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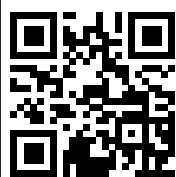
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Tourism maps with Google

Prahlad Singh Patel, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism & Culture, informs that they are developing 'Tourism Maps' for travellers to receive alerts for monuments and tourism destinations on their route.



Nisha Verma

Prahlad Singh Patel has said that Ministry of Tourism has asked Google to collaborate with them in creating 'Tourism Maps' that will guide travellers on several aspects. "Google Maps is already there, but if someone is on a 'tourism highway' that has a monument or tourism product nearby or on the route, it would give them an alert. We have decided that we will never get into booking, but we will share information of everyone who is registered with us," he said addressing the people over All India Radio.



Prahlad Singh Patel
Minister of State (I/C)
Tourism & Culture

The Minister also added that with a newfound focus on sustainability, the Northeast region in India might be a place that can attract tourists. "What we must

put across is that the Northeast could be a new destination for people. We are developing 'tourism highways', especially at places where people have not gone. Hence, if someone has to go from Guwahati to Arunachal,

we will tell them the route. We have removed the difference between public and private establishments, whether its hotels - small or big, guest houses or homestays. We will provide information on the route to take and guide travellers to nearby accommodations, whether public or private, also giving their contact numbers. We will even provide the route to a petrol station and good wayside amenities," Patel said.

It is also believed that a draft of the tourism policy has been shared with states and stakeholders, and suggestions from their end are awaited.

We will
provide
information on
the route to
guide travellers

STB India begins tradeshow with south

The first of four sessions of Singapore Tourism Board (STB) India's Virtual Tradeshow 2021 themed 'Charting our Pathways to Tourism Recovery' kicked off on January 12 with over 800 attendees. The event saw good engagement, with 48 participating exhibitors from Singapore, which included airlines, attractions, hotels and DMCs interacting with buyers from India. The virtual tradeshow is scheduled from January 12 to 21, with upcoming sessions for North region (Jan 15), South region (Jan 19) and East region (Jan 21), respectively.



GB Srithar
Regional Director, India,
Middle East and South Asia
Singapore Tourism Board

GB Srithar, Regional Director, India, Middle East & South Asia, STB, says, "The STB India virtual tradeshow is scheduled from January 12 to 21, with upcoming sessions for North region (Jan 15), South region (Jan 19) and East region (Jan 21), respectively. The virtual tradeshow is scheduled from January 12 to 21, with upcoming sessions for North region (Jan 15), South region (Jan 19) and East region (Jan 21), respectively. new business contacts."

Select buyers at ITM

India Tourism Mart (ITM) 2021 is all set to be held from February 18-20 as a virtual event, with as many as 500 buyers.



Nisha Verma

India Tourism Mart (ITM) 2021, which was earlier touted to be held as a hybrid event, will be held virtually this year from February 18-20. Sharing details is **Subhash Goyal**, Hon. Secretary, FAITH, who says, "ITM 2021 is being held virtually. On one side of the event we will have buyer-seller meets, while on the other side we will have parallel sessions on adventure tourism, medicinal tourism and MICE. We will get the world's best experts on the subjects to speak."

Buyers and exhibitors

Goyal is expecting around 500 international buyers and 200



Subhash Goyal
Hon. Secretary, FAITH

exhibitors at ITM 2021. The organisers are also offering incentives like Amazon vouchers to those buyers who do all the meetings. They will automatically be invited to the main event that will take place in

Contd on page 8 ▶

A make or break Budget

The industry's expectations from Budget 2021-22 seem to be rather unpropitious but the most anticipated. Will the upcoming announcement be the last straw in tourism's undoing or a ray of hope for it? Experts remark...



Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI

"We have asked for export competitiveness, domestic leadership, capital formation and removal of inefficiencies. A strong national tourism council should come into place under the leadership of the PM. We have also talked about the concurrent industry status. We need export status. SEIS rate should be pegged at 10 per cent for both tour operators and hotels. We need a global MICE bidding fund as well. Also, we need to underwrite funds for travel agents and tour operators, because in case of collapse of aviation, travel agents need to be protected either through an escrow account or an insurance account. Also, the entire structure needs to be looked into where TCS, GST and IGST are concerned."

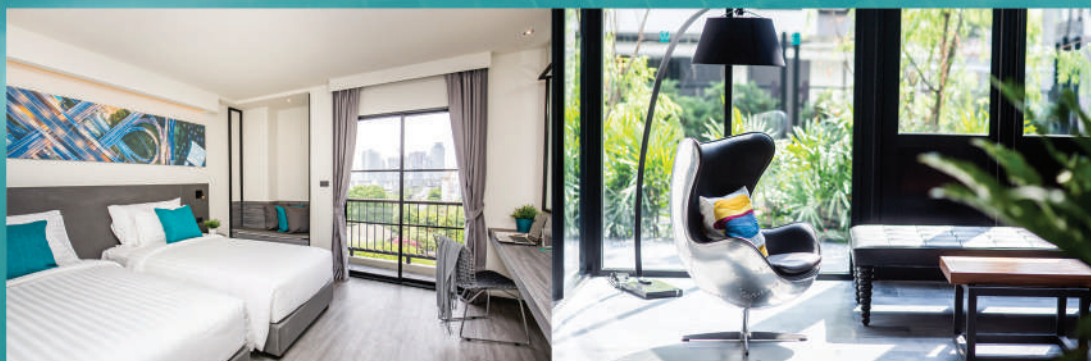


Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

"In our country, hotels and restaurants are treated as a non-industrial commercial customer and deprived of privileges extended to industries. We request the Finance Minister and Tourism Minister to bring tourism under the Concurrent List of the Constitution along with granting industry status to the hospitality sector. Lack of adequate support from the government is impeding the survival and revival efforts of the tourism sector. FHRAI has been vociferously advocating two key demands for decades - bring tourism under Concurrent List and grant Industry status to the hospitality sector."

Contd on page 10 ▶

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Indore emerges as airline hub

Not just Star Air India, but a second regional airline Flybig has started flights from Indore connecting Madhya Pradesh to other nearby states, which is bound to encourage more intra-state tourism this year.



Hazel Jain

The cleanest city of India now has another feather in its cap. It is slowly emerging as a regional airline hub. **Hemendra Singh Jadon**, Chapter Chairman, MP & CG, TAAI, says that while Indore is growing as an economic and business hub, it is also attracting attention of regional airlines. "Regional airline Flybig starting their flights from Indore is good news for travel agents in these states. They have chosen a Tier-II city as their hub, making Indore the first such city to become an airline hub. Though it is not a fuller-service airline, it is giving service equivalent to one.



Hemendra Singh Jadon
Chapter Chairman, MP & CG, TAAI

The seating is comfortable, the aircraft is new, and they also serve snacks," he says.

The airline has started flying Indore-Ahmedabad-Indore. Jadon adds, "There is huge demand from MP to visit the Statue of Unity in Gujarat, Gir and other tourist destinations in Gujarat.

We are getting a lot of inquiries for Gujarat and we think this new flight will further fuel this demand. Soon they will be doing Bhopal, Raipur and Jabalpur from Indore. They also have Gondhia which is a small airport in Maharashtra as part of the UDAN scheme. They have plans to connect Madhya Pradesh with other states which is very good news for agents. We have also suggested many sectors to them. We have already started getting a lot of domestic inquiries and foresee a lot of demand for these sectors from leisure as well as business travellers."

His chapter had also invited regional airline Star Air India to do a presentation for its members. They are also flying Indore-Belagavi and Indore-Kishangarh, and these flights, says Jadon, are doing very well.

Physical events and FAMs

Jadon is happy that familiarisation tours for his members have already started. "We took our members to Omkareshwar recently, organised by Madhya Pradesh Tourism. We have also

been invited to be part of the two-day agent familiarisation trip to Jal Mahotsav, India's biggest water carnival taking place on Hanuwantiya Island in Madhya Pradesh. We have even started doing physical meetings and events for our chapter while taking all necessary safety precautions. Only when we start venturing out will we be able to motivate our clients to travel," he says. The chapter

Regional airlines starting flights from Indore is good news for travel agents

Flybig gets bigger

Flybig recently started operations from Indore to other cities keeping Indore as its base. The first flight took off from Indore at 2.30pm to Ahmedabad. It is scheduled to complete the journey in an hour and five minutes. In the first couple of weeks, it will operate thrice a week, and it will later be scaled up to five flights a week, from mid-February. From January 13, Flybig adds the Indore-Raipur route to its network. From February 1, the airline will begin flying from Ahmedabad to Bhopal.

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VIEWPOINT

Shape up or ship out

The travel industry seems to have begun the new year on an optimistic note with the COVID-19 vaccine roll out as early as mid-January being announced by the Centre. And while the mass inoculation drive will commence with frontline workers, sanitation workers and the more vulnerable groups of society, India's travel fraternity is exhilarated at the ray of hope the move offers.

But, while a vaccine roll-out does spell good news for everyone, the industry must carefully analyse which segment of travellers they expect will make the first move, and which leg of business is expected to pick up first. The industry does predict that it will be the millennials who travel first. However, with this segment not expected to receive a vaccine dosage anytime soon, for such tourism to begin may still take a while. And though we do agree that millennials may be one of the most lucrative segments for revival of tourism in the new normal, it may be safe to assume that they may wish to first be inoculated against the COVID-19 virus and only then undertake travel for tourism. We may also be looking at another amendment to SOPs, as countries look to curb the spread of the pandemic by putting restrictions on unvaccinated travellers.

The new coronavirus variant doesn't make things any easier. People are now more apprehensive of travelling for leisure, even though India's recovery rate is one of the best in the world. In the interim, how can travel and hospitality hope to revive business? We reckon that now would be the time for them to broaden their perspective on the reality and make the most of any opportunity that presents itself.

A rushed and haphazard business strategy may not serve the desired result. Though travel and tourism will resume when international borders open, the number of people willing to travel would have reduced significantly, thereby taking a huge chunk out of everyone's revenue share. Trade associations, too, need to ensure their members are secure and that they benefit from the changed dynamics of the new normal. There may be some consolidation of business, but the smaller ones may still have to fend for themselves for an even smaller market share. Only time will tell what awaits us.

Corporate governance is key

As the aviation industry strives to recover from the impact of COVID-19, CAPA India, in its report titled 'A new aviation sector could emerge in India from 2021', outlines key trends to watch out for that could fundamentally change the Indian aviation sector.

TT Bureau

The government will have a significant and critical role to play in achieving optimal outcomes, says CAPA India. If the strategic changes that are envisaged are well-managed during this year and beyond, the sector could experience

Corporate governance and leadership, together with strong balance sheets will be critical pillars for the revival of the sector and must be accorded institutional priority, if foreseeable failures are to be avoided. Both corporate governance and balance sheet strength have largely been ignored by industry to date.

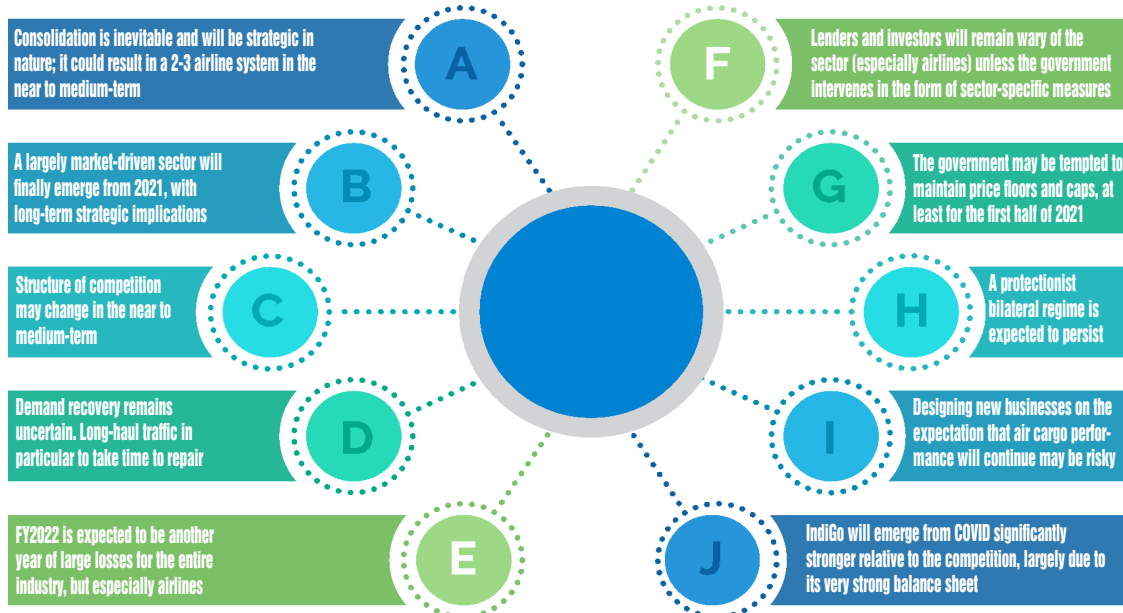
help the weaker airlines raise funds. But, promoters must similarly be willing to infuse significant additional capital.

Over the next 15 months through to the end of FY2022, the pain inflicted by COVID may become more visible than has been the case to date. For much of 2020, the grounding of a significant

this will expose those with limited cash.

Discretionary domestic travel segments – namely business, institutional, MICE, leisure and foreigners travelling on the domestic network – accounted for an estimated 55 per cent of the market pre-COVID. Most of these segments have

Top 10 trends in 2021



Must-dos for the Ministry of Civil Aviation



a fundamental revival. But, if these developments are not ring-fenced by a strong institutional framework in the form of appropriate fiscal, competition and consumer-focused policies, the long-term structural risks may increase significantly.

Given the unprecedented and devastating impact of COVID, indirect government intervention of some form may become inevitable. Bringing ATF under the GST framework starting from this year would be an essential first step, which may

proportion of operations provided a protective umbrella of sorts, as liabilities with staff, lessors, banks and other vendors were negotiated, deferred or waived. But as activity recovers, airlines will increasingly have to pay for resources and services and

evaporated and are unlikely to return until the pandemic is under greater control or deployment of a vaccine is widespread.

International traffic is only expected to recover to 35-40 per cent of FY2020 levels. Re-establishment of trust will be essential for inbound travel in particular to recover. The relatively poor global perception of standards of hygiene in India may have a deep structural impact on consumer behaviour, unless hygiene and health protocols are seen and experienced as having been implemented in practice. India will also need to restore the validity of tourist visas. And even outbound travel will continue to be impacted by border restrictions and poor consumer confidence. Issuance of visas to Indian travellers by foreign countries may be contingent upon their recognition of the vaccines approved for use in India.

As online education and access to digital skills becomes remarkably necessary, UNWTO has launched its first online education committee with the objective to make education a key pillar for tourism's recovery.

