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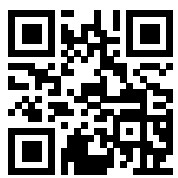
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TRAVTALK PLEDGE

As world tourism day arrives, we want to know from YOU what you will **change** about yourself!

As tourism evolves, how will you evolve?

- I pledge to stop free consultation
- I pledge to go to work on time
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- I pledge to respect my colleagues
- I pledge to attend events on time
- I pledge to never undercut again

Please make a video of yourself pledging change and share your video with us on +91-9818767141 or devika@ddppl.com

Policy must ease doing business

The National Tourism Policy, which had been in the pipeline for a long time, is now under the observation of various trade associations, as the Ministry of Tourism seeks suggestions and feedback from them. **TRAVTALK** spoke to association heads to understand the recommendations they plan to make.



Subhash Goyal
Secretary General, FAITH

“It's a comprehensive policy; the government has tried to cover all the steps. While the policy does talk about skilling people, we must also retain the people who are skilled. There is no mention of such an insurance in the policy. I really feel that right now the first point of the policy should have been bringing tourism back on track. The government wants to make it a world-class policy that is sustainable. Another important thing is to ensure ease of doing business, so development of products must be time-bound.”



Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI

“The policy's aim is to double the tourism in the next 5 years, but we have been trying that since years. We need to relook into the same. We have given collective inputs as FAITH, and we are still drafting some more inputs focusing on the new norms and ways of how tourism is going to be in the future. We have suggested that for travel agents and intermediaries, emerging trends should be considered. Specific central government policies should be there to achieve travel agents and intermediaries' parity for survival.”



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

“Developers should be provided tax incentives/holidays for setting up projects in Tier-II and III cities. We also ask Ministry of Tourism to rationalise taxes, and visa rules should be adopted in comparison to our neighbouring countries. We should learn from leading destinations about best practices that will boost arrivals, especially for MICE. Ministry of Tourism should focus on budgetary allocations. Another issue is the absence of ease of doing business.”

Contd on page 10 ►

IATA: To be or not to be?

That is the question a lot of the travel agents are asking themselves these days. **TRAVTALK** speaks to IATA as well as the various national trade bodies to get their perspective to help our readers make an informed decision going forward.

FY2020 saw 97% renewal of accredited agencies in India: IATA



Hazel Jain

With air travel business down to almost a halt, many ticketing agents are questioning whether they should renew their International Air Transport Association (IATA) membership or not. Meanwhile, the period of agency accreditation for

IATA is based on the calendar year. “So for the renewal that takes effect from January 1, 2021, agents will need to complete the renewal formalities, including making the fee payments, by the end of the year,” says **Albert Tjoeng**, IATA's Assistant Director, Corporate Communications - Asia Pacific. Sharing details of the kind of member-

Why be an IATA-accredited agent?

- ❖ Access to IATA airline members with single Sales Agency Agreement, to sell international and or domestic tickets
- ❖ Access to the IATA BSP as an efficient interface for invoicing and payment between airlines and travel agents
- ❖ Recognition as a professional travel trade organisation

ship that Indian agents have opted for this year, Tjoeng shares, “Almost 97 per cent of the accredited business locations in India renewed their accreditation for the 2020 calendar year. Of those,

about 150 switched from the ‘GoStandard’ accreditation model to the ‘GoLite’ accreditation model. There are about 4,313 accredited agent locations in India, of which 2930 have GoStandard



Albert Tjoeng
Assistant Director, Corporate Communications - APAC, IATA

accreditation and 1383 have GoLite accreditation.” When asked whether IATA would

look at reducing its membership fee this year considering the aviation landscape, he replies in the negative adding, “The fee for renewing the IATA accreditation, which is determined by the Passenger Agency Conference, remains unchanged. Agents are reminded to complete their renewal formalities, including the payment of the fee, by the end of the year in order to maintain their IATA accreditation.”

Contd on page 8 ►

“IATA's mission is to represent, lead, and serve the airline industry”

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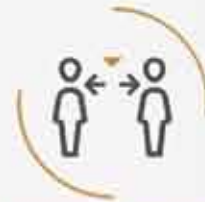
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Rural tourism in focus this year

The 2020 edition of World Tourism Day, themed 'Tourism and Rural Development', will celebrate the unique role that the sector plays in providing opportunities outside of big cities and preserving cultural and natural heritage.



Manas Dwivedi

Celebrated on September 27 every year, World Tourism Day is counted as one of the most important days for the industry. The 2020 edition also comes as governments look to the sector to drive recovery from the effects of the pandemic and with the enhanced recognition of tourism at the highest United Nations



UNWTO
World Tourism Organization

level. This was most notably illustrated with the recent release of a landmark policy brief on tourism from **Antonio Guterres**, Secretary-General, United Nations, in which he explained that "for rural communities, indigenous peoples



Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary-General, UNWTO

and many other historically marginalized populations, tourism has been a vehicle for integration, empowerment and generating income."

For the first time in the 40-year history of World Tourism Day, the official celebration will not be hosted by a single Member State of the United Nations specialised agency. Instead, nations from the Mercosur bloc (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Chile joining with observer status) will serve as joint hosts.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UNWTO, says, "All around the world, tourism empowers rural communities, providing jobs and opportunity, most notably



Placing rural development at the heart of tourism policies can transform the livelihoods of millions

for women and youth. Tourism also enables rural communities to hold onto their unique cultural heritage and traditions, and the sector is vital for safeguarding habitat and endangered species.

This World Tourism Day is a chance to recognise the role tourism plays outside of major cities."

"Our sector is among the hardest hit with millions of jobs at risk. As we join forces to restart tourism, we must live up to our responsibility to ensure that tourism's benefits are shared by all. Placing rural development at the heart of tourism policies can transform the livelihoods of millions, preserve our environment and our culture," he further says. Moreover, development through tourism can also keep rural communities alive. It is estimated that by 2050, 68% of the world population will live in urban areas, while 80% of those currently living in 'extreme poverty' live outside of towns and cities. Young people in rural communities are three times more likely to be unemployed than older adults. 📉

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TRAVTALK

VIEWPOINT

A worthy pledge

Tourism! A sector that contributes to the economy and the society, builds awareness about a region's history and lets us immerse ourselves in the cultural ethos of a place, making us realise that no matter where in the world we are, we're really not that different after all. But, is the culture of a place only defined by its monuments and cities, shopping hubs and business districts, food and cafés? Or should the truly discerning tourist go beyond the oft-visited sites into the outskirts of cities, into the rural districts, and into the basic way of life to truly understand a destination and let its people benefit in the cause? As World Tourism Day, on September 27, brings to light 'Tourism and Rural Development', let us also pledge to restore the very essence of tourism, and to a rightful and honest way of work. In the process, let us genuinely create a sustainable 'new normal' with a strong foundation, so a pandemic such as this does not devastate us, our industry and those whose livelihoods depend on the sector. The time is now to think beyond, think different, and create magic!



Pledge to

- ❖ Attend events on time
- ❖ Respect my colleagues
- ❖ Never undercut again
- ❖ Stop free consultation
- ❖ Go to work on time
- ❖ Never reach the airport late
- ❖ Only ask for one quote

Unclear liabilities for hotels

Many state governments requisitioned hotels to be attached to hospitals, but failed to account for the excessive legal liabilities that were to fall upon a hotel during its untraditional functioning. Dheeraj Nair, Partner at J Sagar Associates, discusses some of these legal nuances.

Hotels, already privy to personal information, now have access to more than such information they would have had hitherto. These details constitute 'sensitive' personal data under the Information Technology Act, 2000. There are statutory prescriptions for the collection, storage and dealing of such sensitive personal data under the Information Technology (Reasonable security practices and procedures and sensitive personal data or information) Rules, 2011, along with other requirements such as consent to collect data as well as the requirement to communicate the intended purpose and recipients.

Most hotels that have not been able to update their privacy policy or disclaimer/consent forms to be aligned to the existing exigencies and ensure strict compliance with the statutory compliances are at risk. Any lapse may attract a legal liability on such hotels even though they have thrown open their doors to accommodate the medical exigency of the company. Hopefully, the enforcement agencies will be flexible in their approach so as to not incriminate well-intended hotels that stepped up during the time of crisis.

Medical waste disposal

Hospitals have a host of environmental law compliances which may differ from the standards that may apply to hotels. Distinguishably, hospitals also have an obligation under the Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules, 2016, which prescribe safe disposal of bio-medical waste. Traditional use of hotels may

require strict compliances for bio-medical waste, but as extensions of a COVID-hospital, they will now also be in possession of bio-medical waste such as contaminated human tissue, contaminated bedding with blood or body fluid, cotton swabs, etc.

In such a situation, will the hotel be liable for lapses in proper disposal of bio-medical waste when in fact its traditional operations never required such compliances? Though it seems reasonable to assume that a hotel can easily be distinguished from

Hotels that have not been able to update their privacy policy or disclaimer/consent forms are at risk

a hospital, there remains an apprehension of the loss and damage that may be caused merely by engaging in the prolonged, expensive and reputation-damaging process involved in establishing this distinction before the concerned regulator/authority.

Medico-legal liabilities

Hotels do not have the infrastructure to provide the specialised care available in medical facilities. Neither do they have the requisite sterilisation and sensitisation processes that are adopted in healthcare centres. The internal hotel policies and SOPs only provide for staff training

Reputational hazard

The lack of information or protocols for certification of disinfection when the hotels are returned to their actual operators and owners, may require hotel owners to invest substantial sums in reputation management. Stigma further impacts revenue, an issue which is aggravated due to the lack of a formalised revenue model discussed between the government, the hospital and hotels. Therefore, the requisitioned hotels, which are already cash-strapped, are presently operating with no estimation of their operational revenue, but bleeding extra expenses on sanitisation operations. This is further worsened by the fact that the government is disrupting regular business operations when it does not requisition the maximum capacity of a hotel, but only partial occupancy. The empty rooms will, understandably, lose preference for business and leisure travellers.

and guest management during and after the pandemic. There is obviously a lack of medical protocols due to the lack of expertise, and in this case, also the lack of government support and initiative.

One could assume that the suspected/patients occupying hotel premises are the liability of the hospital in which they are being treated, but what is the guarantee than in case of a lapse the medical negligence claim will not array the hotel for joint and several liability?

What is to happen in a situation where a consumer makes a claim for damages for contracting the virus during his stay at the hospital, or the hotel environment deteriorating his health conditions? While the enforceability of such tortious claims in Indian courts is questionable, mere institution of a claim would be enough to submerge a hotelier into protracted legal proceedings.

Ministry's SOPs

The SOPs of the Ministry of Health contain some unreasonable requirements on pri-

vate hotels and restaurants, to impose isolation on suspected patients, which may not be feasible on the Indian public without governmental intervention. But, most significantly, the SOPs evidence the government's missed opportunity to address the liability concerns, thus failing to loop the lacuna on liability in case of lapses during hotel quarantine.



Dheeraj Nair
Partner, J Sagar Associates



Vishrutiy Sahni
Associate, J Sagar Associates

(This article is co-authored by Vishrutiy Sahni, an associate at J Sagar Associates. Views expressed are the author's own. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)

IPL teams partner with EbixCash

Ebixcash Tours & Travels has become the preferred travel and Forex partner of five IPL teams. The company will handle travel needs of players and provide end-to-end support, including charter flights, ground transportation, foreign exchange, hotel rooms and event insurance coverage.



Manas Dwivedi

A fully-owned subsidiary of Ebix Inc., EbixCash has announced that it is handling the travel needs for five of the eight franchises involved in the 82-day Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket sporting extravaganza in the UAE. Under the leadership of **Naveen Kundu**, Managing Director, EbixCash Tours & Travels, EbixCash has been able to secure this prestigious assignment. As part of this engagement of EbixCash by five of the IPL franchises, EbixCash is handling 19,000-plus hotel room night bookings for four franchises,



Our depth of products, services and international expanse was instrumental in us being selected

chartered flights for five franchises, ground transportation for two franchises, foreign exchange needs for the entire entourage of four of the teams, and event insurance coverage for one team.

Kings XI Punjab, Delhi Capitals, Rajasthan Royals, Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings are the five franchises that have engaged EbixCash Tours & Travels for varied travel needs of each of the franchises.

Sharing his exhilaration on the deal, Kundu says, "We are honoured to have been chosen as the vendor of choice by the majority of the IPL franchises. Their decision was made easier with Ebix-

EBIXCASH

Cash emerging as the only end-to-end services provider who could handle their varied needs under one window. Our depth of products and

services, international expanse, travel expertise and past record was instrumental in us being selected for this prestigious engagement."

Robin Raina, Chairman of the Board, President & CEO,

Ebix, says, "In COVID-19 times, when most travel providers are struggling, we have managed to secure this prestigious win. I congratulate Naveen and his team for this engagement. I am especially pleased that Naveen

has started his taking over as MD of EbixCash Tours & Travels on this strong note. He has a fantastic record with us over the last two years, having grown the Mercury Travel division that he previously headed for us, by more



Naveen Kundu
MD, EbixCash Tours & Travels

than 300 per cent over a span of two years." ↓

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Technology to drive new NORMAL

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Moratorium up, bankruptcy looms

Ravi Gosain, Managing Director, Erco Travels, says that while the moratorium may have been a relief for some while it lasted, with its limit up, travel professionals now face the risk of bankruptcy. Hence, he advises tour operators to look for other business opportunities just as he has, as travel is not going to come back to normal for a year or so more.



