baggage rates to IATO members, when handling foreign tourists on the airline's domestic network. 🐦



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Achyutaraya Temple, Hampi

## Record of green tales

Driving efforts towards promoting environmentally responsible tourism, Terra Tales is enabling its partner hotels to broaden their distribution network.



TT Bureau

Offering innovative marketing strategies to its hotel partners, Terra Tales has expanded its portfolio to 11 hotels in the last one year. **Gita Chaudhry**, Founder and Owner, Terra Tales, says that she is actively working to expand the company's portfolio. "I represent and market boutique hotels including wildlife lodges, nature resorts and mountain properties. Having added five new hotels in the last one year, we are now looking to enter the South India market. I am also looking forward to induct two more wildlife lodges one of which could be at Panna National Park and another one at Ranthambore National Park. We already have one property at Pench National Park, one at Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve and Bandhavgarh National Park," she informs.



**Gita Chaudhry**  
Founder and Owner  
Terra Tales

Also part of 'The Green People' community that works towards a conceptually new blend of ecotourism, agrotourism and rural tourism, Terra Tales volunteers for Goat Villages, a bouquet of farm retreats and homestays in Uttarakhand.

Apart from wildlife and nature properties, Terra Tales is also promoting luxury resorts, Atmantan Wellness Resort,

Pune and The Tamara Coorg — epitomes of wellness and yoga tourism with integrated and customised wellness programmes.

Talking about the importance of shows like ITB Berlin, Chaudhry says that the exhibition will be a great platform to showcase her properties before a global audience. "I feel that inbound tourism is one market which appreciates green. I am looking for good numbers from the European market," she tells.

Underlining the need of promoting green tourism, Chaudhry says that the need of the hour is to preserve nature and support local communities. "Some NGOs are promoting village houses. Goat Village is a fine example where locals are able to earn with their destination and get something out of tourism," she concludes.

## Riding high on expansion

Accor's new strategy is to expand in key markets that are identified based on their potential growth opportunities and favourable socio-macroeconomic factors.



TT Bureau

For Accor, 2019 will see densification of the brand in key markets in India, reveals **Rohit Chopra**, Regional Director of Sales—India & South Asia, Accor. "At the start of this year, Accor launched its first-ever ibis hotel and third property in Kolkata with ibis Kolkata Rajarhat. In January, we also launched our fifth property in Goa and our first-ever wellness centre with Mercure Goa Devaaya Retreat. We will soon be announcing the launch of the Grand Mercure GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City)," he revealed.

In terms of business for the upcoming quarter, Chopra revealed, "In 2019, we can expect ARR and occupancies to continue with the same trajectory we saw last year when ARR grew by 10 per



**Rohit Chopra**  
Regional Director of Sales—  
India & South Asia, Accor

cent. Multiple factors including improved distribution systems, greater focus on social media, guest centricity as the focal point, enhanced integration of technology and solidification of loyalty programmes, among others are driving this growth."

He added, "To further improve rates and build trust amongst consumers through an integrated approach, we have achieved

greater rate parity between offline and online pricing and availability by blocking leakages of rates from offline to online. In addition to this, brands have a greater opportunity to drive higher ADR segment through their web strategies, given that fragmented demand is on the rise."

Amidst new acquisitions and several existing brands under its umbrella, how many of these could earn profit in India still remains questionable. Addressing the same, he said, "Accor, in India and South Asia, operates a network of 10 distinctive brands ranging from luxury, midscale to the economy segment. Each brand is unique and caters to a different segment with varied price points and distinct services. Therefore, it would be difficult to say any one specific brand is profitable over the other."

## Game changer in tourism: e-Visa

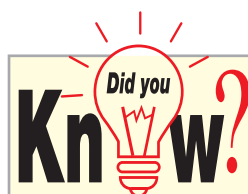
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available for assistance to foreign tourists in 12 international languages.

Commenting on the growth of tourism in India, he said that tourism in the country contributes about 12 per cent to the GDP of the nation. "If you look at the figure for 2017, we have grown at close to 14.8 per cent, while the global average growth is 6.5 per cent. In terms of revenue earnings, against a global average of seven per cent, India has actually grown by 19 per cent. More than 10 million foreign tourists travelled to India last year; if we add the people of Indian origin to the tally according to the global standard, the number jumps to 14.5 million," he informed.

According to World Tourism Council's Power and Performance Index released towards the end of last year, India has been placed at the number three position, right behind China and US.

Billa further said that tourism has actually become the mainstream agenda in the country. "For the first time in India, we are at the centre stage of tourism. The key decision makers have realised the true potential of tourism in becoming an economic engine of growth in this country. The Ministry of Tourism has undertaken landmark assignments over the past four years, committing projects across the country. Out of the 66 projects we sanctioned in the last three years, 33 have already been inaugurated. I think, it is a record implementation scheme," he said.



India is the third largest domestic aviation market in the world and is touted to be the largest market in next 15 years

## Mid-scale hotels cross `3000 ADR

The Average Daily Rate for Indian mid-scale hotels crossed `3,000 for the first time in 2018, according to a Horwath HTL and STR report, with supply outside main markets continuing to grow to benefit domestic brands.



Hazel Jain

The Average Daily Rate (ADR) for Indian mid-scale hotels crossed the `3000 mark for the first time in 2018, according to the latest report by Horwath HTL along with Tennessee-based STR. The report titled 'India Hotel Market Review - 2018' gave a glimpse of how 2018 treated the industry, followed by a brief outlook on what is expected of 2019.

