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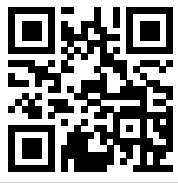
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## Kushinagar, a boon to UP

Kushinagar International Airport's launch will fuel Buddhist Circuit and create employment opportunities in the region, says Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the grand inauguration ceremony.

Nisha Verma

The much-awaited Kushinagar International Airport was finally inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi, who on the occasion said that the new airport is a tribute to the devotion of the Buddhist society around the world.



**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister of India

In his address, Modi said that India is paying special attention to develop the places associated with Lord Buddha through better connectivity and creation of facilities for the devotees. "The development of Kushinagar is one of the key priorities of the

UP government and the Central government. It is near to other Buddhist sites like Lumbini, Kapilvastu, Sarnath and Bodhi Gaya. Therefore, this region is going

to become a centre of faith and attraction, not only for Buddhists of India but also for citizens of other countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Singapore, Laos, Cambodia, Japan and Korea," he claimed. Welcoming the first Sri Lankan flight and the delegation of monks that landed at Kushinagar, he said, "This flight is a tribute to this holy land."

### Boost to economy

Modi claimed that Kushinagar International Airport will not only become a medium of air connectivity but will also create new employment opportunities for the youth of this region. "A

complete ecosystem of business and trading will develop here. Tourism, taxi drivers, small businessmen in hotels and restaurants will reap the maximum benefits," he added.

### Infrastructure & Tourism

Modi emphasised that modern infrastructure is very important for tourism in all its forms, whether for faith or for leisure. "Infrastructure is its precondition. Modern infrastructure complete with rail, road, airways, waterways, hotels, hospitals, internet connectivity, hygiene, sewage and renewable

Contd on page 19 ▶

## New air travel norms

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has issued fresh guidelines for international arrivals into India, which will be evaluated regularly.

TT Bureau

The necessity to keep an eye on the virus' ever-changing nature and the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern (VOCs) continues to be a priority. The earlier criteria for international arrivals in India (as on February 17, 2021 with subsequent addendums) were developed using a risk-based approach. The existing criteria for international arrivals in India have been re-assessed in light of increased vaccine coverage around the world and the changing character of the epidemic. According to the guidelines, foreign travellers, as well as airlines and points

of entry must follow methods for risk profiling of passengers.

### All travellers should:

- a. Submit self-declaration form on the online Air Suvudha portal ([www.newdelhiairport.in](http://www.newdelhiairport.in)) before the scheduled flight.
- b. Upload a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR report. This test should have been conducted within 72 hrs prior to the journey.
- c. Each passenger shall also submit a declaration with respect to authenticity of report and will be liable for criminal prosecution, if found otherwise.

Contd on page 19 ▶

## A boost to Buddhist tourism

G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture & DoNER, inaugurated the conference on Buddhist Circuit in Kushinagar, that saw ministers and officials interact with all stakeholders.

Nisha Verma

Post the inauguration of Kushinagar International Airport by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ministry of Tourism organised a two days' conference titled 'Tourism in Buddhist Circuit – A way forward', which was inaugurated by G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture & DoNER, alongside Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister for Civil Aviation. Reddy said that the infrastructure development for the Buddhist circuit covering Kushinagar, Sravasti, and Kapilvastu, is part of the Swadesh Darshan scheme. "There are many other Buddhist



**G Kishan Reddy**  
Union Minister for Civil Aviation

circuit projects being undertaken in other parts of the country such as Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, which are nearing completion," he added. Lauding the efforts of

the PM in strengthening ties with Buddhist countries, he added, "The Kushinagar International Airport is another step towards facilitating the travel of Buddhist monks and pilgrims around the world to visit this site."

While Reddy claimed that the MOT is focusing on more infrastructure related initiatives, he shared that a comprehensive National Tourism Policy is under consultation process and will be finalised soon. Calling out the tour operators present at the event, he suggested, "All stakeholders should participate in establishing the brand image of India as a holistic destination." ▶

## Call for value additions

Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister, Civil Aviation, says that Kushinagar International Airport serves as the circuit's gateway, claiming that tourism and aviation are two sides of the same coin.

Nisha Verma

When the tourism and civil aviation sectors work together, they can help the country expand economically and create jobs, according to Jyotiraditya Scindia. "In terms of statistics, the economic growth multiplier for civil aviation is 3.25, while the employment multiplier is 6.1. The same can be said for tourism, which has a 4.5 economic growth multiplier and a 7.5 employment growth multiplier. Both of these areas are critical to our economy if we are to have economic growth and job possibilities in the country," he explained. Scindia stated that more people fly than take



**Jyotiraditya Scindia**  
Union Minister, Civil Aviation

the train. They desire quick trips for which connectivity is critical.

### The Kushinagar advantage

He said that the Prime Minister's decision to open Kushinagar is

beneficial to the Buddhist Circuit in India and beyond. "The Kushinagar gateway serves as the circuit's backbone. The first flight from Sri Lanka has already taken off. SpiceJet will begin flights between Delhi and Kushinagar on November 26, and flights between Kushinagar and Mumbai and Kolkata will begin on December 18," he said, urging travel operators to lobby for the flights.

He also mentioned that the Kushinagar airstrip is 3,200 metres, making it Uttar Pradesh's longest. "Kushinagar is Uttar Pradesh's ninth airport. We intend to build 17 airports in the state over the next 3

Contd on page 16 ▶

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## Clear bottlenecks before opening

Celebrating the fact that finally e-Tourist visa is operational, and the website is open for foreigners to apply, **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO says that after going over everything in detail, there are still many problems that need to be worked on.

 Nisha Verma

**Rajiv Mehra** shares that they have written to the government saying the validity of 30 days of e-TV should be extended to at least 60 days. "It should also be a dual-entry or multiple-entry visa to begin with." Secondly, ground transportation is not included. Hence, we asked the government to include at least the Indo-Nepal border land check station in this, as the Buddhist sector would be incomplete without it," he says.



**Rajiv Mehra**  
President, IATO

are permitted to enter Canada. As a result, we should reciprocate and allow them to do so."

### Existing visas

Mehra also said, "We have urged the government for another 15-20 days, so that once the tourists arrive in India, they may look into whether visas already issued to other nationals, which are currently stopped, can be made valid." This is because we have a limit of five lakh free tourist visas, and we shouldn't offer them to people who already have them. Let's strive to attract more tourists to the country and recoup some of the lost trade in the

last 20 months. As a result, my proposal to the government is that all visas that have already been issued be reinstated in one month's time, maximum."

"Another concern is the return of airport permits, because once tourist traffic picks up, people will flock to the area." As a result, our airport permits must be restored as soon as possible. We've spoken with the government about it. They've also reduced the number of passes per



concerns resolved by November 15 at least," he said.

### Scheduled flights

Another problem hurting tour operators is that, "Right from USA or South Africa to Europe, the fares are very high, and tourists will not visit India till fares are stabilised. That will happen when we start operating flights as per the bilateral agreements. Hence, the Government should allow scheduled flights to operate as soon as possible," he suggests. On IATO's front, members will be going on a Fam trip to Ayodhya on behalf of UP Tourism along with the media from November 1-4. There they will interact with the Union Minister of Tourism on November 2 and with the Chief Minister of UP on November 3. 🇮🇳

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company, which we'll manage for the time being. I'm hoping to have some of these significant

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# TRAVTALK

## VIEWPOINT

### Chicken or the egg?

What came first? Air passengers or flights? It's a conundrum that has no absolute answer. Airlines hesitate to start a new, unexplored route but with no flights, there won't be substantial air traffic. It's a riddle that requires participation from all involved – the airlines, tourism boards and the B2B distribution channel. There have been instances where airlines and tourism boards have come together to talk to travel agents and tour operators. But such instances have been few and far between.

This is even more surprising given that the Indian government has devised its formidable UDAN-RCS Scheme – a wonderful, path-breaking idea! This programme is now five years old and its effect is already being witnessed in the smaller, more remote regions of India, especially in the North East. In this regard, both the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Civil Aviation are talking the same language. We hope the airlines and the state tourism boards will continue to take a cue from this.

### Picture perfect

Opening of Kushinagar International Airport turned out to be a celebration for everyone, right from the PM, who came to inaugurate it, to Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath, as well as a big delegation from Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of Tourism. No stone was left unturned to highlight its importance for UP and the Buddhist tourism circuit. This added with the recent takeover of Air India by TATA Group, along with new routes and airports being announced by various airlines, the overall aviation scenario in India looks promising.

However, while we are busy painting a happy picture of Indian aviation currently, especially triggered by the domestic boom, international air travel is still under clouds. With no clarity on when international flights are opening, the industry is finding it hard to start booking, despite the government announcing resumption of e-visa application. The government might have its own concerns on still working within air bubbles, but we hope a clear scenario emerges sooner.

# Quarantine remains major issue

About 50 per cent of global travellers and 57 per cent of Indian travellers anticipate flying for business later this year. The Amadeus' Global Traveler Survey examines traveller opinions and emotions concerning limits, digital health data, and sustainable travel.



TT Bureau

There is a high desire to travel, as per the survey of 9,074 customers from France, Germany, India, Spain, Russia, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Simultaneously, it illustrates the importance of increased transparency on restrictions and procedures in regaining traveller confidence. More than a third of travellers (35%) feel existing international restrictions on where and how to travel are difficult, making them less likely to plan business or leisure travel.

Travellers, on the other hand, have demonstrated a stronger inclination to embrace technology and share health data, to be able to travel again.

When asked if they would be willing to disclose personal health data, the study found that:

- 93 per cent of travelers around the world would be prepared to contribute personal data for the effective use of digital health passports or certificates, up from 91 per cent in February 2021.