Maharashtra tourism revamped

Aaditya Thackeray, Cabinet Minister, Tourism and Environment, Government of Maharashtra, says that though the sector has been ignored in the past, he wishes to turn the tables and allow for opportunities of growth and development. The young minister has already initiated steps that would benefit the sector, the state, and its people.



Nisha Verma

Aaditya Thackeray, who took his ministerial seat only in December 2019, used the time of lockdown to look within the sector and bring about policy changes accordingly. "I thought we could spend the first few months of lockdown in terms of changing and bettering our policies, looking at ourselves internally, and what better we could do as a department for the whole sector of tourism, travel and hospitality," he says.

"One of the most important things that we have done at this time of COVID was to give the hospitality sector the status of being an industry, which would be applicable from April 1. It was being discussed and debated for the last 30-40 years, but hadn't happened yet. We effectively passed a cabinet note to that effect and brought out a GR. This means that all the other rates in terms of our tax and electricity would be given as per the industry. I think that was one of the biggest achievements for us as a team," the minister adds. Another achievement Thackeray says he is proud of is that

as a team, they have made a bridge between the hospitality sector and the department, which has resulted in ease of doing business. "When we started off, we had about 70 applications, 70 licences and 15 NOCs. When we started exploring it, we had about 8-9 different departments of the government sitting together and discussing the need for a particular provision. In one of our meetings with the hospitality industry, we decided to move towards

It's when this segment prospers that we will have many other things prospering

licence removal, analysing what is still applicable and what's not. After that we brought down the number of applications from 70 to 8, licences from 70 to 10, and we brought down 15 NOCs to 9 self-certifications, which are in effect from now on. Other than that, the uni-



Aaditya Thackeray
Cabinet Minister, Tourism and Environment, Government of Maharashtra

fied development control and promotion regulations (DCR) has been established, which has given many benefits to the hospitality sector. There are also active discussions with the urban development department in terms of parking use in Mumbai, mixed-use policy for hotels—residential/commercial in cities like Mumbai, Pune, etc.," he shares.

Tourism a priority

Talking about promotions, he says that both he and the CM have been focusing on tourism. "It's when this segment prospers that we will have many other things prospering because of the ancillary industries and supply chain that it supports. Even after COVID, the bounce back has largely been in this sector. It's about time that we look at Maharashtra as a state for experiential tourism, because we have everything

for tourism. We really want this to be a priority department and see growth in this sector. I am personally available if restaurants, hotels, travel and tourism want to remove any hurdles that might come in their way because we want to develop this sector across the state," he reveals.

Creating a tourism vibe

Sharing that there is a need to create a tourism vibe in places they want to develop as tourist destinations, Thackeray says, "Any tourism destination either has something great to do - a great location, beach, castle, fort, etc. - or is a place where one has absolutely nothing to do around, but is able to pull people owing to a luxurious resort, hotel, etc. I think what remains between the two is a complete vibe that we need to create in terms of skilling, and that's where the whole sector of tourism comes in. With one in place, the other will come automatically. Hence, we need to look at this vibe creation, which is crucial," the state tourism minister reiterates.

Thackeray reveals that for Mumbai, they are creating points of tourism that have been hidden for a long time, be it the municipal corpo-



Developments led by Thackeray

- ❖ Maharashtra's hospitality sector to be 'industry' effective April 1, 2021
- ❖ For hotels, number of applications brought down from 70 to 8 and licences from 70 to 10
- ❖ For hotels, 15 NOCs done away with and instead, 9 self-certifications introduced
- ❖ Unified development control and promotion regulations established
- ❖ Ongoing discussions on mixed-use policy for hotels
- ❖ Creation of tourism spots in Mumbai that hold potential

ration headquarter, which offers a jaw-dropping experience, or the Wankhede Stadium, which will be opened for a stadium experience. These developments are expected to give a boost to

tourism. He concludes, saying, "Wherever we can support the industry and save it from a fall post an exponential rise, we will stand by it and this is my assurance as an industry colleague." 🐦

ITC opens hotel in Shimla



ITC Hotels has launched its Welcomhotel brand in Himachal Pradesh with its first property in the state. Welcomhotel Shimla will have 47 rooms and suites overlooking the picturesque Mashobra valley. It even houses quiet and distinguished conference rooms for business meetings, charming sunset gardens for outdoor parties, and other venues.

B'luru-Frisco direct on AI



Piloted by four women, Air India's San Francisco-Bengaluru polar route flight AI-176 completed a landmark journey with touchdown at Kempegowda International Airport from San Francisco. This marks the first non-stop connection between the two cities.

ARRA Hotels expands with zeal

As a new hotel management and marketing company, ARRA Hotel Group has its goals in place and is moving fast towards achieving them. **Anshu Malik**, Managing Director, ARRA Hotel Group, shares what the group's two brands – ARRA and Twist – stand for, and plans of expanding into the international market by 2022.



Nisha Verma

The ARRA group of hotels is helmed by **Anshu Malik**, a passionate hotelier by choice who learnt the reins of the business under the patronage of Late Captain Nair, Chairman of the Leela Group of Hotels. The new brand - ARRA Hotels - promises to offer the best of modern amenities, warm hospitality and unmatched service.

Sharing his plan for the company, Malik says, "We have signed 25 properties pan India, which are under various stages of reinvention as per our standards, and will be operational by end of the year. We will operate these properties under our flagship brand -ARRA - which is our upscale brand, and



Twist -which is the budget brand with a young feel. We have opened our first hotel in Gurugram and the second would open in Manesar. By February, we will have five hotels in our kitty in Gurugram, Manesar, Jim Corbett, Nainital and Dehradun, with an inventory of 450 rooms."

The USP of the brand, according to Malik, is the service level they offer. "We will create a niche in the market. The brand has a very young and dynamic team that will take the brand forward. Our motto is 'Atithi Devo Bhava', and with this vision, we believe that guests will experi-



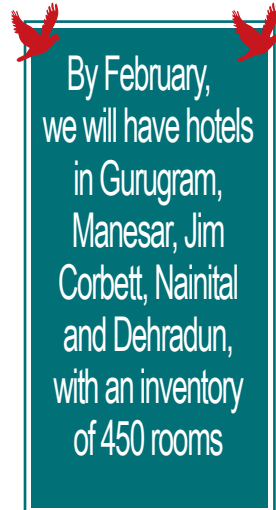
Anshu Malik
Managing Director
ARRA Hotel Group

ence a feel-good factor once they come and stay with us at both our brands," he claims.

Hotels will be launched in the most exotic locations across the country, right from popular tourist places, business hubs and exotic locations to religious sites. The group, according to Malik, will be targeting all segments, including leisure, FIT, corporates, airline crew and

travel agents. The company is currently on a hotel acquisition spree and will be following different models for the same—revenue sharing, sales & marketing, franchise and gross operational profit. In terms of promotion and marketing, the brand will not only make sales & marketing efforts individually for each hotel, but there is also a corporate marketing department that will coordinate regional and national marketing opportunities. They also have an in-house advertising agency.

"We have a very good agency for our social media campaign to handle our SEO and SEM. We will market ourselves against all possible verticals, whether it's print media, electronic media, social media or digital



marketing," informs Malik. While 2020 wasn't a very good year for the industry, it worked for ARRA to acquire new properties. "Because of COVID, people were apprehensive, they were leaving the lease and the hotels. On the other hand, we were acquiring properties and that, too, at very good deals.

I believe that our return on investment will be much faster," he insists.

Malik is quite upbeat about the future. "We are quite optimistic and I believe that the market will open up soon. We will do great business, and the industry would prosper. People are fed up of staying home and want to travel. In the next few months, things would really improve and we will do well," he claims. The strategy forward will be aggressive marketing, shares Malik. "We have a dynamic sales & marketing network. We are acquiring as many hotels as possible. We aim to be the youngest and fastest growing chain in India. We are planning to enter the international market next year," he concludes.

Tourism Breaking News

■ Mumbai-Ras Al Khaimah on SpiceJet from 15th January

■ World Bank signs US\$105 million project to improve waterways in WB

■ Vistara to fly Delhi-Frankfurt direct

■ Kashmir travel trade opens homes to help stranded tourists

■ KTM Virtual Mart from March 1-5

■ India, SL, Maldives and Nepal to discuss tourism revival

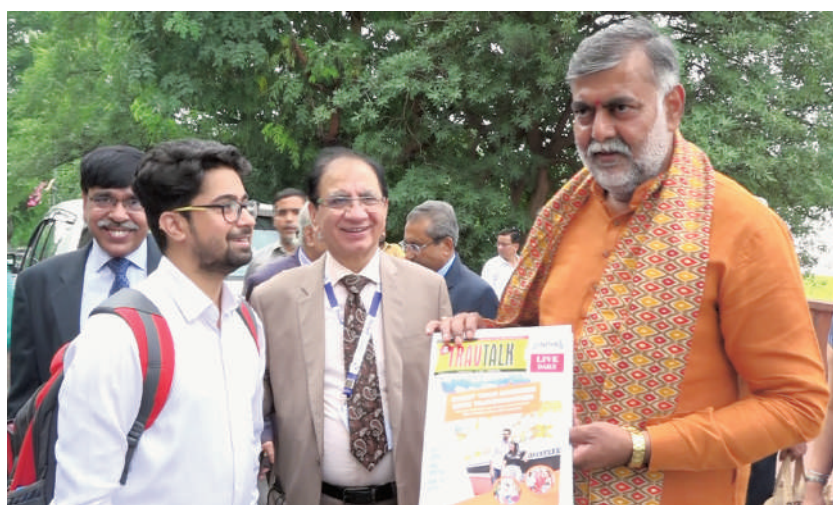
■ HAI opens West Bengal chapter, requests industry status in state

■ Pre-departure testing mandatory for UK

India is ready for business

► Contd from page 3

September 2021, Goyal informs. Until last year, there was a strong selection process to shortlist buyers for ITM, however, for the virtual show, the criteria will be a bit lenient. "Since the show is virtual, we can invite more buyers than before. We already have a database from the last three events, which has over a few thousand names. First, we will be inviting all those and the selection process will be virtual. The criteria to select buyers would be by asking questions so that only



Tourism Minister Prahlad Singh Patel at ITM 2019

those who are doing outbound from their countries come, and not people who are doing inbound. We would be able to better monitor this electronically than we were able to do for a physical event," he claims.

Theme

Talking about the theme of ITM 2021, Goyal shares that the focus will be 'India is ready for business.' However, they haven't

come up with a proper slogan in writing for the same, yet. "We have asked some experts and some of our members to give suggestions, and will be finalising a theme soon," Goyal says, adding that there will also be a session on domestic tourism. "Year 2021 has been declared as the year of domestic tourism with the 'Dekho Apna Desh' theme by Ministry of Tourism. We will be focusing on that as well," he says.

Attendance

The organisers are expecting the event to be graced by senior government officials, including the Prime Minister. "It's going to be a grand success and we are hoping that the PM inaugurates the event. We will be sending invitations to all the concerned ministers, including Minister of Civil Aviation, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and even some important secretaries

and international speakers who could enlighten us," he shares. They are also hopeful that not only the executive committees of all associations, but even all memberships- active or allied and tourism students will be able to learn a lot through the knowledge conclave.

Goyal adds that this is the perfect time to do the ITM. "In 2020, we could not have the ITM because of COVID-19, but we are happy that the timing this year is perfect as on the one hand, the vaccine has been launched in India, and by the time ITM begins, vaccination would have started not only in India but all over the world. Even IATA has brought out its health passport, which will be similar to the Yellow Fever card, and people will be travelling with these cards. We now request the government to start the e-visa as well as international scheduled flights to coincide with ITM," Goyal concludes.

Only those doing outbound from their countries, not people doing inbound, to be selected

STB connects India to Singapore

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) India's Virtual Tradeshow 2021 is a suitable platform for service providers at the destination and the travel trade in India to engage and discuss business opportunities that lie ahead for them. Here they share how they perceive the tradeshow to benefit them and collaborate with each other.



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

“Singapore was already quite popular in the Indian market, and after COVID, they could leverage on that. I do believe that they should focus on the Indian market. In fact, I am bullish on the subject. India will be one of the top source markets for many countries. From the exhibitors, I just want updated information on when they are opening, the SOPs in place, and when they are expecting travellers from India.”

“I appreciate that STB has started doing these roadshows because it allows them to be constantly in touch with Indian stakeholders, and the best thing about these roadshows is that they generate confidence and motivate travel agents. Also, they should work more strongly with us as TAAI, as we have always supported STB as well as all cruise liners. We need to tie-up and have a very strong connect.”



Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI



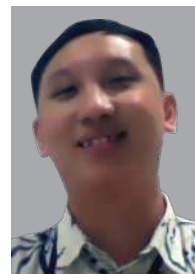
Vishal Jain
President, NETTA

“Being a safe and clean destination, Singapore would be a preferred choice when it reopens for tourists. One of the biggest reasons Singapore is preferred by tourists is cruising. It is important for all of us in travel to know the process of reopening of Singapore because it's such an important destination. From the representatives, we would like to understand the safety norms they have and how they plan to restart.”

“We all eagerly await the days when we can meet up in person. We are keen to share the enhancements we have made to the customer experience, which will ensure that travel to Singapore remains safe and seamless. Over the last 50 years, Singapore Airlines has built a stronger relationship with the travel agents' community and we look forward to working with them over the next 50.”



Mark Wood
Manager, Eastern India
Singapore Airlines



Clement Tan Chuan Wei
Asst VP Sales Int'l Market South Asia & ME, Wildlife Reserves Singapore

“To participate in virtual tradeshow is important and essential to get in touch with partners and update them on how Singapore is doing, and make sure that people still remember the friendship and relationships we built throughout this year. Whether it's Singapore partners or Indian travel trade, when borders re-open, we will be ready.”

“Marina Bay Sands always welcomes the opportunity to participate in a virtual tradeshow like this because this is the platform where we can connect with the Indian travel trade partners and build relationships with new ones. Our expectation is to continue to have the engagement with the Indian travel trade. It's important to leverage this platform.”



Sherman Lo
Director of Sales, Marina Bay Sands

Inputs by Nisha Verma

Standard travel insurance soon

The Insurance Regulatory & Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has proposed a standard travel insurance policy with common coverage and policy wordings across the industry. The Authority expects the new guidelines to take effect from April 1, 2021.



TT Bureau

The draft guidelines issued by IRDAI on December 28, 2020, stated, 'The standard product shall have the basic mandatory covers as specified in draft guidelines which shall be uniform across the market. The product may be both an individual product and a group product.'