**Vijay Thacker**, Director, Horwath HTL, said, "RevPAR grew only by two per cent last year but the year saw a lot of new hotels opening as well. Bengaluru had the largest inventory with 14,000 rooms followed by Delhi and Mumbai. Pune is one of the three cities with more than 70 per cent occupancy and has long-term potential, particularly because the gap between the peak

season and the lean season was the narrowest among all other cities at 10 points."

He added, "There is a lot more to be done on the rate front this year because they are still not growing as rapidly as they should and I am not sure whether some of that rate suppression is because of the impact of GST. Once you go above the `7,500 mark, every time you increase the rate, the percentage gain that the hotel makes versus the percentage gain that the government makes is vastly different; the government gains much more and the guest keeps paying more as well."

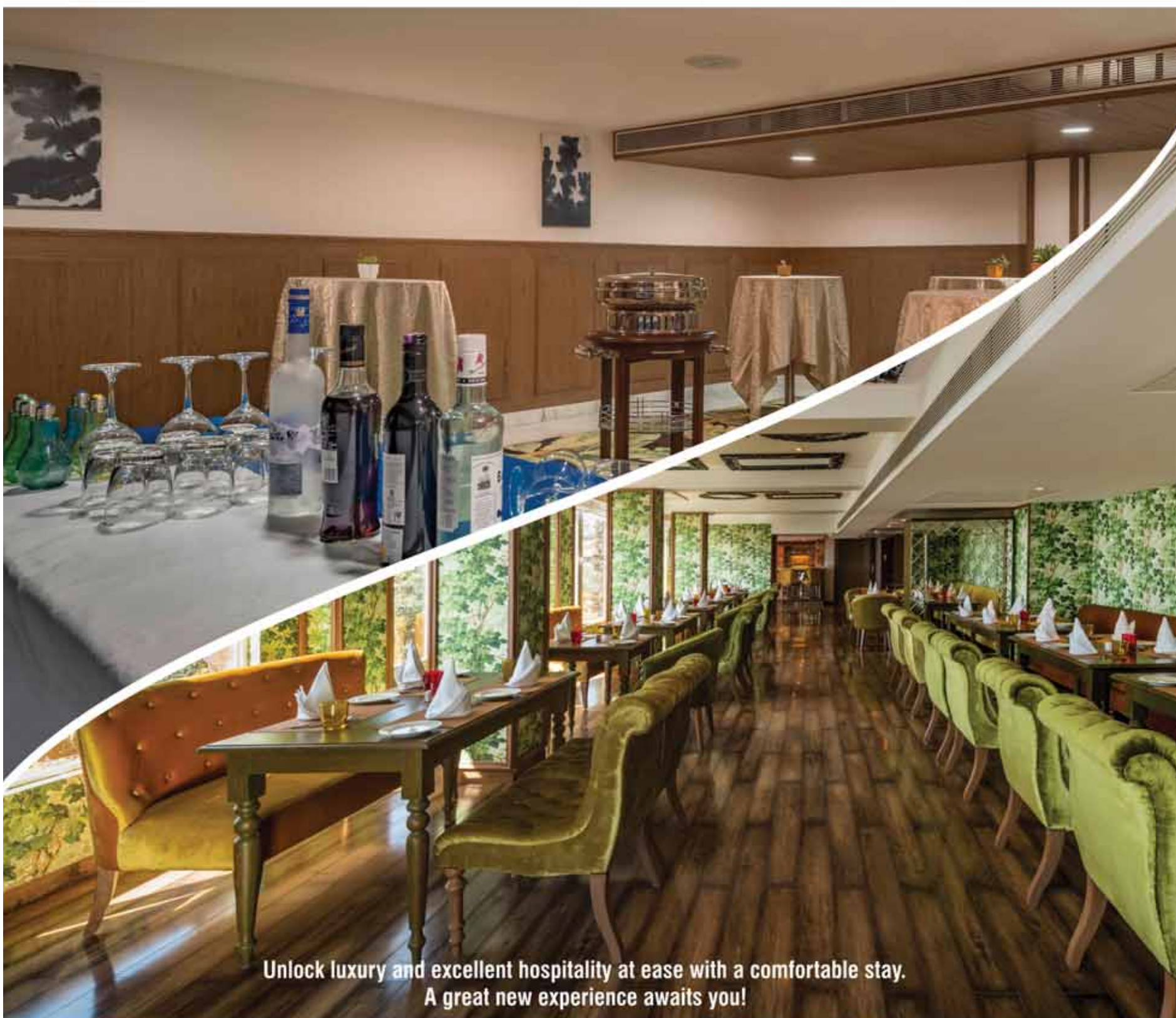
According to him, Bengaluru has done very well this year in terms of keeping its rates up even though occupancies dipped because of the new supply. More importantly, Bengaluru is now above the

14,000 level in the chain-affiliated supply. "Another key aspect is that cities like Pune have started doing very well. Pune is above the 70 per cent occupancy, little soft on rate, and Delhi has gained well because of GST levelling out the luxury tax impact. Also, supply outside the main markets continues to grow which will benefit the domestic brands in future," Thacker added.

Speaking about this year, Thacker said that the main cities are now saturated so they won't grow at the same rate. "We have three new convention centres coming up — the Ambani Convention Centre in Mumbai BKC, Pragati Maidan in Delhi, and the bigger one coming up in Dwarka. There is huge potential to

grow rates. I hope GST is not a hindrance and I hope the upper-upscale segment can push up. But then there are some challenges. The banking sector is not in a very good shape at this point and could be an issue for new projects."