- In order to attend a conference or event, nearly half (48%) of business visitors worldwide would be willing to share their health information. Meanwhile, 36 per cent of leisure travellers would be willing to give such information for a destination trip or activity.

- Mobile solutions continue to be the most popular technology when asked which technology would boost trust in travelling in the next 12 months, with the top technologies including:

- Mobile applications that provide on-trip notifications and alerts (44%) (India: 55%; Singapore: 45%)

- Self-service check-in (41%) (India: 49%; Singapore: 53%)

- Contactless mobile payments (e.g., Apple or Google Pay, Paypal, Venmo) (41%) (India: 47%; Singapore: 47%)

- Automated and flexible cancellation policies (40%) (India: 42%; Singapore: 45%)

Mobile applications and contactless technology have maintained top technologies across all three studies, with automated and flexible cancellation procedures being added in the final study.

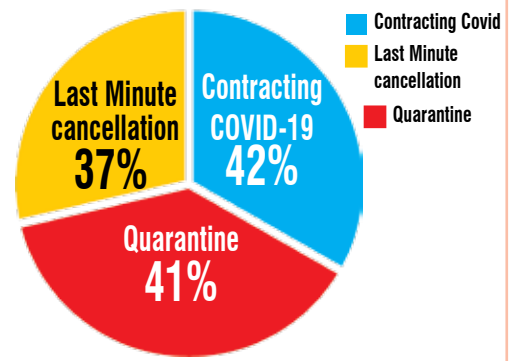
The study is the third in a series of traveller sentiment surveys, in which Amadeus monitors traveller attitude and issues on a regular basis in order to assist the industry reconstruct travel in the most efficient way possible. The 2020 Rethink Travel survey (September 2020) and the Rebuild Travel Digital Health study (February 2021) both indicated how technology may aid in increasing passenger confidence, and Amadeus reviewed this question to assess how traveller confidence has improved from September 2020. Traveler trust in technology has increased to 97 percent, up from 91 per cent in February 2021 and 84 per cent in September 2020,

indicating a growing sense of trust among travellers in technology.

When it came to the future of travel and sustainability, the study focused on the ideas that travellers believe could help

- 41% believe that greater information regarding travel businesses' sustainability initiatives would be beneficial. Although travellers are enthusiastic about travelling in the coming year, the travel industry

### Main concerns while travelling



the sector become more long-term sustainable. The findings revealed:

- Nearly half (46%) of travellers felt there should be more green modes of transportation available, such as electric planes or trains.

- A similar proportion (44%) believe that making sustainable travel more affordable would be beneficial.

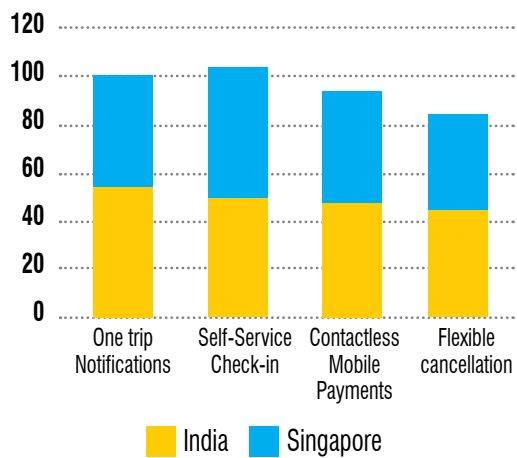
must evaluate how to respond to evolving traveller concerns as the travel environment evolves. The following are the three main worries that travelers have:

- Concerns about contracting COVID-19 while travelling (41%).

- Pre- and post-travel quarantine or self-isolation (41%)

- Last-minute cancellations (37%) due to changing restrictions. The travel sector still confronts numerous obstacles in light of COVID-19," says Decius Valmorbida, President, Travel, Amadeus, "But we are seeing encouraging steps done as limits are lifted and innovations in digital health certificates continue around the world." This study shows that passengers' desire to travel is growing, and they are looking forward to advances in areas like touchless technology, digital health, and sustainable travel. Now is the moment to pay even closer attention to travellers' demands so that we can rebuild our business in a way that is more customer-centric, resilient, and long-term. 📌

On-trip notification (India 55%, Singapore 45%)  
 Self-service check-in (India: 49%, Singapore 53)  
 Contactless mobile payments (India:47%; Singapore:47%)  
 Flexible Cancellation (India: 42%, Singapore: 45%)



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## Tourism Breaking News

■ Fully vaccinated Indians need not do RT-PCR before entering Netherlands

■ Qantas to relaunch commercial flights between Australia and India in nearly a decade, from Dec 06

■ JKTDC debuts Dal Lake's first-ever 80-seater cruise boat

■ Uttar Pradesh will have 17 new airports in the coming years: Jyotiraditya Scindia

■ 72 per cent of Indian travellers want to travel next year: Amadeus Traveler Research

■ No RT PCR required for international travellers at Karnataka airports

■ Thomas Cook India and SOTC tie up with Air Arabia to curate and distribute Air Arabia Holidays in India

■ AirAsia renames itself as AirAsia Aviation; expands portfolio of companies

# Malaysia says #WeMissYou

Tourism Malaysia is gearing up to welcome more tourists and has devised a unique campaign called #WeMissYou campaign ahead of the reopening of its international borders that is expected after 90 per cent complete inoculation nationwide.

TT Bureau

As the world slowly opens up for domestic and cross-border travel, Malaysia is also looking at gradually opening up to allow domestic movement and eventually international visitors as well. Sharing some details about what the country is focussing on at the moment, **Manoharan Periasamy**, Senior Director of Tourism Malaysia's International Promotion Division for Asia & Africa, says, "Malaysia has successfully completed the vaccination of more than 90 per cent of its adult population against COVID-19, and as a result, domestic tourism has fully reopened effective Monday, October 11 2021. In the meantime, Tourism Malaysia is gearing up in preparing to welcome more tourists and also continuing in promoting the #WeMissYou campaign ahead of



**Manoharan Periasamy**  
Senior Director  
Tourism Malaysia- International  
Promotion Division, Asia & Africa

the reopening of our international borders that is expected after we achieve 90 per cent complete inoculation nationwide."

Tourism Malaysia recently participated for the third time at the third edition of the Gulf Travel Show (GTS) from October 12 to 14 2021. As a platinum partner, Malaysia had its own virtual pavilion with 13 booths consisting of Tourism Malaysia Dubai, Tourism Malaysia

Jeddah, Langkawi Development Authority, Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), together with three DMCs/tour operator partners, one product

Tourism Malaysia is gearing up in preparing to welcome more tourists

partner, as well as five hotels and resorts from the island of Langkawi. Highlighting the benefits of participating in this show, Manoharan adds, "GTS 2021 is a platform that allows industry players to share the development



and implementation of safety for domestic and international travellers in preparation for reopening the borders, especially for the Middle East market."

Nasaruddin Bin Abdul Muttalib, Chief Executive Officer of LADA adds, "On September 16 2021, the government has announced the reopening of Langkawi as the pilot project for Malaysia's

domestic travel bubble, aimed at reviving the nation's tourism industry. Langkawi has become the first holiday destination in Malaysia to open its doors to domestic tourists who are fully vaccinated. The visitors are also subject to the standard operating procedures (SOP) compliance and are required to go through COVID-19 screening tests before entering Langkawi."

# We must rejuvenate MICE travel

The Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) elects a new leadership team and wants to revive the MICE segment. However, the association continues to struggle to get some relaxation on property tax as well as excise license fees despite making several requests to all state governments.

Hazel Jain

The Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) elected a new set of leadership for the region for the next one year. **Sudesh Poddar**, a veteran hotelier with business interest in the hospitality industry in Assam and West Bengal, was re-elected as the President of the association in the Managing Committee meeting held after Annual General Meeting of HRAEI in Kolkata on September 10, 2021.

Speaking about the team's immediate focus areas, the president says, "The foremost aim is to help the revival of the industry after the pandemic. We are trying to extend the number of hours of service for bars and restaurants, especially keeping in mind the festive season ahead. Guests are coming back to eat out. To keep the tempo, we have introduced a mass vaccina-



**Sudesh Poddar**  
President, HRAEI

tion drive of hospitality workers in the region. In Kolkata, a large number of our workers are now fully vaccinated. We have collaborated with state governments for this vaccination drive."

Poddar adds that his team is also urging the government to resume international and domestic flights to improve hotel occupancy. "We have made requests to accommodate more people in banquets and are trying to rejuvenate the MICE segment," he adds.

However, there are certain areas where they have not been able to make any headway. "In spite of several requests to all state governments we haven't been able to get any relaxation of property tax. There has been no relaxation of excise license fees too. We have sent several letters and sent delegations to respective departments without any effect. We have met several ministries and relevant government departments with our requests, but we haven't been able to resolve these issues," Poddar complains.

Meanwhile, the association is busy conducting several meetings with members through multiple online platforms since the past one year. "Sometimes, we organise hybrid meetings also, to discuss the problems of our industry," he said. In the past one year the association, under the leadership of Poddar, has strived

In spite of several requests to state governments we haven't been able to get any ease in property tax or excise license fees

hard towards bringing relief to the industry, to the maximum, during the critical hours of a devastating epidemic. He made earnest efforts to raise concern over the issues that have been affecting trade and industry in the year of crisis with multiple government agencies and individuals. These include chief ministers, tourism ministers and chief secretaries of the region.