Key features of the policy:

- ❖ There shall be no restrictions on the age of entry. However, the proposer shall be of a minimum of age 18 years, as per the draft guidelines. The proposer is the person who takes the insurance cover, he/she is also called the policyholder.
- ❖ There are five variants under domestic travel
- * Travel by any mode of public transport (within city)

- * Travel by any mode of public transport (outside city)
- * Train journey
- * Air travel
- * Domestic tours involving road, water, train and air travel and four under overseas travel: Long-term trip (students); short-term trip (tours/leisure and covers travel through road, water, train and air; multi-trip during a policy period (business); and coverage only for travel (onward and return)
- ❖ The nomenclature of the product shall be Standard Travel Insurance Policy, succeeded by the name of the insurance company.
- ❖ The standard product shall also be offered on a family floater basis. When you buy travel insurance for the entire family, it is known as a family floater. It provides insurance covers for the



entire family for the sum assured during the course of travel and only one premium is paid for such a travel policy.

- ❖ The policy tenure of the standard product shall be the duration of the journey of the policyholder as a fare-paying passenger and during their stay overseas, in case of the overseas travel policy, as specified in the policy schedule.

- ❖ Premium under this product shall be on a pan-India basis and no geographic location/zone-based pricing is allowed. Pricing in respect of overseas travel insurance is permitted based on the country or region of travel and stay. For example, Asia (except Japan & Korea), Europe, USA & Canada, Asia (Japan & Korea), other countries, as per the draft guidelines issued by the IRDAI.

SpiceJet shuttles vaccine between India and Europe

Indian carrier SpiceJet has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Belgium's Brussels Airport for providing seamless transportation of the COVID-19 vaccine between India and Europe,



will be SpiceJet's first flight point for Europe, the airline's cargo arm, SpiceXpress, envisions to provide rapid and secure transportation of COVID-19 vaccine from and to Europe and beyond with proper temperature-controlled mechanism under the MoU. Brussels Airport shall provide assistance to SpiceJet with regards to slots, networking contracts, etc.

and beyond. As strategic partners, both SpiceJet and Brussels Airport Company will jointly work with the government, pharma companies and forwarders to ensure a reliable ecosystem for vaccine delivery in a temperature-controlled environment.

They will also work towards developing and strengthening a direct air link for SpiceJet with Brussels Airport. While Brussels Airport

As part of its continued efforts to take up the responsibility of transporting the COVID-19 vaccine to every part of the country as well as outside India, SpiceJet has partnered with GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo, Om Logistics and Snowman Logistics among others.

The airline has also tied up with global leaders in cold chain solutions offering active and passive packaging with dedicated equipment to perform seamless cold chain operations.

'Help us get back on our feet'

► Contd from page 3



Pradip Lulla
Acting President and VP, TAFI

“Some sort of tax stimulus should be given in terms of tax benefits as is given in terms of LTC to government employees. The government should also consider tax benefits like write-offs if one uses ₹5-10 lakh, with proper invoices. A rebate on income tax should also be given. Today, the monetary policy is very accommodative, and the Reserve Bank has reduced the interest repo rate to only 4%, but still in the travel space, the best interest that we can get from MSME is basically not less than 9.5-10%. And with this reduced kind of business, it is not affordable.”

“We have already shared our expectations with the government, out of which five major points are: deemed export industry status in tourism on a par with the IT sector, removal of the cascading effect on tourism services as the industry is heavily taxed, removal of GST on foreign services for foreign tourists, withdrawal of TCS on overseas tour packages and foreigners visiting India/going to neighbouring countries, and extension of SEIS benefits for another five years and immediate release backlog of 2019 and 2020 scripts, which are not received yet.”



Pronab Sarkar
President, IATO



Subhash Goyal
Hon'y. Secretary, FAITH

“This year, my wish-list is that SEIS should be increased for the tourism industry. Owing to COVID-19 we were the first to get affected, and will be the last to recover. Hence, we need a lot of Budget-related support as far as taxes are concerned. We hope that a tax holiday of one year will be given, or a nominal — both corporate and income — tax of 5 per cent or something similar will be charged till we are back on our feet and till all international flights re-start. Then only can we hope for the revival of the economy as well as the tourism industry.”

“An export status for tourism service providers has been a long-pending demand. State-wise industry status and an enhanced publicity campaign covering different subjects with special focus on adventure and natural heritage products has also been our demand for a long time. Other demands include a stimulus package for tourism's revival and waiving of customs duty on import of adventure products. Lastly, building last-mile connectivity for remote areas so that travel time to adventure destinations is minimised and help in improving our products would go a long way.”



Vinayak Koul
Secretary, ATOAI



PP Khanna
President, ADTOI

“The economy will grow because people have started domestic tourism, and we are expecting the government to incentivise domestic tourism, and offer tax benefit and rebates. Also, instead of identifying a few tourism zones like last year, the government should declare at least 2-3 tourism zones in every state and Union Territory. That way, we will have at least 70 tourism zones, which would allow tourists to explore India entirely and stay up to a month instead of the usual 10-15 days. The Centre should also support the state governments and associations through a fund.”

“The amendments related to Goods & Services Tax (GST) are not covered in Budget, so there is nothing to talk about there. An issue that I hope will be addressed is removal of TCS. We also want a final decision on the SEIS issue pertaining to our share from 2019-20, which we haven't received yet, and also that effective guidelines and policies be announced for 2021-25. We have also written to the government to grant industry status to the tourism sector. Let us hope and see that these things are covered in the upcoming Budget.”



Rajiv Mehra
Vice President, IATO



Sunil Kumar
President, UFTAA

“The government has incurred high cost to help mitigate challenges faced by the pandemic. They will introduce smart moves to raise revenue through several initiatives. As they do this, they will offer relief to the larger percentage of tax payers at the lower levels. This is one way to sustain popularity. On most or all occasions, our industry has been disappointed in the past. This year, the tone may be different since tourism is visibly the most affected. Our industry may see some attention by the government, though it may not meet our expectations. From these reliefs, hospitality may benefit the most; aviation may get some attention.”

“I don't have any expectations from the upcoming Union Budget 2021-22 as far as tourism is concerned. All these years, we have been making representations, but we haven't got anything. In case we get something, it would be welcome and we will be obliged that the government took us into consideration, but we neither have hope nor any expectations now from the Union Budget. I believe that if at all, the focus will be on the inbound and domestic markets. I don't think there will be anything for the outbound market in the upcoming Union Budget.”



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI



Ranjeet Das
President, TOAA

“We hope for initiatives that will boost the ailing travel sector in Northeast India. The government has to focus on protecting jobs and businesses through more effective programmes and moratorium extension among other relief support. The Budget should provide special focus on our region's tourism infrastructure facilities, outreach programmes and upskilling/reskilling which needs to be given priority. High airfare to Northeast is always a constraint, so a scheme to cap airfares to make it affordable to all needs to be examined. We appeal to the government to reassess and provide much better support to the tourism industry.”

“I would like to highlight the recent development of TCS that has been put across/imposed on travel agents. TCS of 5% is an additional workload for the industry which is lean on manpower and financial processes. Hence, we expect it to be rolled back by the Finance Minister. Another big concern is working capital, because most of the travel companies are facing a financial crunch. A lot has been committed by the government, but very little has been done. Hence, there should be some concrete steps that the government should be taking towards this.”



Vishal Jain
President, NETTA



Ajay Sarin
Chairman, IAAPI

“IAAPI is thankful to the GST Council for reducing GST from 28% to 18%, though still on the higher side when compared to global GST rate for amusement industry. Lowering of GST rate will benefit families to visit amusement parks in large numbers as the entry ticket will be more affordable. We request for 12% GST with Input Tax Credit to promote this industry. We also hope we are provided Social Infrastructure status and earmarked land while developing metros, smart cities and tourist destinations. A customs duty waiver is also recommended on import of rides, equipment and spares under tourism project.”

“For this Union Budget, we will be looking forward to an equal and more leveraged taxation. There is a disparity between the taxation for travel agents working from their office and Online Travel Agents (OTAs). There are many OTAs that are not registered in India. They do not come under the same banner as most of the agencies do. For anybody who wants to do business in India, the taxation should be equal. Also, more relaxed GST norms and procedures are needed as this industry has gone through a tough time. The only support we can get from the government is in taxation.”



Manav Soni
Chairperson - Eastern Region, TAAI

Contd on page 11 ►

People need more cash in hand

► Contd from page 10



Vishal Suri
Managing Director, SOTC Travel

“We look forward to the Union Budget 2021 bringing in concrete measures that target revival of the economy and boosting consumer sentiment. With a focus on the domestic tourism sector in the current era of travel, there is strong potential to develop smaller cities/towns in India for tourism in line with Prime Minister's vision of being 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and further strengthen 'Make in India'. We hope to see proactive reforms, supportive policies and budgetary allocations, with immediate waiver of TCS for the tourism sector that is critical in stimulating demand.”

“The service industry has been severely affected by the pandemic. Tourism was the first industry to be affected and will likely be the last to recover. We had a lot of expectations from the government and we had demanded some policy changes and exemptions in the aftermath of COVID-19. But, the industry did not receive anything. We are therefore hoping that this Budget will have something for the tourism and the service industry at large. We are constantly in touch with the Madhya Pradesh government and have sent some proposals to them already.”



Hemendra Singh Jadon
Chapter Chairman - MP & CG, TAAI



Manish Kriplani
MD, Baywatch Travels

“I think, whatever calculations and policies the government makes, the final picture is that they should leave the customer with more cash in hand. In terms of taxation, I think they should increase the standard deductions which should give some tax benefits to all of us. Also, I feel that medical reimbursement should be there, and insurance or travel allowances should be increased. This used to be there earlier, but I think in 2018 they withdrew this. I feel that such reimbursements should come into the system again. We want consumers to have more cash in hand.”

“It's very difficult to predict what the Budget will entail, but if a message goes out that the industry needs support, then there are 3-4 simple ways in which the industry can be revived. Firstly, TCS can easily be abolished and can be brought back when things are normal. If the GST were to be brought down or brought to a level that the industry can handle, it will be a huge support. If the government wants to support the industry, they will also have to look at extending the moratoriums on loans and bringing loans to a softer level with miniscule interest.”



Ramesh Marwah
CEO, Dex Group



Ankur Bhatia
Executive Director, Bird Group

“A long-awaited measure the government must address in Budget 2021 is granting infrastructure status, which would allow hotels to avail electricity, water and land at industrial rates as well as better infrastructure lending rates. In the next 6 to 8 months, the government can look at granting exporters benefits under the SEIS and EPCG schemes for some more time to help them tide over the pandemic's impact. Auto-renewal of licence fees is also one of the pressing demands of the sector. We also urge the government to allow GST input credit on the entire project cost for hotel developers.”

“Domestic tourism requires priority support or swathes of tourism-dependent communities will languish and with it, rapid dwindling of our precious local art forms, heritage and culture. Budgetary outlay that retains long-term impact via infrastructure development is equally essential, as also health, safety and sanitation. I also look forward to priority action on soft loans to finance working capital, incentivising tourism spends by providing income tax concessions, payment of overdue SEIS benefits, easing of indirect taxes and waiving of TCS to help aid recovery.”



Madhavan Menon
CMD, Thomas Cook (India)



Deep Kalra
Founder and Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip

“In the short-term, the industry is looking for assistance in the form of rationalisation of taxes, extension of moratorium period, and waving of certain statutory obligations. We hope that in the upcoming Budget, the government takes note of the sector's role in the entire economic value chain and makes the long-due decision of including travel & tourism in the concurrent list. As domestic tourism holds key to recovery, IT deductions on domestic travel undertaken by the taxpayer will encourage people to travel more domestically, further benefitting the ecosystem.”

“The government needs to prevent Indian MICE events from going abroad by offering a 200% weighted income tax expense benefit to Indian companies that undertake MICE events in India. We also recommend the government to create an 'India MICE Fund' and under this, launch 'India MICE Advantage Programme', 'MICE Ambassador Programme', 'Subvention Scheme' and a bidding fund. We need to enable IGST for our hotels to complete the GST chain and enable GST set-offs for companies undertaking MICE in states other than their state of registration.”



Amaresh Tiwari
Vice Chairman, ICPB



PK Gupta
MD, Peekay Holidays

“As a special case, I would request Government of India or the Finance Minister to reduce the GST or completely withdraw the GST for the entire tourism sector at least for one year in the upcoming Union Budget for 2021-2022, because the tourism sector is the worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, for the outbound industry, I would request the government to consider withdrawal of GST as well as TCS imposed on outbound tours because it is not feasible for any traveller to pay five per cent GST and five per cent TCS on the package amount.”

“The hospitality industry is a complex mix of logistics, supply chain, inventory management, kitchen production, and services and entertainment. Unlike traditional manufacturing industries, hotels in India, like in other countries, require huge investments and capital outlays to set up and upgrade products, service, design and technology. We are a highly labour and capital-intensive business with long gestation periods of 15 to 20 years. Hence, when our hospitality industry is pegged against other sectors for lending, it is inequitable and not appropriate.”



Manav Goyal
Director, Adyar Gate Hotels, Chennai



SK Mohapatra
Executive Director
MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts

“Coming in the backdrop of the worst crisis that the tourism and hospitality industry has ever witnessed, expectations will be very high from the upcoming Union Budget for 2021-22.. Though the threat of COVID-19 is gradually subsiding, crippled by its devastating impact, the road to revival is still out of sight. On the tax front, we expect a rationalisation of rates across all categories of services. The government should reconsider its decision to redirect the LTC money of government employees to buy consumer goods, as it will adversely affect the business prospects of our industry.”

“Budget 2021-22 needs to take an overview of the hospitality industry, putting the focus on all the segments of the industry. That is the first challenge. The second challenge is understanding the financial requirements of all the players in each segment. The government needs to address this specific problem and ensure we have cash on hand to honour our payments. We are in need of a 'direct transfer' that can benefit us all, and equally. State governments also have a big role to play in identifying all the key segments and players who need financial assistance or tax holidays.”



Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar
Executive Director, HRAH Group of Hotels

Inputs by TT Bureau

Government of India



Ministry of Commerce
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Countries await Indian millennials

Millennials are believed to be the first to travel when international borders open and commercial flights to and from India resume. Destinations and tour operators already have plans in place to lure this segment that is expected to travel to quiet and new regions, with targeted offerings and experiences.

 Nisha Verma

Amongst the many expectations from this year is the start of international travel. India's travel trade experts believe that the first ones to undertake such a journey would be millennials. As they talk about the different destinations they have to cater to the anticipated demand from millennials when borders finally open,



Vishal Bhatia
Country Manager, India
VisitBritain

these experts also educate us on how they are preparing themselves to receive these travellers.

Destination offerings

Vishal Bhatia, Country Manager, India, VisitBritain, says, "Daydreaming with VisitBritain' is a campaign we are currently hosting on


Daydreaming with VisitBritain is a campaign we are currently promoting through website and social media

— Vishal Bhatia

our website and promoting through our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter channels. In addition, we are also hosting 'Travel Hangovers' every Friday on Instagram."