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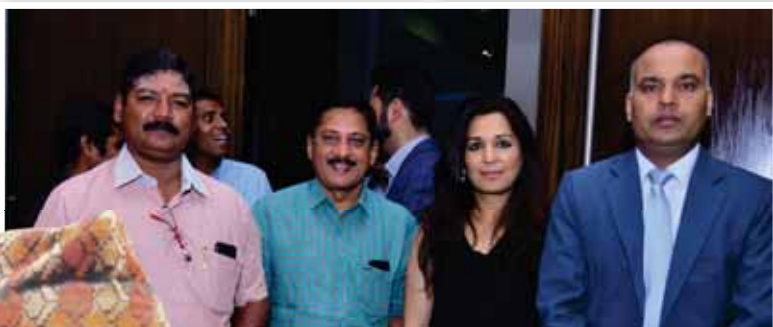
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# Nepal enhances tourism links

The eight-city Nepal Sales Mission 2019 saw an august presence of buyers and sellers, and was attended by over 700 trade partners. Travelling to key cities such as Lucknow, Agra, Jaipur, Bhopal, Indore, Kochi, Coimbatore and Madurai, the Mission successfully paved the way for greater tourist movement from India to Nepal.



# Inbound continues to surge

Stressing on the importance of ITB Berlin for his company, **Ravi Gosain**, Managing Director, Erco Travels & Tourism Enterprises, talks about his business strategy and plan for the future.



TT Bureau

A regular visitor to ITB Berlin for over 16 years, Gosain feels that the travel trade fair is a wonderful platform to meet partners from all over the world and discuss new programmes for the future. "ITB Berlin is an important travel trade fair for our inbound brand, Erco Travels. This year, the company will complete 20 years in inbound business, which is a great landmark for us. We are in discussion to

On a different note, Gosain spoke of his other venture, Tourism Enterprises, and said, "Tourism Enterprises has become a trusted brand in the last few years and we are growing steadily with our existing destinations. Our new partner, Hello Asia – DMC for

“ Travellers on spiritual tours have a potential to create a huge database of like-minded clients in the future. I think this sector needs to be regularised and promoted in a planned manner ”

Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos & Myanmar, which we added last year to our portfolio, is doing well; we are overwhelmed with the support we have received from our partners in India. With our newly-added DMC for West Europe - Saffron World - we are quite hopeful

to do good business in the upcoming summer season. We will try to cover a majority of local destination shows and small, city-based trade fairs to widen our network and reach tour operators and travel agents in small cities as well," he concluded.



Ravi Gosain  
Managing Director  
Erco Travels & Tourism Enterprises

offer some special freebies to inbound travellers who travel to India with us," he said.

Providing insights, Gosain informed that there had been a surge in inbound travellers for spiritual and yoga tours, which is a good sign for the Indian market. He said, "Such travellers have a potential to create a huge database of like-minded travellers in the future. I think this sector needs to be regularised and promoted in a planned manner. Apart from this, there is huge increase in corporate travellers to India, who come to the country for seminars, conferences, and business negotiations." He also said that the government's recent move to increase the validity of the e-visa for foreigners and allow multiple entries will give a strong message to global travellers that India is inviting tourists with welcoming visa norms.

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# Guidelines on priority

Uttarakhand Tourism Professionals Association organised a workshop on the role and sensitisation of rafting, mountaineering and local guides in Rishikesh.

TT Bureau

To generate socio-economic benefits from the tourism sector in Uttarakhand, it has been UTPA's sincere endeavour to help locals in getting jobs to avoid further migration from the region. The workshop hosted

to join hands for promoting Uttarakhand as an important tourism destination in India. He said that the need of the hour was to frame regulations and enforce guidelines for rafting and mountaineering activities in Uttarakhand. While promoting the destination all out to

Also addressing the gathering was **Anil Oraw**, Regional Director - North India, Ministry of Tourism, who provided details on various activities being undertaken by the Ministry in promoting tourism to the state. At the event, subject matter experts from Uttarakhand Tourism also addressed the gathering.

A vote of thanks was delivered by **Narendra Kothiyal**, Adviser of UTPA, who also spoke of the state's potential in tourism through pilgrimage, adventure sports, yoga and meditation, wildlife, and a centre for spiritual studies. Kothiyal also shared his view of how rafting and mountaineering guides should be more responsible towards their profession as they are the eyes and ears of Uttarakhand Tourism. He also said that it was becoming essential to hold guide-training courses for rafting and mountaineering. 🏔️



by the association began with an inaugural address by **Ravi Gosain**, UTPA's Founder President. Here, he urged other associations engaged in the tourism sector in Uttarakhand

generate and help locals to get the maximum benefit out of it, he was also emphatic and cautioned participants about conserving the fragile ecological balance of the region.

# Globus high on



Avalon Waterways, part of the Globus family of brands, is witnessing huge growth for river cruising from India, depicting a maturing tourist market.

Hazel Jain

"Avalon Waterways is our fastest-growing brand in the Indian market," claimed **Scott Nisbet**, President and CEO, Globus family of brands. He was in India recently and visited Bengaluru and Mumbai to meet and thank the company's trade partners for another great year.

"The numbers are still relatively small but it has massive potential in India. When we asked our past travellers if they were interested in river cruising, 61 per cent of them said yes. We see this as a very good sign and we have developed a number of river cruises that are shorter, not the seven or 14-night cruises but three, four and five nights, which is perfect for those who just want a taste



Scott Nisbet  
President and CEO  
Globus family of brands

of what a river cruise is like and maybe add something around it to make it a part of a bigger trip. This will be our focus for 2019 and 2020," Nisbet said.