Apart from this, he took the initiative to organise mass vaccination drive for hospitality workers, launch privilege health

pandemic. Poddar has been closely associated with HRAEI and FHRAI in different capacities. He has held office



card in association with AMRI Hospitals for members of HRAEI, along with their immediate family members, and facilitated tie-ups between hotels and hospitals to meet COVID bed shortage during second wave of the

as President, HRAEI for four consecutive years, from 2014-2015 up to 2017-2018. He is also a member (Catering Expert) on the Board of Governors of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Kolkata.



# urges for OYO IPO suspension

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has made a submission to Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to suspend Oyo IPO citing gross irregularities and fraudulent dealings. These include being engaged in anti-competitive business practices and inadequate disclosures of critical court cases.



**O**bjecting to gross mis-statements and inadequate disclosures contained in the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) issued by Oravel Stays (Oyo), FHRAI has made an official submission to SEBI to suspend its IPO process. The eight-page submission draws attention to irregularities like being engaged in anti-competitive business practices; inadequate

unfavourable verdict. They have disclosed the consequences of a possible penalty imposed by the CCI, but haven't disclosed that CCI also has the power to direct behavioural changes to be undertaken by Oravel, which may completely up-

set the anti-competitive business practices engaged by them. Without this advantage, their revenues will be seriously impacted."

The submission to SEBI further states that based on the informa-

tion filed by FHRAI with the CCI, the latter found a prima facie case for initiating investigation for violations of the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002. Accordingly, it directed the Director General to investigate the violation

vide order dated 28.10.2019. The investigation is currently at an advanced stage. The DRHP filed by Oravel fails to disclose that there has been no stay on the prima facie findings of the CCI or the investigation. Moreover, instead

of making a fair disclosure, Oravel, in its DRHP, has tried to confound investors by conflating irrelevant issues relating to the interim reliefs sought by RubTub Solutions (Treebo) and Casa2Stays (FabHotels). ↴




Gurbaxish Singh Kohli  
Vice President, FHRAI

disclosures of critical court cases; no disclosure on scenarios that may result in the holding company losing control of management of subsidiaries, or entirely making the current business strategy unviable, should the rulings go against them; and, valuations


The investigation by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a serious one


that appear impossibly stretched when corroborated with other numbers disclosed in the DRHP.

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI, says, "The investigation by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a serious one. To our understanding, there has not been a single instance where a company being investigated for anti-competitive practices by the Director General of the CCI has been permitted to initiate an IPO. It is important to note that Oravel in the Risk Factors section in the DRHP, has failed to disclose the consequences of an



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## KTM Society elects its new team

Kerala Travel Mart Society has elected its new team for the 2021-23 term through e-voting at the 21<sup>st</sup> AGM. **Baby Mathew** of Somatheeram Research Institute and Ayurveda Hospital was re-elected



**Baby Mathew**  
President, KTM Society

unopposed as President. Also, elected unopposed were **James Kodyanthara** of Concord Exotic Voyages as Vice President; **Pradeep Jose** of Hotel Yuvarani Residency as Secretary; and **Jibran Asif** of Abad Turtle Beach Resort as Treasurer. **Hari Kumar C** of Eastbound Discoveries is the Joint Secretary.

# Looking beyond a vanilla platform

With a strong proposition for its hospitality partners, Tripjack is focused on offering rich content to the travel agents with an aggressive focus on hotels over the next 12-18 months as their distribution partner. The platform is also looking to expand outside India starting with Middle East.

TT Bureau

Tripjack is a one-stop shop for quick, real-time bookings in travel and hospitality, is popular with travel agents, corporations, and major businesses. From a commercial standpoint, the network's reach of 30,000+ travel partners across the country, as well as a robust distribution over 2,200+ tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 cities, makes it an appealing platform for hospitality partners to be present on.



**Hasan Patel**  
Director, Tripjack

a technology platform that helps them increase their visibility and business, specifically designed to this unique customer segment. The platform includes the right set of tools to distribute, market and service."

### Benefits to hotels

Tripjack offers a host of benefits that include, connectivity with leading channel managers, flexible and hotel friendly payment plans, multiple options for hotels to promote their property across

its marketing channels, industry-leading support team, and flexible approach in-tune with the dynamic hospitality requirements. Tripjack also adheres to hotel's rate strategy guidelines and rate parity protocols. Patel claims, "Tripjack's tech platform goes much beyond a vanilla transactional platform and empowers hotels to achieve much more with access to group and packaging products, marketing tools and cross sell functionality."

"The response from hotels has been phenomenal," Patel says of the feedback Tripjack has received. Our industry is going through a difficult period, and we can assist hotels in regaining business by improving their distribution strategy. As a result, hotels are eager to work with a reputable, long-standing brand that gives them the control and flexibility to manage their distribution on their own terms. In addition,

collaborating with a B2B travel provider allows hotels to diversify their distribution and reduce their dependency on a single channel."

Our focus on tech and product has ensured that the user journey on our platform was best in the industry

### Future ready

Patel says that as one of the largest flight consolidators in the country, Tripjack wants to extend the same leadership position to hotels. "Our vision is to build a

comprehensive and tech-enabled travel ecosystem for our partners and take a multi-product strategy, over the next 12-18 months. We want to expand to regions outside India starting with M.E. early next year," he says.

### Post-pandemic strategy

Patel shares his game plan for the coming year and says, "Covid has had an impact on the global travel industry, including us, but on the hindsight, we used the downtime to build efficiencies in our business and focused on our product and tech in a big way." Patel says that the team is excited for the future. "One thing is for sure – to stay ahead of the curve, businesses will have to reinvent themselves, and the same applies to us. We do have some interesting projects in development. We want to provide a more fulfilling experience to our travel agent family," he adds.

# K'taka wants more local participation

The Karnataka government's five new policies are aimed at boosting heritage, wildlife, spiritual, cultural, adventure, coastal, nature, health, and agriculture tourism, as well as looking into the development of destinations, providing basic amenities, and generating revenue.

TT Bureau

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the industry, particularly in the tourism sector. In an interview, **Kumar Pushkar**, IFS, Managing Director, Jungle Lodges & Resorts, states that tourism accounts for around 15% of Karnataka's GDP.



**Kumar Pushkar**  
IFS, Managing Director  
Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd

The industry employs around 30 lakh people directly or indirectly. The state has potential, but it is critical to ensure that potential is fully utilized in order for it to contribute to economic progress. "I wouldn't say Karnataka absolutely needs revival," Pushkar says of the tourism comeback. "It was probably a break for some time due of the first and second wave of COVID."

Citing Jungle Lodges & Resorts as an example, he notes that last year, after the initial wave of lockdown, when the

industry began to open up, the Jungle lodge was running well and sales were fairly decent. In fact, in December of last year, they recorded the biggest revenue for jungle lodges in 40 years.

When asked about the increase in bookings, Pushkar says, "The lockdown may have increased people's desire to travel, relocate, and work from their new location. Working from home offers an alternative where people can relax as well as work. As a result, this

was a new dimension that added up and led to an increase in bookings."

In glory of World Tourism Day in 2020, the Karnataka government unveiled five new policies aimed at boosting heritage, wildlife, spir-

itual, cultural, adventure, coastal, nature, health, and agriculture tourism, as well as looking into the development of tourist destinations, providing basic amenities, and generating revenue. The Karnataka government is hoping for a successful execution of

its Tourism Policy 2020-2025 this year. By 2025, the new tourism policy is estimated to generate over 10 lakh employment and 5,000 crore in investments in the sector. "The tourism policy supports greater participation of the

local community in tourism activities to achieve inclusive socio-cultural growth and provide economic benefits



The new tourism policy will help people invest in Karnataka which will add to the economy and boost tourism

for the people of Karnataka," the state government says in a statement. "The new tourism policy will help people invest in Karnataka that will add to the economy and boost tourism in the state" Pushkar says.



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# What European DMCs want

PATA India recently invited leading marketing and PR organisation from Europe, called Representation Plus, to share their views and information about market readiness for tourism to India. Titled 'Destination India: A European Perspective & Opportunities' it saw speakers from four important source markets—UK & Ireland, France, Spain and Italy.

Nisha Verma

## UK & Ireland

**Alison Cryer**, Managing Director, Representation Plus, claims that before the pandemic, 2019 was inarguably one of the best years for out-bound travel from UK to India with 1.6 million Britishers travelling to India, recording an increase of 9.3% on 2018.

### Optimism galore

However, she says that things look positive. "WTM is going to be held in November, which is great news for us and the industry. Optimism in the UK has increased with easing of restrictions for overseas travel to any country that is currently on amber list like India. In fact, soon India will be in the green list of countries to travel. This means that if we travel to

India, we don't have to pay £250 over tests per person and go for quarantine for either 2-5 days on return. We only have to use the antigen test," she informs.



Alison Cryer  
Managing Director  
Representation Plus

### Trends to watch

Travel plans for the UK depend on whether the destination itself is COVID free or not. "Since COVID and climate change, the population is aiming at slow, responsible, conscious, sustain-

able, regenerative and transformative travel experiences with lowest possible environmental impact," she informs. Apart from that, she highlights, "There's an estimated 6.2 million future international trips booked, and 17.4 million individual bookings. This is increasing with Asia and Australasia region going up, which also includes India. There is a lot of family travel related to VFR. In this region, 53 % of travel bookings happen through agents or OTAs, which indicates a shift towards assistance from travel industry," adds Cryer.

### UK market to India

Informing that UK market to India is dominated by pre-nesters and families, apart from VFR, she says, "The spend is lower than average because India is great value for money and VFR affects statistics." Cryer shares that the reason for Brits to come to India include

cultural, spiritual and wellness experiences. "India is an experience of a lifetime. Apart from leisure, voluntary and MICE tourism will come back, but not until 2024," she adds.

She insists that international flights should be reinstated. "If there are screening/ quarantine requirements, it will affect travelling to India," she states.