Close neighbour Ireland is also not leaving any stone

turned. **Huzan Fraser Motivala**, India Representative, Tourism Ireland, shares that they are aware that post-pandemic millennials would be the first ones to travel. "We feel that Ireland would be a great fit for the millennial segment since



Huzan Fraser Motivala
India Representative
Tourism Ireland

they look at experiencing unexplored, natural, unique and niche destinations. Post-pandemic self-drive


Post the pandemic, self-drive tours and less-crowded attractions will be popular


— Huzan Fraser Motivala

tours, less-crowded attractions and destinations will be popular. Adventure activities are always popular with the millennials and Ireland has some unique experiences and activities including kayaking, sea cliff climbing, glamping, lighthouse stay, horse riding on the beach, Irish whiskey trails, Irish food trails, etc. As far as accommodation is concerned, Ireland has great B&B, self-catering, Irish holiday hostels and youth accommodations along with some luxury properties." In fact, she adds that holidaymakers to UK can have an extended trip to Ireland as the British



Dr R Sigit Witjaksono
Director of Tourism Marketing for East, South and Central Asia Region, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia

Irish Visa Scheme allows for travel to and around Ireland and the UK on a single visa.


Indonesia has adventure tours with the iconic Komodo Dragons, marine life for divers and mountains for hikers

— Dr R Sigit Witjaksono

On the Asian side of the world, Indonesia claims to have various tourism destinations that could surely cater to millennials. "We have adventure tours with the iconic Komodo Dragons and enchanting beaches, beautiful marine life for divers and amazing mountains for hikers. We also have nightlife entertainment that will surely attract millennials," believes **Dr R Sigit Witjaksono**, Director of Tourism Marketing for East, South and Central Asia Region, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia.

Another favourite for Indian travellers is Thailand. **Vachirachai Sirisumpan**, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), New Delhi, agrees that millennials would be a potential segment to


travel outbound. "TAT India Offices, both New Delhi and Mumbai, have been promoting Thailand online with travel bloggers and other trade partners. Thailand has a variety of products and services to meet with millennials' desires, experiences and expectations. During this time of travel restrictions, we have introduced



Vachirachai Sirisumpan
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi

new destinations which are less-visited by young Indian millennials such as diving in Koh Tao or a trekking trip in Chiang Mai," he informs.

Sharing her view on the Dubai market, **Priyanka Nijhawan**, Director, Dubai


We have destinations that are less-visited such as diving in Koh Tao or trekking in Chiang Mai

— Vachirachai Sirisumpan

Tourism India Representative Office, believes that the emirate has something to offer to all with Dubai Shopping Festival (which started on December 17, 2020) that attracts shoppers from around the world. "The city also organised the 30 x 30-day fitness challenge which attracted a lot of youth. Located in the foothills of the



Priyanka Nijhawan
Director, Dubai Tourism
India Representative Office

Hajar Mountains, the hidden gem of Hatta has also been popularised in recent times. The city is prepared with exciting deals, offers, raffles and much more to entice millennials from India.


Located in the foothills of the Hajar Mountains, Hatta has exciting deals, raffles and much more to entice millennials

— Priyanka Nijhawan

Moreover, Dubai is inching towards becoming a 6 or 7-day destination. With this, Dubai continuously attracts adventure seekers, off-beat travellers and honeymooners who can explore the city at its best," she says.


Arvind Bundhun, Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), also claims the island nation has many authentic experiences to offer to millennials. "Mauritius is ideally set up for water-sport lovers, whether below the surface such as scuba diving and undersea walking, on the surface as with snorkelling, or above the water like kitesurfing, kayaking and fly-boarding. An amazing submarine trip to the deep mystery of the sea is also a one-of-a-kind experience. Mauritius also

offers adrenaline-pumping land activities like skydiving, zip lining, quad biking, hiking, trekking and cycling. Besides, Mauritius offers a chance to walk with lions or swim with dolphins, liked by millennials. Some more pop-



Arvind Bundhun
Director, Mauritius
Tourism Promotion Authority

ular experiences are tour of the Rhumerie (rum factory), a winery or a brewery. There are also some fabulous golf courses in Mauritius and the island makes for a superb golf holiday. Further, Mauritius is an enchanting and


Mauritius is ideal for water-sport lovers, whether below the surface, on it, or above water

— Arvind Bundhun

perfect place for Instagrammers," he reveals.

With mobile technology continuing to play an increasing role in tourism as the number of millennials travelling increases each year, MTPA launched the 'Discover Mauritius' all-in-one travel guide App to promote the culture and beauty of Mauritius by allowing users to plan their trip to the island.

Mumbai starts 2021 with a bang!

Around 80 travel agents from Mumbai got together for a casual sun downer at the open-air restaurant Canto in Lower Parel while observing all safety protocols. The event held on January 10, 2021 was co-hosted by Guideline Travels, Dream Cruises and One Above. With beach wear as the dress code, the party gave the fraternity a chance to play some fun games.



Northeast celebrates its diversity

Held with support from the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India and Government of Assam, the North East Festival took place at Radisson Blu Hotel, Guwahati in December. Here, government officials, trade associations and private travel companies also deliberated on making the region a domestic and international tourism hub.



Self-drive tours will continue

► Contd from page 14

What do millennials want?

According to **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, Managing Director, Weldon Tours & Travels,



Guldeep Singh Sahni
Managing Director
Weldon Tours & Travels

once destinations start opening, millennials will start to travel to destinations they consider safe. "Millennials will be travelling to Australia and New Zealand, as they think these are safe destinations. They might avoid some parts of Europe and might go to Scandinavian countries instead. Islands like Maldives and Mauritius are where people like to go

to. Millennials will be selecting areas with fewer COVID cases," he believes.

In terms of experiences, Sahni shares that they would prefer self-drives, which is easier in the countries he just mentioned. "Even UK will take some time to recover, but it would still be faster



Manish Kriplani
Managing Director
Baywatch Travels

some numbers. In fact, the experiences that millennials would prefer are not going to be crowded, as they like to go for skydiving, bungee jumping, paragliding, skiing, and other adventure sports, including deep-sea diving. There will also be F1 driving experiences happening this year. However, sports travel will be avoided because there are crowds," he shares.

Manish Kriplani, Managing Director, Baywatch Travels, adds, "Most millennials are

actually willing to travel to any city that is planning to open its airport. However, there are few who want to stay in the city centre, visit cafés and night clubs, shop, etc. Then, there are groups

of going out." He shares that while they are getting mixed reactions, it's Dubai and the Maldives that have been getting the millennial share in the last few months. When borders open,

and preference will be to visit one destination or, at the most, a combination of two destinations, thereby avoid-

Millennials might avoid some parts of Europe and might go to Scandinavian countries instead

— Guldeep Singh Sahni

There are groups of those millennials who want to stay in rural areas and wish to drive into the interiors

— Manish Kriplani

of those millennials who want to stay in rural areas and wish to take a car and drive into the interiors, stay in a villa or apartment with a kitchen so that they can prepare their own food instead



Mahendra Vakharia
Managing Director
Pathfinders Holidays

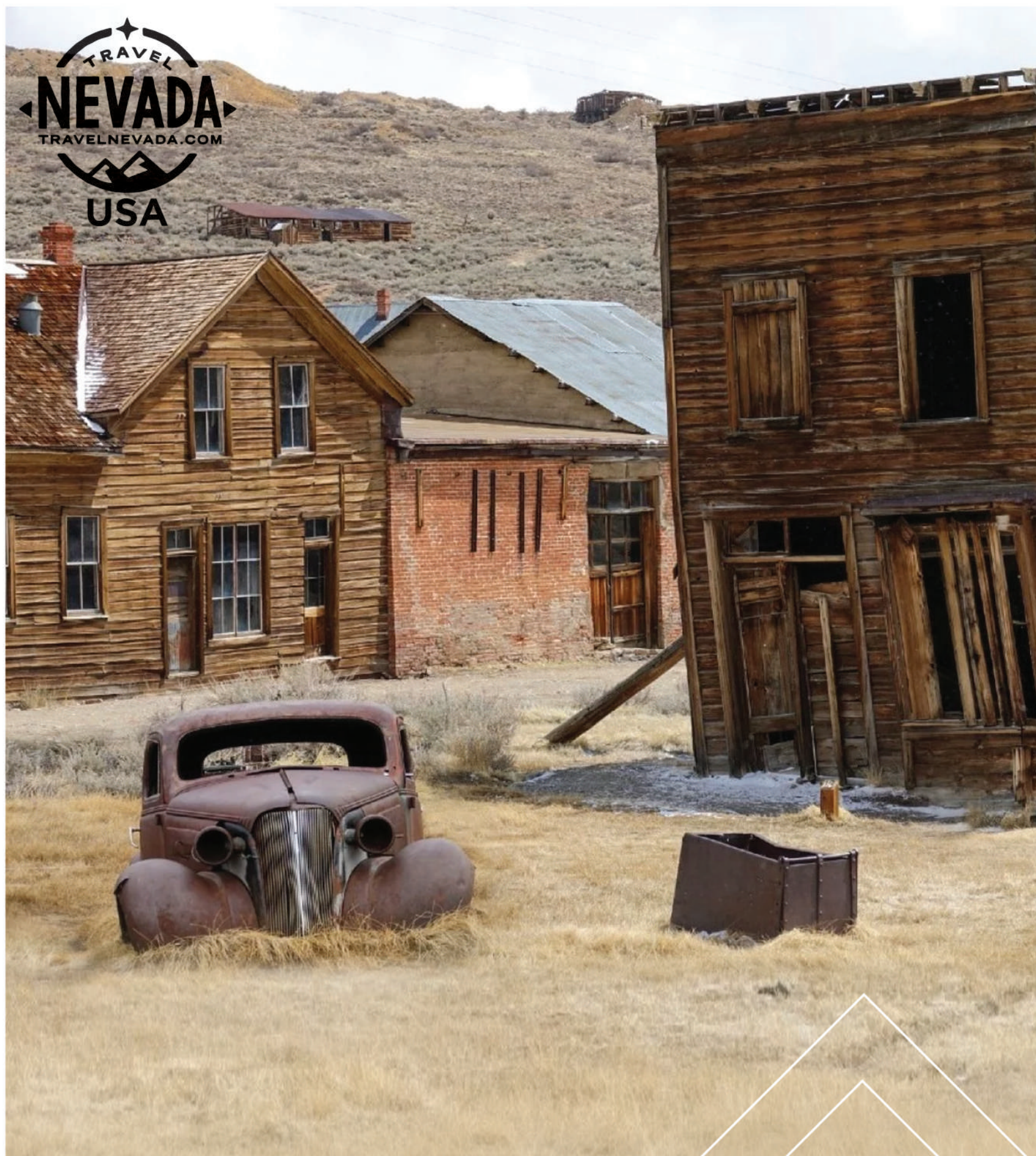
Kriplani would like to offer them Australia, New Zealand or the Arctic, depending on the season.

Mahendra Vakharia, Managing Director, Pathfinders Holidays, believes that mid-aged travellers are keen and ready to travel. "The trend

The trend and preference will be to visit one destination or, at the most, a combination of two destinations

— Mahendra Vakharia

ing too much travel, and also avoiding crowded destinations, shared transport, etc. They will travel to wildlife resorts, hill stations and beach destinations. Kenya, Tanzania, Oman, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Australia, etc., will provide these experiences," he says.



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Neighbouring states key markets

Yuvraj Padole, Deputy Director (Events & Marketing) Madhya Pradesh Tourism, highlights some key industry engagements that his department has planned such as the Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart, creating new road trip itineraries for the trade and registration of service providers in the state.



Hazel Jain

What challenges is the state facing right now?

We have opened our hotels, resorts and destinations following all safety and hygiene protocols, and guidelines issued by the Central and state

government. However, a major challenge that we are facing is to build the confidence in tourist's mind about the safety at our tourist destinations. Train and air services are also not regular, creating a hassle for travellers. The only way people are travelling is by road to visit nearby



Yuvraj Padole
Deputy Director (Events & Marketing), MP Tourism

Facilities to producers/directors

- ❖ Dedicated Film Facilitation Cell shall work as a nodal agency to ease permissions through single-window clearance
- ❖ Authentic shooting locations
- ❖ Film-friendly authorities and strong government support
- ❖ Easy permissions
- ❖ Modern infrastructure and omnipresent hotels
- ❖ Favourable law and order conditions
- ❖ Cost-effective infrastructure, crew, local talent and other skilful workforce
- ❖ Hindi-speaking people, food flexibility

destinations. We are in the process of rebuilding the confidence and trust among travellers through social media platforms to ensure them that all safety norms are being followed in the state.

Are you looking to conduct any roadshows?

Yes, Madhya Pradesh Tourism is already in the process of conducting both virtual

and physical roadshows for all our stakeholders in various source market cities of the country. MP Tourism has also gradually started organising various virtual and physical events such as Jal Mahotsav, and other promotional campaigns.

What new products and experiences is MP Tourism planning to push in 2021?

Keeping in mind the new normal, our focus is more on destinations that fit into the frame of experiential activities – such as responsible tourism, wellness and mindful tourism. We are also focusing on promoting homestays, gram-stays and farmstays as a safe

and culturally-rich option for guests so they can experience our rural culture, food and traditions. We have created special itineraries for this. We have also initiated the registration of service providers in the state. The state tourism is hand-holding all stakeholders to equip them in providing better services to their clients.

ers in the state. The state tourism is hand-holding all stakeholders to equip them in providing better services to their clients.

What prompted MPT to open film shoots first?

Madhya Pradesh is the first state in India to accomplish successful film and TV shootings under strict guidelines amidst the pandemic. Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board recently launched a new Film Tourism Policy to promote seamless film shoots in the state. Films showcase the natural and cultural heritage of the state which inspire and influence tourists to visit it. It will also definitely contribute in state's tourism revenue.

Focus is on destinations that fit into the frame of experiential activities such as wellness and mindful tourism

Digi-pass boosts confidence

Digital passes and certificates lower the risk of COVID-19 infection by providing accurate health status details of passengers, says GlobalData, a research and consulting company.



TT Bureau

Amidst COVID-19, several stakeholders of the travel and tourism industry are exploring the option of digital passes and health certificates which include destinations, airlines and associations like IATA. Since May 2020, Singapore has been testing ICC AOKpass, which is a health certificate that can be shown and verified digitally. It is backed by International SOS (a health and security services company headquartered in Singapore), International Chamber of Commerce and AOKpass. Now, passengers travelling to Singapore can use the ICC AOKpass mobile App to show their COVID-19 test results. In line with this, all travellers from Indonesia and Malaysia can make use of the facility that will be made available to other international travellers in a phased manner.