The company also offers a specialist programme that includes all of its brands. "We find that the India travel agents who complete this programme and become specialists sell three times more

products than the agents who aren't specialists. So, we will continue to promote this in India. We are revamping some parts that will be released this summer so it will be a new and improved version of our programme," he added.

The company is also promoting its 'Globus Escapes' which, according to Nisbet, hits a really low price point since it is off-season travel which means winter itineraries in Europe and other destinations. "I'm continually impressed with our travel agent partners in India. They adjust to changing traveller needs and truly understand our products. More and more Indians have travelled internationally and are open to tours and cruises which are about experiencing new cultures," Nisbet added. 🏞️

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# One Faber rings in 45<sup>th</sup> year

One Faber Group is all set to attract Indian travellers to Sentosa Island in Singapore by offering a host of attractions and activities for its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year at the same price as last year.



TT Bureau

One of the must-see destinations in Singapore is Sentosa Island with its variety of attractions and the only cable car to reach there from the mainland. One Faber Group operates the Singapore Cable Car at Sentosa as well as few other attractions including Singapore Cable Car, Wings of Time, Sentosa Merlion, Faber Peak Singapore, Dusk Restaurant & Bar, Arbora, Good Old Days, Show Bites, FUN Shop, Cable Car Gift Shops and local membership programme Faber Licence.



Patrick Lee  
Director—Sales and Business  
Development, One Faber Group

Patrick Lee, Director—Sales and Business Development, One Faber Group, which is a subsidiary of Sentosa Development Corporation, is thankful for the support received from the Indian market. "We are looking at overseas students because that is a growing market for Indians. We even customise this programme according to students not just for fun but also to ensure that they learn something out of it. We teach them from first generation of cable car to the fifth generation. They can also go back stage for Winds of Time show and learn about the lights and fireworks on water," reveals Lee.

The other market they are looking at is MICE, which, according to Lee, is also a growing segment. "We can customise the experience for 100s of people, create theme parties and dinner, especially with new hotels opening on the island to cater to all segments. We work with our partners Far East Hospitality, who are opening three hotels on the island, which will have 20 per cent of the total inventory on the island."

Lee revealed that the average stay for Indians visiting Singapore is about six days and average days on the island is about 1.45. With a majority of attractions in Singapore on the island, the average stay can be increased for Sentosa with new stay options on the island.

“ We are looking at overseas students because from India as we customise this programme according to students to ensure that they learn something out of it ”

This year, One Faber Group is celebrating its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary

on March 29. Lee revealed that they will have celebrations lined

up for the entire year. "Travelers can pay the same price for all the attractions under our group as they were doing last year without paying anything extra for the activities especially created for the anniversary celebration. Hence, it would be a value addition for the travel-



ers. This is the way we want to thank the Indian customer whilst ensuring sustainability of business," he shared.



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TT Bureau


Hosted by Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board and supported by Adventure Tour Operators Association of India, (ATOAI), PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference & Mart (ATRTCM) 2019 in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, between February 13 and 15, concluded successfully. The event was graced by **Mario Hardy**, CEO, PATA; **Yogendra Tripathi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; **Trivendra Singh Rawat**, Chief Minister, Uttarakhand; **Satpal Maharaj**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttarakhand; **Dilip Jawalkar**, Secretary Tourism, Government of Uttarakhand and **Captain Swadesh Kumar**, President, ATOAI.

Advocating responsible travel and believing in the positive power of adventure tourism, Hardy said that with almost 900 million annual visitors arriving in Asia by 2023, conscientious travel was especially important. He also said that by continuing to interact responsibly with local communities and environments, tourism can truly be a force for good.

During the event, Tripathi highlighted the inherent need for nature in adventure travel activities and said that tourism in the country will continue to grow as visitors increasingly want to experience more. Speaking of new developments in India's tourism landscape, particularly that of adventure travel, Billa said that the country was a 'cradle of the human race' and had been seeing substantial growth in tourism each year, despite global turbulences.

Addressing the delegates, the tourism minister of Uttarakhand called the state "the hotspot of tourism" and thanked delegates for working to add to its prestige. Jawalkar, sharing his view, said that one of the reasons why there should be

more tourism to Uttarakhand is because people in the state are very hospitable and entrepreneurial; partnering with them will be fruitful. Captain Kumar expressed his belief that

adventure travel would be very useful in driving tourism growth in India. He said that the sector encouraged visitors to meet locals and help teach everyone to respect the environment. 



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# Game changers in tourism

Forecasting innovation, winners from India Travel and India MiCE Awards deliberate over what could be the next big thing in the industry whilst suggesting possible policy changes.



**Best Business Hotel**  
**The Suryaa**

“Growth is going to continue in both inbound and domestic segment, feels **Dhananjay Kumar**, General Manager, The Suryaa. “We have witnessed double digit growth in the current year and this trend is going to continue. With digital transformation on an upswing, the hospitality and travel sectors are only touted to grow. There has been growth in terms of domestic guests travelling and staying at hotels. The domestic corporate movement has also seen growth and will continue to grow,” he said.



**Best Wedding & MiCE Hotel**  
**Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur**

“According to **Manish Singh Kushwaha**, General Manager, Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur, the hospitality and travel industry has changed drastically in the last 10 years. He says, “The revenues and profits both have grown steadily and there has been a significant improvement in the use of technology. Artificial Intelligence is going to be a game changer as it has provided natural language processing technique advanced enough to truly interpret questions and deliver intelligent answers.”



