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## Aim to target traditional markets

**Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, shares the way forward for the Ministry, as the borders open for international tourists, including international promotions, working with states, and upcoming events.

Nisha Verma

Now that borders are opening, international promotions are a priority for Ministry of Tourism, says **Arvind Singh**, Secretary of MOT. "We are planning to launch digital and social media campaigns within this month. We also have plans to organise physical events wherever possible. Apart from our India tourism offices, the government has also nominated as many as 20 nodal officers in the missions. Hence, with their help, we intend to launch promotional campaigns," he adds.

### Focus markets

In terms of focusing on markets or countries for promotions, Singh shares, "We will target traditional markets that have been doing very well in the past, like the US, UK, France, Germany, Russia, and the top 10 markets. However, we will focus on the emerging markets such as Australia, Singapore, Spain, Portugal, Japan, and Korea, where we have potential, but not many visitors. Hence, these 20 missions, where we have nodal officers are in the top 10 markets and in the top 10 emerging destinations."



**Arvind Singh**  
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

### Change in promotions

While during COVID-19, all events and promotions were happening digitally, but things will change now, he says. "All events

were happening in a digital mode. We were doing many webinars, or online and hybrid meetings. Now, associations are planning physical conventions and large meetings. Gradually, as vaccination improves and the number of active COVID-19 cases goes down, we will see more physical events," he suggests. However, he adds that hybrid events will be the preferred mode as of now.

### Scheduled Flights

Ever since visas have opened, the industry has been requesting to restart scheduled international flights. Singh agrees,

Contd on page 8 ►

## Elevating Aviation

**Jyotiraditya M. Scindia**, Union Civil Aviation Minister seeks dip in VAT on aviation fuel and work hand-in-hand to boost the aviation sector.

Nisha Verma

**Jyotiraditya M. Scindia**, recently addressed a conference of the civil aviation ministers from the states and the Union Territories, where he urged that all the stakeholders, particularly the states and the Union Territories, cooperate and support the strengthening of the civil aviation sector. Stressing that this industry contributes a lot to the economic development of the country, Scindia says, "The Civil Aviation sector has suffered the most due to the pandemic in the last year. With collective efforts, the industry can work to provide better passenger facilities and



**Jyotiraditya M. Scindia**  
Union Civil Aviation Minister

strive for the sector's expansion and decentralisation." Assuring the states and the union territories of full co-operation and support from the centre, the

Contd on page 18 ►

## No cut in wedding budgets

Inspite of few flagging bookings, the unanimous opinion is that 2022 will be a jackpot for the wedding industry, not just for domestic destinations but with families venturing into international locations as well.

Hazel Jain

The great Indian wedding – a once-in-a-lifetime event for many – has seen a tumultuous last 24 months. But the upcoming season promises to bring the colour back to an otherwise 'pale' industry. While many weddings are back in full swing, albeit within the country, for others it is still a wait and watch situation.



**Rajeev Jain**  
Managing Director, Rashi Entertainment

tions emerging such as Vizag. For families looking for offbeat experiences and the novelty factor, our newly launched resorts and hotels are being considered as attractive options as they also double up as safe leisure get-aways," he says.

To meet this demand, Radisson Hotel Group is offering immersive guest journeys customised for couples, families, and their guests, with initiatives such as speedboat transfers and champagne welcomes at resorts. Saxena adds, "We have further introduced refreshed menus with signature cuisine options from

Contd on page 11 ►

**Zubin Saxena**, Managing Director and Vice President (Operations), South Asia – Radisson Hotel Group, feels that the surge in vaccination rates has given Indians the confidence to host wedding

ceremonies in-person, albeit with a focus on health and safety protocols. "Our hotels across Goa, Udaipur, Alibaug and Lonavala and Karjat are seeing an uptick in numbers with newer destina-

## IATO to drive tourism in Guj

Because of its efficient policy implementation process, in past two to three years, Gujarat in spite of COVID-19, has received 40 to 50 per cent of the FDI that came to India.

Janice Alyosius

The Indian Association of Tour Operators' (IATO) hosted a luncheon meeting recently with **Hareet Shukla**, Secretary, Gujarat Tourism as the chief guest. Giving details about the IATO's 36th annual convention, **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO updated members about the ongoing initiatives with the government. Shukla invited the members to Gujarat to discern the development made by the state and promised to make the experience memorable for them in Gandhinagar. The government is making efforts to promote



**Rajiv Mehra**  
President, IATO

tourism and discovering new destinations for domestic and international tourists. Stating that Gujarat is a progressive and policy-driven state, the tourism secretary said they have policies for

every sector. Because of which, in the past two to three years, in spite of COVID-19, 40 to 50 per cent of foreign direct investment (FDI) came to Gujarat, Shukla said.

Speaking of the government's plan to open its doors for international tourists, he said, "We have a calendar of events, beginning from January, festival-to-destination ones such as Navratri, Saputra, Rann Utsav, so that there is an event every alternate month. We are also coming out with destinations of world-class standards such as Kevadiya. We are keen to attract international tourist footfall to Gujarat."

Contd on page 15 ►

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## Airport on the anvil in Haryana

Haryana involves private stakeholders in planning and discussion of the upcoming Hisar Airport. The state plans on developing the airport as an Integrated Aviation Hub. With the airport coming up in the vicinity, Hisar and surrounding regions will develop.



Janice Alyosius

Members from Civil Aviation department, Government of Haryana held a meeting with the private stakeholders to discuss the planning of Maharaja Agrasen Airport in Hisar. The airport is expected to provide opportunities for growth and development in Hisar and surrounding areas. It will be built on a 7,200-acre plot of land with the development cost estimated around Rs 950 crore. As per a study, passenger traffic from Hisar is predicted to reach 2.1 million by 2024.

The objective is to develop Hisar airport as an Integrated aviation hub, including the construction of cargo railway line in addition to a passenger line. In the first phase, the licensing of the Hisar airport as the first DGCA licensed public aerodrome was completed. In the second phase, the development is in process. The ongoing work involves site clearance for airport development, construction of the runway, formation of SPV to undertake development tasks and planning of



**Pradeep Kumar**  
Chief Advisor  
Civil Aviation, Haryana



**Anil Kalsi**  
Joint Secretary,  
TAFI

Involving senior representatives will help in successful run of the airport

Hisar airport will have many new features which are not there in existing airports

integrated manufacturing cluster is in process. In the third phase, Aerospace manufacturing, Aviation training centre and aviation university, building commercial and residential aerotropolis have been planned. The project's third phase is proposed to be undertaken through PPP mode. The

high-speed rail connectivity to New Delhi and separate lines/yards for passenger and cargo are also being planned. Sudhir Rajpal, Additional Chief Secretary, Civil Aviation department, Haryana Government took note of the viewpoints and provided suggestions to stakeholders.

The location of Hisar is important because there is a lot of urban development taking place in the region. As per a study, it was indicated that by FY 2024, 2.1 million passengers are likely from Hisar airport.

**Pradeep Kumar**, Chief Advisor, Civil Aviation, Haryana. "Haryana is focusing on air cargo. This will help the economy of the state, especially the western districts. Representatives from cargo associations attended the meeting and pointed out the shortcomings they have witnessed in various airports in the past. Involving them in the planning stage and incorporating their suggestions will help in the run of the Hisar airport," reveals Pradeep Kumar, Chief Advisor, Civil Aviation, Haryana.

**Anil Kalsi**, Joint Secretary, TAFI, appreciated the efforts taken by the government and said, "Haryana is taking inputs as to how the planning should be done and it is interesting facet that this is a planned airport in India and it will have many features that are not there in the existing airports".



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# TRAVELTALK

## VIEWPOINT

### On the brink of revival?

Much to the relief of the entire industry, border restrictions have been rolled back, and foreign tourists have started arriving on our shores. As of now, the industry is in a celebratory mode and India tourism offices have welcomed some of the first tourists with garlands, rose buds and kits. With the spirits high, IATO has even announced its physical convention in December.

Indian tourism has already tasted the flavour of domestic tourists, which reached new heights after the pandemic led to a shutting down of borders in March 2020. It was domestic tourists, who kept the tourism business moving as they flocked to not just the tourist hotspots but explored new unknown destinations too. It also boosted the number of homestays, boutique hotels and many other alternate stay options. After serving domestic clients, all these places are ready to receive foreign tourists and the hospitality industry is geared to service them.

The same gusto is seen in the aviation sector. While international scheduled flights have not started yet, but the Vande Bharat operations and flights with many countries under air bubble agreements are making sure to bring not only Indians staying abroad home, but also foreign visitors who have been waiting to travel to India. The number of international flights operating to/from India now are around 40-45 per cent of the pre-pandemic period. In 2019, there were around 1,200 daily international flights in the winter schedule, but now in November-end 2021, only 495 international flights were operated to/from India, ferrying over 75,000 air passengers.

There is a rise in routes being announced for connecting major cities with Tier II and Tier III cities, owing to domestic demand. However, the same is still not visible on the international aviation front. With low number of flights and capacity allowed, the demand is high, and the airfare is skyrocketing. However, recently Secretary, Civil Aviation, has said that scheduled international flights are expected to start by end of this year, which has been a long-standing demand by both inbound and outbound operators. We hope that it happens soon and with the vaccination rates getting higher by day, it would guarantee a Happy New Year for everyone.

# Survey forecasts slow recovery

Collinson and CAPA experts believe COVID-19 testing to ease curbs in most nations by 2022, thanks to vaccination. Verification processes are set in place at many airports and entry points, in the wake of fraudulent COVID-19 testing results.



TT Bureau

As the travel ecosystem continues to adapt to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a newly launched second edition of the 'Asia Pacific Travel Recovery Report' from Collinson, a global end-to-end travel experiences, airport services and travel medical company, and Centre for Aviation (CAPA) survey predicts the recovery process for industry for the coming year and beyond.

The over 400 C-Suite and senior managerial level travel experts from leading global travel brands reveal that they are expecting a 'full recovery' to 2019 pre-pandemic levels in 2023. In addition, concerns around quarantine and fraudulent COVID-19 test results continue to remain a worry.