AOKpass is also being used on flights between Abu Dhabi and Karachi/ Islamabad as well

as Rome and New York City/ Atlanta. Another similar digital pass, CommonPass has been tested on flights between New York and London. IATA is also working on a 'Travel Pass'. **Animesh Kumar**, Director of Travel & Tourism and Automoti-



tive Consulting at GlobalData, comments, "Digital passes help passengers prove that they adhere to the health entry requirements of their destination and enhance the safety of international travellers. Since these can be stored in and used through a mobile application, they are easy to use. The App securely stores and authenticates the negative COVID-19 PCR test results. The passes can also facilitate

faster clearances if airports have dedicated immigration counters, similar to Changi Airport in Singapore."

There is an urgent need for a framework that brings the passengers, testing labs, local authorities, airlines and immigration authorities on a common platform and such digital passes/certificates can facilitate that. The use of QR codes, Blockchain and decentralised data ensures data accuracy as well as privacy. Once such passes are made available on a large scale, it would eliminate the need and use of paper certificates, which slow down the process and can also open the doors for potential test result frauds. Kumar concludes, "Digital health passes would help in boosting the consumers' confidence as they would enhance efficiency, safety, security as well as data privacy and reduce the risk of in-flight infections. There is also a potential for expanding their use for entry in concerts and stadiums."

Connecting tiered cities of India



Regional airline Flybig recently started operations from Indore to other cities keeping Indore as its base. The first flight took off from Indore at 2.30 pm to Ahmedabad. It is scheduled to complete the journey in an hour and five minutes. In the first couple of weeks, it will operate thrice a week, and it will later be scaled up to five flights a week, from mid-February.

The heart of the matter

Madhya Pradesh Tourism recently conducted a two-day agent familiarisation trip to Jal Mahotsav, India's biggest water carnival in the state. Around 14 travel agents from the state travelled to Hanuwantiya Island in Madhya Pradesh for this event which concluded on January 15, 2021. The month-long water fest was inaugurated by Forest Minister Vijay Shah.



ISA Tourism push for Conrad Maldives

ISA Tourism has been appointed as the India representative for Conrad Maldives Rangali Island Resort in Maldives. The sales and marketing representation company is targeting luxury travellers from India for the Maldivian property which is a twin-island resort featuring 151 luxury beach and over-water villas.



Manas Dwivedi

Boutique sales and marketing representation company for hospitality and tourism, ISA Tourism has now been appointed as the India representative for Conrad Maldives Rangali Island Resort. With this partnership, the ISA Tourism team will focus on building aware-



Manas Sinha
Director, ISA Tourism



Sandeep Raghav
VP, Sales & Marketing, ISA Tourism



guests. This property enhances the range of luxury products and experiences that we are able to offer to our key travel partners and corporate clients. As we notice the growing number of luxury travellers from across India, our committed team of ISA professionals will engage relevant luxury travel bookers from many Indian cities, extending the local market support, to garner growth for the resort."

Sandeep Raghav, VP, Sales & Marketing, ISA Tourism, adds, "Conrad Maldives Rangali Island Resort un-



doubtedly is up there in the five-star luxury space. The beautifully-appointed villas on the beach and over water, along with unique restaurant experiences, exotic corals and dive sites around the resort, kids club, meeting rooms and amazing guest services makes it a perfect fit for honeymooners, family travel and corporate getaways. My team and I are excited to lead the rep-

resentation function for this outstanding property."

Conrad Maldives Rangali Island resort, part of Conrad Hotels & Resorts, one of Hilton's global luxury hotel brands, is a twin-island resort featuring 151 luxury beach and over-water villas. The resort, in the South Ari Atoll, is a 30-minute seaplane ride from Velana Airport in Malé. 🐦

Our team of professionals will engage luxury travel bookers from many Indian cities

— Manas Sinha

The villas, kids' club, meeting rooms make it a perfect fit for honeymooners, families, corporates

— Sandeep Raghav

mote their global attractiveness to discerning Indian

ness about Conrad Maldives within the travel trade and driving reservations from the luxury outbound travel market. The team will also generate leads for corporate meetings and leisure groups.

Commenting on this development, **Manas Sinha**, Director, ISA Tourism, says, "We are proud to be associated with Conrad Maldives Rangali Island and to pro-

New team at TAFI Northern India

The Northern India chapter of TAFI recently elected its new team. **Khushvinder Sarna** of The Federal Travels and Tours is Chairman, while **Parnita Bevaja** of Business Travel is the Secretary. **Arush Mittal** of Blue Skies Travels and Tours stood unopposed for post of Treasurer. Other Committee members are **Naveen Gupta** and **Jaideep Singh**.



STATT members convene in Madurai



South Tamil Nadu Association of Travel & Tourism (STATT) recently concluded its meeting for December at Hotel Rio Grand in Madurai, where attendees deliberated on the subject of tourism revival. The Association has regularly been conducting such meetings to strategize how to function in times of a pandemic.

MOT revises MDA guidelines

To promote inbound tourism, Ministry of Tourism (MOT) has released the revised guidelines for Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) scheme for overseas promotions by tourism service providers.

Manas Dwivedi

Under the new guidelines that took effect from the beginning of this month, service providers will be entitled to more financial benefits and a simple claim process. Under the MDA scheme, MOT extends financial assistance to state governments/ UTs and approved tourism service providers across the country for undertak-



Rajiv Mehra
Vice President, IATO

if it's really ₹2 crore, then what about companies with earnings between ₹25 lakh-₹2 crore? This constitutes most small tour operators and this change will be harsh on them; they require this assistance. So, IATO

IATO has requested that minimum requirement remain ₹25 lakh and maximum limit be ₹50 crore

The approved tourism service provider, with foreign exchange earnings above ₹2 crore up to a maximum of ₹25 crore in any one year will be eligible for the financial support. The overall ceiling of the extent of support will be ₹3.50 lakh. Sharing his view on the new guidelines, **Rajiv Mehra**, VP, IATO, says that the reforms were a long-standing demand. "Earlier, the eligibility criteria used to be minimum ₹25 lakh for foreign exchange earnings, which has now been increased to minimum ₹2 crore. I think, there is some typographical error or it has been done unintentionally because



ing the promotion and marketing of tourism to India from overseas markets. In view of the current COVID situation and the distress the inbound tourism industry has seen in the country, the Ministry has enhanced the scope and reach of the Scheme so as to provide maximum benefits to the stakeholders in the tourism industry. The new guidelines have changed the eligibility criteria to avail the scheme.

Etihad's Group CEO takes vaccine



Tony Douglas, Group Chief Executive Officer, Etihad Aviation Group, receives his first dose of the Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine at Etihad Airways Medical Centre. The COVID-19 vaccine is available for free for all Etihad employees and their dependants (over 18 years old) at Etihad Airways Medical Centre.

has written to government that minimum requirement should remain ₹25 lakh and maximum limit be increased to ₹50 crore. We have also requested that this year, MDA be permitted for all MOT-recognised operators," he shares.

QualSTAR: The surety of hotel safety

Though the experience of a perfect hotel stay was once driven by availability of amenities and location of the property, a new guest priority has now emerged – that of safety and hygiene. Customers easily trust the adherence of branded hotels to safety protocols, but for the smaller ones, surety lies in the QualSTAR COVID Safety Compliance scheme.



TT Bureau

Today, the discerning traveller has adapted his travel needs to the changing world around him. Numerous studies and research conducted across the globe suggest that for the tourism and hospitality industry to recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic on business, building traveller confidence is paramount. To achieve that, it is impera-



Anil Jauhari
Lead Assessor – NABCB, Lead Evaluator – APAC & IAF Evaluator

tive to assure prospective customers and clients of the strict adherence to safety and hygiene guidelines. But, merely following set protocols is not enough; it is important to put a stamp on these measures, so customers can differentiate between a COVID-safety-compliant and non-compliant enterprise. While customers easily trust branded hotels and believe in their adherence to safety protocols, it is difficult for the smaller ones (including apartment hotels, other rental accommodation and banquet halls) to compete on that ground. Thus comes in the QualSTAR COVID Safety Compliance scheme.

What is QualSTAR COVID Safety Compliance scheme?

QualSTAR COVID Safety Compliance scheme is a certification that assures patrons of the respective hotel's or accommodation provider's strict adherence to COVID-safety guidelines. It has been accredited by Na-



tional Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) that falls under the umbrella of Quality Council of India (QCI), an undertaking of Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India. It aims to provide an objective assessment of the preventive measures adopted by hotels to mitigate COVID-related risks and hazards.

QualSTAR is the first and only COVID Compliance Certification Agency in India which has been accredited by NABCB (a member of International Accreditation Forum or IAF) in line with international standards for



the accommodation sector. The QualSTAR COVID Safety Compliance scheme is based on guidelines by World Health Organization (WHO), Ministry of Tourism, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and other government organisations.

How does the scheme work?

The QualSTAR certification process broadly involves

three crucial stages, with several steps under each for the impartial certification of accommodations.



MS (Kuki) Chawla
Director, QualSTAR

Stage1: Registration – Registration for the QualSTAR COVID Safety Compliance scheme is a completely automated, online process that is available free of charge. Those interested just need to log on to <https://qualstar.co.in/> and register.

Stage2: Application – The next stage in the process is completion of application documents to gain access to the guidelines incorporated into the COVID compliance standard. This facilitates submission of the self-assessment form leading up to the site audit.

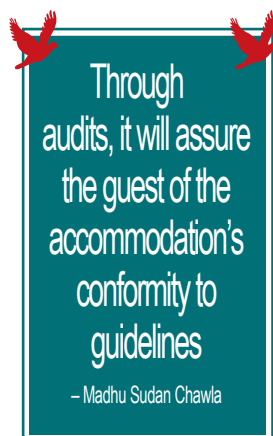
Stage3: Audit – The site audit and subsequent COVID Compliance certification forms the final stage of the process. Once all criteria are diligently met, the certificate is issued for a period of two years. As many as four surveillance audits (mandatory inspections) are conducted by the QualSTAR team to ensure continual adherence to a 200-point checklist.

The QualSTAR advantage

QualSTAR COVID Safety Compliance scheme has been formulated by industry experts with years of extensive experience behind them, and founded under the patronage of Shree VK Duggal, former Governor of Manipur and Mizoram; former Director General - Tour-

ism, Government of India; and former Union Home Secretary.

Speaking about the certification's authenticity and benefits, **Anil Jauhari**, Lead Assessor – NABCB, Lead Evaluator – APAC and IAF Evaluator, says, "COVID compliance is top of everyone's priority today and certainly of the hospitality industry. A third-party COVID compliance certification for hotels carries more weightage than a self-declaration. The common man is bombarded with lots of claims and for him, an accredited certification should mean that he can be assured that



he is dealing with a credible, competent certification body that is under the oversight of a national body."

MS (Kuki) Chawla, Director, QualSTAR, says that the idea behind COVID Safety Compliance certification was primarily to build traveller confidence as a stepping stone in the recovery of the hospitality sector. "It has repeatedly been said in recent times that for the sector to recover, traveller confidence is a priority. Recognising the absence of an accredited certification in the field, QualSTAR formulated the COVID Safety Compliance certification to initiate the hospitality sector on to a path of recovery. The certification, through its extensive checks and mystery audits,

will assure the guest of the accommodation's conformity to safety and hygiene guidelines."

Priya Singh, Chief Executive Officer, QualSTAR, says, "Keeping the nuances of guest service



Priya Singh
Chief Executive Officer, QualSTAR

in mind from the point of view of the user as well as the service provider, and adapting it to international auditing standards for rating and classification is something that QualSTAR has been able to execute after almost seven years of research and development. Being accredited by the national body of the country is a step in the right direction in bringing Indian hospitality standards on a par with the rest of the world. Safety and preventive measures were built into the classification standard to deal with both natural as well as man-made disasters." During these unprecedented times, Singh adds, QualSTAR took the lead and with the assistance of stakeholders from various relevant fields, launched COVID compliance audits to assist hotels in getting back on their feet.

About QualSTAR

QualSTAR is the first and only NABCB (National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies under the umbrella of QCI -Quality Council of India) accredited certification body in the country to provide classification and rating of tourist accommodations. Founded

under the patronage of Shree VK Duggal (former Governor of Manipur and Mizoram; former Director General - Tourism, Government of India; and former Union Home Secretary), its classification services act as a third-party assurance with an aim to boost the confidence of visitors on the quality and safety of the related product and services.

International quality audits and rating criteria based on the current needs of the hospitality industry are the USP of the QualSTAR classification system. Audits are undertaken by the very best minds, armed with a skill set of over 25 years of hospitality experience in leading hotel chains such



as ITC, Taj Group of Hotels and catering services, as well as The Oberoi group to name a few. Global standardisation, transparency and surveillance on adherence to quality and hygiene are its hallmark. The certification scheme covers hotels, apartment hotels and resorts in India within the framework of ISO/IEC 17065:2012 and QUAL Standards QPL 01 2020 & QPL 02 2020 (Criteria Standards).

Register on <https://qualstar.co.in/> and give your customers the assurance of safety and hygiene, so they book with you worry-free! 🐦

Mumbai agents get ready for 2021

A group of around 30 travel agents from Mumbai decided to have a mini celebration recently at Craft Bar, BKC, while observing all safety protocols. Initiated by **Ajay Chhabria**, Director, In-Time Travels by Design and co-organised by **Jyot Jhaveri**, Owner of Sunday Pure Holidays, the travel fraternity members let their hair down after a tough 10 months.



Vaccine success will lead the way

Which countries initiate and successfully implement their COVID-19 vaccination programme will likely determine which ones will restart tourism and air connections first. And, until a database that aggregates COVID-19 vaccination rates is made available, a platform that tracks the latest announcements is a need of the hour.



Tracking COVID-19 vaccination rates is crucial to understand the scale of protection against the virus, and therefore how quickly can countries reboot air connectivity. A global, aggregated database on COVID-19 vaccination rates is essential to monitor progress, but it is

unfortunately not yet available. Until such a database is made available, Our World in Data will track the latest announcements on the first countries to administer these vaccinations.

When considering the number of COVID-19 vaccination doses administered per 100 people within a given population (note that this is count-

ed as a single dose, and may not equal the total number of people vaccinated, depending on the specific dose regime) Israel is the leader with UAE as a far second and Bahrain coming in third.

Global authorisation vaccine certificate

However, there is another challenge that is beginning to

emerge in all this. The UAE gave Sinopharm emergency authorisation in the autumn, and then started vaccinating frontline workers. This led to confusion when a flight attendant went home to Australia and presented her vaccination certificate on arrival in Sydney. Does this mean we will need a globally authorised vaccine certificate that all or a majority of countries can accept?