**Best Luxury Resort**  
**The Fern Samali Resort**

“**Sumit Rahate**, General Manager, The Fern Samali Resort says that a number of ‘green hotels’ are growing exponentially to win over environmentally-conscious guests. “Sustainability travellers are concerned about the eco-credentials of their accommodation. Artificial Intelligence will contribute more towards increasing a hotel’s reputation and revenue to enhance customer experience. Improvement in loyalty programmes can be seen through blockchain technology,” he said.



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**Deepak Narula**

“**Deepak Narula**, Managing Director, GRNconnect.com believes that technology is used widely in the tourism and hospitality industry. He says, “We have witnessed the positive impact of using new technology in our business. Just because of technology, new players in the industry have grown faster than the traditional travel agencies. Travel associations need to play a bigger role in promoting travel tech tourism in the country by coordinating with the government.”

## Insights into the world of Bali

The U&I Roadshow 2019, organised by U&I Holidays, was held in Kolkata, Delhi, Surat, Ahmedabad, Pune and Mumbai. This show provided an excellent platform for hotels, attractions, restaurants and allied services to showcase all possible avenues relating to the tourism in Bali and Indonesia as a whole. Over 25 participants from Bali along with representatives from Australia and Maldives attended the show.



# The real 'taste' of travel

Gastronomic experiences are increasingly becoming the sole reason among many to travel. **Ruhani Duggal**, Director, Minar Group, speaks about her company's approach to promoting culinary tourism in the country.



TT Bureau

A country as diverse as India is bound to have an array of culinary choices; from Rajasthan's *dal baati* to Kerala's prawn curry, the options are plenty. Sharing statistics on the rise of food-based tourism in the country, **Ruhani Duggal**, Director, Minar Group, says that the culinary tourism market will register a CAGR of over 9 per cent by 2023. "We're now observing a trend where gastronomic experiences are becoming the soul reason of travel. Besides countries like Germany,



Ruhani Duggal  
Director  
Minar Group

France and Spain, India is also making its mark on the world's food map," she says.

So, how does Minar Group promote food tours? Duggal says that they believe in the premise of innovating and always trying to offer more. "Earlier, good food was a bonus but now, good food is the highlight of a journey. We aim to provide our clients with authentic experiences where they can immerse themselves and actually feel the Indian culture in all its glory. A big hit with our clients has been cooking demonstrations at the homes of local chefs," says Duggal.

"When travellers are sightseeing, it's fulfilling when they can explore famous eateries as well such as Karim's in Old Delhi, serving delicious kebabs since 1913. Our culinary voyages take our clients on a fresh adventure, where their palette is exposed to the finest Indian gourmet available in grand restaurants, hotels, as well as famous local eateries. From traditional Indian thalis to tasty street food or exclusive regional delicacies, they can get a real taste of some of

India's most famous culinary traditions," she adds.

The concept of culinary tourism allows the traveller to explore and connect with a region and its culture. It is clear that food holds a soft corner in every traveller's heart.

Indeed, a number of tourist destinations have remained popular only because of the food they offer.

Elaborating on Minar's other initiatives, Duggal adds, "We organise itineraries centred on the type of cuisine our client

would like to experience, from Kerala's curry tours with live, hands-on cooking classes, visits to the Spice Village and unravelling the savoury secrets of Kerala's cuisine to wine tours with visits to some of India's best vineyards. Then, there is the option of

food walks or food crawls available that we usually do in Delhi, Agra, Jaipur and Goa." Their clients often get the chance to interact with local chefs as well as reputed chefs from renowned restaurants to grasp the varied nuances of Indian cuisine.

Duggal concludes by saying, "Whether you enjoy cooking or are just a foodie by heart, this is surely something you'll cherish and relish! After all, food is our common ground; no matter where you're from, food is a universal experience."

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# ecare provides WhatsApp service

**Vivek Sanghi**, Co-founder, ecare Technology Labs, explains how its new WhatsApp notification service for travel agents can empower them to be at par with major OTAs in the market.

TT Bureau

In the technology realm, innovation is the name of the game and it's important to offer clients something new



and relevant every day. Travel technology providers are doing just that and bringing in new concepts to ease the way travel agents work today. Elaborating on how ecare Technology Labs is taking steps to do just that, Sanghi says, "We have cracked the WhatsApp notification code in the booking engine, which is one of the demands from every travel agent. Whenever a customer makes a booking, it sends a push notification on WhatsApp, which no one other than us does in travel technology."

He claims that the response has been very good.

"People are very excited! Though there are costs associated with this, it is interesting to offer this as an industry-first

from our side. This service is an add-on and will be similar to how an SMS is sent after a booking," he claims. While there is a cost for an SMS as well, Sanghi says that the cost for the WhatsApp serv-

**“If we don't enhance, we cease to exist because technology is evolving every day. We are hopeful that we are changing the business model and making it more affordable”**

ice won't be very high for the travel agent and would offer a functional difference to them, allowing them to be on a par with major OTAs of the country.

For ecare Technology Labs, 2018 was a good year. "We added more customers than the previous year. There were

the usual technical challenges and upgrades. We added more modules and now our travel agents can also serve corporate customers better with the booking engine component that we've

added. There are new 'wallet' modules that empower the travel agent to also have cash wallets of their customers," he shares.

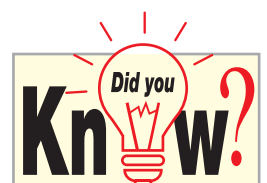
Enhancement of their products is something they do on a regular basis, owing to the demand from customers. "If we don't enhance, we cease

to exist because technology is evolving every day. We are hopeful that we are changing the business model and making it more affordable. We are reducing the on-boarding cost, which is the recurring cost that customers pay, so that we get to see more customers on board," he says.