### Expectations from India

The first thing that FTOs need, according to Cryer is clarity. "Travellers look for higher standards of safety and security. There is a need to ensure right travel insurance for travellers. Travel trade in India needs to update the travel trade in the UK, so that they can pass the information to consumers. Everyone needs flexibility in bookings and cancellation policies. The industry needs 2022-23 rates as a minimum."

Industry must innovate and come up with new experiences to meet new needs

She insisted that the industry must innovate and come up with new experiences to meet the new needs. "The modern global traveller is more conscious than before," she adds. She also advises that regular communication from the industry as well as the tourism boards is expected by UK tour operators when it comes to destination India. "Also, the tourism board needs to be proactive in joint marketing campaigns supporting the travel

industry, Fam trips and press trips as well," she said. Further, she suggests, "They should be training the industry back up on the products, since COVID has seen a great improvement on products as everyone is building back better. They need to inform the industry of these changes. They also need to find a budget while working in partnership with the industry rather than independently," Cryer adds.

### Future scenario

She points out that for India they aren't expecting bookings much before the end of 2021, and travel before the end of 2022-23. "Even if the COVID numbers in India are in control, the country needs to give this message loud and clear above everybody else's messaging, since the world is currently competing for the attention of the British travellers," she stresses.

# Flexible policies need of the hour

## FRANCE

**Sebastian Sarrasin**, Director – Europe Representation Plus, shares that before COVID, France was the country with the highest number of staycations.

### French market

"India is 6<sup>th</sup> among top long-haul destinations for French people. France was the 11<sup>th</sup> largest market for India in 2018 with over 26,1653 travellers, which represented

nearly 2.5 per cent of the total arrivals in India and 2018 was up by around 1.5 per cent than 2017. French people prefer cold months to travel to India. In 2018, in Jan-Mar & Oct-Dec their arrivals accounting for 34.2% and 27.6% respectively. Leisure was 67 per cent, while MICE was around 23 per cent, while close to 9 per cent arrivals were Indian diaspora in France," says Sarrasin.

### Travel Trends

India is currently on France's amber list. Sarrasin highlights that currently, last minute book-



Sebastian Sarrasin  
Director, Europe Representation Plus

ings are happening in France, which is usually three weeks prior to travel. Citing statistics, he shares, "39 per cent of French are ready to travel outside Eu-

rope as soon as they are double vaccinated, while 38% favour multi-destination trips and opt for nature and outdoor experiences, high safety standards and affordability. There is a preference for 3 and 4-star independent hotels followed by self-catering option and staying with friends and family." However, he insisted that the holiday budget will remain the same as pre-COVID for 45% of French travellers. "In addition, there is a great appetite for sustainability and responsible tourism," informs Sarrasin.

### Way Forward

Sharing that the French market hasn't made many bookings for 2022-23, as they are not ready and fear border closing, he informs, "Only 37% of French are expecting a return to normality in 2022. People are looking to travel abroad, and based on online booking searches about 60% people were found to be looking for a long-haul holiday next year, 29% would remain in Europe and 11% wish to spend the holiday in their own country."

### Expectations from India

The French tour operators would like to know what India and Indian travel trade can do to support them. "We need flexible cancella-

We need flexible cancellation policy & clear COVID protocols

tion policy and clear COVID protocols in place apart from the possibility to keep the tide going with the local stakeholders, whether as hotels or DMCs. People are currently looking at 2022-23 and there are even some queries for 2024. French trade would appreciate some support from India tourism. There's a need for a marketing campaign that would be driving demand and hopefully materialise into bookings during the turn of the year. We are expecting the booking

period to kick in for next year at the end of this year or January 2022," he shares.

### What French want

In terms of promotions required in the French market, he suggested that there has been huge appetite for nature and culture of India. "India Tourism should grasp these things and market accordingly to the French population. While India has a great culture and beautiful countryside, I think French people are aware of the big cities and now they are actively focusing on great outdoors and beautiful landscapes of India and escape big cities and crowd now," he adds.

Also, Sarrasin agrees that an Indian specialised destination programme will be ideal for French tour operators. "Anything that will contribute towards educating the trade is going to help massively because travellers consider them as experts and the more information they get, the better they would be able to sell the destination and ultimately they would transform leads into firm bookings," he suggests.



# Culture is biggest crowd puller

## SPAIN

While the COVID situation in Spain is getting better and the hotels are very happy with domestic travel, outbound is not as good as domestic, shares **Diego Barcelo Perez**, Founder & CEO, CCIBA and Representation Plus.

### Spanish Market

"India is now considered a risk country for the Spanish Ministry of Health and only exceptional trips are recommended, not lei-

sure trips. Travel to India is in amber list. 60 per cent online searches for 2022 are for long haul destinations. India not in top 10 long haul destinations but Spanish come to India for relaxation, sightseeing and romantic holidays. It's a great opportunity for India to promote itself in the Spanish market by highlighting unique experiences," he stresses in his presentation.

"The number of trips of residents in Spain increases by 279.9 per cent in the second quarter and stood at 34.3 million. Trips abroad, which represent 2.1 per cent of the total,



**Diego Barcelo Perez**  
Founder & CEO, CCIBA and Representation Plus

increased by 364.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2020 and decreased by 85.2 per cent compared to 2019," says Perez.

Highlighting Forward Keys data, he said, "Reservations to India in future from different markets and Europe, except to UK is increasing by 11 per cent, which is good," he says.

### India's perception

In 2018, around 52,000 Spanish travellers visited India. Perez says that the Spanish travellers are gravitating towards India for adventurous experiences and once in a lifetime trip. "They associate India as a unique and exotic destination. People want

to reunite with friends and family and one can see multi-generational groups or groups of friends travelling together. Also, because of 'Lockdown fatigue', people want slower and more thoughtful trips

For Spanish travellers to India, quarantine is top barrier, he shares. Apart from that, he highlights, "Other barriers include economic and financial constraints, Recent concern is health concerns."

The Spanish market will choose India for culture and heritage, spiritual tourism, adventure tourism, as well as culinary tourism. Apart from that yoga and wellness are top picks. Luxury, especially after COVID, is a preference too, both domestically and internationally. Also, shopping and art are great pulls other than beach destinations.

### Expectations from India

Spanish tour operators expect some basics from Indian travel trade. "We look for flexibility in booking, insurance, free cancellations, health and safety protocols, as well as easy e-Visa

process. Sharing that they don't have much information regarding Indian COVID protocols and activities for travellers, Perez says, "It's very important to share this

**Spanish market will choose India for culture & heritage, spiritual, and adventure tourism**

information. There is a need to position India as a very secure, COVID free and sustainable destination. They should offer attractive products/experiences for the new traveller's in COVID times. PR activities should be done to reduce the perception that India is an 'infected' destination. Stimulation of geographic dispersion across the country should be done, promoting less known Indian destinations." He insisted

that India tourism should make India stand out from its competitors in Asia through the promotion of its unique features. "There is a need to increase awareness about India communicating all positive news releases and features related to it, including health and sanitary news, destination awards, participation at fairs, new routes and connections, the latest touristic offers, etc. There is a need to invest in promotional activities as well as well as establish a permanent press and trade support office in Spain. Also, there is a need to implement a long-time promotion strategy in the Spanish market. Also offer more info in Spanish. India must also be professional in the international tenders to find marketing representative in Europe. They should incentivise new direct flight connectivity from Spain," he advises. Perez says that FITUR will happen in 2022. "We have already announced the dates for FITUR – January 19-23, and it will be an opportunity to reconnect with our trade partners from across the world, including India," he said.



# Transparency remains the key

## ITALY

Italy is a mature market for India, says **Fabiana Cannizzaro**, Founder, Corat Italy, Representation Plus. "Italians have been flocking to India attracted by its culture and

tive year, long holidays showed a positive trend (+12.7 per cent in 2018). Also, in the last five years, the share of trips booked using internet has been increasing (31.8 per cent in 2014 compared with 46% in 2018), and I can see this going up dramatically in the next few years," she says.

Cannizzaro shares, "Italians are driven by their own culture and heritage to go and compare that with other countries and destinations and India is a favourite for this purpose."

She further informs that Italians were free to travel within the EU with a negative PCR test and no quarantine on return. Italians were not allowed to travel for leisure outside EU. This was and still is illegal.

### Efforts of Italian trade

Cannizzaro shares that for the last 18 months, Italian tour operators and travel agents have, through their respective associations, liaised with government officials in the attempt to open Italian

borders to outgoing tourism outside the EU, which took a lot of time. "We tried to stimulate the Italian government to open borders

**India Tourism Office should be instrumental in communicating post-pandemic status**

as it's very difficult for us to carry on like this. If nothing happens, the industry would be very angry with our government," she informs.

### Consumer trends

There is a huge pressure on the part of Italians to travel long haul, shares Cannizzaro. "It will take 12 to 18 months before we will see the same levels as 2019. This might be due to the reduced buying power by the consumer, although



a large number of Italian families have accumulated money through savings, which could be used to pay for their travel. There is also increased rates in hosting countries and high cost of flights," she adds.

She claims that Italians would prefer destinations that are not touched by mass tourism. She adds that they must not expect long-haul market towards Asia in general due to the negative COVID reports out of China, since most Europeans consider China the culprit for the pandemic outbreak.

Sharing India's perception, Cannizzaro says, "India might be penalised because in the past few months we have witnessed images of many deaths and sufferings in India due to COVID. Whereas, countries such as USA, Canada, Japan and South Korea, which are perceived as clean and efficient, will see a rise in long-haul travel from Italy."