#### Re-opening of borders

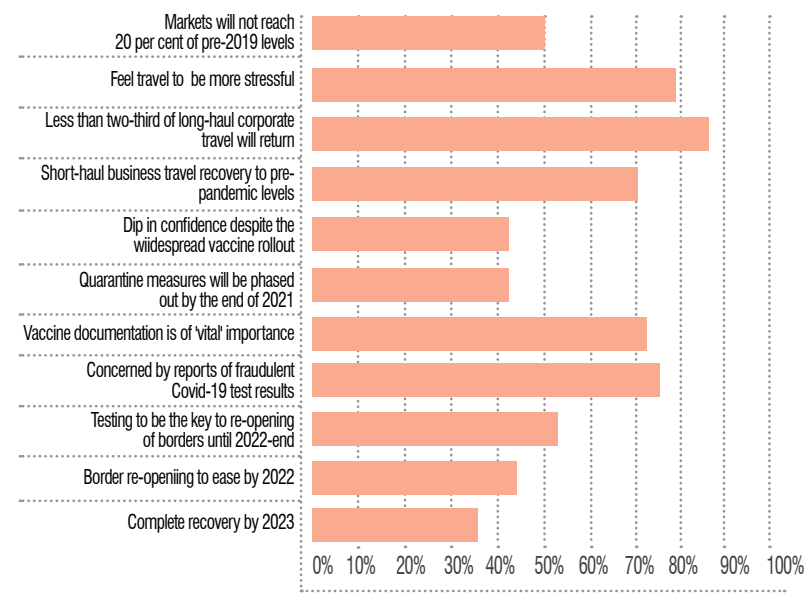
Polarisation with regards to travel controls, testing and policies across the globe continue to change over the course of the last few months. An increasing number of experts expect re-opening

The results show a likely increased desire to be 'away from the maddening crowds'

of borders to ease or substantially ease in 2022, while a third of global respondents still expect border reopening arrangements by governments to evolve at different rates in the next year. This is a significant reduction from the April 2021 survey of 56 per cent, where uncertainty dominated.

Signalling confidence in the testing protocols enabling a safer return to travel, several respondents expect robust COVID-19 testing

#### Respondents' percentage expectations of recovery by 2022 or 2023 relative to pre-pandemic levels, as well as their overall opinions of the global situation



to be significant for re-opening borders until the end of 2022 and continue until 2023. This mindset can be seen by the recent border re-openings in Singapore, Australia and the United States; they cite COVID-19 tests as components for reduced quarantine or even quarantine-free travel.

To address the concerns of fraudulent COVID-19 test results, Collinson is partnering with more than 30 airlines, airports and technology providers across the globe to help implement enhanced verification processes at key checkpoints in the journey and to make accredited corona testing accessible to travellers.

#### Travellers' state of mind

Many experts believe that travel is 'safe' if everyone adheres to preventative solutions (e.g., wearing face masks, social distancing etc.). But that said, the figure has dropped, reflecting a decrease in confidence level despite the widespread vaccine rollout, and given the nuances as to what individuals may consider to be safe solutions.

The results show an increased desire to be 'away from the maddening crowds'. This is in

line with Priority Pass's global drive to enhance lounge experiences for travellers; with the introduction of Be Relax Spas for the pre-flight relaxation, and contactless food and beverage

reach. Recovery to pre-COVID-19 levels is likely to take longer than any of the other sectors, with respondents becoming less confident due to travel curbs remaining imposed far longer than an-

#### Research results of travellers' sentiments

- ❖ Compared to forecast of five months ago, the expectation of travel resuming to pre-pandemic levels in 2023 has increased
- ❖ Fears of fraudulent travel and testing documents, as well as the impact of travel on mental and physical well-being, are predicted to remain top traveller worries.
- ❖ Business and long-haul travel will continue to be the slowest-recovering travel segments in 2022, while short-haul leisure travel will experience a resurgence in some areas
- ❖ In the Asia-Pacific region, optimism is low, as senior aviation and tourism professionals are more cautious than their global counterparts

offerings such as Ready 2 Order set to double its presence across the lounges for a seamless dining experience.

#### Reboot for business travel

While short-haul business and corporate travel has made a cautious comeback in certain sectors, there's been little movement between the April 2021 and September 2021 surveys. On the other hand, long-haul business travel remains the furthest from

anticipated. According to a majority of respondents, two-thirds of the business/corporate travel market will be back in 2022.

**Priyanka Lakhani**, Commercial Director, Middle East and Africa and Director South Asia, Collinson said: "This research is critical to understand the industry sentiment and as a result, taking the necessary steps to ensure the safe and long-term return of global travel."



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# Border tourism: Focus on Ladakh

Border tourism in the state to be promoted by boosting confidence of locals. The Union Territory Administration will soon launch its tourism policy, in which border tourism will be included. The centre recently announced to construct four new airports and 37 helipads to increase air connectivity to the region.



Janice Alyosius

Ladakh administration is emphasizing on promoting border tourism in the region, and at the same time, the UT is focusing on preserving its environment, ecology & culture through responsible and sustainable tourism. The Govt has announced air connectivity to Ladakh by planning to construct four new airports and 37 helipads. Border areas are sparsely populated and it is necessary to bring the communities into the mainstream, explains **K Mehboob Ali Khan**, IRS, Secretary Tourism and Culture, Administration of U.T. of Ladakh.

Though, Border tourism was not popular in Ladakh due to restrictions of the border areas. "The Administration has done away with the ILP for domestic tourists though an environmental fee



**Rupinder Brar**  
IRS, Additional Director General,  
Ministry of Tourism



**K Mehboob Ali Khan**  
IRS, Secretary Tourism and Culture,  
Administration of U.T. of Ladakh



**Jamyang Tsering Namgyal**  
Lok Sabha MP  
BJP Ladakh

Border tourism will enhance the lifestyle of the rural areas in Ladakh

The Ladakh Admn. stresses on Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

Since 1974, Ladakh has been an attraction for global tourists

needs to be paid in Leh," he said and informed that the admin-

istration will launch its tourism policy, with Border tourism.

**Jamyang Tsering Namgyal**, Lok Sabha MP, BJP Ladakh, said

the UT has potential in the tourism sector. Ladakh has been an attraction for international tourists since 1974. The U.T. will be organising a month-long Winter Sports Festival for the adventure enthusiasts in Feb next year to promote winter tourism.

**Rupinder Brar**, IRS, ADG, MOT mentioned that border tourism will enhance the lifestyle of the people in Ladakh's rural areas and create employment opportunities for the locals.

Brar says that physical connectivity is crucial for the travellers and service providers. "In last few years, there has been a reasonable thrust on development of infrastructure such as roads and telecom towers, which has brought both physical and digital connectivity in the region in a bid to promote tourism in the State," Brar says.

## Tourism Breaking News

Children under 5 years arriving into India will not need COVID tests: Health Ministry

The IRCTC and the MOT sign an MOU to strengthen the country's hospitality and tourism industry

IATA reports: Undisciplined passenger incidences are on the rise

MoCA aims to double number of airports in India by 2023-24: Jyotiraditya Scindia

EaseMyTrip acquires Spree Hospitality; adds new revenue vertical for the company

Global Destinations, now a proud member of the Global Travel Representation Alliance (GTRA)

MOT to have its iconic week in July 2022 for Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav: Arvind Singh

The National Aquarium, largest aquarium in Middle East, opens in Abu Dhabi

## Revival of Odisha tourism

With the tourism sector excitedly anticipating a revival in the coming days, EKTTA (Enterprising Knot of Travel & Tourism Associates) is in 'Walk-the-Talk' mode.



TT Bureau

EKTTA resolved to revitalise focused action on the subjects it has been talking about since its inception, namely, empowering and enabling the industry with effective workshops and knowledge sharing, catalysing organic and inorganic growth with tie-ups and networking, and so on, at its much-anticipated Annual General Body Meeting held at Swosti Premium Hotel on

An exclusive interaction with Chairperson HRAO and Swosti Group, **Jitendra Kumar Mohanty** was organised on the theme of 'Vocal for Local' to create a synergy among the

Odisha for overall growth of tourism in the state. A riveting presentation of Dubai Tourism & Commerce Marketing (DTCM) in India supported the event by educating our members on



November 12. Without wasting any time, two crucial tasks were carried out immediately following the Annual General Meeting.

local travel agents/tour operators and the hoteliers with the sole aim of bridging the gap between the stakeholders in

new products and opportunities, as well as the latest SOPs in Dubai, in order to make it genuinely experiential.

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# Incredible India still a strong brand

The key to developing tourism holistically is to have an integrated strategy between regional airports, regional and national tourism boards of India, and airline/tour operators. **Gavin Eccles**, Managing Partner, GE Consulting & Advisory, shares his perspective.



Hazel Jain

## How can the country develop its domestic tourism?

Key, is an integrated strategy between the regional airports, regional/national tourism board of India, and, the airline/tour operator partners. As Goa witnesses a reduction in airlines from Europe focusing on winter sun, competitor destinations such as Mombasa (Kenya) and Zanzibar (Tanzania) in Eastern Africa are gaining both charters and new long-haul leisure routes from Eurowings Discover. Incredible India is still a strong brand, but a brand needs more than just promotion.

## Since the pandemic, LCCs are being touted as the best model to have. Is this true for India as well?

The pandemic has shown that the LCC model has been more

adaptive to changing conditions. In markets such as Europe, the key LCCs of Ryanair, Wizz Air and EasyJet are able to work on pan-European routes as the markets opened. However, the carriers such as British Airways, Air France, KLM among others were connecting North America, with Asia-Pacific, were difficult for to re-start. Also, the flexibility of the LCC model allowed much easier discussions with airports to move to, two-week planning of services.

## What have we learnt as we come through the pandemic?

Well, an airline that has the chance to make quick route decisions, and build connections on changes in consumer demand will be more effective. With this in mind, many analysts believe in the LCC model. Coming back to India, four of the major six carriers follow a



Gavin Eccles  
Managing Partner  
GE Consulting & Advisory

similar approach to that of LCCs in the US and Europe have been following. IndiGo, SpiceJet, Go First and Air Asia India should be ready to adapt, and, look at how they plan and support route development, according to key changes in the tourism and aviation demand. Ensuring demand is driving supply, and trying to adapt our supply to the new demand. The process should be in-place, and, airlines implementing accordingly, and, as the Civil Aviation removes all

caps on numbers of routes, and seats to be sold etc., It is time for the carriers adapted to the new realities and ensured that the demand drives the business.

## Demand is higher than supply in India. Yet most Indian airlines are struggling. Why do you think this is so?

Stating that the airlines should be ready to work with the new operational realities is only one half of the story. The other is commercial. Looking at the Indian model, the four major domestic focused LCC players are all similar. In essence, there is no difference, and, as Michael Porter says, "There can only be one cost-leader. So, does that mean one is profitable, while the other three are losing money. And, throw-in Air India/Air India Express and Vistara, that, are not LCCs by definition, are they not, also offering no real difference to the

four-LCCs on product, service, and price. So, potentially six airlines with no differentiation, and, when such a market has this kind of environment, it is the price that falls, and, commoditization kicks-in.

Airlines cannot make money when all are offering the same goodies. Either become the

Ryanair, on average, it is half of their European legacy counterpart. Research focused on analysis by the Indian DGCA, highlights Indigo with an equivalent of 2.9 ₹ per km, with Air India at ₹ 5.7 for the same trip. Indigo is working the cost-side of the approach well, and, matches the halving of the flag-carrier airline model that is Ryanair v/s Lufthansa and the like.