In addition to the UAE and China, Sinopharm's vaccine has received emergency approval in Bahrain and Egypt. Sinopharm claims phase three trials showed 79 per cent efficacy. An interesting part is that the UAE will also allow all its residents and citizens who have received both doses of an approved vaccine to enter

10 Southeast Asian tourism industry lessons we have to learn from 2020

- ❖ Travel bubbles are difficult to set up, easy to pop
- ❖ For a successful domestic tourism stimulus, redemption must be super easy
- ❖ Public holidays = increase in daily cases
- ❖ Coordination between local and central governments is critical
- ❖ Destinations within driving distance of Tier-I cities will receive more bookings
- ❖ Weekday tourism will be weak
- ❖ Publicising cremation costs to tourists will generate lots of (negative) press
- ❖ Requiring less sensitive antigen tests instead of RT-PCR tests for domestic air travel leads to false confidence in safety, increasing cases
- ❖ But, if RT-PCR tests are prohibitively expensive, people won't travel
- ❖ The aim of maintaining zero locally transmitted cases is impossible - and when cases do crop up, it causes panic

without restriction no matter where in the world they are travelling from. This points

again to COVID vaccination certificates becoming a staple of international travel. 📌



Outsourced solutions help hotels

Outsourcing sales and marketing activities can provide independent hotels and resorts an expert panel working for them so that they can focus on keeping their guests happy. Zuper Hotel Solutions offers such tailor-made packages for boutique and mainstream hotels and resorts.



Hazel Jain

Never thought of making your own dream resort or hotel? Zuper Hotel Solutions will ensure your dreams and ROIs are captured, says **Akaal Manchanda**, Director of Operations, Zuper Hotel Solutions. "Independent hotels should outsource their marketing and sales activities in today's fast-paced age. The right marketing company can add a jetpack to your progress. With a client base already set in the

market, the right association can propel you right into the target audience which directly impacts your revenue flow," he says. When hotels outsource, they get an expert panel working for them while they focus on their core passion of hospitality and keeping guests happy. Manchanda adds, "Independent hotels often cannot hire the best talent due to various factors which are bypassed when they outsource their sales and marketing activities. Zuper Hotel Solutions offers tailor-made packages



Akaal Manchanda
Director of Operations
Zuper Hotel Solutions

for boutique and mainstream hotels and resorts. We follow the AAPER process – Audit, Analyse, Propose, Execute, Retain. This means we follow multiple guidelines while getting hotels and resorts on-board with a thorough audit and analysis process. This process follows up with a corrections and suggestions round, post which the budgets are finalised with the core team and



ZUPER
HOTEL SOLUTIONS

an execution plan is drafted. This is where the real action begins and we ensure your target market along with the ever supporting trade circuit get to know about the new brand on-board, having executed multiple campaigns we know how to take lead."

Speaking on how this product is different from the marketing companies already in the market, he says, "Various marketing companies present in the market will not take the load of sales and targets. We are here to accept the challenge and offer pay as per performance packages. We have developed

a host of services to ensure the unit does not need to jump windows. We take the responsibility of various departments and are accountable for the same. We have turned around, launched and retained some of the best properties around." Zuper Hotel Solutions is currently

associated with The O Hotel Pune and Goa, The Oxford Golf Resort, Tropical Retreat at Igatpuri, The Forest Club at Karjat, Seashell Beach Suites & Villas at Goa, Shambhalah Resort at Mahabaleshwar, and The One Lonavala. It is coming up at five new locations this year.

Marketing companies will not take the load of sales and targets. We are here to accept the challenge

Advantages of associating with Zuper

- ❖ Best talent on-board
- ❖ Corporate presence
- ❖ Assured revenue packages
- ❖ Lean overheads
- ❖ Vast trade network
- ❖ Pay as per performance packages

Lake Tahoe: The all-season wonderland

It's called the Jewel of Nevada, USA, and once you see it, you'll know why. Lake Tahoe is the nation's largest alpine lake, 22 by 12 miles of sparkling water surrounded by 72 miles of pristine shoreline. During the warm summer months, it's a water-sports paradise. And when it snows, well, it's a haven for winter sports enthusiasts.



TT Bureau

The crystal-clear lake is roughly divided into two shores, north and south. South shore is the lively side, with no end of stuff to do both in and out of water. Most of the large hotel-casinos can be found here in the town of Stateline, along with the base



of Heavenly Mountain Resort, Heavenly Village. It's chock-full of shopping, dining and recreation options, all within

easy walking distance of the hotels. On the southeast shore, Zephyr Cove is bursting with watercraft activities, parasailing and beach lounging. It's also home to the famed paddle-wheel cruise boats, the M.S. Dixie II and the Tahoe Queen. There are scenic cruises, dinner cruises, specialty cruises, even



charter cruises for weddings and parties.

Life is a bit more relaxed on Tahoe's north shore, where the focus is on celebrating quiet mountain life. In the summer, the choices are limitless. With classic North Lake Tahoe hikes, mountain biking bucket-listers, and dozens of pristine beaches

kissed by one of the crispest, clearest, bluest bodies of water in the United States (they don't call Lake Tahoe the 'Jewel of the Sierra' for nothing), you're going to want to dive into the North Shore's warm-weather wonderment. The Tahoe Rim Trail is also a popular destination for hikers from all over the world. Measuring

165 miles, the trail system passes through two states, six counties, one state park, three national forests and three natural wilderness areas. Guests of the trail have their pick of several trailheads around the lake with varying degrees of difficulty and length. And for the elite hikers, there's always the 165-Mile Club. 🐦



The 'Emirati Cuisine Programme'

Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) has announced the launch of the 'Emirati Cuisine Programme' (ECP). The initiative aims to boost the Emirate's authentic cuisine offerings in Abu Dhabi's hotels to raise profile of local cuisine and promote Emirati culture and traditions.



TT Bureau

Coinciding with the UAE's 49th National Day celebrations, the new initiative - Emirati Cuisine Programme - aims to increase the number of local dishes being offered at top hotels through a series of incentives, training courses and promotions. Hotels can participate in ECP by offer-

ing authentic Emirati dishes on their menus. Within its first year, the programme will target four and five-star hotels in the emirate, with more hotel categories being incorporated in subsequent years. As part of the programme, DCT Abu Dhabi will oversee the training of hotel chefs through a series of virtual remote training videos, led by acclaimed Emirati chef Khu-



lood Atiq, to ensure that the food meets the standards of authenticity and quality of true Emirati cuisine.

"Food can tell the story of a nation and express cultural identity in a way that transcends words. The inspiration to create the 'Emirati Cuisine Programme' came from DCT Abu Dhabi's desire to give visitors the chance to experience the beauty and hospitality of Emirati culture through food," said **HE Ali Hassan Al Shaiba**, Execu-

tive Director of Tourism and Marketing at DCT Abu Dhabi. He added that this initiative is part of DCT Abu Dhabi's commitment to promoting Emirati culture in line with the packed calendar for the 49th UAE National Day celebrations. "We have been in touch with several of our hotel partners in the Emirate and observed a high level of enthusiasm amongst them to provide visitors with more authentic Emirati experiences. Up to 50 chefs from hotels across the emirate

have expressed interest to be a part of the training series. There is a great appetite for authentic cultural experiences around the world, and we wanted to make sure that Abu Dhabi would be amongst the first destinations to address that desire and give travellers what they are looking for," he said.

"What makes this programme special is its unique virtual platform that allows us to train the chefs while adhering to COVID-19 social distancing measures," said Chef Atiq.

Within its first year, ECP will see several offers taking place across Abu Dhabi to promote Emirati food to residents and visitors. DCT Abu Dhabi will

We wanted to make sure Abu Dhabi would be amongst the first destinations to give travellers what they are looking for

be announcing participating hotels who will be serving new authentic Emirati dishes. The hotels will also be featured on a dedicated ECP website, which visitors can access on: www.EmiratiCuisine.ae

Emirati Cuisine Programme

ECP will feature a series of online initiatives and promotions to showcase authentic Emirati cuisine and traditions to global audiences. Amongst the first initiatives launched by the programme will be a series of exclusive online cooking training videos, hosted by Chef Atiq, to show participating hotels chefs how to cook their very own authentic Emirati dishes, at their respective establishments. The videos will be available on DCT Abu Dhabi's media library with exclusive access for participating Abu Dhabi hotels.

IATO ushers skill development

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), in partnership with **TravTalk**, organised a series of webinars for its members and the travel trade under its skill development initiative. With several webinars successfully conducted in the last three months, the team plans to bring introduce more sessions in the future.



Manas Dwivedi

During the distressed times of COVID, IATO partnered with **TravTalk** to organise skill-based online webinars and programmes which, in



Pronab Sarkar
President, IATO

students and faculty of tourism and hospitality management, various universities as well as institutes across

We have been active in informing members about the programmes and have received good feedback

– Pronab Sarkar

the initiative has been a success," he says.

Depicting the success results of the initiative, the man who put the whole initiative together, **Zia Siddiqui**, EC

till January 13, 2021. A total of 10,590 participants registered for the webinars and the same garnered 5,270



Rajiv Mehra
Vice President, IATO

a span of just three months, have not just imparted skill education to IATO members but to the entire tourism and hospitality industry, including

A programme had 40 classes that were regularly attended. Participants were so involved!

– Rajiv Mehra

the country and overseas. The attendees learnt new skills, got lessons of motivation and understood the importance of digital tools. The webinars had speakers from fields such as wellness, life skills, etc.

Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO, says, "All the webinars we have organised till date have been successful with a large number of people attending them. We have

been active in informing our members about all the programmes and we have been receiving good feedback."

Rajiv Mehra, VP, IATO, believes that this learning will help members in the long run. "There was one programme that had 40 classes that were regularly attended. The participants were so involved! This indicates that



Zia Siddiqui
EC Liaison, Skill Development Committee, IATO

Liaison, Skill Development Committee, IATO, informs that the industry participated in each webinar with great vigour. "In total, nine webinars were conducted

10,590 people registered for the webinars and the same garnered 5,270 views on the Facebook page

– Zia Siddiqui

views on the Facebook page. The series would be continued till end of January 2021. All the participants highly appreciated this initiative by IATO," he says.



TRAUTALK

Media Partner

Upcoming 2021

31st March and 1st April, 2021

**Middle East's First and
Only Virtual Travel Show**

**Resume, Restart,
Reconnect,
Reimagine,
Rethink, Reengage
and Reignite
TRAVEL**

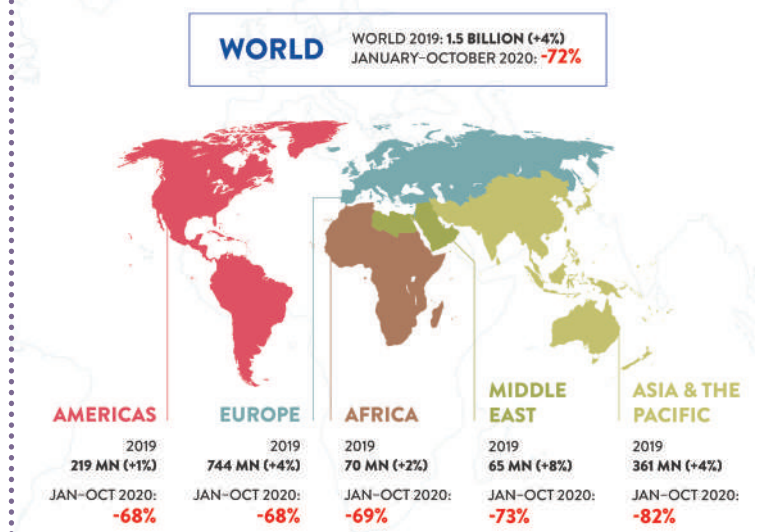
2020: A year in review

Starting from pre-pandemic days, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) graphs the radical decline of tourism and its hopeful recovery with short-term trends in an insightful yet succinct report. Looking ahead, most experts do not expect to see return of international tourism to pre-COVID levels before 2023.