### Expectations of Italian trade

Italian tour operators will be expecting the local trade to be ready with all COVID protocols

in place. "They want to have information on vaccinations related to Indian population, PCR tests to be done before returning home, visiting safe places and locations, and to be abreast with all relevant information related to COVID. Also, Italian tour operators will be looking for providers with a flexible cancellation policy. They need appropriate insurance covers in place locally to cover COVID-related issues."

### What India shall do

She says that the Italian travel trade request their Indian partners to be honest about the COVID situation in order to communicate effectively with the consumer. "They must be collaborative in case of need in emergency situations. The India Tourism Office should be instrumental in communicating post-pandemic status and a good consumer campaign in Jan/Feb 2022 could help stimulate cultural tourism to India in later months," she claims.

heritage. In the last few years, the market has matured," she adds.

### Italian market

In 2019, around 128,500 Italians travelled to India, which represents a 1.3 per cent increase as compared to 2018. "In Italy, pre-COVID, for the third consecu-

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# Panoply of offerings at West Midlands

From interesting cities to delightful towns oozing natural beauty, coupled with stretches of opens spaces, West Midlands and its areas are perfect for those looking for interesting experiences, activities and Instagram-able locations with their loved ones and family. It's a destination that has it all.

 Nisha Verma

**W**est Midlands, one of the nine official regions of the UK, comprises counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire. The largest city in the region is Birmingham.

When in West Midlands, get ready to experience an eclectic melange of people, cultures and areas, while experiencing its rich history and industrial innovation. The region has given birth to world-famous manufacturing, culture and literature. In addition, visitors get to see award-winning museums and some of UK's best-loved attractions, along with warm and welcoming population.

There are many reasons why one should visit this diverse region. Right from watching a play in Shakespeare's birthplace; to enjoying a concert at the Birmingham Symphony Hall; or tasting both local and world cuisine at one of the Michelin-starred restaurants, one can do so many things in West Midlands. Explore castles, enjoy festivals or visit world-class museums – the West Midlands is home to a panoply of cultural interests, attracting more than 100 million visitors every year.

## Potpourri of cultures

Known for having the youngest and diverse cultures in the UK, the West Midlands has been the



home to leading figures from literature, music and performing arts, like Shakespeare and Black Sabbath. In a bid to celebrate the region's cultural success, Coventry has been declared as the UK City of Culture in 2021 and will be hosting a year of cultural celebrations.

## Diverse heritage

Located in the heart of England, the heritage of this region is abundant with castles, country houses and the canal network, that gives glimpses of its industrial past. Those who come here can hear stories and legends from kingmakers at Warwick Castle, as well as the conspirators in the gun powder plot and how the motor industry saw a revolution. In fact, West Midlands' heritage attractions recorded the biggest growth in visitor numbers in 2017, which was an 11.9 per cent increase from the year before.



## Indian visits to West Midlands

The West Midlands are the second most-visited region of the UK outside London. They received an average 9 per cent of all visits from India between 2017 and 2019, which was around 47,000 visitors.

The region's heritage was seen in abundance recently on an international stage through the infamous BBC Peaky Blinders drama series, set out in the 1920s. Those interested can walk in the footsteps of the Shelbys, at the Black Country Living Museum, which was the official home of Peaky Blinders.

## Unique attractions

The West Midlands region is brimming with world-class museums and top UK attractions. Its rich history and heritage are visible at

Warwick Castle, Dudley limestone caverns, while adventure seekers can have fun at Drayton Manor – one of England's most popular theme parks. Offering both free and paid-for attractions, there are experiences and destinations for all. In 2017, the number of visitors to family attractions and galleries had risen by 2.5% and 3.4% compared to 2016.

However, an attraction that is unique to the region is the English Waterways, which

span across the whole of the Midlands. The canals make for an experience specific to the region, whether on or off the water, offering amazing attractions to explore along the way.

## Destination for all

The region has everything for everyone. From shopping, festivals, sports and outdoor spaces, you name it and West Midlands has it. The region received around 2.2 million international visitors in 2016, with Birmingham alone welcoming 41.8 million visitors in 2017, which was a 6.9% increase from 2016 and generating £7.1 billion worth of economic benefit.

Thousands of sports enthusiasts are expected to throng

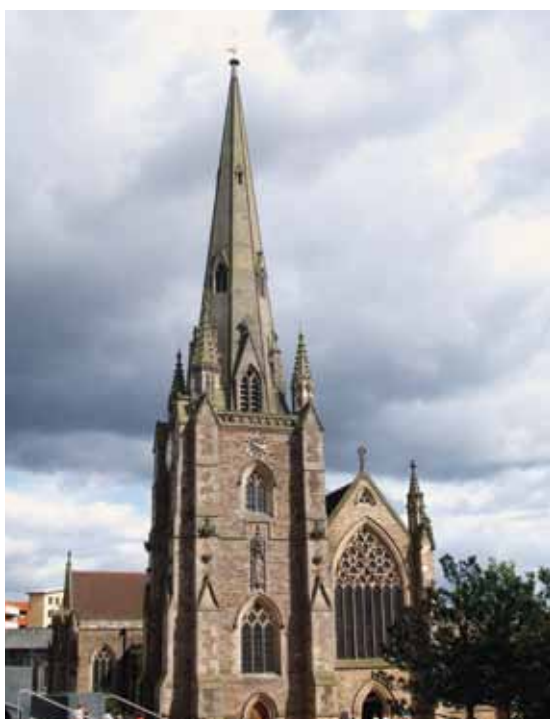
Birmingham and the region in 2022, and experience all that the region has to offer. One can indulge in various activities including spending a weekend with family experiencing one of the great festivals, running each weekend across the region and get a taste of its food, arts and culture, heritage and sport. Visitors can even opt for a luxury

 From shopping, festivals, sports and outdoor spaces, you name it and West Midlands has it

weekend getaway, dine at one of the region's 5 Michelin-starred restaurants, or just go for a shopping spree at one of the top department stores in the city.

## Best for Business

With its excellent facilities and wide range of accommodation to offer throughout the West Midlands, including the renowned National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Resorts World and Ricoh Arena, the region is popular for business visitors alike. Birmingham has been ranked as one of the most popular regional cities for meetings, conferences and events. Having 60,000 beds available, ranging from international brands to individual properties, as well as excellent connectivity and transport networks, West Midlands is one of the most accessible regions in the UK. 





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# 1,900+ buyers at SAT virtual show

South African Tourism's maiden virtual roadshow 'VirtuallyYoursSouthAfrica' concluded successfully with 99 South African suppliers as part of the delegation who exhibited their products from 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021. Of them, over 41 were exhibiting in India for the first time and they showcased their products to more than 1,900 Indian buyers.

Hazel Jain

Inspired by border openings and increased confidence in travel, South African Tourism held their maiden virtual roadshow in India to capitalize on the strong consumer and corporate traveler demand in the country. The 'VirtuallyYoursSouthAfrica' roadshow is expected to boost tourism economies in both nations.

According to the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan put together by the tourism board earlier this year, key focus areas remain re-



igniting demand, protecting and rejuvenating supply and strengthening capacity. The recently-concluded roadshow in India is the first of many efforts to reignite international travel demand, in order to meet a global target of 2.6 million visitors in FY21-22.

About 99 South African suppliers were part of the trade delegation who exhibited their products and services in India from 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021. Of the 99

suppliers, over 41 were exhibiting in India for the first time and 12 were women-owned enterprises.

With a heavy emphasis on empowering small businesses and boosting the local economy, this roadshow also saw the inclusion of 31 SMMEs – more than double the number that participated in the 2020 roadshow. Also present were representatives from accommodation establishments, destination management companies, experiences, seven South African Provinces, VFS and airlines showcased their product and services.

"India is a high potential source market for us, at South African Tourism. In fact, the market has been recognised as one of our key international focus markets. While India has traditionally been a multigenerational, family source

market, we see huge opportunity to leverage the destination amongst millennials as well. They are looking for an adventure and



Neliswa Nkani  
Hub Head – MEISEA, South African Tourism

with 3,000+ adventure activities, South Africa is known to provide one at every turn! We hope to welcome more and more Indian travellers to have safe, sustainable and memorable holidays, as well as a taste of our warm hospitality and local culture," says Neliswa Nkani,



Hub Head – MEISEA, South African Tourism. Commenting on the roadshow, she said, "I am thrilled at the response we received at our maiden virtual roadshow – I believe that the partnerships forged here will be instrumental in setting the tone as we direct efforts towards travel recovery in India."

In line with their evolved recovery plan, South African Tourism India has identified key focus areas for the forthcoming year. These

include aggressively promoting their new regions, building on the destination's position as the adventure capital of the world, providing increased value for money itineraries and catering to niche traveler segments like runners, bikers, sports enthusiasts etc. The tourism board is also hoping to welcome a large number of Indian cricket fans into the destination during India's Test tour of South Africa in December 2021. ↴

## Good to know

South Africa is currently open to all international tourists, including Indians. Travellers intending to visit the country will be required to produce a negative PCR test, not older than 72 hours from the time of departure from the country of origin to South Africa.

## Need 1-5% ATF all over

Contd from page 1

to four years. Following Kushinagar, construction on Ayodhya International Airport will start in 6 months, and Jewar International Airport in Noida will open soon. This would improve connectivity, especially in the context of UDAN. We presently have 390 routes approved under UDAN, with aim of increasing the number to 1000 in the next two years."

### Value additions must

Scindia further said that tour operators shouldn't just serve as a booking agent and rely solely on commissions. He did, however, suggest that they provide value additions for travellers in boosting their earnings. "Make packages for whatever circuit you want, and force hotels to offer packages with Value Addition Services (VAS), because today's tourists want a hassle-free experience with only one point of contact for everything, which should be through you. I believe in creating an ecosystem in which we can all work together to move forward."