For Sanghi, currently the challenge is that there is no Return on Investment (ROI) for travel agents when they set up their business online, which is their forte. "The demand is ever-growing, but the cost implications need to be addressed. We work with 100-150 travel agents and almost 40 per cent of them are seeing results and they are happy that they came on board. Hence, we need to bring this to the masses. The agents can initially pay less for the technology and when they earn, they can pay as

they go," he reveals.

Talking about the next game changer in the technology space, Sanghi concludes by saying, "The biggest thing in technology that we see is analytics. Since customers cannot analyse data, I believe it will be Artificial Intelligence (AI) which gives inference to the agents. Apart from that the next big thing is voice."



According to Passport Index 2019, the Indian passport has become 10 ranks stronger in the last five years, thereby improving its position from 77 in 2015 to 67 in 2019

## Click for more products

With new products having been launched last year and more on the anvil for 2019, JustClickKaro.com is looking at a good year of business.

TT Bureau

**Navjot Bhasin**, Director, JustClickKaro.com, says that the OTA launched many new products in 2018 and will be launching four more this year. "B2C, one of the prime products that we came up with and which is set to be officially launched, has already been in the market for two months and has received amazing response in the packages division. Another prime product we launched was for MICE, which began in November last year. While we still don't have the numbers for 2018, in terms of business, we are getting positive results for all the products we have launched. We will be launching our new technology in 2019," he claims.

Bhasin says that JustClickKaro is expanding its presence to new regions in order to cater



Navjot Bhasin  
Director  
JustClickKaro.com

to a growing demand. "We recently opened an office in Azerbaijan. Baku, its capital city, is one of the hottest selling destinations where the growth in Indian tourist arrivals has been 180 per cent. We are expecting this to increase by 1000 per cent this year. For us at JustClickKaro.com, both domestic and international business is on an upward trend. While there may have been a slight dip in the South

India market due to the Kerala floods last year, there has been growth in others, which is over and above the dip."

Speaking of market interruptions, Bhasin says that GST and demonetisation did disturb the market and post their implementation there was a time when people thought that the market was moving in a negative direction. "People were not able to understand the concept of GST; hotels and packages were badly hit and I believe that people are still not clear with the concept. But, to be honest, the market is moving forward and I have not seen a decline. We believe that there is a proper formation required in terms of policies, and if these taxations and GST issues are clear, people will be able to maximise their revenue and things will go in a positive direction," he says.

## Time for digi remittances

**Abdul Hadi Shaikh**, Co-founder and CEO, FxKart.com and FlyRemit, believes that the latter will change outward remittances in the travel business.

TT Bureau

**FlyRemit**, claims Shaikh, is India's first digital remittance platform. In 2018, they launched FlyRemit Pay. "It's a platform which enables DMCs globally to work with Indian agents, opening up the entire global market for them to work seamlessly on a trusted technology platform, which is FlyRemit Pay," he explains.

Shaikh is optimistic that 2019 will be an exciting year for them. "We believe that the market is opening up and that the outbound travel business where we ensure seamless remittances to DMCs is going to be explored. We will have more exciting things coming up in 2019," he claims.

The India market for them is going great, shares Shaikh, and he believes that the new com-



Abdul Hadi Shaikh  
Co-founder and CEO  
FxKart.com and FlyRemit

when we believe and expect the digital remittance platforms to shine," he insists.

He feels that the biggest issue in the B2B space is payments to suppliers. "The people who were receiving the remittances and those who were paying the remittances had a major bottleneck in terms of doing these transactions. It involved a lot of heavy paperwork. We believe

**“The collection of PAN card for outward remittances has made a difference between genuine and non-genuine operators, and we are very happy to be in this space in 2019”**

pliance rules are good for the industry. "The collection of PAN card for outward remittances has made a difference between genuine and non-genuine operators, and we are very happy to be in this space in 2019,

that with our software, we've saved a lot of time for these agents as well as for DMCs, so that they can focus on business and get better margins out," he concludes.



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# Numbers talk at int'l exhibitions

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International trade fairs and exhibitions bring the global marketplace at your fingertips. As influential platforms, they provide an excellent opportunity to assess opinions and




### Online Reach

Fitur 2019 consolidates its leadership in social networks communication strategy of tourism fairs, reaching more than 84 million users across social networks

determine market potential. Here is a quick look at opportunities at these events:

**Fitur 2019**  
One of the first trade shows of the year, FITUR is held every January in Madrid and is a global meeting point for tourism professionals and the leading trade fair for inbound and outbound Ibero American markets.