Nisha Verma

The COVID-19 pandemic has been surrounded by uncertainty since its very beginning and while it did give a break to those who'd been working for so many years, it soon spread panic among the industry and the world, with people fearing for themselves and their businesses. After all the havoc it caused and the support the industry sought from the Indian government, **Ravi Gosain** says he was disappointed. "We did not get any support from the government because the spectrum of this pandemic is much bigger. It is not just tourism, but all sectors are in a bad situation except es-



Ravi Gosain
Managing Director, Erco Travels

entials," he says. Therefore, adds Gosain, he decided to explore and pursue new avenues and opportunities. "I knew from the beginning that if this situation prevailed beyond August, we would need to be prepared for the next few years for travel to come back to a pre-COVID level. I took the challenge and was upskilling myself in finance and was studying. I took up

a course on angel investors and venture capitalists. I thought that if I get into investing or consultancy or in-

idea and got on board. Now, I have invested in an Agri-tech start-up," he shares.

Post-moratorium fears

Now that the moratorium has ended and travel firms have to pay EMIs, Gosain feels that immaterial of the size of the company, they may not be in a position to pay even a single bill. "That will be a huge setback. Most of the employees or employers took moratorium, and they were expecting that something will roll out after August. However, we don't see anything yet. We know that this month will also go away like that and there is not much hope for international flights resuming. I fear that there will be many bank-



There is not much hope for international flights resuming. I fear there will be many bankruptcies

ruptcies on a personal level or company level. People will start panicking, as they will have to also pay money back for the last 3-4 months. This is very scary, and I don't know what plan the government has. They may see people coming out on roads and protesting," he adds.

Support is must

"We need support from the state," asserts Gosain, adding, "there is only one ray of hope — many people in the industry are shifting to an alternate profession. It's not about making money but being engaged in something. If tourism returns, I can come back and run the show." 🐦

UK wants to be front and centre

Vishal Bhatia, Country Manager, India for VisitBritain, says that he is already seeing a small but significant number of visitors from India visiting their friends and family in the UK in recent weeks. He shares that the UK is also building a new immigration system to ensure it remains open to genuine visitors.



Hazel Jain

What are your expectations in terms of visitor traffic?

We have seen a revival of flights between major cities in India and London as part of the 'travel bubble' agreement between the two countries, for people who wish to repatriate. We are seeing a small but significant number of visitors from India visiting their friends and family in the UK in recent weeks.

How can the trade get involved in VisitBritain's social media engagements?

VisitBritain is keeping Britain front of mind globally for when the time comes for us to promote travel again. 'Day Dreaming with VisitBritain' is one of our campaigns that



Vishal Bhatia
Country Manager - India, VisitBritain

we are currently hosting on our website and promoting through our social media channels. It invites our partners to contribute via blogs on their memories of Britain.

Please share on-ground information for agents.

In the UK, businesses and visitor attractions across the UK have been working flat-out to welcome customers back safely, adapting and in-

Visa update!

The Ministry of Home Affairs recently eased restrictions to allow Indian nationals who hold a valid visa under any category to travel under the agreement as long as the country you are travelling to permits entry to Indian nationals.

novating to meet new ways of working and still providing a great visitor experience. The 'We're Good To Go' industry standard and consumer mark launched in partnership with the tourism organisations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, is supporting visitors to book a break in the UK with confidence, reassuring travellers that tourism businesses are

following official guidelines to welcome them back safely. More than 35,000 businesses across the UK have signed up to 'We're Good To Go'.

How can agents keep themselves updated about any changes for travel?

We have launched a campaign 'Know Before You Go'

to encourage those intending to travel to the UK, to check before setting off. Information including the latest tourism-related news and information for UK tourism businesses on COVID-19, including links to useful information and advice is available on VisitBritain's dedicated COVID-19 hub.

Are you initiating any discussion with your key agent partners in India to guide them on travel protocols?

We are supporting our travel industry partners to ensure they have access to VisitBritain's recovery approach and campaign information as it develops.

We have continued to engage with more than 4,000 partners in the travel

trade through webinars since April 2020, providing the latest information on travel to Britain and keeping them updated as hotels and attractions reopen.

On-going updates including resources for the international travel trade are available on VisitBritain's trade site.

We are supporting our travel industry partners to ensure they have access to our recovery approach

Stay updated!

Information including the latest tourism-related news and information for UK tourism businesses on COVID-19, including links to useful information and advice is available on VisitBritain's dedicated COVID-19 hub.

An event-full comeback for

DUBAI



The beat is back in Dubai's events sector with an array of regional and international artists heralding its restart. Event organisers have received a boost from Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism), which has given the green light for hosting live events, indoor and outdoor concerts in line with health and safety guidelines.

The restart of Dubai's events sector has been made possible by the decisive citywide management of the global pandemic leading to a phased resumption of events and entertainment activities, which started with a line-up of events hosted under the Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS) programme. Event organisers received a further boost from Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism), which has given the green light for hosting live events, indoor and outdoor concerts in line with health and safety guidelines.

As one of the first few cities in the world to not only reactivate the events industry but also bring back live events, Dubai has seen huge success in the summer with fans making a beeline to indoor entertainment venues to watch their international and regional stars in action while adhering to a range of precautionary measures, including social distancing rules to ensure the health and safety of both attendees and performers.

Ahmed Al Khaja, Chief Executive Officer, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), says, "As a multi-faceted destination that offers visitors a multitude of different experiences, events form a key element of Dubai's tourism strategy that is guided by the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai to ensure Dubai becomes the most visited city in the world. The successful management of the pandemic has allowed us to come out of this unprecedented situation to once again leverage the events and entertainment sectors, as part of efforts to accelerate growth in the tourism industry."

He adds that Dubai has had a long history of hosting leisure events featuring A-list musicians and performers, who have made the city a part of their world tours over the years. "We are now excited to see the events environment regaining its vibrancy with the return of live events. Dubai Tourism will continue working with its stakeholders and partners to keep up



Ahmed Al Khaja
CEO, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment

the momentum in the events sector, as we prepare to cater to the diverse and evolving needs of visitors ahead of the full reopening of the tourism industry," Al Khaja says.

Sold-out shows!

Making his debut in the UAE, world-renowned comedian Jimmy Carr certainly helped put the smile back on audiences in Dubai by performing at three successive sold-out shows. Carr, who was originally scheduled to perform two shows at Dubai World Trade Centre on August 13 and 14, accommodated a third show due to popular demand.

With Dubai leading the way in resuming live events, the Carr shows were a major safety test that the events sector passed without a hitch. From

the time of purchasing tickets online and to the point of arriving at the venue and leaving at the end of the show, fans with masks on enjoyed a safe, smooth and seamless process. It was contactless payment, guests were checked for their temperature on arrival at the venue, tickets were scanned at multiple entry points that helped eliminate queues, signs on

Successful management of the pandemic has allowed us to leverage the entertainment, events sector

the floor indicated how far should an individual or group stand apart from the other, and people were also able to walk comfortably between the aisles.

Laughter Factory, a long-standing Dubai-based comedy club, also contributed towards bringing back the vibe to the events and entertainment sector in Dubai, providing further excitement to the city's summer calendar which showcased nine shows featuring six of the best British talent in the comedy world. Hotels served as the venues for the Laughter Factory comedy series with a table seating arrangement for

Dubai Calendar

Dubai gets its vibrancy from the diverse events that are hosted for much of the year and on almost every weekend covering art, culture, entertainment and sports, which cater to people of all nationalities, cultural backgrounds and walks of life. Dubai Calendar, the digital platform of the Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), a part of Dubai Tourism, is involved in almost every major event taking place in Dubai and partners with event organisers in hosting numerous events throughout the year. As the city's go-to events and entertainment guide, Dubai Calendar also provides residents and tourists the opportunity to dive into the heart of the city by discovering upcoming events and offerings for free through its website and App, as well as buying event tickets quickly and securely through the App's purchasing platform.

the audience, in addition to implementing safety measures.

On August 21, Emirati comedians Ali Al Sayed and Mina Liccione had the audience in stitches during their live show at Dubai Opera, as part of DSS. August also saw Arab singing sensations Saif Nabeel and Mohammed As-saf perform live at the Dubai Opera on August 20, while top Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam enthralled fans at a live concert on August 21 at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Ensuring safety

Since the reopening of the city to tourists on July 7, several sectors including the tourism, retail and events industries have launched various initiatives to ensure Dubai is on the right track towards normality, while emphasising that health and safety is the top priority. Dubai launched the DUBAI ASSURED stamp, a compliance programme to certify and recognise hotels, tourism and retail establishments and

attractions that have implemented all safety guidelines. The city was also awarded the Safe Travels global safety stamp by the World Travel & Tourism Council.

With malls across the city 100 per cent open and retail sales beginning to pick up, the return of events is also a significant development for Dubai's Retail Calendar featuring major festivals and events throughout the year. Residents and visitors have also shown they still have a strong appetite for events and great confidence in the safety measures that are in place, providing greater

inspiration to the industry as it prepares for a busy season in the remaining months of 2020. The line-up ahead includes the Fall/Winter Collection retail campaign, the Dubai Home Festival, the Dubai Fitness Challenge and the iconic Dubai Shopping Festival, which kicks off in December.



IATA obligated to serve agents?

If IATA does not play the role of a mediator between the airlines and agents, does it risk being irrelevant? Even though agents feel that it has leanings towards the airlines, membership to this community comes with its own set of advantages, or is being at the mercy of big consolidators for refunds from airlines the only challenge for non-IATA agents?

► Contd from page 1

'IATA has its benefits'

Membership to the hallowed hallways of IATA comes at a price, but even as travel agents start to question its relevance in times of crisis such as this, it's important to look at the benefits this membership offers agents.

Pradip Lulla, Acting President and VP, TAFI, feels that



even though IATA agents are vehement about trading credit shells with refunds right now, they must look at the other side of the coin. "The IATA membership comes with a host benefits such as access to their platform and to the GDS systems. But most of all, the IATA stamp lends credibility to the agent. Being

accredited as an IATA agent helps in getting our money back in cash from the airlines. This is because we can have a direct access to process refunds – either direct credit or filing a refund application and being in control of



Pradip Lulla
Acting President and VP, TAFI

the refund process." Lulla however adds, "IATA today must offer solutions to protect the agents' money that could be lost due to closure of weak airlines via industry insurance. Else,

the agents will rescind their membership."

IATA offers two options to agents – GoStandard and GoLite. The GoLite accreditation option allows them to transact with airlines through BSP exclusively using the IATA EasyPay and card forms of payment. Go-Lite agents can benefit from IATA accreditation with fewer financial requirements and lower percentage of bank guarantee. Lulla adds, "The IATA platform is a great advantage to the participating airline with the global ratio in the range of 0.5% default. But airlines don't take this advantage and give ticketing capabilities to maximum travel agents to garner more business with practically no risk." ➔

'IATA is dying a natural death'

Pointing out that IATA was created to give joint bank guarantees to member airlines, **Subhash Goyal**, Secretary General, FAITH, says, "Even under the aircraft act, it says that the agents must be compensated. The commission can be decided between the airlines and the agent. Unfortunately, this has not happened because I believe that the DGCA in India is not as strong as the DGCA in other countries. This means that apart from IATA, our government is also to be blamed partly."

However, he claims, "IATA unfortunately is dying a natural death. By taking a backseat in terms of handling agents' issues, IATA is committing suicide. Despite charging a hefty fee, it did not support the

agents when airlines like Kingfisher and Jet Airways went bust. It is not just an association which is only for the airlines, but for the agents also. A bulk of the money being paid to IATA is from over a million



Subhash Goyal
Secretary General, FAITH

agents across the world. The reason these agents joined IATA initially was to get commissions. Today, things like black-marketing of air tickets happen because agents don't get commissions. If all agents



start getting a commission of around five per cent, it would be a great move. We should pressurise the government that travel agents should be given commissions; else it is giving rise to unscrupulous practices. Another option is to increase the airfare by five per cent."

Insisting that IATA should stand up for agent members, he says, "If IATA does not play the desired role of a mediator between the travel agent and the airline, then IATA is becoming irrelevant. That would be the biggest tragedy of aviation and the tourism industry." ➔

'Basic IATA features must be free'

Due to the pandemic, IATA's billing and settlement plan (BSP) has failed. The time has come to revise it and ensure a complete change in the Resolutions of IATA.



Jay Bhatia
Vice President, TAAI

Unfortunately, the laws are one-sided. Financial securities are obtained by IATA on behalf of the airlines for agent defaults, but no securities for defaults/winding-up of the airline members of IATA.

It should be noted that over the years the agent default has come down to 0.0008 per cent – approximately Rs 30 lakh only as against sale of over Rs 42,000 crore (in 2019) by accredited agents under BSP. Compare this over Rs 8,000 crore lost by agents due to the shutdown of Jet Airways alone.

IATA, on the directions of the administrator of the government, appointed on NCLT matter of the airline could only pay back eight per cent of the total value of the claim. This has hit our trade badly. Even the traveller has been affected.