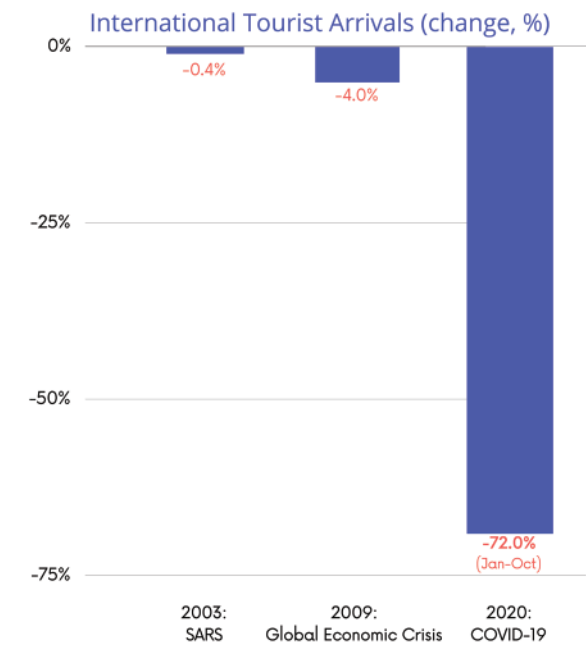
Tourism in Pre-Pandemic Times



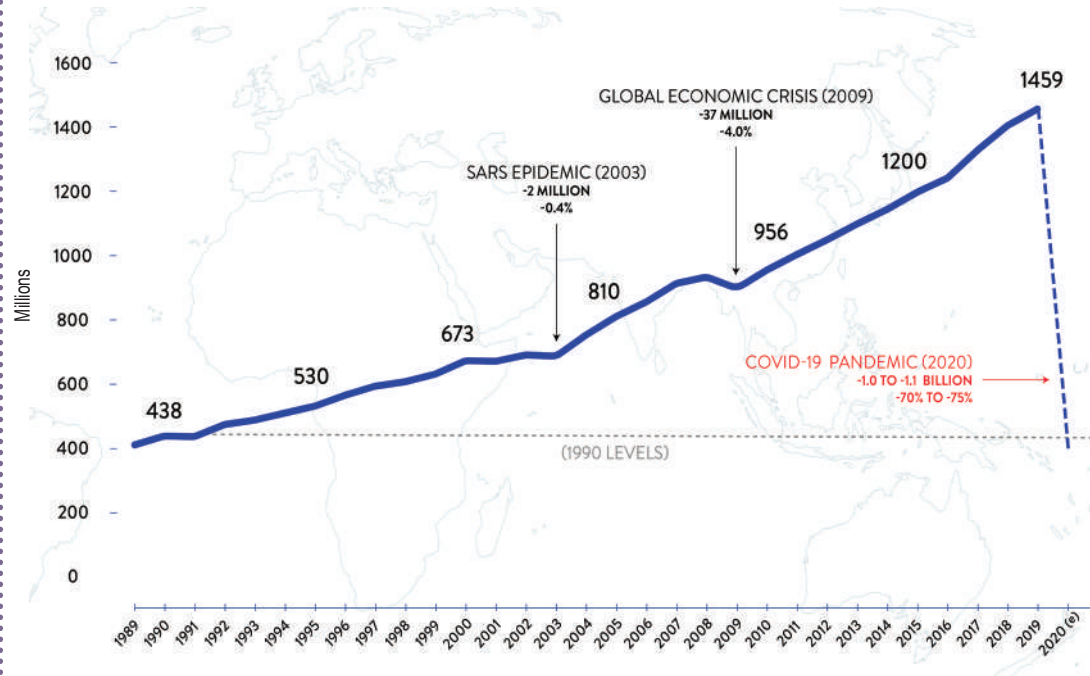
International Tourist Arrivals 2020



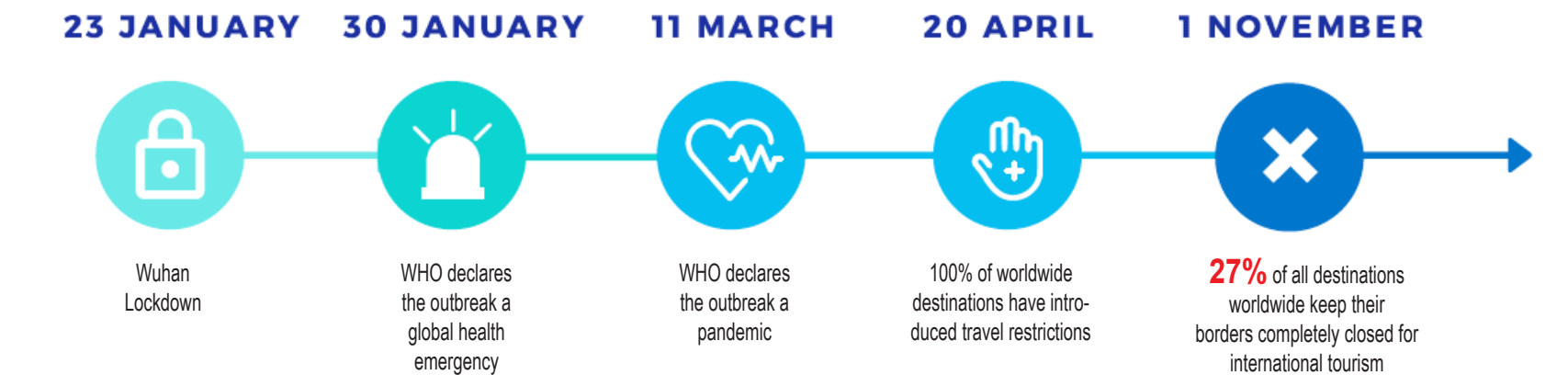
Unprecedented fall of international tourism



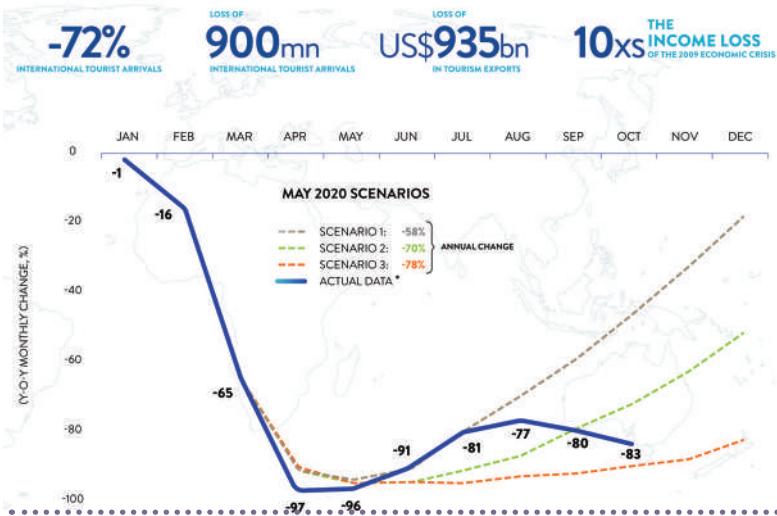
International Tourist Arrivals



2020: A timeline marked by closures



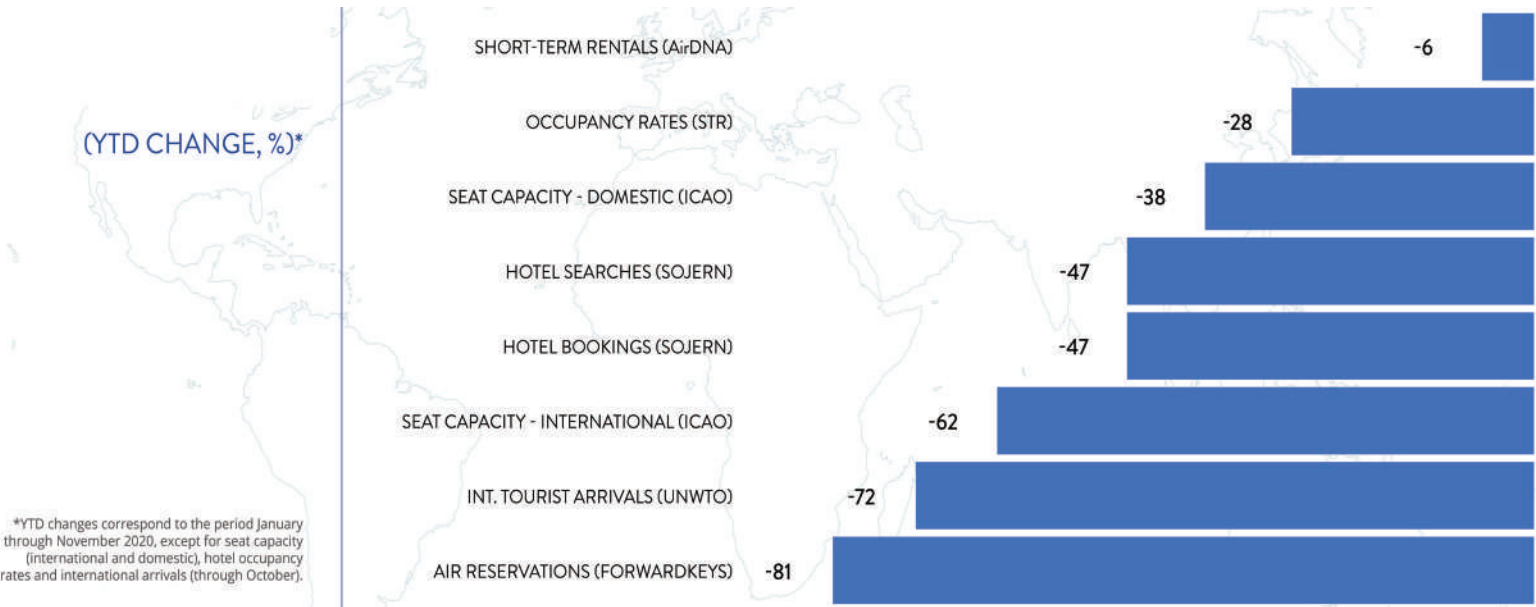
Estimated Impact (Jan–Oct 2020)



International tourism back to levels of 30 years ago

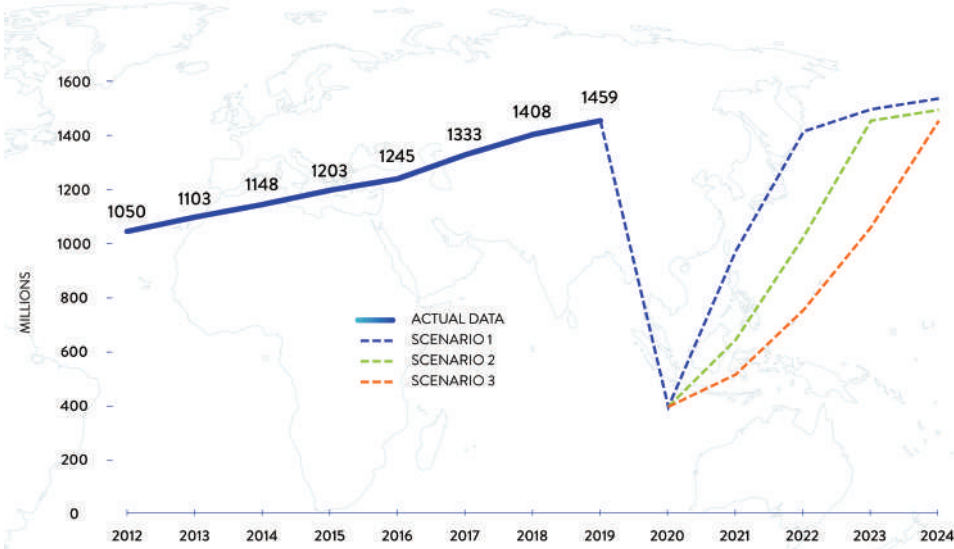


Selected Tourism Indicators 2020



Looking Ahead

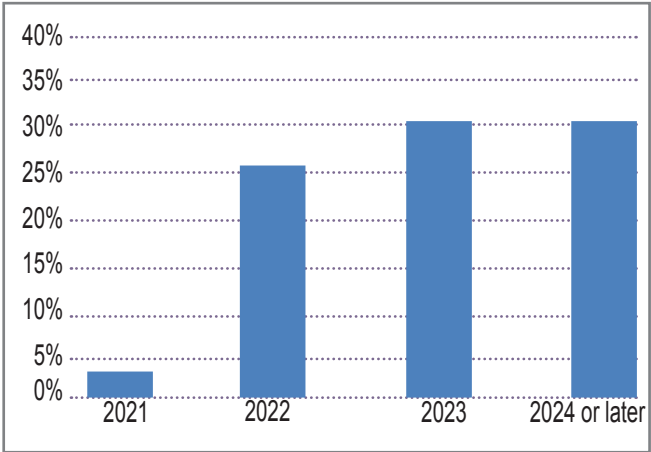
2021–2024 Scenarios



It might take 2.5 to 4 years to recover to 2019 levels in terms of international tourist arrivals

When do you expect international tourism to return to pre-pandemic 2019 levels in your country?

Most tourism experts do not expect international tourism to return to pre-COVID levels before 2023!



Source: UNWTO Panel of Experts survey, UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, October 2020

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



JANUARY 2021

Date	Event	Time
15	STB India Virtual Tradeshow	North India
17-23	ASEAN Tourism Forum 2021	Cambodia
18	UNWTO Executive Council (Hybrid)	Madrid
18	Penang Roadshow to India (Virtual)	Kochi
18	IATO Workshop on cost cutting	11:30 am
19	STB India Virtual Tradeshow	West India
20	Penang Roadshow to India (Virtual)	Chennai
20	TOFTigers Webinar- Sustainability Awareness	03:30 pm
21	STB India Virtual Tradeshow	East India
21	CII Medical Value Travel	02:00 pm
21	UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism	3:00 pm
21	CAPA India Webinar	04:00 pm
22	Penang Roadshow to India (Virtual)	Delhi
25	Penang Roadshow to India (Virtual)	Mumbai
27	IATO Workshop on Short & Off Season Itineraries	11:30 am
27-29	Europe + Asia Events Forum	St. Petersburg
29	TOFTigers Webinar- Travelife launch	03:30 pm
29-31	Gujarat Travel Fair	10:00 am

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

Intriguing times for aviation

The year may see an interesting turn of events for the aviation industry as the vaccine rolls out, feels **Peter Harbison**, Chairman Emeritus, CAPA. But, to truly get back to being a profitable sector, air travel may still take another year.



Manas Dwivedi

This is a remarkable time for us because we can now talk about having a vaccine for this dreadful event that has been plaguing us for the last nine months," says **Peter Harbison**, speaking at the CAPA Live event recently. "Of course, it's not going to be plain sailing. We could be looking at a big second or third, or even extended first waves occurring in Europe and America. How long can airlines hold their breath in terms of cash burn?" he questions.

Speaking about how different markets have fared, he adds, "Several Asian markets have performed very well. According to the OACD, the recession that we're going to be looking at will be the worst since the Depression nearly a 100 years ago. It's



Peter Harbison
Chairman Emeritus, CAPA

going to be hard for airlines to get back, to get the premium traffic flying, to get large numbers of what has become a very price-sensitive market, particularly in Asia."

Harbison adds that global passenger traffic (RPKs) will not return to pre-COVID-19 levels until 2025 or beyond. "In fact, we are seeing 2010 levels still



persisting right through 2024. So much depends on what happens internationally. IATA is forecasting another 12 months of cash burn," he says.

As a result, we can't rely on the vaccine as the saviour for the industry, believes Harbison, pointing out that "Government support or progress on the use of testing to accelerate market opening will be critical for the survival of airlines in many regions over the next six to nine months." Speaking about travel bubbles of which there has been much talk over the past few months, he said that even in Europe where one would

expect the EU to have a more multilateral approach, things are still so fragmented. "It's going to be bilateral bubbles



Use of testing to accelerate market opening will be critical for the survival of airlines

that start to open things up. But, it's not easy to open up bubbles and I think Asia Pacific is leading the way in terms of expectations," he shares.

"WTC supports measures designed to curb COVID-19 and protect public health, but calls for the complete removal of unnecessary quarantines," says Gloria Guevara, WTC President & CEO.

Trends that will change air travel

David Lavorel, CEO, SITA at Airports and Borders, plots a new course for aviation's recovery in 2021 and predicts a smarter, safer and more sustainable travel industry that is fit for people as well as the planet with six technology trends set to transform air travel in 2021.



Manas Dwivedi

According to **David Lavorel**, the industry must regain the trust of passengers. Airport and airline workers must also trust the measures taken and the environments they are working in are sufficient to keep them safe. "The pace of innovation adoption sets a scene for rapid industry transformation over the next few years," he believes.

Self-service and biometrics

Automation and biometrics will become the norm rather than the exception at leading airports globally in the next few years.

Evolving airport operations

Passenger flow management technologies provide real-time passenger monitoring and actionable insights, for airports to understand and manage passenger movement throughout the airport. It will become a necessity to



David Lavorel
CEO, SITA at Airports and Borders

proactively manage crowd density and social distancing during daily operations, as well as longer-term planning.

IoT, AI and ML

While helping to address immediate needs like sanitisation, social distancing and the automation of customer support processes, the combination of these technologies potentially signposts a Fourth Industrial Revolution, where, beyond

airports, the physical world around us becomes connected and intelligent.

Digital identity

In the coming years, the development of a digital identity is likely to replace the traditional passport. One approach is a Digital Travel Credential (DTC), currently being explored and progressed by key industry bodies like ICAO. Another potential solution is self-sovereign identity, a form of digital identity giving travellers control over how their personal data is shared and used.

APP & health ETAs

Advance Passenger Processing (APP) brings the ability to assess the risk, including health risks, and

allow or deny travel at check-in. When coupled with the implementation of a Health ETA service, it enables real-time checks to be performed to confirm that each traveller has completed the required health checks and is eligible to travel.