**ITB 2018**  
As one of the leading travel trade shows, ITB Berlin is held in Berlin in the month of March each year and is the

Exhibitions	Exhibitions Companies	Exhibitions Companies	Trade Participants	Total Participants	Exhibition Area
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	4,664	182	32,642	51,409	—
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# EVENT TALK

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## MARCH 2019

EKTTA Annual Convention	Bhubaneswar	1
Kempinski Roadshow	Mumbai	1
TTH Expo	Ahmedabad	1-3
19th IAAPI Amusement Expo	Mumbai	6-8
ITB	Berlin	6-10
TTH Expo	Vadodara	8-10
MITT 2019	Moscow	12-14
AccorHotels Showcase	Mumbai	13
AccorHotels Showcase	Delhi	15
IITE	Bhubaneswar	15-17
Odisha Travel Bazaar	Bhubaneswar	15-19
IT&CM China	Shanghai	19-21
Karnataka Tourism Roadshow	Mumbai	19
ICPB EGM	Delhi	20
Karnataka Tourism Roadshow	Panaji	20
Dhaka Travel Mart	Dhaka	21-23
Mauritius Tourism Roadshow	Chandigarh	25
IBTM Arabia	Abu Dhabi	25-27
Mauritius Tourism Roadshow	Pune	27
Mauritius Tourism Roadshow	Nagpur	28
Mauritius Tourism Roadshow	Hyderabad	29
Mauritius Tourism Roadshow	Kolkata	30

## APRIL 2019

TAT Luxury Roadshow	Bengaluru	2
Hotel Investment Conference South-Asia (HICSA)	Mumbai	3-4
WTTC Global Summit	Seville, Spain	3-4
TAT Luxury Roadshow	Mumbai	4
AITF	Baku, Azerbaijan	4-6
The Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)	Perth	6-9
ACTE Global Summit	Chicago	7-9
ILTM Africa	Cape Town	7-9
Digital Travel Summit	California	8-10
Karnataka Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	9
Karnataka Tourism Roadshow	Lucknow	10
Korea Tourism Travel Mart	Mumbai	12
Travel Luxury Show	Mumbai	13-14
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Cambodia	13-15
Incredible India roadshow	Sydney	15
COTTM	Beijing	15-17
Incredible India roadshow	Melbourne	16
KITF	Almaty	17-19
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Laos	17-19
Incredible India roadshow	Auckland	18
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Vietnam	21-24
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Thailand	26-29
Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB)	Jaipur	28-30
ILTM Arabia	Dubai	28-29
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# OPPORTUNITY



## Executive Chef

Location : Chokhi Dhani Restaurant London  
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## Sales Executive

Location : Delhi  
No. of Openings : 2  
Experience : Minimum 2 Years

Job Description: Primary Job responsibility will be the smooth & efficient selling of Chokhi Dhani Group of Hotels, in Inbound, Domestic, MICE & Corporate Segments. Delivery of brand appropriate communication materials, through mailers. Participate in meetings, seminars for establishing new key accounts. Compilation of DSR, Weekly & Monthly Sales Plan. Should have Good Hold in field Travel Trade.

## Housekeeping Executive

Location : Jaipur  
No. of Openings : 1  
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## Lufthansa Group Airlines

### New Delhi

Lufthansa Group Airlines has appointed **George Ettiyil** as its new Senior Director Sales—South Asia. He will be responsible for all commercial activities of Lufthansa Group Airlines, including Lufthansa German Airlines, SWISS, Austrian Airlines and Brussels Airlines, in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Ettiyil has held several key positions within the Lufthansa Group for more than 20 years. For the last few years, he served as Head of Global Sales Products & Programs for the Lufthansa Group Hub Airlines.



## Lords Hotels & Resorts

### Mumbai

**Abdul Wahab** has joined Lords Hotels & Resorts' corporate office as Deputy General Manager—Sales. Armed with a bachelor's degree in Arts from Mumbai University and a diploma in Travel and Tourism, he embarked on the journey working with Rath Tours and Travels, Meruka Tours and Travels, and Concord Holidays in the sales department. His assignment with the hospitality sector began with the Sarovar Group of Hotels as Corporate Sales Manager, from where he moved on to join the Carlson Rezidor Group of Hotels at Country Inns and Suites – Navi Mumbai.



## Ambuja Neotia Group

### Kolkata

Ambuja Neotia Group has designated **Subrata Debnath** as the Business Head of its upcoming hospitality project, Raajkutipur - Swabhumi, in Kolkata. In the new role, Debnath will lead the boutique property in delighting guests and patrons, and ensuring that the hotel stays true to its ethos. In his previous assignment, he led the food and beverage operations at Taj City Centre, Gurugram. With an experience spanning over 25 years, 10 unique destinations across the world and a host of international brands, Debnath is known for his exemplary hotel operations skills and preopening of hotels.



## Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa

### Mumbai

**Rajesh Malliya** has been designated as General Manager of Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa. He began his career with Taj Hotels and worked in different positions with the organisation for 11 years. In his current role, Malliya will be responsible to drive Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa to new heights and deliver the Hyatt Centric brand experience. He has worked in various locations in India and has also held General Manager responsibilities in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



## Indore Marriott Hotel

### Indore

**Sriram Ramaswamy** has been appointed as the Director of Sales & Marketing at Indore Marriott Hotel. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the field of sales and marketing in the hospitality industry, and has been responsible for leading teams across departments to achieve set objectives and targets, develop e-marketing and sales strategies to build the brand, as well as increase the revenue for the property. Ramaswamy comes with over 15 years of experience. Having served in some of the leading hotels in the country, he understands the nuances of the hotel business in India.



## Andaz Delhi

### New Delhi

**Vimal Verma** has been promoted to Director of Operations at Andaz Delhi from his previous role as Director of F&B. He will oversee operations of all major departments such as human resources, food services, housekeeping, etc., and will also be required to deal effectively with key stakeholders, both outside and within the property. In addition to the new role, Verma also manages The Hong Kong Club in the capacity of a General Manager. He began as a Corporate Trainee at Hyatt Hotels; 12 years later he became the Director of Food & Beverage at Andaz Delhi.