Basic features must be given free to all accredited agents. We have appealed to IATA directly as well as through UFTAA to ensure a win-win

situation for all. International carriers do not follow the law of the land (India) citing global IATA norms, which is not true. Even after com-



ing on a common platform, airlines are revising their policies and not following universal policies as per the Resolutions. Yes, the IATA annual fee is very high and TAAI has already appealed to IATA seeking its reduction. TAAI has also appealed on the matter of commission with MoCA by demanding minimum five per cent on the total airfare from all airlines. ➔

'Non-IATA is the way to go'

Members of the Enterprising Travel Agent's Association (ETAA) include travel agents and companies who sell products such as tours, cruises, hotels, car rentals, etc. We at ETAA want to give every travel agent a chance to be a part of an association. When we started this association, the non-IATA members had nowhere to go. Hence, to support these agents we started allowing non-IATA members also. Further, our members are mainly those running mom-and-pop organisations working mainly for the passion of travel. As the commission on air tickets today is negligible, it only makes sense to issue tickets through big consolidators and concentrate more

on tour packages. Hence, it does not make sense to pay high membership fee to IATA.



Dharmesh Advani
National General Secretary, ETAA



The only challenge is that a non-IATA agent is at the mercy of big consolidators for refunds from airlines.

There is also a lot of investment that needs to be done. These investments

About ETAA

The Enterprising Travel Agent's Association (ETAA) represents the non-IATA retail tour operator in India. It is the largest association of non-IATA travel agents in the country and probably the world.

are not practical in today's world. We encourage our members to register for IATA TIDS which is much cheaper and provides a unique identification code, recognised by airlines and most travel industry suppliers, such as hotels and car rental companies, and their electronic reservation systems worldwide.

ETAA has around 800 members pan India today. ➔

Our Faith is completely shaken

Airline commissions have gone down to almost zero, but IATA fees have multiplied almost seven times. Does the IATA membership benefit agents enough to renew it every year? **Tarun Malhotra**, Director of InORBIT TOURS, shares his view.

In the current situation, most of us have cut down salaries of our own staff who have been with us for more than a decade. On the other hand, we are forced to pay IATA fees even this year so that they do not have pay cuts. We should be proud of ourselves as Indian travel fraternity under the able leaders of various associations. The IATA fee 20 years ago was less than US\$ 100 when the agency commission was around 13 per cent. Today, the IATA fee is US\$ 765

while commission to agent is ZERO. What a progress by 97 travel trade associations!

IATA has always been pro-airline and this is widely accepted by all associations across India. There is very little or no trust in our associations. Most of these associations charge Rs 7,000 per member. IATA charges US\$ 360 per licence and another US\$ 385 for enhanced programme for easing refunds. This brings it to a total of almost Rs 55,000 being paid to IATA. This amounts to al-

If no travel agent renews membership, IATA will be forced to wind up or cooperate with agents

most Rs 20 crore paid by the Indian travel agents, which the above associations conveniently ignore or have accepted. Imagine if no travel agent renews their membership? What is the maximum IATA can do? It will be forced

to wind up or cooperate with the travel agents. Why doesn't IATA force any airline to give refunds?

Benefits of IATA?

Apart from it being a payment platform linking payment of agents to airlines, BSP and refunds, there seems to be no other benefit of IATA. If any agent goes bankrupt or shuts shop due to the current pandemic, will IATA refund the fees paid as we agents have not been serviced by IATA this year?

We strongly feel that IATA should carry forward the fees paid for 2020 to 2021 with no additional cost. This is the least we can expect from IATA in troubled times

such as this, as well as to reduce their fees for the future and make it uniform.

We are not a member of any association anymore. They don't even bother as to why their members are quitting their association. It is time for them to introspect and find a solution.



Tarun Malhotra
Director, InORBIT TOURS

(Views expressed are the author's own.
The publication may or may not subscribe to them.)

Join the movement

Tarun Malhotra, along with Jyoti Singh, has started a Whatsapp Group called 'IATA?' to raise this issue.

Breaking News

- Registration is must for tourism service providers in AP
- International flights from Kushinagar airport in 2 months
- Mumbai airport launches contactless check-in facility
- IATO Convention in Ahmedabad postponed till September 2021
- Economic advisor assures FHRAI of action against erring banks
- United States keeps India on 'do not travel' advisory list
- PATA India to conduct webinar with key speakers on Sept 17
- Need to create domestic markets to survive: Suman Billa

GPS & TWAI offer NDC platform

Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) has tied up with Airlines Technology by TWAI to offer the NDC technology to its members as part of its 'Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives'. The new offering is said to be affordable for the travel agent, with a substantial difference in price from other platforms.

Nisha Verma

Harmandeep Singh Anand, Managing Director, GPS, has revealed that they have tied up with TWAI to bring the NDC (New Distribution Capability) technology which, according to him, is the new solution and the new normal. "TWAI has almost 19 airlines on the leader-board of IATA NDC, and we are going to target the 4000 IATA agents across India, and this technology will be useful to all. TWAI also has some additional products and we will be supporting them to put them forward to the Indian travel community," he said.

Trideep Aggarwal, Co-Founder and Director, Air-



Harmandeep Singh Anand
Managing Director, GPS

lines Technology by TWAI, shared that airlines have been pushing more for NDC for the last few years. "NDC allows airlines to distribute new things which they were not able to do earlier. Currently, there are about 19 airlines that are on our platform and by the end of the year, it will be closer to 23," he added.

Simplifying the NDC technology, Aggarwal said,

"NDC allows airlines to market additional products besides just an airline ticket, which can

The price difference is substantial. The agent can save ₹1000-20,000 per ticket

— Harmandeep Singh Anand

include lounge access, Wi-Fi prior to boarding the plane, better meals, extra luggage, etc. Customers want to buy many of these



Trideep Aggarwal
Co-Founder and Director, Airlines Technology by TWAI

things prior to the trip and NDC allows airlines to sell these additional products, if the customer decides to buy them at the time of booking."

Plan for India

Highlighting their plan for India, Aggarwal said that they have partnered with GPS to market to micro, small and mid-size agencies. "Our goal is to launch affordable products in India to be used

by travel agents, giving them a better experience. Target-wise, we are hoping to market it to the GPS network and

Our goal is to launch affordable products, to give agents a better experience

— Trideep Aggarwal

be able to have an adoption because the pricing and the target marketing has been done to suit micro to mid-size agencies," he added.

Price model

Explaining the price model, Anand said, "One-time setup fee is around Rs 12,000, which is nothing if you have the system in place that is the API integration of the NDC. After that it will be a per passenger fee depending on the number of bookings one generates, which would be as low as Rs75 per booking. It's a very nominal cost, which one pays when they use the system. In fact, till March 31, 2021, the first 300 bookings will be without any cost. Hence, if you look at the calculation, it gives you almost Rs 24,000 worth. Hence, with a substantial price difference, the agent can save anything from Rs 1000 per ticket to as much as Rs 20,000 per ticket."

Rent villas from Baywatch Stayzz

'Adversity is a blessing in disguise' goes the old saying, and no one understands this better than **Manish Kriplani**, MD, Baywatch Travels, who has helped fill the gap in demand and supply for luxury villas through his latest venture - Baywatch Stayzz. The brand offers serviced luxury villas for rent, soon to be available through an online portal as well.

Nisha Verma

The idea to launch Baywatch Stayzz came to **Manish Kriplani** when he saw the demand for driving holidays while talking to his clients. "We realised that most of the villas available in the market were average, with no housekeeping, butler service, etc. I wanted to fill that void with luxury villas offering a butler service. I wanted a full-service villa with a minimum area of 5,000 sqft on the beach. I started talking to friends who had such villas and realised that there was a huge availability of very high-end luxury villas that the own-



Manish Kriplani
MD, Baywatch Travels

ers wanted to give. The idea was to be different from an Airbnb; we didn't want to give a villa where a person opens the door and there is nobody there. We are Indians, we want to be pampered," he shares. For service and staff, Baywatch is talking to housekeeping and

hospitality companies, and Kriplani says that there is a huge availability of these resources caused by the loss in jobs due to the pandemic.

I wanted a full-service villa with an area of 5,000 sqft on the beach. The idea was to be different from Airbnb

Today, he is working with different clients on different models. "There are a few luxury villas we are taking on lease, some are on revenue-share, and for others we are only doing sales and marketing. We have a whole range of modus operandi for obtaining villas," he adds. Kriplani is also preparing an e-commerce portal that will host all these properties and villas.

Currently, there are nine villas in the portfolio, and the company is planning to bring more under the Baywatch Stayzz umbrella.

Expansion plans

Kriplani says that he has big plans for Baywatch Stayzz, and should have around 50 villas in Chennai in the next few months. "Then we will go to Bengaluru, Kodaikanal and

Ooty. We are talking to potential investors who know the industry. The way forward is to raise funds from a few angel investors and some other sources as well. We can put up offices in Delhi and Mumbai, because there have to be at least 200-250 listings for a company to be commercially viable and that's what our plan is," he says.

In times of COVID-19 and with hygiene protocols a priority for everyone, Kriplani says he has ensured that social distancing, cleanliness and hygiene be maintained at all properties. "My priority for these villas is to maintain top-notch hygiene and cleanliness for our clients. Every time a client checks out, we do proper deep cleaning and sanitise everything. We have ticked all the boxes for a good

holiday for a client. At this point of time, when they have nowhere to go, all they have to do is pack their bags, get into their cars and drive to one of these villas where everything is taken care of," he says, adding that clients will also get a villa that has some character and charm.

Open to weddings

With no dearth of innovative options, Kriplani says that they are even looking at having intimate weddings at the villas because all of them have huge lawns. "We are specialists in destination weddings and I hope that with this, we will provide the same curated luxury weddings that we have provided overseas. The guest limit will be 50-70 people. Our plan is to make sure that we provide good venues. 🐦

WTTC calls for the restoration of 'air corridors' between financial centres as vital to reviving international business travel and help kick-start economic recovery. The pilot corridor between London and NY could herald this return.

Tourism should be a priority sector

Azerbaijan virtual travel event on October 14

Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB), the national promotion body designed to support the growth of Azerbaijan's tourism industry, will host its biggest virtual travel trade event - Travel Business Azer-



Florian Sengtschmid
Chief Executive Officer
Azerbaijan Tourism Board

baijan Online (TBA 2020) - on October 14, 2020. "In these challenging times it is important to reconnect with our partners and industry stakeholders," says **Florian Sengtschmid**, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board.

► Contd from page 1

"We have suggested that tourism be categorised as a priority sector and loans be given at minimal interest above repo by government directives. We also request standard SOPs on all entry and exit points at airports with no quarantine for asymptomatic and COVID-negative reports. We suggest that the government restart all hotels and bars, and require these establishments to strictly adhere to safety guidelines. The government should remove e-pass regulations on interstate road travel."



Pradip Lulla
Acting President and VP, TAFI



PP Khanna
President, ADTOI

"While the policy draft makes a suggestion on doubling domestic tourism from 1.8 billion to 3.6 billion in another five years, it should focus on identifying and developing new destinations in a time-bound manner. Policies to help realise the milestones of domestic tourism should be clearly identified. Another important thing is the five 'S' - Safety, Standardisation, Security, Sustainability and Sensitisation - and the policy should lay out guidelines and milestones for five years, with municipal corporations and state governments covering them."

"We have studied the National Tourism Policy draft and it looks okay to us. We have told the ministry that as far as IATO is concerned, the draft is fine. But, whenever we have a meeting, I hope topics in the draft are discussed one by one in the presence of other stakeholders as well, and any input then and there would be given by us. We are eagerly waiting for changes in the MDA scheme to be announced. Once they are announced, things will get better. We are hopeful of hearing from the ministry soon."



Rajeev Mehra
Vice President, IATO



Capt Swadesh Kumar
President, ATOAI

"Now that we have received the draft of the National Tourism Policy, there is a deliberation going on among the officer bearers and members on it and I cannot speak on the developments myself since we have not yet submitted our suggestions and recommendations to the ministry. But, one thing which I can say is that the time has come for Ministry of Tourism to consider adventure tourism as a very important source of business. I think, more importance should be given to adventure tourism just like inbound and domestic tourism."

"We have asked for the policy to be undated, so that changes can be made from time to time. We have suggested that the National Tourism Board needs to be made and shall include all the categories of tourism. Eco-tourism, sustainable and experiential tourism should be included when a roadmap is being made for specific tourism products. International marketing plan should be directed at FTOs and through them to consumers. Incredible India logo can be changed to attract attention."



Jatinder Taneja
Vice-Chairman, PATA India Chapter

Inputs by Nisha Verma

Virgin Atlantic offers flexibility

Virgin Atlantic has resumed its service from Delhi and will start Mumbai operations from September 17, 2020. **Alex McEwan**, Country Manager - India, Virgin Atlantic, claims that bookings will now be more flexible for travel agents, as he simultaneously clears the air on the airline's restructuring and recapitalisation plan.



Nisha Verma

This year marks 20 years of flying between UK and India for Virgin Atlantic. Expressing his pleasure on the feat, **Alex McEwan**, says, "We know many of our customers will be excited to reunite with friends and family, and we are looking forward to welcoming them on board, taking to the skies safely in true Virgin Atlantic style."

Talking about expectations from the Indian market, McEwan comments, "We resumed flights to India from September 2, as we continue to build our network during the global pandemic. We have taken a big step forward in securing our fu-

ture by launching a court-backed process as part of a solvent recapitalisation of the airline, with a restructuring plan that once approved and implemented, will keep Virgin Atlantic flying. The recapitalisation will deliver a refinancing package worth £1.2 billion over the next 18 months in addition to the self-help measures already taken."