Blockchain for savings

Customs processes are another area where Blockchain can solve challenges. Airports, airlines and governments can share baggage content information to pre-clear bags at arrival, hence avoiding the need to recheck bags in transit. Improving efficiency in this department, and further reducing the chances of baggage mishandling on arrival, is good news for passengers.

In Memoriam



Sheldon Adelson
(4.8.1933 - 11.1.2021)

Casino magnate and philanthropist **Sheldon Adelson** has passed away at the age of 87. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Las Vegas Sands Corporation, and also its Founder, Adelson's achievements in the integrated resort and hospitality industry are well-documented. Las Vegas Sands Corporation owns the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, and is the parent company of Venetian Macao, which operates The Venetian Las Vegas and the Sands Expo and Convention Center. Adelson's vision for integrated resorts transformed the industry, changed the trajectory of the company he founded, and reimagined tourism in each of these markets. His impact on the industry will be everlasting.





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THE LEELA PALACE

Jaipur

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has appointed **Chandrashekhar Joshi** as the General Manager of The Leela Palace Jaipur. In his new role, Joshi will launch the soon-to-open 200-room property. He will be instrumental in introducing The Leela Palace Programming and signature Palace Service to the Pink City. Prior to joining The Leela, Joshi was the General Manager at Renaissance Bali Uluwatu Resort & Spa, and over the 20 years of an extensive hospitality career has worked with hotels like Le Méridien Pune, JW Marriott Juhu Mumbai and Renaissance Mumbai among others.



SHERATON GRAND RESORT & SPA

Chennai

Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa has appointed **Shiv Bose** as the General Manager of the property. Here, he will spearhead the team and develop the hotel's operations to deliver stellar service standards, while lending his expertise to a holistic stay experience for guests and be the torchbearer of the first Sheraton resort in the country. Prior to taking up this role, Bose was the General Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal. He has been the General Manager at Le Méridien Nagpur for over two years and was also associated with Starwood Hotels & Resorts and East India Hotels.



COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT

Ahmedabad

Deep Preet Bindra has been appointed as General Manager at Courtyard by Marriott, Ahmedabad (Ramdevnagar). With an experience spanning over 17 years in the hospitality and services sector, he will lead the team at the hotel to strengthen its position in the value-driven market of Ahmedabad. Having started out as a management trainee at the financial services corporation American Express, Bindra took a leap into the hospitality sector in 2008 when he joined The Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. His stint with Marriott International began when he joined JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity.

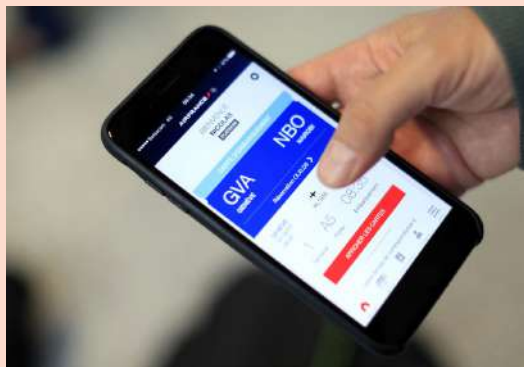


A blueprint for 2021

What should we expect from a year that is pregnant with hopes and promises of the vaccine magically transforming travel demand? While digital Apps and passports may become the norm, long queues at airports are expected to return with additional health checks being imposed. Here are six things that can serve as a guide to navigating 2021.

Last-minute bookings a norm

The lack of international coordination on travel restrictions and quarantines is still worrying, with countries often deciding new rules unilaterally and suddenly. This will prompt customers to book at very short notice, giving travel companies and airlines low visibility of future demand. This is also a reason why companies will need to offer 100 per cent refund to travellers in case of cancellations.



Speed is of the essence

This will also mean that travellers will change their minds even before governments can put a travel ban. It is therefore pertinent that the industry remain on its toes and stay flexible to be able to tweak its offerings as per demand. Continuous communication and forging good relations with suppliers/vendors will serve the industry well.



Long queues will be back

Bitter experience has made governments cautious. And so, despite the inoculation programme, they will continue to have a combination of prevention measures in place for a while. Airports will likely have an extra layer of checks for health documents for a while as well as rapid testing for COVID for departing and arriving passengers.



Beware of full-service carriers

Even if vaccines are administered rapidly, air traffic probably won't recover to 2019 levels before 2024. The budget airlines will be the first ones to recover – their finances are in better shape than their full-service rivals, and they're more oriented towards leisure and short-haul travel, which are expected to recover first.



Boom of the Boomers

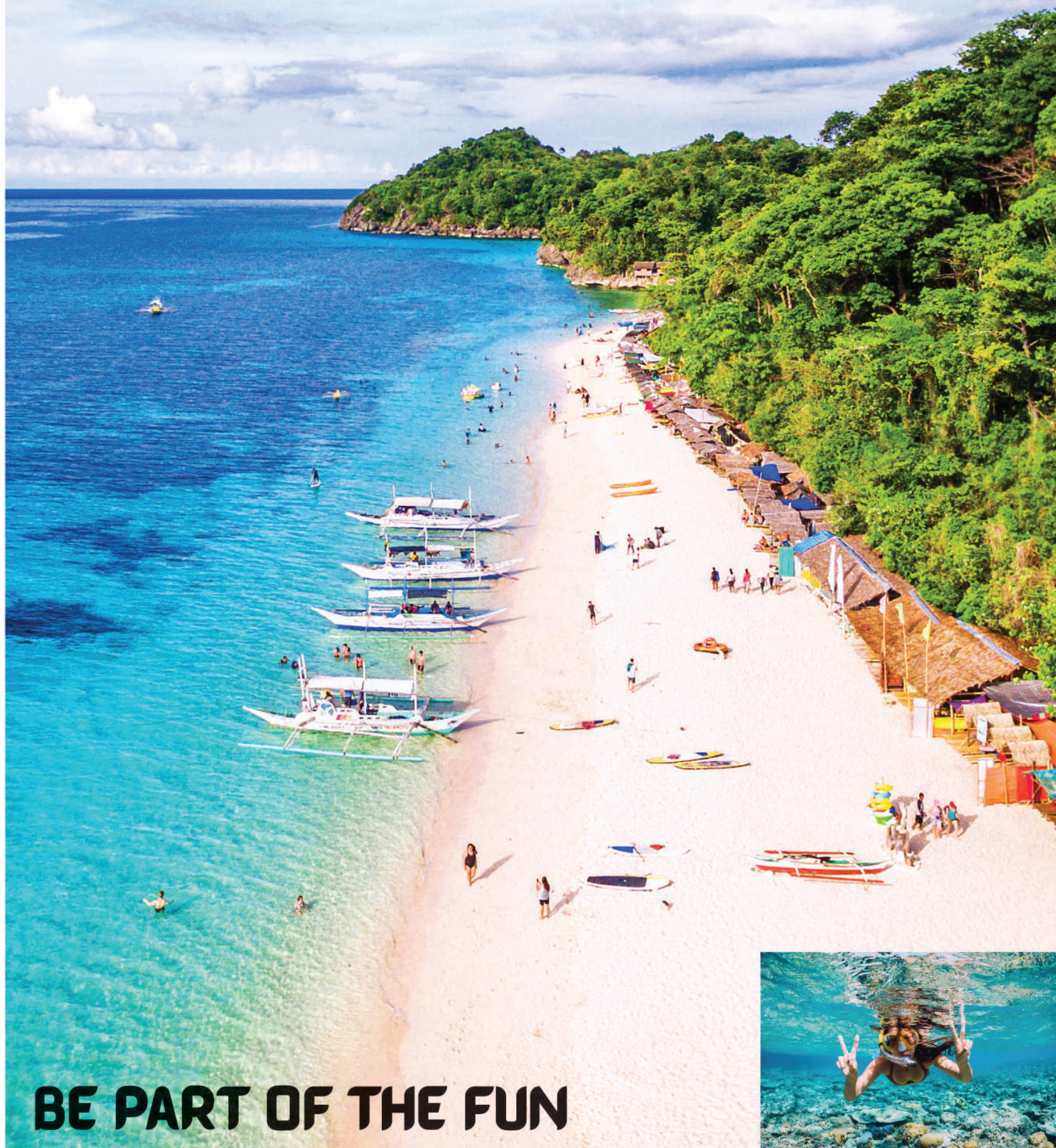
Since the elderly will be the first in line to receive the vaccines, we can expect a boom in travel by the over-60s. This will be a clear sign that confidence is returning but will also mean that travel companies, airlines and hotels will need to shift their ever-fixed focus from the millennials and Gen-Z travellers back to this segment.



Learn to adopt technology

There's a good chance that digital Apps and health passports being developed by the airline industry and various governments to store virus test results and COVID vaccine certificates, will become a norm. This will force many of us to learn to use technology. It will also eventually make quarantines unnecessary – hopefully. And last but not the least, hug your loved ones.





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Goa aims to be tourism haven

Pramod Sawant, the Chief Minister of Goa, says that the new tourism policy aims to provide some relief to the travel trade of the state, add more homestays and tourist spots, and make Goa the most sought-after destination by 2024.



Nisha Verma

Claiming that the tourism and hospitality sectors are very important for Goa and contribute to the economy of the state, **Pramod Sawant** shares, "In 2019, Goa saw over 71 lakh domestic arrivals and over 9 lakh international arrivals. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 crisis however, the number of tourists would be significantly less. But, in August 2020, we saw almost 12 lakh domestic tourist arrivals, and only 3 lakh foreign arrivals. Initially a time of uncertainty, we have learnt to deal with COVID and the government has supported the tourism industry since the lockdown."

The CM adds that Goa has been able to handle the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic with a high recovery rate. "Owing to constraints, the government could only give some financial relief such as a deduction in fixed electricity charges, waiver of 50 per cent on tax for commercial vehicles, etc. All restrictions and conditions that were put on tourists have been removed. The response of domestic tourists has been very encour-

aging. Going forward, we need to ponder on how to build resilience across the entire tourism value chain," he says.

Since October, Goa has been witnessing a steady increase in the flow of tourists, especially during the weekends, and Sawant adds that starred hotels are expected to do well

in the sector. It is aimed to offer the unique Goan experience by presenting a mix of historic, natural and cultural locations & attractions, he adds. The policy also aims to make Goa the most preferred destination by 2024, and the minister expects it to be the backbone for taking crucial decisions on development and marketing.

The government is now planning to encourage homestays in the hinterland. Sawant says, "Subsidies and easy finance are being made available to families to restore their traditional Goan houses and to further encourage them to convert them into profitable entrepreneurial ventures. The government aims to showcase the unique village culture as well as protect nature in the hinterland."

He adds, "We are in touch with Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Civil Aviation, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allow charter flights into Goa at the earliest and open the visa facility for tourists. We are in discussion with CIL and other bodies for formulation of the new Tourism Promotion Board for Goa. The regional

board, i.e. Goa Tourism, is constituted to take tourism in Goa forward in a focused manner and in the right direction. The aim is to give better infrastructure for the state, which promotes tourism. Work on the Greenfield international airport at Mopa is also in full swing, and it will have no restrictions on landing hours," he says.

For MICE, Sawant informs that they are coming up with a convention centre in the heart of Panjim city, which can cater to almost 1500 people at a time. For weddings, too, the government is in the process of giving single-window clearance for all permissions required. Even for film shooting, they have simplified the process of obtaining the licence in Goa, Sawant claims.

We are
doing our best
to promote
sustainable
tourism with
infrastructure,
connectivity

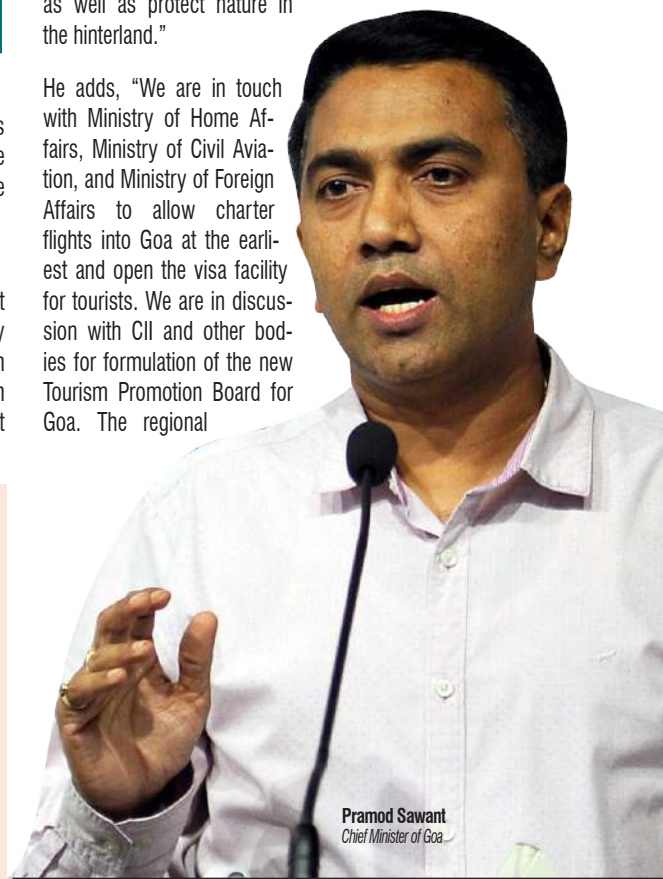
with the increase in arrivals even though footfalls will be lower than they were in the past season.

Tourism policy

The Chief Minister says that his government has recently launched the new state tourism policy, which will help them push systematic development

Government of Goa's tourism plan

- ❖ Open new tourism spots and add them to the tourism map
- ❖ Create a robust system to bring smaller hospitality players under a single portal
- ❖ Push for ease of doing business
- ❖ Amend excise laws
- ❖ Do away with the need for annual police clearance
- ❖ Issue five-year excise licence
- ❖ Provide discount on upfront fee on five-year tourist licence



Pramod Sawant
Chief Minister of Goa



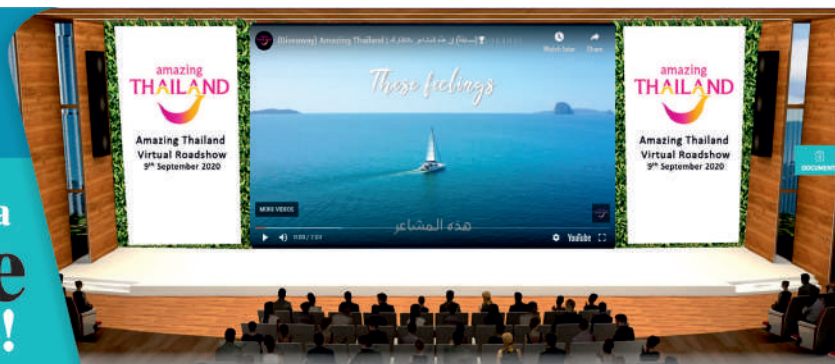
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