Jyotiraditya Scindia  
Union Minister, Civil Aviation

### VAT in ATF

"I am approaching every CM and asking them to lower the VAT on ATF" Scindia said, explaining the strong campaign he is running with Chief Ministers of all states to reduce VAT on ATF. There are 11 state governments that tax between 1 and 5 per cent, and around 27 state governments that charge between 5% and 30%. My goal is to persuade as many governments as possible to levy a 1-5 per cent VAT on ATF in order to enhance connectivity coverage." With states like Uttarakhand, J&K, Andaman & Nicobar, and Haryana, Scindia has already achieved this objective. "In fact, three new fixed-wing

connections to Uttarakhand began less than a week after the drop in VAT from 25% to 1% was announced, and 18 new helicopter connections were given. Because of the high level of connectivity, this has eco-

Around 27 state governments charge between 5 per cent & 30 per cent

nomic multiplier effects as well as employment benefits. Also, refuelling planes from these places of connection with minimal ATF becomes much cheaper. Maharashtra, for example, has a dual VAT system, with almost 5% across the state and around 26% in Mumbai and Pune. I would augur for one level of ATF between 1-5% across the states," he asserts. ↴

## Training for key markets

Timing the launch of its new Aussie Specialist Program (ASP) well, Tourism Australia witnessed as many as 3,884 new registrations from India since March 2020.

Hazel Jain

### What are some of the new elements in the new version of the Specialist Program?

The Aussie Specialist Program (ASP) has been a resounding success since its inception, because we were able to connect and network with a wealth of travel agents worldwide, through the ease and convenience of a dedicated online destination training platform. During the pandemic, we re-introduced a newer and more up-to-date version of our online course with greater personalisation, faster qualifying times and interactive training modules.

### How many new registrations did you see for the TA Specialist Program from India since the pandemic hit us?

The ASP has received an overwhelming response during the pandemic and we have received 3,884 new registrations since March 2020. We currently offer and have adapted the program to be accessible to agents in



Nishant Kashikar  
Country Manager India & Gulf

all our key markets and in the dominant or more commonly spoken languages such as English, Mandarin, French, Korean, German Cantonese, Italian, Japanese and Bahasa.

### Any highlights from The Summit that you think will appeal to the Indian travel trade? Why do you think they should join in?

The inaugural Australia Global Summit will go live on 16th November and will be a day packed with immersive education and training sessions, viewing of on-demand content and will be accompanied by keynote ad-

resses by some of the industry's finest thought-leaders. A panel of inbound tour operators and DMCs will share what's new across Australia and how to exceed client expectations.

The summit will also highlight our year-round calendar of cultural events and present Tourism Australia's new tools and initiatives such as the Trade Resources Hub, Australia 365 On-Demand and the National Experience Content Initiative project, all designed to help the agents sell more of Australia.

### What are the other products that support agents along with this Specialist Program?

We have introduced a new offering alongside the re-launch of the ASP, Australia 365 On-Demand, a global and virtual trade hub that allows registered buyers to connect with over 20,000 suppliers. This platform also provides Aussie Specialists with the means to train, connect and stay updated throughout. ↴

Mountain regions make up 18 of India's top 100 destinations. In 2021, Ooty triumphed over Lonavala as the best hills hideaway, with Munnar a close second. Goa as number one beach destination, with Puducherry, second. Kanyakumari was 50..



# Odisha works towards inclusivity

Praising it for taking up fundamental and far-reaching initiatives to create inclusive tourism, **Suman Billa**, Director (Technical Cooperation & Silk Road Development), UNWTO, says that one of the most important cornerstones is that Odisha is creating authentic and traditional experiences for tourists.

TT Bureau

Many states in India today are beginning to recognise and actively working towards the inclusive growth – this year's theme on World Tourism Day – and this includes Odisha also. The Odisha Government had identified this as one of the most significant areas to work towards even before the pandemic had started. Some of the key areas that Odisha Tourism has been focusing on are heritage and tribal tourism development.

Commending the state's initiatives towards this, **Suman Billa**, Director (Technical Cooperation & Silk Road Development), UNWTO, says, "There is no sector as efficient as the tourism sector in taking up the inclusive growth to its peak. Tourism matters because of its sheer size. One out of every 10 jobs are created by



**Suman Billa**  
Director (Technical Cooperation & Silk Road Development), UNWTO

the sector in the country. One of the other important aspects of tourism is its ability to create jobs for a diverse workforce be it airlines, hotels, tour operators, travel agencies, etc. Odisha has taken up fundamental and far-reaching initiatives to create inclusive tourism. One of the most important cornerstones is that, Odisha has taken up initiatives in creating authentic and traditional experiences for tourists and this is supported

by their push to create homestays which is an excellent move. This not only gives the opportunity to showcase the true experience of Odisha to the tourists but also creates economic avenues for the community."

He adds, "Odisha is also supporting its traditional industry like handicrafts and handlooms through tourism. It is excellent that Odisha is creating traditional wooden boats that will be manned by the local boatmen thus creating livelihoods for them."

This vision is led by the state's Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who says that Odisha Tourism is taking strides towards integrated development of the state's tourism sector that is self-sustainable and supports wider economic recovery. Sustainable and responsible tourism is intrinsic to Odisha and its key offerings are community

oriented. Odisha's award-winning ecotourism initiative of community managed nature camps exemplifies this model in letter and spir-

Traditional Odia wooden boats will be manned by the local boatmen thus creating livelihoods for them via tourism

it. His government also introduced the Odisha Homestay Establishment Scheme 2021 to enable creation of immersive tourism experiences through operationalisation of homestays at unexplored

bio-diverse destinations with rich culture while boosting local entrepreneurship.

## Climate for investment

The Odisha government has created an investor-friendly climate in the state to rebuild its tourism industry in the next five years. Multiple surveys of investible tourism landbanks are being carried out by the state to further develop both existing and unexplored tourism destinations. Even the private sector investments are being facilitated through attractive incentivisation schemes so they can be retained. The state is working on infrastructure development through integrated master planning of identified priority destinations in the state with scope for community participation and incorporation of sustainable value adding enterprises like handicrafts and promotion of authentic Odia cuisine. Odisha has reworked the

strategy and vision for tourism in the post Covid environment while ensuring that safety is a priority. Its government is committed to take care of ecotourism in a community driven model which is also sustainable.

The state is also ramping up the award-winning community-led eco-tourism models. In the last four to five years, Odisha has developed a lot of eco-tourism sites both by the Tourism as well as the Forest Department. Despite the pandemic, the Eco-retreat at Konark had 50 per cent occupancy and other sites had 40 per cent occupancy. The Eco-Retreat will be expanded to about seven unique eco-tourism destinations this year and the model on which the project is based incorporates best practices in material utilisation, zero liquid and sewerage discharge and holistic waste management.

## Recognising true potential of Odisha

Odisha government is working tirelessly to attain inclusive growth. Despite the pandemic, the government has recognised the state's potential and has been working hard to promote tourism as a major industry that will aid in economic growth and employment generation.

Janice Alyosius

Despite the pandemic, the sector's stakeholders have shown significant resilience and capacity to deal with its negative impacts. Odisha's state government is working to ensure that business opens up in accordance with stringent norms and protocols, allowing the tourism sector to recover quickly.

Ensuring that the industry returns to normal will require a collaborative effort from all parties concerned. "Everything rests on us," **Surendra Kumar**, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Odisha, says. "If the procedures are followed, if people ensure that they are wearing masks, and keep social distance, then we can quickly break out of the pandemic cycle." The Odisha government is currently focussing

on promoting inclusive growth. "The state has a lot of potential. It is a fascinating state in terms of natural beauty and cultural heritage," says Kumar.

Odisha's government is working to improve tourism through a variety of programmes. The first step is to phase out the community-led eco-tourism model. Odisha has developed a number of eco-tourism locations in recent years

because it is a product that has been well received by the public, with occupancy rates exceeding 65 per cent despite the pandemic. According to Kumar, "It is a product that will attract many tourists."

Second, upgrading homestays, which enable guests to enjoy rural life and explore the countryside. The third concern is the tourists' safety. It is more crucial than anything else because if something goes wrong, it has a significant negative impact on the sector, making recovery difficult.

The eco retreat is the next major endeavor, which was developed to provide a sustainable environment for tourists as well as to foster social responsibility by assisting the local habitat and the local people. With the best in lodging, food and drink, adventure activities, and engaging cultural experiences and excursions, guests will receive

the greatest services while also benefiting the area's local farmers. These eco-friendly hotels will greatly benefit them by using their locally grown foods. "Our goal is to discover new regions. There are many sites that have yet

The earlier we recover from the pandemic the better will be for the sector

to be explored, particularly along the seaside highway. We want to increase access to a huge number of beaches that have yet to be explored due to lack of accessibility. The beaches are superior than those found in urban areas today, and they may be converted into resorts.

## Indian Travel League by TAT & TravelBulz

TravelBulz and the Tourism Authority of Thailand held the Indian Travel League (ITL), a fun-filled quiz program aimed at engaging the travel agent community in India and to welcome Indian guests back to Amazing Thailand. ITL is a



weekly campaign with a total of four rounds. The campaign started on October 20 and each week a match would conclude with a wordplay format quiz. Minimum scores would be tallied to qualify for the next round and winners will be announced on November 19, on social media. Forty six participants qualified for the next round and two of them won 2 Night stay vouchers in Phuket. The competition is continuing and there are a lot of prizes for the winners.



## EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



## NOVEMBER 2021

Date	Event	Time
1-3	World Travel Market (WTM)	10:00 am
2	UNWTO & WTM Ministers Summit	9:00 am
4-5	International Conference on Hospitality and Tourism Management (ICOHT)	9:00 am
9	Spain Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm
9	IMEX America 2021	10:00 am
12	India Travel Mart - Jammu	9:00 am
16-18	Qatar Travel Mart (QTM)	9:00 am
16-18	IATA Ground Handling Conference	9:00 am
16-18	Adventure ELEVATE 2021	9:00 am
16-20	IT & CM Asia	3:00 pm
18	Switzerland Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm
19-20	India International Travel Mart - Mumbai	10:00 am
23	Austrian Tourism Webinar - Kunst Haus Museum	2:30 pm
24-26	ITB China 2021	1:30 pm
24-26	PATA Destination Marketing Forum	9:00 am
27-4 Dec	Athens International Tourism Expo (Virtual)	5:30 pm
30-2 Dec	IBTM World	8:45 pm

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

## WTM's collaborative venture

The Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) will once again sponsor the International Media Centre at WTM London2021, helping to get the message out to the world's press that travel and tourism are on the rise.



The GNTO has sponsored the International Media Centre for the past 13 years, having first signed up in 2008 and continuing to do so ever since.

"The Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) wants to do its part in assisting destinations and travel partners from around the world, capitalise on their presence at WTM London by displaying what they have to offer to the media," says **Eleni Skarveli**, Director of GNTO UK & Ireland office.

"We are honoured to be a part of WTM London's collaborative endeavour to rebuild the tourism business as we learn to adjust following the COVID outbreak." Countries must now, more than ever, collaborate with foreign media to get their message through. We'll be at WTM



London to demonstrate how Greece is looking to the future, with innovative experiences and product offerings in a Covid-free environment."

Greece will have an additional platform to promote itself to the world as a sponsor of the International Media Centre, which attracts thousands of press and influencers each year from trade and consumer publications in print, broadcast, and online, as well as bloggers and others involved in new media.

Regional tourism boards, travel trade partners, travel agencies, resorts, operators, and other players will be presented at the Greek booth at WTM London. They will use WTM

London to promote both new advancements and classic favourites that Greece is known for, such as its cultural attractions, crystal-clear waters, undiscovered island jewels, and laid-back lifestyle.

On opening in summer, Greece quickly became a popular choice among British visitors looking for guaranteed sunshine in a destination they could trust.

"We are happy to have the GNTO as the sponsor of the WTM London International Media Centre once again," WTM London Exhibition Director **Simon Press** emphasises. The worldwide media will be a major component of WTM London's objective to deliver the message this year more than ever before. "Greece has always been a popular destination for British tourists, as well as those from other key markets who know they'll be welcomed warmly."

As a result, when people had the opportunity to travel this summer, Greece was one of the most popular places."

GNTO's primary booth at WTM London will be EU1100 – EU1150, in addition to having

We are honoured to be a part of WTM London's collaborative endeavour

a platform at the International Media Centre. WTM London will be held at ExCeL in London from 1-3 Nov, 2021, and will be followed by WTM & TF Virtual on 8-9 Nov.

## TATA AIG guarantees travel in peace

Buying travel insurance is a smart way to guard against the unexpected, but making sure that some essential coverages are included in the policy should be considered before buying insurance. TATA AIG Insurance offers customised travel insurance policies suitable for various individuals.

Janice Alyosius

Investing in travel insurance is like taking precautions for the unseen certainties that could lead to a hindrance during a trip.

Travel insurance prepares us for the unexpected expenses. Since everything has begun to open up and people have started to travel, knowing about travel insurance is a must. **Parag Ved**, President and Head – Consumer Lines, Tata AIG General Insurance, in a recent in-

terview, answers some frequently asked questions by the consumers regarding insurances.

#### Right Travel Insurance

The required travel insurance policy should offer the right cover needed. TATA AIG offers multiple travel insurance plans. Additionally, they also offer customised travel insurance policies suitable for various individuals. Buying travel insurance is a smart way to guard against the unexpected, but making sure that some essential coverage are included in the policy should be considered like

hospitalisation cover, trip cancellation on account of pax being detected positive and trip interruption on account of pax being detected positive, should be covered. This helps in making travel hassle free. There are four main categories of travel insurance as suggested by Ved—leisure, business, student and multi-trips.

#### Medical coverage

Ved indicated that there are six major medical coverage that come under travel insurance:

**Medical Emergencies** – Travel insurance policy will help in dealing with the financial implications that come with meeting with an accident or falling ill while travelling. The policy will cover everything, right from a regular illness that requires hospitalisation to dental emergencies and even fatalities.

**Medical Evacuation** – At the time of emergency medical evacuation to the nearest hospital, the policy will



**Parag Ved**  
President and Head – Consumer Lines, Tata AIG General Insurance

take care. In case someone needs to be evacuated and brought back to India for medical treatment, the travel insurance policy will look after that as well.

**Accidental Death and Repatriation** – Due to unforeseen circumstances, an accident or medical emergency abroad could end up being fatal. TATA AIG's travel insurance policy will provide the nominee with the full sum insured amount if this happens. It will also take care of the cost of repatriating the insured individual's remains back

to their city of residence. Compassionate Visit – when someone is in hospital, TATA AIG provides a two-way ticket for a family member to come and take care of the patient.

**Interruption of Study** – If someone has purchased a student travel insurance policy and has to interrupt the education because a family member is ill, TATA AIG reimburses any unused tuition fee.

In case of trip cancellation or re-schedule also, travel insurance helps. Trip cancellation pays the non-refundable part of the tickets and hotels/ Insurance COI can be endorsed to new dates if need be.

#### Invest in travel insurance

Ved also mentioned that we need to buy travel insurance in case of loss of passport, baggage, or documents; health problems; flight cancellation or delay; and emergency medical evacuation. Ved further stresses that the right travel

insurance will not only secure our health and personal belongings, but also guarantee peace of mind while travelling. He added, "Travel insur-

The right travel insurance will not only secure our health & personal belongings but also guarantee peace of mind while travelling

ance helps you get a fair value as part of the claim up to the SI, minus the refunds or rebates given by the airlines or hotels (depending on the coverage) and ensures nothing spoils your perfect vacation."





# adtoi aspires for sustainability

ADTOI is encouraging people to undertake travel and arranging programmes to build confidence among travellers and usher in a new era for the tourism sector through planning, managing, and developing tourism activities sustainably. The association is focusing on promoting tourism-related activities in a sustainable manner.

Janice Alyosius

When asked about his goal to promote sustainable tourism, **PP Khanna**, President of the ADTOI, replies, "Sustainable tourism is a concept that encompasses the entire tourism experience, including economic, social, and environmental issues, as well as improving tourist experiences and addressing the needs of local communities. The association is focusing on promoting tourism-related activities for both pleasure and business purposes in order to help travellers plan, create, and manage their visits in a sustainable manner."



PP Khanna  
President, ADTOI

Individuals began to relocate because they couldn't stop travelling for numerous personal and societal reasons. We've been encouraging people to travel and putting up programmes to boost confidence and bring in a new era for the tourism industry. We've also taken steps to expand our membership base by providing all stakeholders in the country a subsidized, attractive membership fee. The offer is open till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. In the past one and a half years, we have

seen a jump in the number of new memberships."

Khanna spoke on his commitment to enhance tourism services and guarantees, the safety of visitors. "Providing safety and security to all, including tourists, is a State subject. Tourist police have been deployed in some states to ensure this. In addition, as service providers, our members provide tourists with useful tips and advice, while visiting tourist destinations. The members spread up-to-date tourist information, give personalized services to consumers, and aid travellers in the event of difficulties when visiting sites, among other things. Because the services are diverse, all service providers must maintain a high level of service," he says.

He adds, "Tourism products are either managed by private or public or the Centre/State Governments. To attract more tourists, they all have



Gujarat Tourism, we successfully held our Annual Convention in February 2021 at Kevadia,

Sustainable tourism is a concept that encompasses the entire tourism experience

with post-FAM trips. It drew over 300 delegates from across the country." ↴

to take collective action to maintain and provide new products. We also get feedback from the visiting tourists about difficulties experienced or deficiencies noticed, and we follow it up with the concerned people or the government." In terms of the Tourism Vision 2022, he adds, "Let us wait and see how the

government presents the next budget and what kind of relief the tourism industry will receive. Although rising expenses and dwindling resources may have an impact on the tourism industry, domestic tourism will continue to grow and offer economic prosperity to all regions. With the help of

*More and more airlines are ensuring that a 100% of their staff is fully vaccinated. United has the strictest policy and has told its 67,000 employees they must be vaccinated if they want to continue working there.*

## MoCA's connectivity thrust

▶ Contd from page 1

energy ensuring a clean environment, are interconnected and it is important to work on all these simultaneously," he said. "Also, India's rapid progress of vaccination will create confidence in the foreign tourists that India is widely vaccinated, and it is safe for tourism or for work," he adds.

### 17 airports in UP

The PM announced that under the UDAN scheme, over 900 new routes have been approved in the last few years, out of which air service has already started on more than 350 routes. "More than 50 new airports or those which were not in service earlier, have been made operational. Plans are afoot to create a network of more than 200 airports, heliports and seaplanes in the country in the next three-four years," he highlights.

Stressing that air connectivity is constantly improving in Uttar Pradesh, he says, "In UP, eight airports are already functional before Kushinagar airport. Work is on Jewar International

Airport after Lucknow, Varanasi and Kushinagar. Apart from that, airport projects are going on in Ayodhya, Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Moradabad and Shravasti.

### Air India

Claiming that the recent move of the government to privatise Air India, which resulted in the national carrier going back to TATA



Narendra Modi  
Prime Minister of India

for civil use. With this decision, distance and time of air travel has reduced on many air routes," he avers.