Alex McEwan
Country Manager - India
Virgin Atlantic

Elaborating on the matter, he says, "In order to complete the private-only, solvent recapitalisation of the airline,

This is a filing which supports and recognises the solvent recapitalisation of the airline in UK courts

our restructuring plan is going through a court-sanctioned process under Part 26A of the UK Companies Act 2006.

Virgin Atlantic has reached a significant milestone in safeguarding its future, securing the overwhelming support of all four creditor classes, including 99% support from trade creditors who voted in favour of the plan. Achieving this milestone puts Virgin Atlantic in a position to rebuild its balance sheet, restore customer confidence and welcome passengers back to the skies as soon as they are ready to travel. The US proceeding on September 3 is a continuance of the standard procedural steps available to Virgin Atlantic to protect its assets in the US jurisdiction while (i) Virgin Atlantic's solvent recapitalisation is completed via the UK court process and (ii) then beyond, as the recapitalisation plan is



enacted and delivered going forward. This is not a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing; it is a filing which supports and recognises the solvent recapitalisation of the airline in the UK courts."

Value additions

On August 24, Virgin Atlantic announced complimentary COVID-19 global insurance cover which will apply to all existing and new bookings for travel from August 24, 2020

up until March 31, 2021. "Our customers can now book with confidence and our endeavour is to provide additional peace of mind to them. All the additional measures and policies make our product offering stronger in the market and we have been promoting them among our travel trade partners, customers and club members through social media, our website and contact centre teams," he shares. 📌

More people to opt for charters

Witnessing a great response from the market due to the pandemic, charter flight operations have certainly gained momentum. **Kanika Tekriwal**, CEO & Founder, JetSetGo Aviation, anticipates that more people will opt for charters rather than commercials for flying due to natural safety concerns.



Manas Dwivedi

With charter flights becoming a crucial part of the aviation landscape, what future do you see for them? Considering that COVID-19 is here to stay for a while and the future will not remain the same, we are anticipating that there will be more people opting for charters rather than commercials for flying due to safety concerns. However, the number of trips would reduce to 50 per cent or more. So, if someone plans seven trips in a year, they would reduce it to two or three. As Zoom and other web meeting platforms are the new Private Jet and everyone's gotten to the new normal of doing business virtually, we are not going to see

numbers come back anytime soon for business travel, once a major contributor to the travel industry. Leisure travel, however, is going to pick up a notch and is already showing influx mainly because people have now learnt to work from home at their own convenience and choice of place. Supporting the same, we have been getting innumerable queries for one-way trips to Goa, Dubai, London, etc., for families to permanently move base for a few months.

What kind of growth can be expected from the sector?

The growth of any sector depends on the market response for the product. In charter aviation, unlike before, we have started witnessing a great response



Kanika Tekriwal
CEO & Founder, JetSetGo Aviation

from the market due to the pandemic. From the sudden nine-fold increase in requests that we saw just before the lockdown was announced to receiving approximately 20 queries a day just after the easing of restrictions, out of which 70 per cent were first-time flyers, we are seeing a projected growth. However, we are still to reach the times of pre-COVID as

far as our business is concerned. The main reason for sustained growth would be a

We have been getting innumerable queries for one-way trips to Goa, Dubai, London, etc., for families

permanent shift in consumer behaviour and mindset, and when charter flying begins to be considered as normal as flying in a commercial

aircraft in India. Once everything gets back to normal, we are expecting 25-30 per cent growth in our sector.

What will be the major change in terms of consumer behaviour while choosing charter flights?

We are observing a complete shift in consumer preferences and behaviour. Earlier, when safety and hygiene mattered less, there were many options available. Now that safety and hygiene are the new reality, options have become limited. More and more people are opting to choose charters when it comes to their travel options mainly for the reason that charters provide minimal touchpoints and better social distancing keeping the natural fears

of people at bay. More than anything else, people have started normalising the term 'charters', which earlier was considered as a luxury commodity. For the very first time, we are seeing a new wave of queries received - people not necessarily rich are looking to hire private jets even if that means spending their life's savings.

Will this bring about a paradigm change in the cost of operations?

The pricing of charters will more or less remain the same because unlike commercial flying, charters are more personalised and have a fixed cost of operation. The price is calculated with factors such as length of trip and size of aircraft in mind. 📌

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**The National Accreditation
Board for Certification
Bodies Accreditation**
(Under process)

IATO seeks revision of refund

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has given its recommendations to the Ministry of Tourism on issues faced by its members, and also appealed for a change in guidelines under MDA and recognition to tour operators. **Rajesh Mudgill**, Honorary Secretary, IATO, shares more details.



Manas Dwivedi

During a virtual interactive members' meet of IATO, spoke about the recent activities of the Association and updates from its interaction with Ministry of Tourism and other government departments to provide relief to members.

Sharing details on the most important issue of SEIS, Mudgill said, "IATO has very strongly recommended the government on SEIS refunds. The money should be distributed as early as possible and instead of seven per cent, we have requested to make it 10 per cent. There are certain proposals from the Ministry of Tourism that we have received, and on that we have given our recommendations."



Rajesh Mudgill
Honorary Secretary, IATO

Marketing Development Assistance

Mudgill shared that for Marketing Development Assistance (MDA), the Ministry has proposed that the amount should be increased from Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 4 lakh per trip.

"Also, an increase of Rs 2,000 has been proposed for lodging, from Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000 per day for five nights. IATO has recommended that it should be for at least seven

nights, when IATO members are visiting foreign countries for a particular trade fair. It would really be helpful if members can extend their stay and do the sales calls

do some aggressive marketing to bring business back to India," he added.

Marketing and promotions

"For online promotions," informed Mudgill, "the Ministry has proposed that tour operators can do promotions up to Rs 50,000, and 50 per cent of that will be refunded by the Ministry for doing online promotions. Since online marketing is increasing day by day and our reliance on online marketing is going to be more and more, it is important to put more focus here. So, we have requested the upper limit to be Rs 1 lakh, and Rs 75,000 should be refunded."

He added that for international marketing, the Ministry has proposed that tour operators

can have three trips to international markets, but IATO has recommended at least four trips if not five. "We are not saying that there should be an increase in expense cap for each trip; we think that the same amount can be distributed over four or five trips and the upper limit of Rs 12 lakh can remain intact. More trips will definitely help the members and they will be able to utilise the funds to the maximum," he said.

MOT recognition to tour operators

"The Ministry has proposed only one category of tour operators. Whether you are doing domestic, inbound, MICE or adventure, the category will be one - as 'tour operator'. However, in the adventure category, where it has

some specific requirements, tour operators will have to furnish some additional information and requirements. Regarding the staff, there should be minimum two employees and maximum four, out of which at least one should be a tourism graduate or diploma holder from IITTM or some other recognised university. What IATO has recommended is that people with seven years of work experience in any of the organisations approved by MOT and member of IATO, such employees be considered as qualified staff even if they don't have a tourism degree or diploma. We have also recommended that for companies with a turnover of up to Rs 5 crore, the minimum staff condition be waived off," he added.

MOT says
₹50,000 worth
of online
promotions,
50% refund;
we requested
₹1 lakh limit,
₹75,000 refund

to consolidate the business. This will definitely help. This is the time when we need to

Vistara reviews European options

Vinod Kannan, CCO, Vistara, says that the airline will add close to 40 more aircraft to its fleet by 2023, while using its existing fleet to densify its network. He adds that while the pandemic did throw challenges their way in terms of ticket refunds and revenues, they managed to power through by beefing up cargo operations.



Nisha Verma

Please elaborate on Vistara's international expansion plans.

We intend to add nearly 40 more aircraft to our fleet by 2023, including wide-body and narrow-body aircraft, to densify our network within India and expand on international routes. We recently inducted our second Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner and our first A321neo aircraft, despite the delay in these deliveries caused by the outbreak of COVID-19. We plan to use our existing fleet as well as the new narrow-body aircraft, including the A321neo, to fly to international destinations within the range of three to seven hours, at the earliest opportunity, and also to densify our domestic



Vinod Kannan
CCO, Vistara

network. The Dreamliners will be used for long-haul operations, to fly to destinations within 11 hours of flying time in the first phase. At present, we're operating international flights to Dubai and London Heathrow as part of the 'transport bubble' formed between India, and the UAE and the UK. We are also reviewing similar opportunities to operate special flights to Paris and Frankfurt.

What impact did the pandemic have on the airline's business? What was the survival strategy?

The impact of COVID-19 on the aviation industry has

We are
operating
flights to Dubai
& London
Heathrow as
part of the
transport
bubble

been truly unprecedented. With the temporary suspension of operations during the

nationwide lockdown, there was a long period of no revenues that led to depleting cash reserves, while some of the significant expenses/fixed costs continued for us. Of course, this resulted in severe financial impact and we have since been pursuing several measures to reduce non-customer-facing operating expenses and are making every effort to conserve cash wherever possible. This includes renegotiating various contracts with partners, vendors and lessors. We also had to make the difficult decision of temporarily reducing some of our staff cost with the singular focus on preserving all jobs. During the lockdown when commercial operations were put on pause, we

quickly beefed up our cargo operations to generate some revenue. We operated a few international repatriation flights under the government's Vande Bharat Mission and some charter flights as well.

How challenging was it addressing refunds?

It was truly a situation beyond anyone's control - one that affected all stakeholders in the ecosystem. Book-



ings that were not eligible for refunds were extended for a longer period for customers to use them at their convenience. Communication with our trade partners and customers remained a top priority for us to provide clarity.

Vistara's customer survey results!

- ❖ 65% respondents said they expected to take their next Vistara flight before December 2020
- ❖ 25% of them indicated that they would fly to visit their friends and relatives; 35% expected to fly for business
- ❖ 69% rated Vistara 8/10 or higher in terms of their confidence in the airline for ensuring their health and safety while travelling

IPL Fantasy League for agents

To create some buzz in the industry and engage the trade, Tripjack has launched an exciting competition based on the IPL matches that is open to everyone. The 'Tripjack Travel Agent IPL Fantasy League' will remain open till the end of the IPL season, and agents can start registering today!



Hazel Jain

Hasan Patel, Director of B2B travel portal Tripjack, announces an exciting competition for the travel trade which is based on the IPL games. "This is a fantasy league for agents and will run for the duration of the games. All agents can sign up for this and win wonderful prizes every day, such as free domestic air tickets, gift hampers and loyalty points that can be redeemed on any future bookings. We encourage the trade to sign up for this and participate!" he says.

Sharing his thoughts about how this idea germinated, Patel adds that the entire country was experienc-



Hasan Patel
Director, Tripjack

ing a big lull in the past few months. "All businesses and entertainment activities have been on a low. So when the IPL was announced, we decided to create a buzz around it. Cricket, and especially the IPL, is always such a massive event in India, and after all these slow months we are really looking forward to it. We wanted to share this experience amongst our travel partners and that's

when the idea came up. We think with business activity slowly resuming in the last two months, the travel fra-



There is an opportunity to win prizes for every match. Along with that, we will have a leader board

ternity needs something to uplift its mood. Hence, we organised the 'Tripjack Travel Agent IPL Fantasy League'. It



is a unique and new concept, and everyone is very excited about it," he says.

Prizes to be won!

There are about 60 matches in the IPL so the Fantasy League will have contests daily. Before every match, travel partners need to log in to the App or website through tripjack.com and set up a team of the 11 best players. All agents are free to play, and the top winners from every match can win hotel stays, air tickets, gifts and loyalty points. Tripjack.com has great deals for hotels and flights, so the loyalty points will be available in the agency

Sign up today!

Signups are open now! Create a tripjack.com account in two minutes, and then click on 'Join Fantasy'. There are additional rewards for signing up early! The competition will remain open till the end of the IPL season.

account after the IPL is over, and can be used for additional discounts against future trip bookings. Patel adds, "There is an opportunity to win prizes for every match. Along with that, we will have a weekly and season-long leader board. Winners of the leader boards will be eligible to win bonus rewards and mega prizes!"

How to participate?

The fantasy concept is great fun, because it is free to play with prizes every day. "To par-

ticipate, first you need to sign up for Tripjack," Patel adds. After signing up, the user receives 1,500 Bonus Game Cash (which can be used to play the games). Before every IPL match, they need to select their top 11 players from both teams. However, they cannot join the contest once the match starts. As the game progresses, every run, wicket, boundary, etc., earns your team and player certain points. The participants with the highest points will be the winners. 🐦

Mussoorie gets 1st Wyndham

Ramada by Wyndham Mussoorie Mall Road has opened its doors. Owned by RKM Enterprises, the hotel is strategically located at Picture Palace on the Mall and is a short walk away from the major highlights of Mussoorie.



TT Bureau

Aboutique resort, Ramada by Wyndham Mussoorie Mall Road is located at the edge of a cliff, offering an unrestricted view of the Doon

Valley, and offers a colonial charm with modern luxury. Not only is it the perfect family getaway but can also be a great venue for corporate and social events.



Nikhil Sharma, Area Director Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, says, "Ramada by

We are proud to introduce another Ramada by Wyndham hotel to the Uttarakhand market and we look forward to welcoming guests looking to venture out to pristine hills of the north."

To this, Rakesh Mediratta, the hotel's owner, adds, "It gives

us great pleasure to be able to bring affordable luxury lodging accommodations to the Queen of Hills – Mussoorie - community and we



It is our first hotel in Mussoorie and the second hotel in the hill state of Uttarakhand

look forward to welcoming travellers to the area's newest hotel."