It is time for the carriers to adapt to new realities and ensure that business thrives

low-cost leader, and push this as a key DNA of your approach. If you look at the Cost Available per Seat Kilometre (CASK) of

However, the same research shows Revenue per Available Seat Kilometre (RASK) is at ₹ 3.4 for Indigo. So, it costs ₹ 2.9 to fly, and, we make ₹ 3.4. Ryanair, on the other hand, costs 3.2-euro cents to fly, and, they make 4.2-euro cents. A difference of a 17 per cent increase on CASK to RASK for Indigo, vs, 34 per cent for Ryanair. Ryanair is able to make such a difference in revenue generation with— ancillaries—that is, making money beyond the selling of a flight.

# MOT's iconic week in July 2022

► Contd from page 3

"The industry has been in touch with us. They have also been talking to the MoCA, and the government is aware of this concern. The challenge is how to increase the number of seats available since we are all operating in an air bubble regime and the demand seems to be going up," he adds.

## What comes next

After the tourism and culture ministers' conference of southern region and the ITM in Nagaland, Ministry of Tourism is planning a meeting with the tourism ministers of all the states, reveals Singh. "Once the situation normalises, we can plan a meeting of all the tourism ministers in the country," he adds.

## International travel shows

While the Ministry of Tourism delegation from India did not attend the WTM this year, Singh shares that the event saw participation from Indian tourism representatives in London. However, the response was quite moderate. Regarding participation in more such events,

he adds, "With international travel easing, there will be confidence to organise and participate in more physical events."

## Going digital

Ministry of Tourism is working on expanding NIDHI 2.0. "We want to expand it to include a database of tour operators and other stakeholders. We have set up a self-certification system, making it much more robust. We are also working on the national digital tourism mission, which will link all the stakeholders in the system on one platform, as has happened in the case of the health sector. There will be many digital initiatives, which have been one of the highlights of COVID-19 and have resulted in a shift to digital forms of communication and the use of more information technology based applications," he confirms.

Speaking about the single window clearances for infrastructure development in states, Singh asserts, "Everything we are doing, including the national digital tourism mission, are all steps



Arvind Singh  
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

towards making it easier to get all the permissions. All the players of the industry will be linked digitally, and information will flow seamlessly. Hence, the increased adoption of the digital applications and techniques by the states will help in the process."

## Film tourism

Sharing that recently they had conducted a symposium on film tourism in Mumbai, Singh claims, "We had a very good response from nine states that participated and showcased their products. Positive feedback came from representatives of the film and motion picture industry, television channels, and others who at-

tended the event. In fact, many states have come up with policies where they are giving incentives and trying to make it easier for filmmakers to get permission to shoot in their states. It was good to get the industry and the states together, and we plan to continue these series with other states too. Hopefully, that will lead to easier shooting permission in the states and attract filmmakers to come and shoot more within the country, instead of going abroad and spending more money on foreign exchange."

## Rural tourism

After 2020 World Tourism Day, there has been a lot of focus on rural tourism, assures Singh. He adds, "There will be development towards rural tourism. We also have a strategy papers ready, as well as draft guidelines for homestays, which are mainly in the rural areas, and

these guidelines will be circulated to all the states very soon." However, when it comes to homestays or alternate accommodation, Singh says that the goal is to collect best practices

Once the situation normalises, we can plan a meeting of all the tourism ministers in the country

try has tried to collect all these practices. We have discussed it with the players who were active in this sector and have tried to come up with guidelines that will encourage other states to also go down the same path," he stresses.

## National Tourism Policy

When asked about the long pending National Tourism Policy, Singh says, "Many things have changed. The policy will be launched soon."

## Amrit Ka Mahotsav

With regards to it, celebrations for 75 years of Indian independence, Singh reveals, "Every ministry has been given a week, which is known as an iconic week, where they have to launch events. Ministry of Tourism's iconic week is in July 2022, and at that time there will be major events that we will be undertaking."

*Kerala has introduced Responsible Tourism (RT) Classification for hotels and resorts, giving added thrust to environmental protection and ecological-restoration. They will be classified into RT Diamond, RT Gold and RT Silver categories.*



# Spain is safe for tourism

With the acceptance of Covaxin for entry into Spain and with the majority of Spanish population fully vaccinated, the European destination is bound to climb popularity charts for Indians once again, especially since the Consulate General of Spain in Mumbai is processing visas in one day!



Hazel Jain

To take advantage of the upcoming holiday season and with the World Health Organisation recognizing Covaxin as a COVID vaccine in its Emergency Use List, the Tourism Office of Embassy of

Spain has been fully vaccinated. We are processing visas very fast. The visa comes from BLS office and it is processed within one day by the Consulate!

He added, "There is no need for quarantine when visiting Spain. There are three entry

Visitors can fill the health declaration form on the website [www.spth.gob.es](http://www.spth.gob.es) or by downloading the mobile app 'Spain Travel Health SpTH'. This will give them a QR code on successful validation. This QR code is required for boarding and health control at entry. Minors under 12 years

instructed by our Foreign Minister to prepare a visit to India early next year. We hope this visit will strengthen our relationship. This political development is further proof that Indians and Spaniards are working together to identify and promote our common interests. This include commercial and financial but also cultural and tourism. Tourism is an enormous field where we can work together and increasing tourism between the two countries will mean increasing our friendship." He revealed that in 2019, India registered more than 83,000 arrivals from Spain while Spain welcomed more than 2,22,000 Indian tourists.

Director of DDP Group. He said, "I give Spain full credit for being the first European destination to open up. In fact, Spain feels that by 2022, it may be back to the pre-COVID levels in terms of tourist numbers. We don't need to be afraid of COVID, rather learn to live with it. I believe, the most vaccinated country right now is Spain, which is remarkable. India, and in fact South Asia, is expected to reach 29 mn outbound tourists by 2024-25."

from Sri Lanka. In the past few months there have been many students going to Spain mainly to study architecture."

Highlighting the strategy for the outbound market, **Elisa Robles Fraga**, Director of Turespaña in India, says, "We have a positive outlook for the future. We have also introduced a microsite that has information regarding Spain and safety norms and regulations called 'Travel Safe Spain' and is available at <https://travelsafe.spain.info/>. I believe this will do an excellent job in conveying all relevant information. Spain is one of the safest countries with strict hy-



**Fernando Heredia Noguera**  
Consul General  
Spain in Mumbai



**José María Ridao**  
HE Ambassador of Spain  
to India



**Helena Escorial Lopez**  
Head of the Consular Section  
at the Embassy of Spain in India

Spain is now open for safe tourism as 90.5% of the population in Spain is fully vaccinated

Developing bilateral tourism between India and Spain means increasing our friendship as well

We work through BLS offices and visa applicants must submit their visa applications through them



**Ambica Shrestha**  
Honorary Consul of  
Spain in Nepal



**Priya Jayawardena**  
Honorary Consul  
of Spain in Sri Lanka



**Elisa Robles Fraga**  
Director  
Turespaña in India

A key segment of travellers from Nepal that visit Spain are those who travel for business

There have recently been many university students going to Spain mainly to study architecture

We have introduced a microsite with information called 'Travel Safe Spain'

Spain in India (Mumbai) recently conducted a travel trade webinar. Focused on the Spain (Schengen) visa for India, Nepal and the Sri Lanka market, the session saw attendance from more than 2,000 participants from the travel trade.

One of the key announcements during the discussion was made by **Fernando Heredia Noguera**, Consul General of Spain in Mumbai. He said, "We have good news! Spain is now open for tourism and safe tourism at that because 90.5 per cent of the target population in

requirements as tourist: a valid Schengen visa, a vaccination certification, and a health declaration form. There is no need to show your vaccination certification when you go to apply for your visa. You only need it to enter Spain. You can enter Spain 14 days after your second dose. With regards to the vaccination, we have some amazing news for our Indian friends. You can now enter Spain with Covaxin also along with Covishield. No RT-PCR test required to enter Spain if fully vaccinated!"

are exempted from presenting vaccination certificates. They only need a valid Schengen visa and the QR code from the app or website. However, children between 12-18 years who aren't vaccinated cannot enter Spain.

## Bilateral relationship

Speaking on the potential of bilateral relationship between the two countries, His Excellency **José María Ridao**, Ambassador of Spain to India, says, "Our prime ministers – **Narendra Modi** and **Pedro Sanchez** – met recently and we have been

Sharing some key details on the procedures and requirements for travelers for non-essential travel visa, **Helena Escorial Lopez**, Head of the Consular Section at the Embassy of Spain in India, said, "We work through BLS offices. Applicants must apply through them and then we will resolve their visa application. Regarding Nepal and Sri Lanka, there is a BLS office in Kathmandu. For Sri Lanka, they can come to New Delhi to apply at our Embassy or through office of BLS in India, or through the Embassy of France in Colombo. Spain welcomes all tourists from India, Sri Lanka and Nepal."

The session was moderated by **Sanjeet**, Founder & Managing

Spain in Nepal, said, "A lot of people from Nepal have started flying out of Nepal especially for their holidays. But the most important segment of travelers that visit Spain are those for business. For leisure, tour operators who create Europe packages now must include Spain. Nepalese people, mostly families, feel they must visit Spain. Madrid and Barcelona are the most popular places. The market needs to be developed further to have more Nepalese people visit other places in Spain as well."

**Priya Jayawardena**, Honorary Consul of Spain in Sri Lanka, said, "Apart from tourism, many business people also visit Spain

giene and protocols approved by the Health Ministry and are being followed at all tourism establishments. With tourism activity picking up, we expect to engage the travel trade even more with hybrid and physical events in 2022 in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. We also have plans to organise FAM trips for the trade next year."

## Key announcements

- ❖ 90.5% of the Spanish population fully vaccinated which makes Spain a safe destination for tourism
- ❖ Covaxin now accepted for entry to Spain
- ❖ Faster visa processing



# Virtual flexibility wins agents

Virtual events have been a lifesaver for the travel industry during the pandemic. A targeted audience, low cost, and maximum results are making agents and NTOs stick to webinars and online travel shows. Online events help in reaching out to a wider audience, giving a chance to interact with suppliers from remote destinations.

Nisha Verma

The pandemic saw technological solutions for meetings run over time, with people discovering a new way to conduct B2B meetings, conferences, and exhibitions.

## The positives

**Harmandeep Singh Anand**, MD, Global Panorama Showcase (GPS), one of the first physical shows with a strong focus on technology and virtual participation. "The most significant benefit of a virtual event is that participants can access or connect at their convenience. Since 2016, GPS has been doing so by going paperless and using the GPS Connect App and an

person." As a result, everyone saves time and has access to all the information they require. While meeting in person has its own benefits, attending online events allows you to be specific and focused on what one is looking for. "Virtual will be the way forward for specialised and time-specific events even after physical events open," Harmandeep adds.