**Sunishchal Parasnis** has joined Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa as the Director of Sales & Marketing. With over 10 years' of experience in Hospitality Sales and Business Development, Parasnis has vast knowledge of Goa's hospitality business and its trends. At Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa, he is responsible for the sales and marketing process to ensure competitive positioning of the hotel through strategic agendas, planning sales and distribution strategies in relevant domestic and international markets as well as identifying valuable emerging markets. His journey at Hyatt started with Grand Hyatt Mumbai where he was appointed as Sales Executive.



## Renaissance Mumbai & Lakeside Chalet

### Mumbai

**Bhanu Gupta** has been appointed as the Director of Food & Beverage at Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet – Mumbai, Marriott Executive Apartments. In this role, he will be responsible for heading a team of culinary professionals and experts, crafting an exciting and innovative direction to create unique experiences at all the food and beverage outlets in the complex. Gupta has been in the hospitality industry for the past 15 years and has worked with various brands and properties including Radisson Blu MBD, The Taj Mahal Hotel, Park Hyatt - Chennai, Hyatt Regency – Delhi and The Imperial.



## JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata

### Kolkata

**Sabrina Pooja Dey** has been appointed as the Director of Operations at JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata. Here, she will be seen effectuating strategies to support business growth, revenue generation through upselling of products and services, and creation of value through new product designs. Ensuring strict compliance with quality, safety, environment and health standards, she will be required to demonstrate creativity in conceptualising and executing unique guest experiences.



## TALKing People

One great holiday moment for **Scott Nisbet**, President and CEO, Globus family of brands, was when he went to the Amazon with his family. "The kids painted their faces and sat on a canoe to look for an anaconda. Moreover, I live in a beautiful place called Colorado and we get up on the mountains often and ski a lot," he shares. In India, one of Nisbet's best experiences was on a houseboat trip in Kerala. "We rented private boats and went out on the water for a couple of days. It was just beautiful," he says.



**Jurgen Bailom**, President and CEO, Zen Cruises, says his favourite holiday destination is Miami because he has lived there most of his life. "I would consider any place a great holiday destination if you get to play a nice round of golf there. My favourite golf course is Miami Shores. I love playing there because I always get a hole-in-one. Another favourite is the Miami Beach," he shares. He has also participated in and completed four Ironman races. Bailom hasn't travelled much in India, yet. He did visit Kolkata in 1994 when he met Mother Teresa.



De-stressing, for **Neliswa Nkani**, Hub Head – Middle East, India & SE Asia, South African Tourism, is an internal process. "I usually journal and put things down on paper to get more clarity. Long walks through serene paths surrounded by nature also help. I can fluently converse in seven languages – English, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho, Dutch and Spanish. I am also picking up a bit of Hindi, now that I am spending time in India," she revealed. The most memorable holiday for Nkani is when she goes to the Eastern Cape, to a village called Nqhayi, where the Tsitsa Falls flow endlessly.



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# Densification in key cities

Accor has revamped the ibis brand in India and unveiled the new look with the launch of ibis Kolkata Rajarhat. **Jean-Michel Cassé**, Chief Operating Officer—India and South Asia, Accor, throws light on the group's plans for the year and the launch of new brands.



Tripti Mehta

### **Q**What makes the new ibis Kolkata Rajarhat different from other ibis properties in India?

We have taken into account the expectations of our customers to make the hotel trendier, friendlier, and be able to make an emotional connect with the customers. Supported by our marketing campaign, ibism, we have been able to transform the product itself by creating one that is dedicated to its F&B among other things. 'Spice It' is unique in its segment and is promoting the regional gastronomy to all the customers.

### **Q**How would you describe 2018 in terms of Accor's business and that of the industry?

If you look at STR, you will realise that the growth in RevPAR has been minimal, driven slightly by volume and slightly by room rate. So, it was not a bad year for the industry at large, but it was not a good year either. Occupancy in India, too, is still at 65 per cent, the same as last year. One is forced to wonder why the industry is not growing



more than that, either in volume (if we believe there is still space in volume) or in Average Room Rate (ARR). Most of our hotels (once they are stable after two-three years), are at an occupancy of 70-75 per cent. Where we've been growing in 2018, and this was a conscious call, is to grow in the ARR. In terms of ARR, when you look at ibis, we grew in 2018 compared to 2017; RevPAR growth was also at 13 per cent. No one else is getting this kind of increase and most of it is coming from the ARR.

### **Q**What are the group's plans for 2019?

For this year, ibis Kolkata Rajarhat is the only ibis that is going to open. Other properties in the pipeline, slated to be operational within the next three to four years, would be the 259-room ibis Vikhroli, the 184-room ibis Thane, and the 133-room ibis Styles Vagator in Goa. We also have two more hotels to open in 2019 – one will be a Grand Mercure in Ahmedabad,

which will become operational around June, and the other - Mercure Devaaya Retreat in Goa - has already opened.

### **Q**The concentration of some brands such as Fairmont and Swissotel is among the least, in India. Is the group looking to expand them further?

Development in this market is primarily going to be about densification of brands like Novotel and ibis in key cities, but we also want to densify now in the luxury brand space. We want to have more Sofitel, Pullman and Swissotel hotels in India. We also have a Mövenpick in Colombo now, which we took over a couple of months ago. We'd love to bring this brand back in India. 🇮🇳



## New developments

Accor has announced a disruptive and dramatic shift in its loyalty programme into a fully integrated global platform integrating rewards, services and experiences. This new programme will recognise, understand, cherish, communicate with and reward guests, giving access to 'ALL of Accor'. Accor has also launched a new premium visual language including a new corporate logo. The two distinctive brands, Accor and ALL, will utilise the same 'iconic A' monogram which represents the historical emblem of the group.



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