Offering 45 rooms, Ramada by Wyndham Mussoorie Mall Road boasts of modern facilities. 🐦

KTO webinar on September 25

The Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) will conduct a destination presentation on Friday, September 25, at 11am that will have a special focus on Busan. Along with KTO, the webinar will also have representatives from Busan Tourism Organization and a DMC joining in from Korea for product updates. **Young Geul Choi**, Deputy Director,

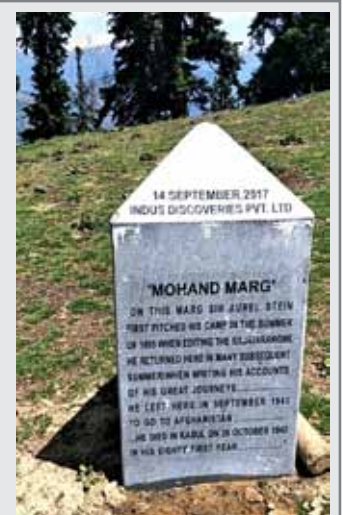


Korea Tourism Organization, New Delhi office, says, "Each region of South Korea has its own unique feature and characteristic. To bring a better understanding of each special region, we decided to conduct a destination presentation with a special focus on Busan –

South Korea's second-most populous city. The local charm paired with attractions and shops are what draw people to Busan. It is the perfect destination for slow travel, filled with hidden attractions in its side streets. It is also a food haven with its streets lined with restaurants and food vendors. With this, agents can add more value to their South Korea itineraries."

A memorial for Sir Aurel Stein

In pursuit of its commitment to revive and spread awareness about Sir Aurel Stein's Kashmir legacy in India and beyond, Indus Discoveries seeks to erect a fitting memorial to Sir Aurel Stein in Mohand Marg. A British-Hungarian explorer and archaeologist, Sir Stein associated with Central Asian exploration, and retreated to the meadow at Mohand Marg to relax and write. There in 1900, he also edited and translated into English the 12th century Sanskrit chronicle of Kashmir, Kalhana's Rajatarangini, which became a vehicle that brought him to the threshold of his self-made career as a pioneer in Central Asian research.



Luxury 'drivecation' by the Ganges

'We realised that the need of the hour was to design a new 'drivecation' package that provides a luxurious yet safe, hygienic experience,' says **Kush Kapoor**, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts. Now, the group offers this package at its luxury resort in Rishikesh, The Roseate Ganges, with a number of exclusive features, such as pick-up in a BMW, included.



Neha Rawat

How has the response been to the drivecation packages?

Drivecation packages were always popular because of the incomparable comfort and luxury they offer, but now they are becoming even more so because of prevailing pandemic conditions in which social distancing has become an important factor while planning any vacation. Since our luxury resort, The Roseate Ganges, is at a motorable distance from Delhi-NCR, we have introduced new drivecation packages and they have instantly gained popularity. We realised that people are eager to plan holidays to rejuvenate themselves after being cooped up post the lockdown,



Kush Kapoor
CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts

yet are hesitant to travel because of the fear of coming in contact with more people, especially by the means of air travel. We realised that the need of the hour was to design a new drivecation package that provides a luxurious yet safe, hygienic experience.

What kinds of experiences do you offer?

The drivecation package offered by the hotel includes

an ideal experience of direct transfer from a guest's home to The Roseate Ganges in a luxurious BMW with two nights' stay in a deluxe villa inclusive of breakfast and lunch or dinner, Wi-Fi and a rejuvenating yoga session with our compliments. This

The package includes direct transfer from a guest's home to The Roseate Ganges in a BMW with two nights' stay



unique experience is valid for Delhi-NCR only. One can avail this offer for just Rs 44,444 (all inclusive).

Other experiences during the drivecation which guests can opt for are a mindful session on the three gunas of life and moksha; Vipasana meditation – India's most ancient technique of meditation; an Ayurvedic and Podikizhi massage at Aheli spa; or a private

dinner by the white sand beach (at an additional cost).

What measures are you taking to ensure the safety of guests?

The Roseate Ganges in Rishikesh is nestled in the green foothills of the Himalayas and offers stunning views of the adjacent lush forest-covered hills and crystal-clear rushing water of River Ganges. At

the retreat we are following our standard touchless hospitality procedures under 'Care by Roseate' to ensure no contamination enters via any route. The measures involve thermal screening at entry gates of all passenger vehicles; display of 'Safe' status in Aarogya Setu App for staff and guests; wearing of mask is also a must to enter the property premises.

All hotel vehicles are disinfected at entry points and after every use. Sanitisers are kept in all prominent locations within the hotels and resorts. Guest luggage is disinfected from outside upon arrival. To enable seamless, remote check-ins, touchless check-ins are facilitated via an App. 🐦

India needs trained naturalists

While a lot is being done at India's national parks, a lot more can be done to ensure we offer a quality wildlife experience to visitors. There is a need to conduct high-quality training programmes for naturalists across the country, and help create the demand that our national parks are capable of.



Hazel Jain

The Kaziranga National Park is one of the most famous and popular wildlife parks of India and is the pride of Assam. For a number of practical reasons like monsoon season and resultant annual floods that submerge large portions of the national park, the duration of visiting season is only six to seven months, especially during the annual winter holidays.

Nirmalya Choudhury, Executive Director (Operations), JTI Group, which operates a hotel close-by called the Diphlu River Lodge, hopes that there will likely be some changes when the park opens again next time, hopefully in October or November 2020. "The



Nirmalya Choudhury
Executive Director (Operations)
JTI Group

opening of the Kaziranga National Park is likely to be subject to the strict adherence to physical distancing guidelines. The park authorities should work in association with local, state and national tourism associations as well as state tourism authority to introduce guidelines for this while ensuring an excellent overall wildlife experience." JTI Group has three brands under it: Jungle Travels India,

Assam Bengal Navigation, and Eastern Odyssey. The Diphlu River Lodge is part of the JTI Group and caters to a lot of wildlife tourists.

As the number of visitors grow, the need for quality training for naturalists is more evident

consider adopting interesting and interactive means to educate the visitors on various unique aspects of Kaziranga and the simple responsible measures to be adopted by the visitors during their safari rides. "They can also consider providing clean toilets at the entrance of all the ranges of the park. As a hotel, we do have to face the annual floods which the national park has to endure every year. Our property also gets inundated every year during the monsoon. We have to incur considerable expenses for our post-flood maintenance of the property annually," he adds.

A wholesome wildlife experience

For Choudhury, a wholesome wildlife experience also involves getting to know



the local customs, practices and involvement of the people who live in the area. "A lot more can be done to ensure better interaction between visitors and the local people. Behind every quality wildlife experience is the hard work and skill of the accompanying naturalists and safari vehicle drivers. As the number of wildlife and nature visitors increase, the need for more high-quality train-

ing and nurturing facilities for naturalists is becoming more evident. Perhaps the forest authorities can collaborate with private stakeholders and institutions like WWF, WTI, BNHS and local nature conservation societies to hold training programmes across the country. Proficiency in English, Hindi and other languages will ensure easier interaction with visitors," he says. 🐦

Hotel distribution on IGAT's list

Sunil Talreja, Vice President - Sales, InterGlobe Air Transport (IGAT), says that an optimistic outlook and proactive business strategy helped them sail through the difficult months of the pandemic. Now, IGAT is diversifying into hotel distribution, keeping its cruise distribution plans on hold for the time being.



Nisha Verma

For InterGlobe Air Transport (IGAT), COVID-19 struck early as they represent China Eastern Airlines and the pandemic started in China. However, owing to their diverse portfolio, they managed things well. **Sunil Talreja** says, "We have been true as an organisation and have retained our people as well as engaged them. While we see that this will take a little longer than people expected, there is light at the end of the tunnel and we will be seeing some green shoots coming our way." He adds that as they represent Delta Airlines from US, which is one of the key markets for India, they are

seeing some traffic starting there. There is even traffic to the UK that has started with Virgin Atlantic.

A big responsibility as a GSA is to keep agents constantly informed and manage the establishment well. "We have a sales team, a reservations teams and a robust HR department within InterGlobe. We are keeping them motivated and training them. We have re-skilled our people and we are looking at working differently. We are doing a lot of data mining. Hence, it's not only relationships, as a lot of data-driven calls are being done with people engaging on different digital platforms with the travel trade. We still want to be in the face of the



Sunil Talreja
Vice President - Sales
InterGlobe Air Transport (IGAT)

customer in a different way, and be present in their minds when things come back," Talreja shares.

He even points out that the subject of refunds has been spoken about a lot in the last six months. "All the carriers that we represent are proactive in processing refunds and engaging with customers be-

cause that's the time our travel agent friends need us. Their

partners we bring to them," assures Talreja.

As their way forward, he claims that they are adopting a targeted approach. "At this point one can't reach 1500 agents, hence, one needs to be very specific and focused. Over-reaching is a fruitless exercise, hence, we have a segmented approach. By staying focused, we are just trying to work smarter than before," he claims.

With safety as their priority, Talreja says that right now, they are talking more about safety than ever before because the reason people have stopped travelling is lack of safety. "There is too much pent up demand in India right

now. As soon as people feel they are safe, they will travel," he believes. In fact, IGAT is also building confidence about India at the same time amongst its principals abroad.

Talreja also reveals that they will be focusing on the hotel distribution business despite having plans to distribute cruises earlier, which have now been put on hold. "We are very keen on diversifying further in the travel space. We are in some advanced stages of discussion, and the next thing we are looking at is hotel distribution across the globe because that gels with our business model and we will be targeting the same end customer," he reveals. 🐦

We want to be in the face of the customer differently, and be in their minds when things return

money is stuck, and hence we try our best to process it as soon as possible, so that liquidity remains with them. That is the faith that as airline

Self-drive with flexible booking

Every Friday since May, Hertz car rental has been organising a series of webinars with NTOs, an initiative they believe is working in their favour and is creating the right awareness among agents about self-drive holidays. Hertz has also made booking flexible for the convenience of its customers.



TT Bureau

Amit Mishra, Sales and Marketing Manager – India, Hertz, InterGlobe Air Transport (exclusive GSA), explaining the aim of initiative, says, "Due to COVID-19, outbound travel has come to a standstill and so have physical engagements with customers and trade partners. Thus, to continue our engagement with the trade community and create a top-of-mind recall for the Hertz brand, InterGlobe Air Transport (the exclusive General Sales Agent in India) created Friday webinars for travel agents and business partners."

Claiming that the response has been fantastic, he adds, "During the Q&A round of

the webinars, we answered questions from agents who had to extend their customers' stay in other countries due to the lockdown and from corporate travellers who were planning to travel internationally once air travel resumed from and to India. This is the right time to spread awareness about a variety of destinations and an opportunity to explain what customers need to know when planning a self-drive trip during these challenging times."

Since May, they have been conducting webinars every Friday morning in collaboration with different tourism boards. "Tourism boards have supported Hertz by discussing the advantages of a self-drive holiday experience, highlighting how much you can expe-



Amit Mishra
Sales & Marketing Manager – India
Hertz

rience when you explore off the beaten track. To date, we have conducted webinars on self-drive rentals with tourism boards in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, Britain, Germany, Thailand, Dubai, Spain, Italy, Atout France and Switzerland," Mishra shares. The hygiene and cleanliness of vehicles are paramount in their efforts to reduce the risk of the coronavirus. They have identified some critical clean-

ing points like door handles and vehicle interiors, which are thoroughly cleaned and sanitised in all vehicles before and after each use.

In fact, they are fully booked for these seminars. He says, "In the current climate, we are creating awareness

Protocols introduced by Hertz

- ❖ Sanitisation of desks, counters and public areas
- ❖ Sufficient sanitisation of stations throughout locations
- ❖ All staff wearing face masks or face shields and gloves
- ❖ Regulating social distancing at locations
- ❖ Installing protective screens at certain client facing locations
- ❖ Measuring and monitoring staff temperature before and after each shift

about flight destinations and the advantages of booking a self-drive vehicle that will be clean and safe. In addition, we communicate the safety measures we have in place to protect customers. These include reminders to social distancing, complimentary hand sanitiser at the counter and reduced customer transaction time. We will also continue to share relevant

information about outbound destinations during the upcoming seminars. Webinar attendees who have questions about the validity of their driving licence at promoted destinations should make enquiries with their local driving licence authorities."

Mishra also reveals that apart from destinations, airlines are invited to the seminars. 🐦

This is the right time to explain what customers need to know when planning a self-drive trip

Experience the 'art' of travelling

Art experiences are a high-value social currency that no one is talking about. **Kartik Gaggar**, Founder and CEO at Rajasthan Studio, explains why having at least one art experience in your client's travel itinerary should be a must if they are seeking the real pleasure of travel.

You have planned the travel itinerary to a tee – the hotels, the transport, all major attractions, the food joints. But aren't you missing something? The exploration of the true beauty and culture of the place your clients are visiting. How many seek the localities of the place, interact with the native people of the city, and hear their stories about their place, the culture, the arts it is famous for?

Having travelled to dozens of places within the country and internationally, what I have learned is that the real pleasure of travelling to a new place lies in the people you meet, art forms you discover, learn and collect. This creates a strong sense of connection with the place that goes

beyond the market-bought souvenirs or the gallery full of Instagrammable pictures. A local touch helps in transforming you from within and such experiences liberate your soul, expand your vision and satiate your wanderlust from within. In short, connecting with the roots gives you such a high that no other thing can probably ever give. But, don't take my word on it! Try it yourself to believe it.