**Zahoor Qari**, Chairperson & Managing Executive, Air Links Tours and Travels, also says, "Virtuality provides us the

## Innovations galore

While virtual events existed prior to the pandemic, they have gotten a new lease on life in the last two years, thanks to an increase in the number of users. Qari enjoys the breakout sessions in



**Riaz Munshi**  
President  
OTOAI



**Manoj Saraf**  
Managing Director  
Gainwell Travel

Virtual will be the way forward for specialised and time-specific events

One can connect from anywhere, saving money, time, and logistics in the process

virtual events since they allow for targeted talks. "Being from J&K, though, having high-speed internet and an uninterrupted power supply is a bit of a 'wild goose chase'. I would want some innovations to ensure the availability of alternatives to those key factors for successful online events."

"Since virtual events became a reality on Zoom, Google, and other such platforms, there have been a lot of improvisations," Saraf adds. A travel trade show such as SATTE, WTM, or ITB, for example, provides the feel of a real event with real people behind virtual booths."

## Lifeline during the pandemic

**Shravan Bhalla**, General Secretary, OTOAI, claims that there were many advantages for a travel agent during the pandemic to attend various webinars and exhibitions. "They got connected to the right people for future business prospects. When there was no business or hardly any business, all agents kept themselves busy by gaining knowledge and updates on various destinations and virtual product training events. It was the only way to stay connected with colleagues. In fact, agents from small towns and cities were able to connect digitally, which was not always possible for them when they attended actual meetings."

online platform to connect buyers and sellers. "GPS Connect is a recurring platform that allows buyers and sellers to connect whenever they want by mutual agreement," he explains.

Agrees **Manoj Saraf**, MD, Gainwell Travel, "The best part of attending an event online is that people can connect from anywhere in the world, and save money, time, and logistics in the process."

The convenience of a virtual event, according to **Riaz Munshi**, President, OTOAI, is unrivalled. "There's no need to travel, and you will have more time to interact with the other

considered as platforms for B2B engagements, events, and exhibitions. COVID-19 made people think of them as a way of connecting with potential buyers, and they have been active since May 2020," he claims.

## More targeted

Saraf claims that virtual events are more targeted. "They definitely save time as you do not have to travel for them."

Echoing similar thoughts, Bhalla adds, "Virtual meetings save a lot of time as webinars are largely attended. Secondly, virtual meetings give access to all the agents in tier-2 or 3 cities to be a part of the events."

Anand says that while everyone can walk into a physical event, in virtual events, both buyers and sellers can filter their meetings accordingly. "International destinations can only have meetings



**Zahoor Qari**  
Chairman & Managing Executive  
Air Links Tours and Travels

Virtuality provides the luxury of attending events in the comfort of our own homes

with outbound operators, while domestic operators can only focus on states and not NTOs. This plays a major role in virtual platforms," he claims.

He also informs us that with GPS Connect, agents can access previous webinars, which were held three to six months back. "It is like a Netflix platform created for the industry, where buyers can watch the webinar or a session that we conducted at their own convenience. In terms of technology, that is what GPS has done, which no other plat-

form or company has done," he claims.

## Learnings

Qari says that keeping the audience actively engaged is essential, e.g., by throwing questions and asking for brief input, etc.



**Shravan Bhalla**  
General Secretary  
OTOAI

Agents from small towns and cities were able to connect digitally

"Otherwise, there is a tendency for the audience to lose interest. Virtual attendance saves commuting time, so the attendees have more time to spend with family and engage in personal care activities," he adds.

Saraf says that ultimately, a hybrid model or a combination of both virtual and real meetings will emerge as the way forward.

Bhalla agrees that the webinars save time. Also, he mentions that with most countries opening doors for Indians, they feel many issues related to travel (visa issues, COVID-19 protocols, health pass, air bubble, flight issues etc.) are being addressed. "We are pleased that the majority of tourism boards are actively engaging with agents by hosting virtual joint events and inviting visa counsellors and airlines to address various procedures and protocols and answer relevant questions/issues to make things easier."

Online events help in reaching out to a wider audience, claims Kapoor. "We have had a chance to interact with many smaller destinations as well as suppli-

ers from remote destinations, which were either not visible earlier or had never participated in physical events before."

Munshi's big takeaway from virtual events has been that they provide information on what's going on in the industry and new trends. "People have attended virtual meetings to update and educate themselves across all parts of the trade, not just tourism." This is the most efficient strategy, we were saved by the virtual world since we were able to obtain information and stay connected. People will use this platform for targeted meetings in the future, saving time and money," he adds.

## Suggestions

In order to make sure that agents do not just attend virtual events to showcase their presence online without gaining any knowledge. Bhalla suggests, "To overcome these issues, the destinations



**Monia Kapoor**  
EC Member of OTOAI and  
CEO of Travel O Holidays

Online events help in reaching out to a wider audience

should provide a quiz session, with prizes at the end, so as to keep them active throughout the webinar and, at the end, offer a participation certificate to the active participants."

He also adds, "We have seen a state few tourism boards make the virtual events lively by making agents participate in cocktail or mocktail-making virtual events by sending a personalised kit to all registered participants, making it a fun-filled event."



# Wedding industry to witness rise

► Contd from page 3

our more than 100 hotels. With the pace of travel and consumer confidence levels both picking

demic is more or less over now. I believe that international weddings are opening up fast, and by 2022, we will witness many international

and the like are doing roaring business currently. We all should be prepared to cater to an increase in weddings that will take place in the next year, with new domestic destinations and out-of-the-box ideas at our disposal. For all of us, we all have huge business opportunities for the coming seasons. The client/s will spend more on entertainment as new concepts arise. The expenditure on food and clothes will also increase as the number of functions go up significantly since they are being held in India."



**Zubin Saxena**  
MD and Vice President (Operations),  
South Asia - Radisson Hotel Group



**Meera Charnalia**  
Senior Vice President & Head  
MICE



We are optimistic about this wedding season with consumer confidence picking up

Customers are also open to the idea of planning it on non-saya dates this year

Meanwhile, Meera Charnalia, Senior Vice President & Head (MICE), Thomas Cook India reveals that her division has executed several weddings and related events this year, with a several events lined up in the next few months. "The weddings are mostly booked during the saya dates, but due to the COVID-19, the customers are also open to the idea of planning them on non-saya dates this year. A majority of these are destination weddings with themed weddings. The families of brides and bridegrooms are now displaying an appetite for increased spending in order to move out of their home location to host the ceremony at a dream location. Some of the destinations in demand for lavish weddings

hosting sun-downer weddings," Charnalia adds.

## Small, convenient weddings

Perhaps as a result of the pandemic, many families, it seems, are opting for convenience rather than sticking to saya dates. **Atul Upadhyay**, VP (Operations) at Pride Group of Hotels, feels optimistic that COVID-19 cases are declining and restrictions are be-

has its resorts are doing well for pre-wedding shoots, Upadhyay claims. "It is about convenience when it comes to destination weddings now. Hence, city banquets such as Indore, Pune, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, New Delhi, and Kolkata are equally popular. Our locations at Bharatpur, Rajkot, Puri, Goa, Mussoorie and Dapoli are quite popular and busy. Our team allots an internal

budgets depend from client to client. It starts from ₹25 lakh onwards. That is why you can see every year at least 10 to 12 luxury resorts opening up in India," Singh opines.

Meanwhile, **Jitendra Kejriwal**, Chairperson of Arika Tour & Travels and Chapter Chairperson, IATO-Maharashtra, states that the entire wedding indus-

up, we are optimistic about this wedding season."

## Are saya dates still winning?

One of the most ardent advocates of non-saya, or non-auspicious dates for Indian weddings, **Rajeev Jain**, Managing Director at Rashi Entertainment, feels that the Indian wedding industry continues to

weddings across the world. Domestic destinations are already an 'in' thing now. We are getting enquiries, but all are for saya dates only," he says.

Forever the optimist, though, Jain adds that one will find many new opportunities opening up such as new domestic desti-



suffer because of the pandemic. "But we at Rashi believe that the Indian wedding industry will witness a significant rise as the pan-

nations. Jain adds, "Dedicated tourist spots such as Goa, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Mahabalipuram, Udaipur, Kerala, and Khajuraho

include Jaipur, Udaipur, Hyderabad, Lonavala, Mahabaleshwar, and Alibaug among others. Goa and Kerala are famous for



**Atul Upadhyay**  
VP (Operations)  
at Pride Group of Hotels



**Dharmendra Singh**  
Director, Plaisir Hospitality Services and  
Maharashtra Chapter Chairman, ADTOI



**Jitendra Kejriwal**  
Chairman of Arika Tour & Travels and  
Chapter Chairman, IATO-Maharashtra

Small weddings have become the new normal with live streaming and virtual guest attendance

We are getting queries and two of them are in the finalisation stage for February and March 2022

All wedding properties have been sold out. We are looking at Indore and Hyderabad

ing eased. "With the new normal, the wedding business will take time to revive. But currently, the wedding season looks promising. Many have taken the vaccination, and at this point, small weddings have become the new normal, with live streaming and virtual guest attendance alongside. Yes, this goes for non-saya dates as well. Nowadays, it's more about availability, convenience, and combining with holidays rather than just saya dates," he says.

Destinations such as Goa, Dapoli, Gangtok, Udaipur, and Mussoorie where Pride Group

representative to each event," says Upadhyay.

## No budget cuts

Only those families that can afford to spend, plan for fantasy weddings on dream destinations, says **Dharmendra Singh**, Director, Plaisir Hospitality Services and Maharashtra Chapter Chairman, ADTOI. "We are getting queries and two of them are in the finalisation stage for February and March 2022. People are interested in doing destination weddings in places like Goa, Jaisalmer, Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Jaipur. Nowadays wedding

ty is sold out until February 15, 2022. "All bookings are exclusively in India this year and all wedding properties are sold out, including for non-saya dates. The rates for saya dates have skyrocketed. The Leela Goa is around ₹ 45,000 to ₹ 50,000 plus taxes per night."

"The clients' budgets are the same as pre-COVID-19 levels; they have not come down and the people are okay with spending now." For March 2022, some of the clients are inquiring about international wedding destinations," Kejriwal adds.





# Indians holiday into a new dawn

Cordelia Cruises is working closely with the Government of India, the shipping authorities, the port authority, as well as the travel industry to ensure that Indian travellers can experience the joys of cruising safely even within the country and outside it, whilst enjoying the benefits of an Indian offering which is on par with global standards.



Hazel Jain

**C**ordelia Cruises by Waterways Leisure Tourism Pvt Ltd is India's only premium cruise liner. True to its name, Cordelia Cruises aspires to promote and drive the cruises culture in India through experiences that are for families, stylish, luxurious, and most importantly, inherently Indian. It's a cruise for Indians catering to the way Indians love to holiday.

Cordelia Cruises is the new way to holiday that eliminates all the hassles of multiple travels to reach your destination, curating and following itineraries etc. Cruising is the new and super-

Cruising, after all, is a great option to unload the stress, relax and holiday. What, after all, is better than being away from the hustle and bustle of our maximum cities than immersing ourselves in the expanse of the ocean on a cruise which offers something for everyone and of every age group.