The local culture is its people

No matter how many tourist guides or Google pages you cram to understand the history, demography and culture of a place, the truest way to know a place is to visit it and know it from internally. Hence, the best way to accomplish it is through having unhurried

and intense conversations with the people who live there. An art experience or a workshop with the native artists can help you not just learn a

A local touch helps transform from within, liberates your soul and expands your vision

local art/craft but also know the cultural aesthetics and the stories of how the people of the place have been pre-

serving their glorious past by entwining them into the present times through art forms, food, collection galleries, and other ways.

The real FOMO

Art experiences are a high-value social currency that no one is talking about. People never fear missing out on material things; they always regret the things they didn't do. Indulging in an art experience is like uncovering the layers to seek the light within. It helps you understand the art in its raw form, when it's not even art, its abstract things, culminated mind. In that moment, you become art! This feeling of submerging yourself into art and creating art along with the impassioned narration of tales by the artist is beyond any mate-

rialistic indulgences. It's also a beautiful way of contributing to the sustenance and building of local communities.

Contribute to the community

When you buy art directly from the artist, you are helping them sustain themselves. There are so many invaluable art forms across the world that are dying or are already forgotten because the new generation didn't pursue them. While artists and artisans are driven more by passion, they have families to feed. Therefore, when people stop preserving, promoting and acknowledging the native art forms, they begin to diminish, and just like that they become history.

Authentic and adventurous

What's better than learning

art forms from a master artist? Learning it together with your close ones! Trust me, turning this art experience into a family time activity, a friends' day out, or a team-building exercise can do wonders for your bonding and rapport with the others. Creating art teaches you patience, appreciation, teamwork, and most of all love for handmade things.



Kartik Gaggar
Founder and CEO
Rajasthan Studio

(Views expressed are the author's own. The publication may or may not subscribe to them.)



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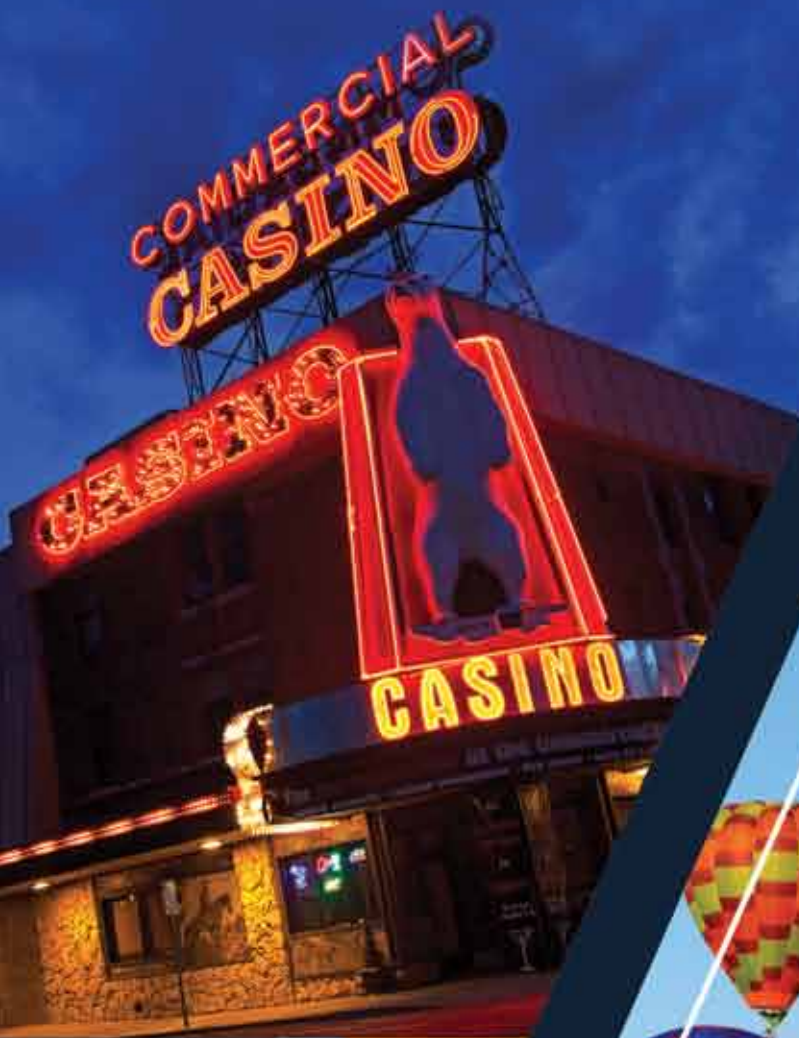
South Korea Webinar

Destination brief and product update by DMC with key **focus on Busan** region.

Presenters: Korea Tourism Organization + Busan Tourism Organization + DMC

Join us on

Friday, 25th September 2020 at 11 am (IST)



Reno



Cross Hotels: Apt for India market

After months of lockdown and travel bans, the world is gradually opening up. Keeping with the times, Thailand-based hospitality group Cross Hotels & Resorts has also re-opened some of its hotels across Thailand. The group also has properties in Indonesia and Vietnam.



TT Bureau

Thailand-based hotel group, Cross Hotels & Resorts has opened a number of its properties with strict health and safety protocols in place. From the time of arrival of the guest at the airport to the time of departure, staff at Cross properties follows the guidelines religiously. The group is also offering flexible incentives to Indian travel

unique to offer to guests, and lays focus on safety and hygiene standards and measures received from Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration (SHA) – a co-operation between the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Ministry of Public Health, the Department of Disease Control, the Department of Health and the Department of Health Service Support.

place after using of vehicles and transfers,” he says. The hotel is suitable for leisure FIT, family leisure groups as well as business travellers, even buy-out groups looking for a private arrangement.

Based on static rate offers, most Cross hotels could consider providing incentives to travel agents based on the number of room nights. For instance, 0-500 room nights get two per cent incentive



Away Chiang Mai Thapae Resort



Away Koh Kood Resort

agents. It has an extensive portfolio of properties in Thailand that include X2 Vibe Buriram Hotel, X2 Koh Samui – A Spa Retreat, X2 Kui Buri Resort, Away Chiang Mai Thapae Resort – A Vegan Retreat, Away Koh Kood Resort, X2 Vibe Chiang Mai Decem Hotel, X2 Vibe Pattaya Seaphere and Oceanphere, and X2 Vibe Phuket Patong among others. Each hotel has something

Katerawee Thepprachum, Director of Sales at Away Chiang Mai Thapae Resort – A Vegan Retreat, says that they have visible signage throughout the hotel, reminding guests of social distancing guidelines, personal hygiene and the importance of personal protection equipment. “We also carry out temperature checks on all arriving into the hotel. The cleaning and spraying is always in

and 501-1000 room nights get three per cent.

Away Koh Kood Resort - a hotel suitable for company staff outings, weddings and leisure – offers a lively activity centre and plenty of outdoor fun, informs **Boonyok Kanika**, the General Manager of the hotel.

Keen on leisure and small MICE groups, X2 Vibe Chi-

ang Mai Decem Hotel has meeting rooms that can accommodate a maximum of 40 people (under normal circumstances). On working with Indian travel agents, **Chayanisa Ruankew**, General Manager, X2 Vibe Chiang Mai Decem Hotel, says, “If the agents book 15+1 rooms, they will need to pay only for 15 and the remaining room will be complimentary.”

“X2 Vibe Pattaya Seaphere is fit for small MICE and leisure groups. We can arrange a stunning private dinner party upto 80 Pax at our ‘Sky white rooftop bar’ with a panoramic view. Our hotels are located nearby the most famous attractions, such as Suan Nong Nuch Botanical Gardens, The Legend Siam and Cartoon Network waterpark. X2 Pattaya Oceanphere,

80 Pax. “It is perfectly located close to key tourist attractions, a large shopping mall, and the beach is only a two-minute walk away. It offers 136 delightfully furnished and modern design rooms and villas starting from 45 sqm. All facilities are presented in a smooth, minimalistic and comfortable design style,” shares **Ismet Isakovski**, General Manager, X2 Vibe Patong.



X2 Bali Breakers Resort



X2 Vibe Phuket Patong

At the X2 Pattaya Oceanphere and X2 Vibe Pattaya Seaphere properties as well, temperature checks are taken before entering and also in the F&B outlets. Hand sanitisers are freely available all over the properties. Social distancing is in place and housekeeping duties have been increased. Vehicles are also sanitised after each trip. **Steve Lockhart**, Cluster General Manager, X2 Pattaya Oceanphere and X2 Vibe Pattaya Seaphere, adds,

on the other hand, is suitable for couples, a leisure group of friends, and families. We can arrange a floating breakfast and barbeque dinner at our private pool villas. X2 Pattaya Oceanphere is perfect for getting away with the new norm of social distancing, but you can still enjoy a private party with your loved ones.”

X2 Vibe Phuket Patong is suitable for leisure, FIT and small MICE groups with 60-

The Indonesian property of Cross Hotels & Resorts – X2 Bali Breakers Resort – has also implemented strict protocols. **Artana Komang**, General Manager, X2 Bali Breakers Resort, adds, “We love to have all market segments from India. We have rooms and villas for the leisure guest, meeting rooms that can fit up to 100 persons, and also varied wedding venues such as a wedding chapel, grass lawn, and poolside.”

RevPAR down, but modest

Delhi has always been a strong hospitality market and hotel owners expect a faster recovery in comparison to other major cities. There are very few high-ticket hotel assets on sale in the city.



TT Bureau

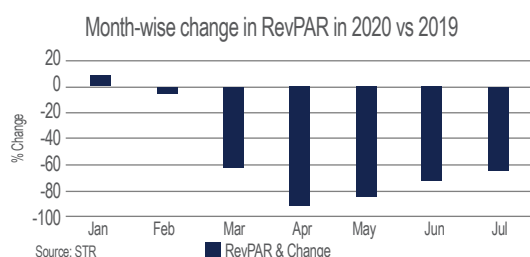
Delhi has seen significant decline in Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) YTD July 2020, declining 44.3 per cent over the same period in the previous year. However, this decline is the most modest decline as compared to all major cities in India,

Governments have gradually eased lockdown restrictions, with international repatriation flights and some domestic travel leading the way for recovery of the hospitality sector in the nation's capital, according to JLL India Hotels and Hospitality Group.

The city is amongst the first key markets to bring the CO-

ness travel movement from the neighbouring cities of Gurugram and Noida. In a recent announcement in late August, Delhi hotels in non-containment zones have been allowed to open.

Hotels are also receiving several inquiries for weddings and social events with limited gatherings, within the allowed limit of 50 people per function. Many hotel venues have been pre-booked for all auspicious wedding dates in November. Food and beverage (F&B) service is being revamped across most hotels with the removal of buffets and introduction of pre-plated meals, online delivery listings as well as delivery of do-it-yourself (DIY) meal kits. Hotels are looking at alternative sources of income. ↴



reeling under the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. The city's RevPAR is slowly rising as the Central and State

VID-19 situation under control with a high recovery rate. Delhi has gradually opened its borders to facilitate busi-

Hotel reps unite as IAHC

Hotel representatives and companies promoting independent hotels and groups have formed Indian Association of Hotel Representatives & Companies (IAHC) to work towards getting recognition for the sector.



Nisha Verma

Geeta Maheshwari, Director, Hospitality and Marketing Services is the President of IAHC, while **KP Singh**, Founder, Enchanting Experi-



Geeta Maheshwari
President, IAHC

ences, is the Vice President. **Digvijay Diwakar**, Director, Diverse Hotels Marketing is the Secretary; **Shruti Pandey**, Founder, Synergi Hospitality is the Joint Secre-



tary; and **Jitender Sharma**, Director, Consortium Resorts & Inns, is the Treasurer. Communications will be headed by **Shoba Mohan**, Founder, RARE India.

Speaking about the aim behind creating the association, Maheshwari says, "We, hotel marketing professionals,

were not recognised by government and various trade associations. The aim behind IAHC is to get the recognition for hotel representatives and companies."

IAHC aims to use their collective strength to petition for categorisation and recognition under tourism services with the Department of Tourism, and work towards synergies with other associations of the travel industry to drive excellence and collaborations. Diwakar added, "The idea is to bring people and address our concerns, while simultaneously creating awareness for the entity. We will be working towards collaborating with other travel trade associations. We want to be the 11th association of FAITH." ↴

Safety and hygiene up a notch

Building the confidence in guests to travel and stay at their hotel is a priority for every hotelier today, as their hotels strictly adhere to the news SOPs. Even their staff has been extensively trained, while a lot of amenities have been made contact-less.

“We have introduced intensified hygiene and sanitation measures to ensure employee and guest safety by launching the ALLSAFE Label. This programme has ensured that we indoctrinate the new hygiene and safety goals. In order to receive the ALLSAFE Label, all operational team members were mandatorily asked to attend the specific training modules and implement the same in their shifts.”



Sarbendra Sarkar
Founder & MD
Cygnett Hotels and Resorts

“At Cygnett, cleanliness and comfort always went hand-in-hand. Now, with the 'new normal', we are further implementing several sterility practices, keeping in mind the safety of our staff and our guests. We ensure consistent sanitisation of all our premises on a daily basis; all our employees use PPE kits; we provide contactless experiences to make the guests more comfortable; and we are very strict about practising social distancing.”