Cordelia Cruises is working very closely with the Government of India, shipping authorities, port authority, and travel industry to create a future when travel can safely start again after the current pandemic of Corona passes away, and Indians can cruise and enjoy the proud Indian offering of global standards and quality.



lative version of a #staycation. It's a one stop travel destination that covers everything you might wish for in your travel itinerary. From breath-taking views, adventure activities, music and dance, international cuisine, everything is taken care of under one roof.

## Entertainment 24x7

Cruising through this holiday you will witness India's most popular entertainment shows at the Marquee Theatre with enthralling 'live' music and stand-up comedy gigs, mesmerizing magic shows, outdoor movie nights and professional theatre performances. Unparalleled excitement for everyone will keep you entertained throughout your stay onboard. To add to this, you may just be lucky enough to see Dolphins prancing around in the sea while you hang out on the sprawling deck, sipping a hand crafted cocktail.

## Upfront agent cut

It is key to note that Cordelia believes in delivering these experiences right from the guest's first interaction with them. They have an end-to-end fully online reservation system designed for the

booking convenience of all age groups. Alternatively, guests can also reach out to travel experts at their contact centre for booking assistance or get in touch with their nearest travel agents for Cordelia Cruise bookings. Travel

agents can avail of their advanced online booking platform. Also, the best part for travel agents is also that they get a 10 per cent upfront cut, there is no long waiting for that.

## Eclectic cuisine

Given that food is arguably one of the most important aspects of hospitality, Cordelia has partnered with the Apollo Group for its food and drink offerings. With immense variety, the food aboard Cordelia includes a plethora of cuisines and flavours catering to wide ranging palates and tastes. From flavours of India to authentic vegetarian and international cuisines, we also cater to preparations for our dedicated Jain customers. Some of the highlights include an eclectic mix of flavours from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Mumbai to Kolkata at 'Essence of India'.

There will also be simple home-made pasta, burgers, and pizzas at 'The International Grill' and exotic kebabs and bread at 'Hot Clay Tandoor'.

There will be dedicated Jain cuisine service for guests to enjoy traditional Jain dishes. Authentic Indian recipes are on offer at the 'Vegetarian Bang'. There is also homestyle thali restaurant being introduced onboard. A variety of comforting hot soups, subs, and rolls will be available at the 'Kettle & Bunn' and classic Indian sweets to specialty cakes and pastries to satiate your sweet tooth at 'Sugar N Spice'.

The Empress comprises 796 cabins, 11 decks, food pavilion, a fine dine restaurant, speciality restaurants, bars, lounges, business centres, spa, salon, dive in theatre, casino, marquee theatre,

non-stop entertainment, musical performances, live bands, adventure activities and shopping that ensures 24x7 entertainment for everyone on-board!

Everything offered on-board Cordelia cruises is especially designed and meticulously curated to cater to the likeness of our Indian audiences. The preferences of cuisine, Bollywood centric music and dance shows, magic performances etc. And we take pride in offering all that is liked by our audiences. It's safe to say that Cordelia is Indian at heart with most of its crew being Indian offering the best way India likes to holiday.

Since its launch, Cordelia Cruises is proud to have successfully catered to ensuring best holiday experience to those who have been on-board with us. We have received great positive feedback from our travel partners and guests alike. We have been praised for our efficacy in seamlessly travel bookings (online and offline), addressing queries and complains, offerings and discounts and most importantly our services once the guest is sailing.

For the team at Cordelia Cruises, it is motivating to hear positive feedback which in turn gears up everyone at Cordelia team to do and offer their best to all those who want to make their holiday a memorable and unforgettable experience! 🐦





# 20 successful sailings so far!

Waterways Leisure Tourism, that promotes Indian cruise liner Cordelia Cruises, is confident to provide a safe cruise vacation to its guests. It has successfully completed 20 sailings with approximately 20,000 guests till date, and is ready to embark on many more with new destinations in the offing.



Hazel Jain

Giving India its very own cruise brand, Waterways Leisure Tourism has been aggressively promoting Cordelia Cruises in the market. Speaking about the success they have seen so far, **Jurgen Bailom**, CEO and President, Waterways Leisure Tourism, says, "Indians were far from familiar with cruising especially locally. The thick of the pandemic was itself a significantly daunting time. I am overjoyed and humbled in equal measure with the response we have received since our launch. Families come in large numbers, wedding and important events are being hosted on board and guests are making memories of a lifetime through the stellar food, entertainment and destination experiences being offered by Cordelia Cruises. Christmas is coming and so is New Year's Eve and guests are truly looking forward



to the grand entertainment we have created for them. This response is pushing us to do even better every day and offer so much more. Cordelia Cruises has put India on the global cruising map. This is just the beginning."

**Vijay Kesavan**, Director - Sales & Marketing, Cordelia Cruises, shares details of the sailings. He says, "Cordelia Cruises launched in September 2021. The response we have received is not only encouraging but also overwhelming. The sailings

form a part of our workforce at Cordelia. The people who represent the company and are the face of it are very integral to the company's growth and success. The consumers perceive us through these faces and we are glad to have people who think of Cordelia as their own. Each and everyone associated with Cordelia has worked towards making the company and the services we provide the best in the industry. In such a short span of time, we managed to make our mark in the travel industry and hear customers rave about their experiences on-board. So everyone from the back-end team, administration, on-board staff etc are the ones who made our journey to success possible."

He shares updates on the offerings and says, "It is key to note that Cordelia believes in delivering these experiences right from the guest's first interaction with them. They have an end-to-end fully online reservation system designed for the booking convenience of all age groups. Alternatively, guests can also reach out to travel experts at their contact centre for booking assistance or get in touch with their nearest travel agents for Cordelia Cruise bookings. Travel agents can avail of their advanced online booking platform."

## Agent engagement

Kesavan reveals, "We are constantly updating our database with more regional agents to make our offerings accessible to all travel enthusiasts and also form a stronger network of partnership with the agents. We aim to target tier two cities as well in the coming year (both customers and travel agents). As far as our advertising campaigns are concerned, we have been advertising with the newspapers. However, our future plans include advertising through radio and in-theatre advertising which are currently being evaluated and in pipeline."

In the coming year, the itinerary includes newer destinations like Sri Lanka and Chennai. Currently, Mumbai has been the hub of all Cordelia sailings. However, in the coming year the team also plans to make Chennai as a hub starting monsoon.

## Testimonials from agents

Three travel agents who have been selling Cordelia Cruises share their experience and the feedback they received from their clients on how smooth their sailings were.

"We are seeing huge demand from our customers for this product. On an average we are booking two cabins a day from two to three cabins a week earlier. It seems a lot has been done to enhance the product and marketing to make customers aware of the product. We are looking at our clients' social media posts where they are tagging Cordelia Cruises and it seems they are enjoying the on-board experiences. It surely can become a year-round product for not only Indian customers but for neighbouring countries as well."



**Manish Dua**  
Vice President (Hotels & Holidays)  
Travel Boutique Online

"Cordelia has come as a breath of fresh air in the post-pandemic landscape. It has laid the foundation for the cruise market in India. We have received great feedback from those who have recently experienced the cruise. For example – a group of 110 guests on 15th November had a gala time on-board and they couldn't stop raving about their experience. Cordelia is helping Indians to have multi generation travel together. This new form of travel that is budget friendly, does not require a passport nor multiple travel stops!"

"We feel proud of being a leading distributor for Cordelia Cruises. This is a truly unique vacation experience for our guests from India. This emerging travel trend of cruising gives everyone the freedom to enjoy all activities at one destination itself providing the experience of international travel. What is truly amazing is the cruise offers everything for everyone which makes for perfect family time together. It's only been a few months and we've already seen a surge in inquiries from guests all over India, who have heard great reviews about it."



**Sapneal Rao**  
Director, Destination Masters  
LLP



**Jurgen Bailom**  
CEO and President  
Waterways Leisure Tourism



**Vijay Kesavan**  
Director - Sales & Marketing  
Cordelia Cruises

Cordelia Cruises has put India on the global cruising map. This is just the beginning

have been to Goa, Kochi, Diu and Lakshadweep.

We have successfully completed 20 sailings with approximately 20k+ guests till date and counting. Our Lakshadweep package, in particular, has received a lot of interest. Since our launch, the response we have received from all our customers (B2B and B2C) is not only encouraging but also overwhelming. It is, in fact, twice as much as we anticipated. Domestic travel is being sought after like never before. Indians are exploring vacation opportunities that are different and haven't been experienced by them earlier on. We can then safely state that we are at the right place at the right time. En-

The sailings have been to Goa, Kochi, Diu with Lakshadweep receiving a lot of interest

quiries and bookings for group holidays as well as weddings are pouring in for us."

Entertainment on the ship is curated in a way to cater all sorts of age groups on board. It also has DJ nights, live concerts and movie nights are planned on the cruise. Guests can also enjoy the rock climbing amidst the beauty of the majestic ocean or relax at the pool and jacuzzi. And for those who want to try their luck and earn some money, the casino is the place to visit.

Speaking about the strong team behind this, Kesavan adds, "We are indeed blessed with a truly hardworking, positive and talented set of individuals who



**Raveesh Khullar**  
Category Manager  
Yatra Online



# Getting ready for IATO convention

The IATO had its meeting in New Delhi, providing updates on the 36<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention, to be held in Gandhinagar, from December 16 to 19, 2021. Chief Guest **Hareet Shukla**, IAS, Gujarat's Secretary-Tourism, Devasthanam Management, Civil Aviation, and Pilgrimage assured of the Gujarat government's complete support in making the event a huge success.



DELHI



## IATO Maha holds curtain raiser

In order to orient and prepare its chapter members for the upcoming 36<sup>th</sup> annual convention at Gandhinagar, the Maharashtra Chapter of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) recently held a physical event in Mumbai, led by NS Rathor, its Western Region Chairperson. This was the chapter's first physical event in the last two years.



MUMBAI



# Gearing up to talk tourism

**EM Najeib**, Sr. Vice President, IATO, has been announced as the Chairman for the 36<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention to be held at the Leela Gandhinagar, for which **Rajnish Kaistha**, Honorary Secretary, IATO, is the Co-Chairperson. With new ideas and different topics planned for the convention, it will set in a tone of vibrancy and positivity amongst the members.



Nisha Verma

**S**peaking about their first physical convention post-pandemic, Najeib shares the theme of the convention 'Brand India—Road to Recovery.' "In the last 20 months, the industry has been struggling, but we expect a complete recovery. The tourism industry and the government will work together to ensure that India is back on track. We expect a sizeable number of inbound tourists, if the scheduled flights start," he adds.

Kaistha says, "On the positive side, domestic tourism has picked up. Both hotels and airlines are doing a good job, but leisure inbound has yet to start and is going to take time. We need to have proper SOPs in place, as people are going to look at how, India is going to maintain its image."

## Expectations from the convention

Najeib shares that with new ideas and different topics planned for the convention, it will set the tone of vibrancy and positivity amongst members. "The members will get a platform to exchange ideas to help the industry recover and move forward with optimism and confidence," he adds.

Kaistha echoes the thought, saying, "While people look up at us, the idea is to uplift the morale of the people and tell them how things are going to be post-COVID. Many senior people, professionals, hoteliers, airline representatives, and motivational speakers will come and guide our members through the new normal."

Najeib adds, "We are expecting **Arvind Singh**, Secretary of Tourism; **Rupinder Brar**,



**EM Najeib**  
Senior Vice President  
IATO



**Rajnish Kaistha**  
Hon. Secretary,  
IATO

The members will get a platform to exchange ideas to help the industry recover

Motivational speakers will guide our members through the new normal

ADG, Tourism; **Dr V Venu**, Additional Chief Secretary, Kerala, and all the industry leaders.

There will also be experts from the aviation, tourism, and hospitality sector."

## Issues to address

Kaistha says that they will talk about how to deal with hotels under the new normal, as they are looking into increasing their prices. "We will focus on transport prices due to hike in fuel prices, state taxes and means to rationalise them. For this, we are calling on people from various states to speak up and send a message that while we are opening, we must be price- and quality-conscious, as well as ensure that tourists return with a positive impression that India is not only ready to welcome tourists, but they return as ambassadors and say that India is ready," he adds.

## Registrations and protocols

Najeib reveals that on the first day of opening, they received around 100 registrations. They hope to get a total of 1000–1200 registrations, with all pro-

ocols by the GoI being followed for registrations.

## Gujarat is in the spotlight

Gujarat Tourism will have a presentation at the convention and expect messages from both the PM and the Home Minister for the same. "We are also trying to get the CM of Gujarat on board. There will be Fam tours to places like Bhuj to Rann of Kutch, Dwarka to the statue of Unity, educating them with the products and having them showcased in the best possible manner so that Gujarat is seen on the international tourism map," he adds. Lauding the Gujarat government, Najeib says that they have been very welcoming. "Even the hotels like Leela or Novotel have been very supportive. We are looking towards a good convention and we invite maximum of our members to join us and make it a success," he adds.

## IATO on tourism recovery

Contd from page 3

Speaking on the National Tourism Policy, Shukla said, "The national policy is focused on having a sustainable tourism so that it benefits the local community too. There are many components that are a part of the policy such as capital subsidy for new projects, exemption in power and stamp duty, manpower support and provision for mega projects, that is, a project worth ₹ 500 crore will have a special package."

While speaking about the 36<sup>th</sup> IATO annual convention to be held in Gandhinagar, Shukla said, "During the convention, the IATO members will get an opportunity to see the progress and development of Gujarat. We are in the process of revising the tourism policy, heritage tourism, adventure sport and homestays, and will soon launch another policy; cinematic tourism." Post-convention, tours will be organised to give an opportunity to the IATO members to explore Gujarat. "The IATO has taken up with the MOT to request the Ministry of Home Affairs to allow e-Tourist visa with double



**Hareet Shukla**  
Secretary, Gujarat Tourism



**Ravi Gosain**  
Vice President, IATO

The national policy is focussed on sustainable tourism to benefit the local community

IATO convention gives a platform for people to meet and greet and to motivate each other

entry and 60-day validity. They further requested the ministry that the visas should be allowed for entry of tourists through land from Nepal in order to facilitate Buddhist tourism movement. The IATO has also requested **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, MOT, to resume international flights in line with the bilateral agreements with various nations," Mehra said.

**Ravi Gosain**, VP, IATO, said, "The convention gives a platform for us to meet and greet each other. Supporting each other at this point is important." He further spoke on digital marketing, responsible tourism, and connectivity. On the speakers list included Secretary of Tourism, joint secretary tourism, industry stakeholders and other delegates.

## Soaring high with UDAN

**Jyotiraditya M Scindia**, Union Minister for Civil Aviation, attended the UDAN Utsav at Veer Surendra Sai Airport in Jharsuguda, Odisha and shared UDAN's success story.



Nisha Verma

**Jyotiraditya Scindia** complimented the government and the authorities for Jharsuguda airport. "The development of Jharsuguda airport is a perfect example of cooperative federalism and success story of UDAN scheme. It is an example of how the centre and state's joint work could do wonders," he adds.

He unveiled a 'Socio-economic Impact Study Report of UDAN Scheme' conducted by Indian School of Business. There was an exchange of partnership agreement between UDAN and MMT. Another highlight of the event was the result of UDAN Logo competition, which was announced and the new logo of UDAN India@75 was launched. The minister also flagged off new air route between Shillong and Dimapur under RCS Scheme.



Jyotiraditya M Scindia addressing the gathering at UDAN Utsav celebrations in Jharsuguda, Odisha

Scindia said that while all the airports in the country were witnessing a steep decline in flyers during the COVID time, Jharsuguda airport was among those few, that were different. "The number of flyers across the country saw a decline of 62% while Jharsuguda during the same time, witnessed a mere drop of 5%. This shows the potential of the district and the region at large," he says.

Speaking of the success of UDAN scheme, he said that the country had only 72 airports since independence while after 2014, the number

has increased to 136 airports now stood at 136. "We have set a target to increase this number by 220 in the next five years which will include helipads and water aerodromes. The number of airlines, routes have also increased significantly over the years due to the advent of Udan scheme," he shares.

Scindia also revealed that the Greenfield Airport at Puri and the Phase II expansion of Veer Surendra Sai Airport in Jharsuguda will commence, following responses from the state government.



# 2022 regains momentum

FITUR 2022, organised by IFEMA MADRID, will take place from January 19 to 23, with the theme 'Embracing the World' and will feature the Dominican Republic as a FITUR Partner Country. The event endures to develop its professionalization and specialization strategy by focusing on various segments that drive the tourism market.

TT Bureau

After the milestone of FITUR 2021, in its "Special Tourism Recovery" edition, and backed by the entire value chain of the international tourism industry, the Trade Fair dedicates all of its effort to its essential mission, to contribute to the recovery of tourism.

This is proven by the 53 per cent growth already recorded for the next edition, compared to the 2021 edition, and the forecast is that it will continue to increase, at a pre-pandemic rate of participation that will strengthen the role of FITUR as the world's leading trade fair.

The representation of the Spanish tourism industry is already confirmed at its highest level, in terms of Autonomous

Communities and Cities, and also very positively in terms of companies, to which must be added, the growth of official international participation, which

ements such as the gradual normalisation of tourism activities and the backing by the government in declaring it as an Event of Exceptional Public Interest, as

chain, will once again place all of its resources at the service of the industry in its main mission to contribute to speeding up tourism recovery and helping the industry to grow.

Along with the worldwide promotion provided by FITUR, the event continues to develop its professionalization and specialization strategy by focusing on the various segments that drive the tourism market, with its sections FITURTECHY; FITUR KNOW HOW & EXPORT; FITUR MICE; FITUR HEALTH; FITUR ENTERTAINMENT; FITUR TALENT; FITUR LGBT+; FITUR LINGUA and FITUR WOMAN, as well as B2B events and activities, programs that showcase some of the future key points and challenges, with special emphasis on the digital transition, technological progress and sustainable

development. Alongside these sections, the FITURNEXT Observatory is dedicated this year to boosting good tourism practises regarding accessibility.

FITUR will be held throughout eight halls, divided as follows:

Its main mission is to contribute to speeding up tourism recovery and helping the industry to grow

America in Hall 3; Europe and Middle East, Hall 4; Asia-Pacific and Africa, Hall 6; Spanish Official Organisations, Halls 5,

7 and 9; Travel Technology and Companies in Halls 8 and 10,

This year the Dominican Republic is the FITUR Partner Country, therefore it will have prominent positioning and strategic visibility to showcase the country's many tourist attractions. This is the second time that the Dominican Republic is the "FITUR Partner", the first being in the FITUR 2019 edition, and so far, it is the only one that has collaborated twice as a partner. The Dominican Republic is partnering with FITUR to highlight its mild climate and the hospitality of its people, its connections with over 1,400 airports from over 170 countries, as well as its proper handling of the pandemic regarding protocols for tourism, vaccination of the local population and especially of tourism industry workers.



stands, two months before the event, at over 70 per cent compared to the results of FITUR 2020 and represents a growth of 240 per cent compared to the May 2021 edition. Thus, FITUR 2022, in alignment with el-

well as the significant backing from institutions, countries and destinations, hotel chains, travel agencies and tour operators, technological companies, suppliers, transportation and, in general, from the entire tourism value

## India Tourism taps



India Tourism conducts physical roadshow jointly with ADTOI Maharashtra Chapter in Pune. The roadshow focused on Odisha as a destination where India Tourism invited travel stakeholders from Odisha to conduct B2B meetings with the Pune counterpart to promote the state. The association will take out a similar roadshow in Bhubaneswar to promote Maharashtra as a destination.





# Booster dose for investor interest

Travellers now prefer private villas over hotels which indicates a long-term behavioural change. As a result, there is a lot of investment in private vacation homes. **Devendra Parulekar**, Founder of SaffronStays, shares his perspective on emerging trends among the Indian travellers for selecting accommodations.



Hazel Jain

**What kind of trends have emerged among Indian travellers with regards to choosing and booking accommodation?**

Offsites and team get-togethers used to be the time for colleagues to bond and unveil their fun side. With WFH, interactions became a lot more transactional, work fatigue set in and it was difficult to form deeper bonds. This is why many corporates have started enquiring and also booked with us for a team get-together. While last year was all about revenge travel, it is now mostly about the need to take a break, as and when you have the chance.

The frequency of breaks among the travellers has gone up, where people choose to stay at premium accommodations. When

we speak of celebrations, it is far easier to convince a large group of people to drive to a private villa near Mumbai and Pune or even fly to Goa than have everyone join the party abroad.

**What is the investor sentiment currently given that the industry is still trying to find its feet after the lockdowns?**

Yes, there is a lot of investor interest. There are three types of investors. The first type is the money that comes in from the established, large hospitality chains that will invest in working with homes and homeowners. The second group consists of investors who are building homes with a view to rent them out. So those are not private equity firms but individuals-ones who are building and/or buying a home in Goa or Alibaug and giving it to players like SaffronStays to run and monetise. The third type



Devendra Parulekar  
Founder, SaffronStays

consists of private equity firms and investors who will probably also want to see a piece of the action. Private equity investors are waiting for credible players to emerge whom they can back and grow up with. As of now, our focus is on expanding our business within the country.