“From sanitisation of rooms, public areas, linen, air-conditioning, contactless check-in or check-out, QR codes have suddenly taken the front seat. 'Go digital' is the new mantra. Norms and protocols set by the government are the foundation, and hotels have gone beyond to create trust amongst guests. Creating awareness through various social media platforms has been a challenge.”



Ajay Pawar
Regional GM
Lords Group of Hotels

“Our hotels have implemented revised health and safety standards for their guests and employees as per the new norms. From touchless lobbies to spread-out banquets and exhaustive pandemic protocols, everything is implemented now. We have introduced a safety and hygiene programme - Karona safe Rahona safe - which is based on the guidelines issued and updated by WHO, FSSAI and MoHFW.”

Inputs by Neha Rawat



Nabendu Acharjee
GM, Homitel Chandigarh
A Sarovar Hotel



Irfan Khatri
GM, ibis Bengaluru City
Center & Hosur Road

UNITE 2020: Virtual leisure and M!CE show

UNITE by Saleint is organising a Global Virtual Trade Show combining the leisure and M!CE industry on an online platform.

The trade show is scheduled to start at 00:00 hrs Toronto time (EDT)



on September 16, 2020 and will be live till 23:59 hrs Toronto time (EDT) on September 17, 2020.

Those visiting can expect to connect with 34 exhibitor booths that will showcase more than 39 popular destinations across five continents and represent an excess of 45 brands such as Air Canada, Korea Tourism Organization, Six Senses, Club Med, Fiesta

Americana, Korean Air, Taj Hotels, Hyatt Hotels and Versace Dubai among several DMCs and unique hotels.

The speaker line-up consists of IGLTA's Vice Presidents LoAnn Halden and Clark Massad, Six Senses Regional Director of Sales

for Bhutan and Thailand - Claudine Triolo. There will also be a panel moderated by TRAVELTALK where M!CE and luxury Leisure professionals uncover the future of India outbound and more. It is expected that 1700+ meetings will take place over the two days. A Buyer Chat Room and Buyer Lounge will be additional spaces where they can interact with one another.

Rajasthan approves tourism policy

The Rajasthan state cabinet has approved the state Tourism Policy 2020, which is aimed at rebuilding the marketing strategy for international branding of tourism and promote domestic tourism. It also proposes to strengthen the tourist assistance force and encourage start-ups in the sector.



Manas Dwivedi

With a vision to reposition Rajasthan as a preferred tourism destination for both domestic as well as international tourists, the objective of the new tourism policy is to strengthen and diversify existing tourism products; provide innovative tourism products and services with focus on lesser-known destinations especially in rural areas; improve the connectivity of tourist destinations through road, rail and air; expand tourist accommodation infrastructure; and take steps to encourage private sector investment in the state. Approving a new tourism policy for the state, the cabinet has called for

constituting a state tourism advisory committee under the chairmanship of the chief minister. The current District Tourism Development Committee headed by the district collector has been given



more executive powers. The panel will be responsible for all work related to tourism development in a district.

As per the five-year policy, two to three prominent monuments or sites in each division of the state will be developed as 'Iconic Monuments' or sites to be managed by

the new district committees. 'Special heritage village' and 'special craft village' will also be declared in each district.

Pristine locations with sand dunes in untapped areas such as stretches around Sambhar, Pushkar, Nagaur and Bikaner will also be identified and promoted as new desert destinations. For **adventure tourism**, special incentives will be given to promote aero tourism (hot air ballooning, parachuting, paragliding, parasailing, etc.), aqua tourism (boating, paddle boating, angling, jet skiing, etc.), land-based tourism (trekking, rock climbing, rappelling, safaris, quad biking, ATV, birding, etc.) and **cruise tourism** in the Chambal river



and Banswara backwaters. For **MICE tourism**, suitable locations will be identified, graded and listed by the tourism department. A cell will be set up to facilitate approvals for promoters establishing convention centres of national and international

standards. Tourism units engaged in MICE activities will be provided table space at subsidised rates in Rajasthan Tourism pavilions in domestic and international travel marts. For **rural tourism**, a Tourism Development Fund will be set up which

will be used to support the development of rural infrastructure in identified villages. For the **hospitality sector**, a scheme for classification of all tourism units will be launched. Suitable measures will also be taken to revive properties of RTDC.

15th Foundation Day at TAAI MP & CG chapters

Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh Chapter, recently conducted a webinar to celebrate their 15th Foundation Day. **Hemendra Singh Jadon**, Chairman, TAAI - MP & CG Chapter, shares, "This was the first time we celebrated the Foundation Day and had many dignitaries present for the occasion. We had invited Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI; Usha Thakur, Minister of Tourism, MP; Shivasekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary of Tourism, Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC); Aryama Sanyal, Director, Indore Airport; and Balbir Mayal, former President of TAAI."

Jadon revealed that they discussed about the

planning of post-COVID business scenario in the state. "The Minister and Secretary discussed how the government and trade can together promote the state post-COVID. They



Hemendra Singh Jadon
Chairman, TAAI - MP & CG Chapter

also said that they will be helping the agents in doing that and even asked for ideas," he said. They have also proposed that MPSTDC support through training and education on sites and destinations, so that they are easier to sell for travel agents.

Hotels on the revival path

With hotels in Delhi now open, hoteliers are gearing up to clear the mist of doubt in the mind of guests. Some prominent hoteliers talk about challenges of and strategies for the new normal.

"As of now there is no corporate or leisure business coming in. People who are really fed up of staying at home are coming back to hotels, so we are seeing staycations. Dropping prices will not get us business, we will end up losing more money. For the last couple of days, we have started operating our F&B with social distancing norms; footfalls have picked up."



Rohit Arora
Area General Manager
The Park New Delhi



Sanjay Gupta
General Manager
Le Méridien Gurgaon

"We decided to keep our hotel open during the pandemic. We also opened a floor for our associates in April, and rebranded the entire hotel programme. In June, we were one of the few hotels to see a pick-up in the wedding business. This has helped us stay afloat. Our focus is more on staycations, marriages and parties that have helped us generate a cash flow."

"It's incredible how things change. In the new scheme of things, with 50 guests, you can book luxury hotels in Rs 3-4 lakh. People are showing a lot of interest in doing small events; buffets have changed – they are served by our chefs; every associate has to wear PPE. There are 335 odd seats in the restaurant – now we have reduced it to 50% due to social distancing."



Varun Chhibber
GM, The Leela Ambience
Gurugram Hotel & Residences



Rajesh Namby
General Manager
The Lodhi New Delhi

"All through the pandemic when we were closed, we were practising how we would re-open. We restructured our kitchen in line with hygiene and sanitisation guidelines. We also have an in-house cleaning manager. As we opened, we saw luxury is here to stay. We got 25 reservations from OTAs, and guests at the restaurant."

Inputs by Neha Rawat

Thailand 'Together' with trade

The 'TogetherThailand' campaign conceptualised by the India offices of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) concluded on a high note after a month of interactive contests, quizzes and surveys, with focus on beaches, cuisines and new destinations. Tour operators from around the country engaged in the campaign and the grand prize winners were announced at the end.



Manas Dwivedi

Sharing his exhilaration after organising a successful campaign to increase engagement with India travel trade, **Sirisumpan Vachirachai**, Director, TAT New Delhi – North and East India, said, "I would like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to all tour operators who participated and shared their response. I would like to congratulate all the winners for cherishing their memories about Thailand." To this, **Cholada Siddhivarn**, Director, TAT Mumbai – South and West India, said, "I hope that the activities of the campaign brought back good memories. TAT India offices will stand



Sirisumpan Vachirachai
Director, TAT New Delhi – North and East India

with all of you together during this challenging time."

The winners

Each winner shared their excitement on winning the weekly contest. **Debabrata Tripathy**, Director - Tours, Go Holidays, said, "It was a great experience to become part of this contest, share our memories and even check

out memories shared by other tour operators. In my opinion, Thailand is a perfect destination for MICE, families, as well as corporate and leisure groups."



Cholada Siddhivarn
Director, TAT Mumbai – South and West India

"The anticipation of winning was there till the end of the campaign, so it was a good experience. If we consider cost, connectivity, distance



and visa formalities, Thailand is probably the best destination for Indian travellers," said **Prinston P Prakasia**, Sales Manager, Travelust India, another Grand prize winner. Echoing the sentiment was

Shubham Kumar, Managing Partner, EJI Travel Solutions, who said, "The best part was that we were supposed to create all the content from our previous trips to Thailand. As a travel enthusiast, I loved

participating in this contest and look forward to exploring more hidden treasures on my upcoming Thailand trips."

Thanking TAT for the wonderful campaign was **Swati Kapoor**, Managing Director, Holiday Tripster, who said, "I would like to thank TAT Director Vachirachai and the entire team of TAT New Delhi for selecting me as one of the winners. I am looking forward to travelling to Thailand once again."

"I could not resist myself from participating," said **Sunil Shivani**, Director, TLC Holidays, adding, "Thailand is one of my favourite destinations and also the one for which we get most travellers." 🇹🇭

'A gateway to Madhya Pradesh'

RH Khwaja, Former Secretary (2010-2012), Ministry of Tourism, offers a compelling review of 'Zero and Beyond', a coffee-table book by SK Mishra. The book offers a visual journey into Madhya Pradesh through Mishra's lens. Khwaja recommends the book specially to those who love the natural treasures of the state.

Zero and Beyond, authored by **SK Mishra** and edited by Khushi Mishra, is a delightful coffee table book on Madhya Pradesh. It is aesthetically pleasing and in-

novatively conceptualised with evocative photographs. The text is interesting, informative and lucidly composed. The author has avoided unnecessary trivialities and focused on relevant anec-

dotal stories and legends of the places he has covered in his photographic adventures. This significantly enhances the value of this beautiful book. I am particularly fascinated by the title of the



SK Mishra
Author, Zero and Beyond

Key details on Zero and Beyond

Type: Hard-bound cover, hand sewn, offset printing

Dimension: Height - 24 cm, Width - 33 cm

Price: Rs 3,000

To order a copy and for further details, an email may be sent to the author at s_kmishra@yahoo.com.

crossword are interesting and engagingly presented.

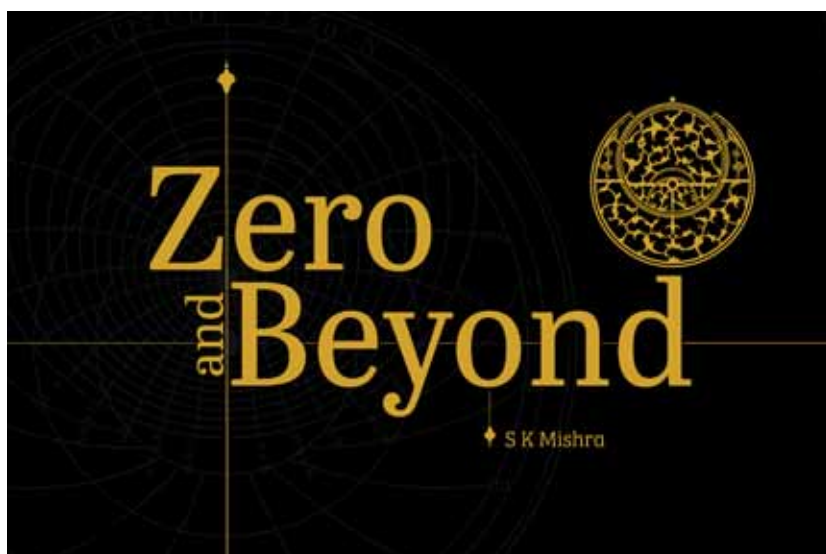
I emphatically recommend this book to all those interested in exploring and absorbing the manmade and natural treasures of Madhya Pradesh. This splendid effort is a must-possess book for all lovers of culture, heritage and nature. It is a gateway to discovering Madhya Pradesh in all its varied charms for discerning persons who value human creativity and natural beauty at its inimitable best.

My sincere compliments to SK Mishra and Khushi Mishra for their labour of love culminating in this captivating coffee table book. 🇮🇳



RH Khwaja
Former Secretary, MOT

(Views expressed are the author's own. The publication may or may not subscribe to them.)



EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



SEPTEMBER 2020

Date	Event	Time
15	PATA Webinar on Travel Buyers	1:30 pm
16-17	UNITE- Virtual Leisure & MICE Show	9:30 am
17	PATA India Webinar on Europe	3:00 pm
18	CAPA India Webinar	4:00 pm
18	Hotelier Summit Series Masterclass	3:00 pm
21	Southwest Germany Webinar	12:30 pm
23-27	Virtual PATA Travel Mart	10:30 am
25	Korea Tourism Webinar on Busan region	11 am
27	World Tourism Day Celebrations	TBA
29	IESA Webinar on Events Industry	11:00 am

OCTOBER 2020

14	Travel Business Azerbaijan Online	6:30 am
21-23	ITB Asia Virtual	9:30 am
21-23	MICE Show Asia	7 am
21-23	Traveo Tech Asia Virtual	7 am

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

CKTI wants September restart

The Confederation of Kerala Tourism Industry (CKTI), led by **EM Najeed** as President, has called on the government to take immediate steps to reopen the tourism sector in Kerala, and submitted a memorandum.



Manas Dwivedi

EM Najeed, President, CKTI, has said that when the tourism industry is on the verge of collapsing as one of the state's highest income earning industrial sectors, excluding NRI investment, the country is literally on the verge of collapse. "Based on Unlock-4 declared by the Central government recently, our neighbouring states - Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Maharashtra - have opened the tourism sector with or without COVID-19 protocols. But, the existing 14-day compulsory quarantine in Kerala, a requirement for travellers arriving in the state, is a major setback," he says.