**Do you see any consolidation happening in this segment as well?**

Absolutely. There are two reasons why I think the industry

has just begun to explode. One is that, behaviourally, the customers are now preferring private villas over hotels, so there is a secular long-term behavioural change. Secondly, because of the rise in the number of customers, there is a lot of investment happening in private vacation homes. So, the quality of supply that is coming through is brilliant.

Pre-COVID-19, most of the homes were built 10 to 20 years ago and were being repurposed to host guests. But now the supply that is coming in consists of homes that are newly built. For the next 18 to 24 months, you will get to see a lot of inventory come into the market. This means that supply will grow at least 10 times, and that is where the industry will start seeing the kind of traction that it deserves. Better supply means

better guests, and vice-versa, and this cycle will continue. So a lot of investment — whether in gated complexes or complexes made purposely with renting in mind — will take place.

Having said that, you will see a lot of hoteliers entering this space.

For the next 18-24 months, you are going to see a lot of inventory coming into the market

New-age, technology-based companies such as SaffronStays will evolve. Eventually, you will

find two to three large players who have a pan-India presence and many small regional players. For instance, an operator in Goa, who would have five to ten homes doing a spectacular job, and then, there will be large players like us, with a national footprint of more than 1,000 homes. The difference between the two is the ability of the organisation, the team, and the founding team would be able to embrace corporate processes and embrace technology to run the entire operations, and sales and marketing function.

At the end of the day, the crux of this proposition is who is able to provide better quality services at the right price points to guests, meet their aspirations, among other facilities. If you are able to scale all of these, you will grow, else you will be left behind.

## Focus on health tourism

Maharashtra's Directorate of Tourism aims to attract more medical and wellness tourists from the UAE and the Gulf region, as it announces MoU with destinations at the World Expo 2020 in Dubai.



TT Bureau

Maharashtra's Directorate of Tourism and Medical Value Travel Council of India (MVTCI) have signed MoUs with the UAE, Bangladesh and Oman in the Gulf region to bring the West Indian state's wellness and healthcare tourism offerings to citizens and residents in these countries. The event took place at the ongoing World Expo 2020 Dubai. Maharashtra is showcasing its culture and tourism potential in addition to trade and commerce. The state tourism department aims to explore long-term collaborations with organisations in the UAE and the region in the areas of business, investment, and medical and wellness tourism.

At the event, **Aditi Tatkare**, Minister of State Tourism, GoM said, "The Government of Maharashtra provides world-class health amenities at 50 per cent lesser cost." The Maharashtra



Government's Tourism Directorate and MVTCI have created a roadmap for encouraging patients from other countries to seek out services in the State.

**Milind N Borikar**, Director of Directorate of Tourism, said, "Maharashtra is the one-stop destination for end-to-end healthcare services and specialised healthcare providers, diligently creating a healthy ecosystem." The state was recently recognised at WTM- London for eco-village and tiger conservation projects, in addition to winning global re-

sponsible tourism awards, and the International Agro Tourism Award for having over 1,000 agri-tourism centres.

Under the Regional Tourism Development Scheme (RTDS), over 250 destinations are being developed. The state's responsible tourism policy ensures optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

## GPS 2022 to cover 16 cities

**Harmandeep Singh Anand**, MD, Global Panorama Showcase, has announced that they will be doing the next edition of GPS from April 2022 in 16 cities.



Nisha Verma

**Harmandeep Singh Anand**, shared that GPS 2022 will be a bigger event and will cover 4 cities in each quarter, making it a total of 16 cities in one year. "The events will be physical and depending on the participation, it will be either for one day or for two days. The same GPS format will be followed, and the virtual platform is already there for people to connect. There are over 2000 verified attendees, consisting of pan India buyers, who are registered, which is the USP of the GPS platform. The 16 cities will be the four metros—Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru; along with 8 cities that were already there—Nagpur, Ahmed-



Harmandeep Singh Anand  
MD, Global Panorama Showcase

abad, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Kolkata, Kochi, Pune; and we will be adding Jaipur, Indore, Guwahati and Visakhapatnam," said Singh. Sharing further details on events, he added, "Pricing will be as per the category of cities and audience we are targeting. We won't be targeting 1000 agents per city now. Because of COVID, we will be restricting

it to between 100-300 buyers per city. With more people expected in metros, the event would probably be split over two days in those cities. GPS

GPS would be a targeted event, where we want the decision makers to be present

would be a targeted event, where we want the decision makers to be present, and not anyone or everyone."

*As per WTC's and Trip.com latest projections, consumer trends show strong growth in international spending for 2022 and beyond, projected to overtake domestic spending, as more destinations ease restrictions and vaccination rates continue to rise.*

## EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



## DECEMBER

Date	Event	Time
1-3	Rann Utsav-The Tent City	TBA
3-5	India Travel Mart - Lucknow	11:00 am
3-5	India International Travel Mart Hyderabad	11:00 am
4 - 6	Guangzhou International Travel Fair	9:00 am
6	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
7	Singapore Webinar	TBA
6 - 9	ILTM	TBA
7-9	Future Travel Experience Global Exhibition	9:00 am
10	Singapore Webinar	TBA
13	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
14	Austria Webinar	2:30 pm
16 & 17	Travel MICE Show	9:00 am
16 - 19	IATO 36 <sup>th</sup> Annual Convention	10:00 am
17-19	India Travel Mart - Jaipur	11:00 am
23-26	Thai International Travel Fair	10:00 am

For more information, contact us at: [talk@ddppl.com](mailto:talk@ddppl.com)

## UP ramping up tourism infra

Uttar Pradesh government is making rigorous efforts in improving the state infrastructure and connectivity to promote tourism. The government has made a master plan to develop new hotels, roads, airports and rail connectivity to facilitate tourism.



Janice Alyosius



India is popular for its cultural and traditional tourism and Uttar Pradesh offers a wide range of tourist and religious sites. In the past, the state lacked in tourist infrastructure and other facilities. The UP government is, of late, making rigorous efforts in improving the tourism infrastructure and connectivity of the State. The government has prepared a master plan to develop new hotels and construct roads, airports and railway tracks to increase connectivity for the convenience of tourists.

**Ravi Gosain**, Vice President, IATO, said, "Varanasi, being a religious destination, is the most sought-after international tourist destination. After it comes Ayodhya, which has a history of religion and culture associated with it. The recent Deepotsav has brought Ayodhya into limelight.



**Ravi Gosain**  
Vice President, IATO

The holy city has the potential to be popular among tourists, especially in understanding India's culture and its history".

The UP government is also working towards improving the hospitality sector in the state. Gosain mentioned in conversation with **Sanjeev Kumar**, secretary, Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA), that 10 to 15 hotels are being developed and a luxurious Dharamshala is in the pipeline. Incentives are being offered to the hoteliers in order

to construct hotels and resorts in Uttar Pradesh.

The country has a several destinations that have the potential to attract international travellers. According to the government's master plan, they do not want to promote Ayodhya just as a religious destination but something more than that. "With Ayodhya, other destinations will also get a face-lift. Cities such as Lucknow that attracts less international tourists so it can be the transit point with the development of Ayodhya and Varanasi," Gosain added.

Tour operators always look for new destinations to sell in the international market, therefore enhancement and development from time to time is very essential. The operators expect their tourists to see more and more. In India 60 per cent of the travellers are second time visitors. So,

if someone visits for the second time it is important to offer them something different.

International tourists have started enquiring about the country and with new destinations to be

A master plan has been prepared to improve roads, airports and rail connectivity for the tourists

offered to them, Gosain felt that it will certainly act as a booster to Indian tourism, which is the need of the hour. Gosain appreciated the efforts put in by the government of Uttar Pradesh to promote tourism.

## TAT celebrates 'Loy Krathong'

Thre TAT, New Delhi celebrated the Thai festival of lights with energetic Thai cultural performances, floating kathongs in the water, and relishing authentic Thai food, to honour the goddess of water.



Janice Alyosius

The TAT, New Delhi and Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport celebrated the Thai festival of lights known as 'Loy Krathong', on

a homage is paid to the goddess of water by floating the Kathongs. Kathongs are made from candles and incense sticks that have been decorated on banana leaves. It is believed that by floating the Kathongs, all misfor-

formances, floating beautiful kathongs in the water, relishing authentic Thai food and lot of more activities.

**Vachirachai Sirisumpan**, Director, Tourism Authority of Thai-



November 19. The festival, which is similar to India's festival of lights, is held on the night of the full moon of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month, which traditionally marks the end of the rainy season, and

tune of the devotee floats away, and his or her prayers are heard.

The magical evening was celebrated with Thai cultural per-

land, New Delhi, said, "The event is to bring Thailand to India. It is a way for the TAT to thank the partners, travel agents, media, and other allies for supporting Thailand. Thailand is open to



international travellers, including Indians without quarantine, and Covaxin is also being accepted by the Thai authorities after the approval of the World Health Organization (WHO), which is definitely a good news. We are getting lot of inquiries, and people are excited to do business with us again."

He says the authorities are also waiting for commercial flights to take off, and there will be many new perspectives on the tourism front that they will be presenting to the visitors in 2022, added Sirisumpan. The diplomats, corporates, the media, and members of the travel fraternity have been invited to celebrate the magical festival of lights 'Loy Krathong'.

## Aviation has job potential

► Contd from page 3

Minister said that the success of the states would also lead to our complete success.

## Managing the crisis

He claimed that the whole-of-the-government approach had helped the Ministry tackle COVID-19 pandemic situation effectively and convert the crisis into an opportunity. "The domestic aviation sector suffered a lot during the period, and hence the government set up nine advisory groups, covering a wide array of sub-sectors like airlines, airports, MROs, flying training schools, cargo, ground handlers, and aircraft manufacturing, and their meetings have been yielding good results," he adds.

## Reduce the VAT on ATF

In his address, Scindia appealed to the states and the Union Territories to bring down VAT on aviation fuel as it contributes big time to the operational cost of flights. He thanked many of the Indian states for having cut the rates to a very large amount, which has helped gain more air traffic movement in the country within a very short period of the reduction. The Min-

ister claims, "The sector has a large cost-benefit ratio and huge employment potential."

In addition to the that, Scindia called upon the states to facilitate new airports by swiftly handling land allotment issues. "The Ministry will be doubling the number of airports and

The Ministry will be doubling the number of airports and taking the number to more than 200 by 2023-24

taking the number to more than 200 by 2023-24," he claims. The Minister stresses the need to bring up at least one heliport in each of the district, in collaboration with the states and the Union Territories. With regards to the seaplanes, he says that the states should provide capital support for this initiative, too.





## Gagan Katyal

Corporate GM Sales & Marketing,  
Ananta Hotels and Resorts

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# Travel

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## SHERATON GRAND

**Pune**

The Marriott International has announced the appointment of **DEEPA CHANDIRAMANI** as the Senior Cluster Marketing and Communication Manager of Sheraton Grand and Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa. With over nine years of experience in the hospitality industry, she will oversee the marketing, public relations and social media for both the hotels. She began her career at Courtyard by Marriott, Chennai, she was a key taskforce member at Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa, JW Marriott Mumbai, Courtyard by Marriott Bilaspur and Courtyard by Marriott Raipur.