On the other hand, Kerala tourism minister Kadakampally Surendran has informed the

EM Najeed
President, CKTI

Tourism Panel of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) that the state government is considering to reopen the state for tourism by the first week of October. CKTI has already submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister and Tourism Minister of Kerala, to open the tourism sector without further delay. According to the proposal, hospitality, Ayurveda and wellness sectors in Kerala are ready to adhere to state government protocols and directions, including regular

COVID-19 testing and confirming a negative result before clients utilise the facilities, and to start business slowly.

"We propose to require travellers and clients to arrive with a recent RT-PCR test (48 hours) or follow dual testing Rapid Antigen and RT-PCR test so as to

obviate the need for 14-day quarantine. Without government directives in favour as above, we cannot start taking clients or guests. It should be a policy decision by the government by involving health and tourism departments in issuing directives to open the tourism sector by adhering to SOPs," Najeed explains.

The state government has already given permission to open hotels in the state, subject to the COVID-19 Prevention Control Rules, but it will only benefit visitors who come for seven-day business purposes. Due to this, very few hotels in major cities are open in Kerala now. If this situation continues, the tourism industry, which earned about Rs 45,000 crore for the state exchequer last year, will have to close permanently.

The 14-day quarantine in Kerala, a requirement for arriving travellers in the state, is a major setback

TAG goes on 36-day road trip

The Tour Operators and Travel Agents Association of Gujarat (TAG) has taken upon itself to promote travel within India and will embark on a 36-day road trip on September 18 to do this. Small get-togethers have also been organised for members and suppliers at each stop, strictly following health and safety protocols.



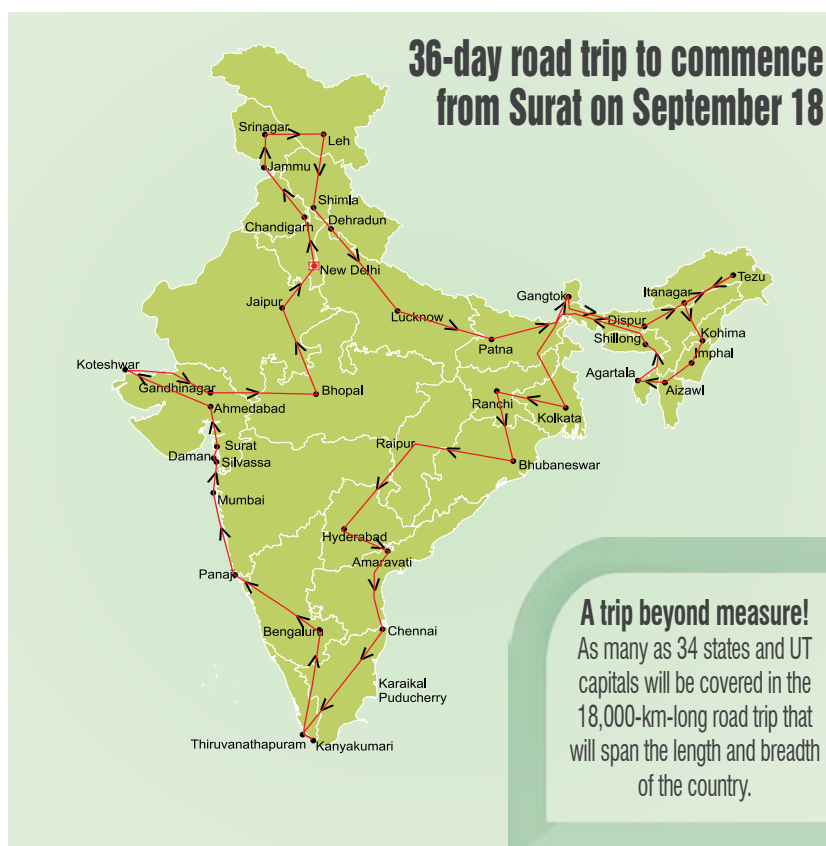
Hazel Jain

Members of the Tour Operators and Travel Agents Association of Gujarat (TAG) do not want to wait for tourism to restart. They have come together and initiated a campaign to promote domestic tourism. A five-member

Pankaj Gupta
President, TAG

team from TAG will embark on a historical 36-day road trip across India, starting off from Surat on September 18. The team will cover around 18,000kms visiting 34 states and UT capitals (except Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands for obvious reasons) while showcasing their landmark monuments and COVID-ready hotels. **Pankaj Gupta**, President, TAG, said

The intention is to showcase India in all its glory and what better way to do this than a road trip



that the team will be led by Rajiv Shah, Owner of Surat-based agency Network Tours & Travels. "They will essentially cover around 500kms per day on an average. The entire trip is largely self-sponsored but the team will receive some local support at the pit stops that they make. The fuel, the cars, the daily expenses will all be borne by us. They will return to Surat by the fourth week of October. The intention is to showcase India in all its glory and what better way to do this than a road trip." Sharing more on-ground details is Shah, who adds, "We will be sharing photographs and updates while on the road from every stop we make to showcase that everything is okay and open now."



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HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

New Delhi

Hotel Association of India (HAI) has appointed **Charulata Sukhija** as Deputy Secretary-General of the Association. Her appointment is in line with HAI's overall strategic restructuring to strengthen the HAI secretariat in its effort to aid the survival of the hotel industry in India. Sukhija has been part of the hospitality sector since 1985, and started her career at the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), an organisation entrusted with the task of developing tourism infrastructure and promoting India as a tourist destination.



OYO HOTELS & HOMES

New Delhi

OYO Hotels & Homes has appointed **Anuj Tejpal** as Global Chief Commercial Officer, OYO. In his new role, Tejpal will work with regional CEOs and leaders to drive global delivery of revenue for hotels which includes various facets like direct demand, OTA and revenue management. He will be supported by all other country leaders and functional heads in refining the central and country or regional organisation structure. Tejpal is one of the founding members of OYO and was previously the Global Business Development Leader.



THE LEELA HOTEL AND RESIDENCES

BHARTIYA CITY

Bengaluru

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has announced the appointment of **Reuben Kataria** as the General Manager of the upcoming The Leela Hotel and Residences Bhartiya City Bengaluru. Recognised for his astute business acumen in managing hotels, Kataria is a veteran in the hospitality fraternity and well-known for his leadership qualities. In his new role, he will oversee the complete pre-opening.



Safest airports: APAC & the world

Safe Travel Barometer has released the Safe Travel Score for airports worldwide including the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, and three Indian airports – Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai – have made it to the list of the top 10 in APAC. In fact, Delhi and Bengaluru are also ranked among the top 10 safest airports of the world.



Airports play a critical role in easing the passengers into the new normal. They are the first line of defence in ensuring a safe and less anxious travel.

Overnight, hundreds of airports worldwide had to upend their operational pro-

cesses; research, evaluate and implement a variety of initiatives to ensure traveller and crew safety and comfort, while also minimising the chances of COVID-19 transmission. The Safe Travel Score is a rating initiative

based on an independent audit of more than 200 airports and 20 traveller health and safety measures announced by airports. The Safe Travel Score is an indicator of the preparedness of the travel industry as part of the 'new normal'.

Being 'ground zero' for the COVID-19 pandemic, APAC's



airports have a head start in implementing traveller health and safety measures compared to other regions. These measures are also directed by the respective aviation authorities and governments at large. Accordingly, APAC

airports are the most mature in the world when it comes to implementation of safe travel initiatives, including COVID-19 testing of passengers upon arrival.

Top 10 APAC airports for COVID-19 traveller safety measures

Airport	Country	Safe Travel Score
Singapore Changi Airport (SIN)	Singapore	4.7
Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport (CTU)	China	4.6
Indira Gandhi International Airport (DEL)	India	4.6
Kempegowda International Airport (BLR)	India	4.5
Hong Kong International Airport (HKG)	Hong Kong	4.4
Beijing Capital International Airport (PEK)	China	4.4
Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (BOM)	India	4.3
Sydney Airport (SYD)	Australia	4.2
Melbourne Airport (MEL)	Australia	4.2
Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KUL)	Malaysia	4.2

Other leading airports in traveller safety measures

North America	Europe	Middle East and Africa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL), USA Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), USA Boston-Logan International Airport (BOS), USA Philadelphia International Airport (PHL), USA Dallas Love Field Airport (DAL), USA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frankfurt Airport (FRA), Germany Heathrow Airport (LHR), UK Boryspil International Airport (KBP), Ukraine Amsterdam Airport Schiphol (AMS), The Netherlands Paris-Orly (ORY), France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH), UAE Dubai International Airport (DXB), UAE Hamad International Airport (DOH), Qatar Bahrain International Airport (BAH), Bahrain Istanbul Ataturk Airport (ISL), Turkey

Top 10 worldwide airports for COVID-19 traveller safety measures

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Singapore Changi Airport (SIN)	Singapore	4.7
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Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport (CTU)	China	4.6
Indira Gandhi International Airport (DEL)	India	4.6
Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH)	UAE	4.5
Dubai International Airport (DXB)	UAE	4.5
Kempegowda International Airport (BLR)	India	4.5
Hong Kong International Airport (HKG)	Hong Kong	4.4
Beijing Capital International Airport (PEK)	China	4.4
Heathrow Airport (LHR)	UK	4.4

airports are the most mature in the world when it comes to implementation of safe travel initiatives, including COVID-19 testing of passengers upon arrival.

Virendra Jain, Co-founder and CEO, Safe Travel, states,

"Safe Travel Score for airlines and airports allows us to piece together a holistic view of air travel, beginning from the airside all the way through on-board experiences. Our independent rating centred on traveller health and safety measures establishes a

baseline for travel brands, while equally offering travellers a glimpse into what they can expect in their journeys."

Last month, Safe Travel Barometer had announced the safest airlines in the world. While Germany's Lufthansa is rated as the

world's leading airline with a Safe Travel Score of 4.5 out of 5, India's Vistara and US-based Delta are tied at the second spot with a Safe Travel Score of 4.4 out of 5.

Airlines which made it to the top 10 achieved a Safe Travel Score of more than 4 out of 5.





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Domestic travel, the saviour

With a focus on region-wise perspective on hotel performances and strategies, HVS ANAROCK recently discussed an incisive perspective on India. **Mandeep S. Lamba**, President (South Asia), HVS ANAROCK, shares more...



Hazel Jain

By when do you see occupancies and RevPARs returning to normal levels?

We see occupancies coming back to pre-COVID levels around the third quarter of 2022 in India. We see RevPARs return to normal from second quarter of 2023. In terms of the segments, it is going to be leisure and the mid-management corporate short-haul travel. The mid-market hotels are what is going to lead this recovery.

How would you rate India vis-à-vis global hotel performances?

India is doing a slower start but getting there much faster. This is primarily because we have a less steep hill to climb. India had been performing below its potential and our RevPARs have been among the lower ones globally. Secondly, in India one of the remarkable things is our domestic market. If we just look at the numbers, our international arrivals are just under 11 million but domestic tourism is about 150x of that around the country.

So will there be a stronger focus on domestic market?

Our knights in shining armour are going to be the domestic traveller, and everyone is going to start focusing on them like they have never done in the past. That is where the recovery is going to come from. The second part of

our recovery will be from our outbound market that will not be able to travel overseas and will start spending in the leisure markets in India. That's why we see a quicker recovery happen.

Your advice to owners looking to sell right now.

This is not a great time to sell. But if your cash flows are not holding out and you have no other way of managing your cash flow, then there is no

Our knights in shining armour are going to be the domestic traveller and everyone will focus on them

option but to sell. Other than that, I would advise everybody to hold on because the valuations will be a little depressed – reasonably depressed actually – if you sell now. So the best advice I can give hotel owners is that if you have the ability to manage your cash flows for the next 12 months, then just hold on.

Do you foresee any consolidation happening?

There will be some consolidation happening at both the

domestic and the international level. This is an opportunity and people are looking at larger distribution, larger balance sheets. Therefore, there will be an opportunity to consolidate and I think there will be some consolidation that will happen globally. It's only natural for a pandemic or a disruption of this kind to bring these opportunities into play. Not that they were not on the cards even after the big merger happened between Starwood and Marriott, others would also want to get the same scale.

Do you see any changes in the development costs?

In the short term, there will be a reduction in development costs. There are lessons that we have all learnt from the pandemic. In terms of the way hotels need to be built more efficiently, where they can be cordoned off more easily, areas are going to get smaller, especially in the South Asian and Asian context. Our large lobbies are going to get smaller; our staffing ratios are going to come down considerably. Capital costs are going to come down for sure. The challenge in the short term is going to be that banks are now not very fond of lending to hotels – not that they were so even pre-COVID for that matter. But now there seems

to be even more risk for the banks.

Will the old excesses return or are we going to be like this for ever?

Everybody has short memories and we will start travelling again. But there is going to be a fairly long-term impact if not permanent in two segments of our business – corporate travel and MICE. Ultimately, MICE will come back though because of the sheer need for people to meet in person in large numbers, which technology may or may not be able to deliver. But corporate travel certainly is going to be impacted.

Which segment is going to see a long-term impact?

Boutique leisure travel is going to see exponential growth! 🐦



Mandeep S. Lamba
President (South Asia)
HVS ANAROCK

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