## HILTON

**Mumbai**

**DEEPAK KUMAR** has been named General Manager of the Hilton Mumbai International Airport. Deepak has over 20 years of expertise and a broad range of operational skills from a variety of hotels and brands. His most recent position was as GM of the Holiday Inn Cochin. Deepak spent nearly a decade with IHG, working at Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport and Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport before coming to Cochin. During his career, he has continuously been a high achiever, driving change and growth with innovative strategies to expand revenue streams and manage expenses, develop talent in his teams and strengthen relationship with owners.



## ZONE BY THE PARK HOTELS

**Delhi**

Zone by The Park has appointed **KIRON NAIR** as its new Director-Operations. Nair will be responsible for driving operating efficiencies across the Zone by THE Park Hotels. His primary focus would be to enhance and lead the operations and help foresight and guide the team to strive towards excellence and growth. He will be focussing on positioning the brand as a market leader with his years of expertise in the hospitality sector. Nair has been in the hospitality business for more than two decades. He has previously worked with leading hospitality brands across the country.



## THE HYATT PUNE

**NITIN SHEVDE** joined Hyatt Pune, Kalyani Nagar as the HR Manager. He has been with Hyatt for the past 16 years and has worked with seven Hyatt hotels in India. He joins at Hyatt Pune from his last assignment at Grand Hyatt Mumbai. Nitin will be overseeing strategy, recruitment policy, implementation, talent management and associate engagement at Hyatt Pune. He has represented Hyatt at a global training held by Hyatt, in China and has been a part of pre-opening teams of Grand Hyatt Goa and Hyatt Place Candolim.



**SRIVATSA ALLAMPALLI** has been appointed as the Director of Operations Hyatt Pune, Kalyani Nagar. He will be leading business and strategic operations of the property and smooth functioning of the hotel. In his 20 years in the hospitality industry, he has been responsible for Front Office management at some of India's leading hotels. He has been with Hyatt hotels for the past 10 years, including a stint in Oman, Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Pune. Srivatsa played a role in orchestrating opening and management for Hyatt properties in Ahmedabad and Lucknow.



## WATERWAYS LEISURE TOURISM PVT LTD

**Delhi**

Waterways Leisure Tourism Pvt Ltd appoints **RAKHI DUTTA** as the Regional Manager – North & East India, spearheading the business development and brand awareness for Cordelia Cruises. She will focus on the business development and building up the brand. She has over 23 years of experience in establishing and handling International luxury and premium Indian cruise lines. She has also worked with Princess Cruises, P&O Cruises & Hurtigruten and also worked for Discover the World Marketing, InterGlobe Enterprises & Cruise Professionals.



## NIRAAMAYA WELLNESS RETREATS

**Kerala**

Niraamaya Wellness Retreats announced the elevation of **JAYACHANDRAN C R** from General Manager to Area Director - Operations. In his new role, he will be spearheading the operations for all the retreats and private residences in Kerala and will be reinforcing the core ethos of the brand. With a career span of 20 years specializes in management experience with luxury hotels across India and abroad overseeing the operations of a pre-opening, opening and functional hotels. He has also worked with brands like Taj, ITC, Leela, Raviz and MGM Grand Australia prior to joining.



## HYATT REGENCY

**Dehradun**

**HARKARAN SINGH** has been appointed as the General Manager for Hyatt Regency Dehradun (pre-opening). In his role as the General Manager, he is leading the multi-cultural team of this stunning 263 keys hotel across all disciplines. Singh brings with him 15 years of varied experience across Marriott and Hyatt hotels in India. He began his journey with the Hyatt family 12 years ago and has worked across Hyatt Pune in 2010 to Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli, Hyatt Regency Kolkata and served as the General Manager at Hyatt Raipur, before taking on his latest role at Hyatt Regency Dehradun.



## THE WESTIN

**Goa**

**SHARAD SINGH** is appointed as the Director of Food and Beverage at 'The Westin Goa'. He has over 14 years of experience in operations, strategy planning, marketing and promotions, customer relationship management and spotting bar and restaurant trends. In his new role, he will oversee all aspects of the hotel's planning and service. He is an expert in formulating standard operating procedures that keep the department functioning. In his previous roles, he was associated with reputed brands like Sheraton Grande in Pune, The St. Regis in Mumbai, and Marriott Hotels in Pune, Jaipur and Mumbai



## TALKING PEOPLE

**AMIT SIDANA**, Vice President (Sales & Marketing), Pride Group of Hotels, does not believe in the word 'stress'. "I do not allow negative thoughts into my head, so life is sorted out.

My day starts with playing a few rounds of lawn tennis. During the lockdown, there have been some realisations. I could implement everything I studied during Hotel Management during the lockdown after almost two decades.

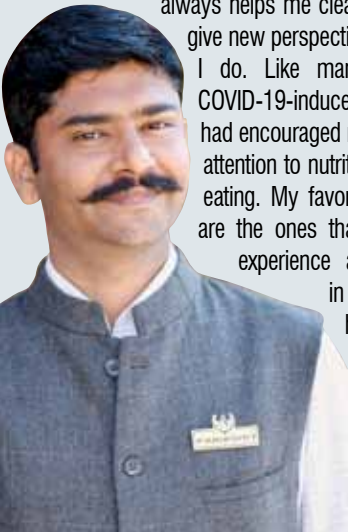
"Sidana loves to holiday in Coonoor in India and internationally it is Mauritius. "But my next holiday will be to New Zealand. The mountains, the snow, the lakes, the waterfalls – everything I love is in New Zealand," Amit Sidana says.



For **RAHUL PANWAR**, General Manager, Grand Mercure Gandhinagar GIFT City, exercise is a way to manage stress that does not have to add to your financial woes. I developed a habit of reading during lockdown. I am more of a beach person and love to spend my free time near the ocean, whenever possible. Goa is my favorite destination in India. My next holiday will be in Dubai. I have not explored the Middle East yet, and there is no better place than Dubai. Love to see the skyscrapers, hotels, and the ocean etc," Panwar says.



**PARIKSHIT RATHORE**, Lodge Manager, Aramness Gir, likes to unwind and de-stress by stepping out for a walk, a run, or a trek. "For me, a change of scene always helps me clear my head and give new perspectives in whatever I do. Like many others, the COVID-19-induced lockdown had encouraged me to pay more attention to nutrition and healthy eating. My favorite destinations are the ones that allow me to experience animals, plants in their natural habitat. My next holiday will hopefully be Masai Mara in Kenya," he says







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# Book-A-BDM with NCL

Increasing demand among travellers, waiting for months to take forward their global travel plans has made the job of cruise companies a little easier. **Braydon Holland**, Senior Director of Sales, Asia, NCL, discusses the company's strategy for India and the Asian markets.



Hazel Jain

**A** lot of effort will need to be put into PR and marketing to revive cruise tourism. What have been NCL's efforts towards this so far?

The key to restoring confidence in cruise is ensuring that our travel partners and the travelling public are aware of our comprehensive health, hygiene, and safety protocols, which guide every touch-point of their journey with us.

Our multi-layered Sail Safe health and safety programme has been developed in partnership with scientific experts, and at its cornerstone is the requirement for all crew and guests to be vaccinated to get on our ships. This requirement is the safest way to cruise, together with pandemic protocols such as COVID-19 testing, medical-grade air filtration, and

We are also doubling down on our travel partners as part of our Partners First Commitment. For example, we have just launched a brand-new platform — 'Book-A-BDM'— that will give travel agents direct access to our local Business Development Managers (BDMs) in India, at a time and in a way that suits them. The partners will be able to quickly book a one-hour personal session with their local BDM, either over the telephone or via Zoom, to discuss group bookings, sales event planning support, marketing and promotions with the NCL, or a general NCL product, itinerary, and destination update. .

**Tell us about the pent-up demand for cruising globally, and especially in Asia?**

As the borders open, vaccination programmes accelerate

for any new cruise ship in our 55-year history.

We successfully restarted our cruise operations on July 25, 2021, with Norwegian Jade sailing the Greek Isles. By April, our full fleet will be back at sea,

adaptable promotional materials, or product training.

I look forward to getting to know as many of our valued travel agents in India as I can, so that I can better understand how we can support them and where the opportunities lie. At the same time, we are continuing to invest in our consumer marketing in India to help inspire travelers to contact their travel agents to start planning their future cruise.

**What are the popular itineraries for Indian travellers?**

Indian cruisers are avid travellers, and voyages throughout Europe, Alaska, and the Bahamas are always popular, including iconic destinations in the Western Mediterranean such as Rome, Venice, and Barcelona, as well as Northern Europe, where Iceland and Norway are at the top of Indian travellers' bucket lists. 🇮🇳

**'Book-A-BDM' allows the agents direct access to our local BDMs in India**

including the Norwegian Sun, which will debut in Asia next year. Now that we are seeing the resumption of cruises following a more than 500-day suspension, travel partners and travellers alike are starting to recognise that to enjoy a 2022 or 2023 cruise, now is the time to book.

**What marketing strategy will NCL employ in 2022 to bring back bookings from India?**

India is an incredibly important market for NCL. As part of our 'Partners First' philosophy, we're doubling down on our investment in the travel trade in India, developing tools and resources that will help travel partners maximise their selling potential. One such example is our newly launched 'Book-A-BDM' platform, which allows agents to connect with our BDMs in a way and at a time that suits them best, whether they are seeking event support,



**Braydon Holland**  
Senior Director of Sales  
Asia, Norwegian Cruise Line



a dedicated public health officer on every ship to oversee health safety and hygiene.

Also, next year we will launch our brand new ship, the Norwegian Prima. It represents the first new class of ships for NCL in a decade. She's the most spacious new cruise ship in the premium and contemporary categories, with more wide-open spaces and elegant design, taking it cruising up a notch from August 2022.

and confidence returns, travellers are seeking out new travel experiences that make up for the many months spent in lockdown. Since cruising offers this and much more, it is at the top of many travellers' bucket lists. In fact, we've seen that happen shortly after we announced our new ship, the Norwegian Prima. She became our most in-demand ship ever, notching up the single best booking day and best initial booking week

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## Updates for the 2022 Travel Season with Swiss Travel System and Jungfrau Railways.

With travel to Switzerland being possible for fully vaccinated Indians, Switzerland Tourism is looking positively towards the 2022 travel season.

Therefore, we would like to conclude our 2021 Webinar Series with a special presentation from two popular travel products – Swiss Travel System and Jungfrau Railways. It is an opportunity to get the latest information, as well as the latest updates for the upcoming travel season.

Date	Day	Webinar	Time	Registration QR code
6th Dec 2021	Mon	Swiss Travel System	3.00 PM IST	
13th Dec 2021	Mon	Jungfrau Railways	3.00 PM IST	

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