### Strength of connectivity

Referring to the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, he informs, "It will not only improve governance, but also ensure that all modes of transport such as road, rail, air etc should support each other and increase each other's capacity. It is the result of these reforms that 1,000 new aircraft will be added to the sector."

He concludes, "India's aviation sector will become a symbol of nation's progress and the energy of UP will also be involved in it." ↴

group, the PM said, "This step will give new energy to the aviation sector of India. One such major reform is related to the opening of the defence airspace

India is paying special attention to develop places associated with Lord Buddha via better connectivity

## Keep up with Air Suvidha

▶ Contd from page 1

They should also give an undertaking on the portal or otherwise to Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India, through concerned airlines before they are allowed to undertake the journey that they would abide by the decision of the appropriate government authority to

Countries with mutual recognition of vaccinations or whose citizens are exempt from quarantine on reciprocal basis can be found on Ministry of External Affairs site and Air Suvidha Portal

This is also a dynamic list. Travellers from Category 'A' Countries

a negative RT-PCR test data. Only asymptomatic passengers will be allowed to board the flight after undergoing thermal screening. All travellers are urged to download Aarogya Setu app.

### During travel

At airports, on flights, and during transit, an in-flight announcement about COVID-19 will be issued. During the flight, the crew must ensure that COVID guidelines are observed at all times. If a passenger exhibits COVID-19 symptoms during the flight, he or she will be isolated.

### On arrival

Deboarding should be done with physical distance in mind. All passengers will be subjected to a thermal screening at airport. The online self-declaration form must be shown to the airport health officials. Passengers who display signs during screening will be immediately segregated and transported to a medical facility in compliance with health procedure. If they are found to be positive, their contacts will be identified and managed as per policy. ↴



undergo home quarantine/self-health monitoring, as warranted. Travellers from specified countries (based on epidemiological situation of COVID-19 in those countries) are identified for additional follow up. These include need for additional measures as made available on the websites of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

shall upload their fully vaccinated certificate on Air Suvidha portal.

### Before boarding

The airlines/agencies concerned will present travellers with Do's and Don'ts along with their tickets. Airlines will only allow passengers to board if they have completed the Self Declaration Form on the Air Suvidha portal and uploaded

## NIRAAMAYA WELLNESS RETREATS

### Bengaluru

**POONAM TIPNIS** has been promoted from General Manager Sales to Vice President – Sales and Central Reservations at Niraamaya Wellness Retreats. Tipnis has been with Niraamaya Retreats for over seven years now and has been instrumental in growing the brand's visibility and sales in both the international and the domestic markets. She is a hospitality graduate from IHM Mumbai with over 23 years of experience in the field.



## SIRMAUR HOTELS

### Himachal Pradesh

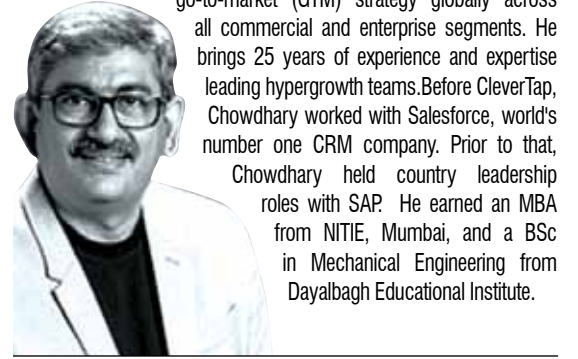
**ANAND SINGH**, has recently joined Sirmaur Hotels Pvt. Ltd. (Black Mango Resort), a 4 star business hotel in Himachal Pradesh, as General Manager. He worked previously for The Bagh Bharatpur & Kanha, Green Hotels & Resorts, Hotel Chandela, and Usha Shriram Hotels. He has more than 19 years of pre-opening and group expansion expertise in the following areas: Wild Life/National Parks, Hill Resorts, 5 Star Deluxe Hotels, and Business Hotels. At the age of 23, he became the General Manager of a four-star luxury hotel.



## CLEVERTAP

### Mumbai

CleverTap has appointed **VIKRANT CHOWDHARY** as its Chief Growth Officer (CGO). Chowdhary will lead CleverTap's integrated go-to-market (GTM) strategy globally across all commercial and enterprise segments. He brings 25 years of experience and expertise leading hypergrowth teams. Before CleverTap, Chowdhary worked with Salesforce, world's number one CRM company. Prior to that, Chowdhary held country leadership roles with SAP. He earned an MBA from NITIE, Mumbai, and a BSc in Mechanical Engineering from Dayalbagh Educational Institute.



## LORDS HOTELS AND RESORTS

### Mumbai

**VIKAS TOPA** has been appointed as The Training Manager at Lords Hotels and Resorts Corporate Office in Mumbai. He is a seasoned hospitality professional with more than two decades of experience. He will be responsible for identifying training needs and implementing programs across all Lords properties in India and overseas. His main focus will be to ensure that team members and managers have appropriate skills and knowledge to further develop the level of guest experience that the brand delivers.



## HOLIDAY INN

### Mumbai

**SUNIL SHARMA** has joined the Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport as Director of Food and Beverage. He is a Hospitality Management graduate with an Economics Honors degree who grew up in Delhi, Himachal Pradesh's capital. Sunil has almost a decade of experience in the hospitality sector, having worked for multi-national hotel chains such as Waldorf Astoria in the UAE, The Torch in Doha, Hilton Hotels in the Middle East and India, and The Leela Palace in Chennai and Mumbai. He's also a certified Sake Sommelier with a background in Indian, Japanese, Middle Eastern, and European food.



## RADISSON BLU HOTEL & SPA

### Nashik

Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Nashik appoints **MANIKANDAN MARAR** as Director of Finance. Marar has almost three decades of experience in financial planning and analysis, financial control, taxation, and budgeting, as well as a profound grasp and command of the area. He will continue to develop novel financing structures and lead the staff to success while spearheading the hotel's business strategy. He has worked for prestigious hotel chains such as Le Méridien, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, and Hilton Hotels & Resorts.



## KALPTARU LORDS INN

### Nepal

**RAVINDRA ALEY** has been named Operations Manager at the Kalptaru Lords Inn in Nepalgunj. Aley has a diverse background in the hotel and tourist industries. Aley will be in charge of Lords' overall business strategy in his new position. Being at the helm of operations, his main objective will be on continuing to provide guests with a real value experience by establishing true Lords standards at the property.



## COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT

### Raipur

**KAMAL TIRKEY** has joined as Human Resource Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Raipur. He joins the Marriott family with 9 years of professional experience, having worked for brands such as Fairfield by Marriott, Le Meridien, Sheraton, and Westin. Prior to joining, he worked as an Assistant Human Resource Manager for Fairfield by Marriott in Lucknow. Even before this, he held several positions in the Marriott Human Resource department for various businesses within the Marriott family.



Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Nashik announces the appointment of **BISWA RANJAN MOHAPATRA** as Director of Rooms. A seasoned hospitality professional with over 15 years of experience, Mohapatra brings a wealth of knowledge and skills of the housekeeping and front office functions to his current role. He joins Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Nashik after a stint with Ibis Novotel Bengaluru Techpark, where he was appointed as Rooms Division Manager, managing an inventory of 526 rooms. Mohapatra began his hospitality career in 2006 with Grand Hyatt Mumbai and worked across various departments in his tenure of over 8 years at the property.



## TALKING PEOPLE

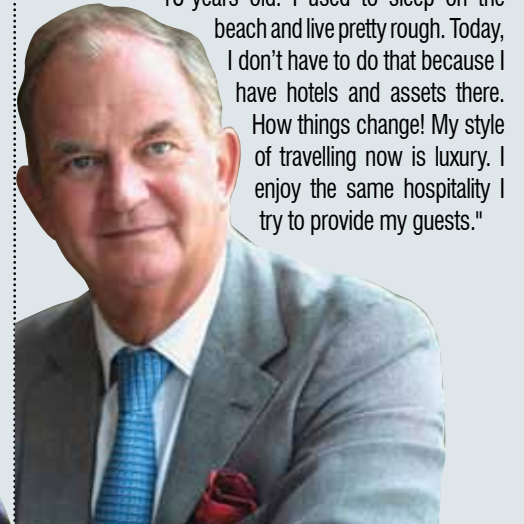
**SANDRA POLO CANUDAS**, Commercial Director (Asia & ME) Palladium Hotel Group, relaxed after work by playing sports. "I have always played sports since I was a child and the pandemic has given me the opportunity to have a regular schedule. Getting some fresh air by running and observing the sun going up and down next to the Mediterranean sea. It boosts my energy. Moreover, during the lockdown, I have learned to cook a bit better!" she says. Canudas has visited India several times and loves Jaipur.



When not at work, **SHARIN JOSEPH**, Director of Sales & Marketing at Courtyard and Fairfield by Marriott Bengaluru Outer Ring Road, enjoys adventurous cycle rides, playing badminton and jamming with his friends over the weekend. "I also enjoy running. I have also picked up a new skill during lockdown – baking cakes!" he says. Sharing his favourite holiday destination, Joseph says, "In India, it would be Coorg and Chikmagalur."



**JOHN SPENCE**, Founder & Chairman, Karma Group loves the Greek Islands. He says, "The Greek islands are very special to me; I first went there when I was 18-years old. I used to sleep on the beach and live pretty rough. Today, I don't have to do that because I have hotels and assets there. How things change! My style of travelling now is luxury. I enjoy the same hospitality I try to provide my guests."



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# Travel

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# Wind under IndiGo's wings

Ronojoy Dutta, CEO & Whole Time Director, IndiGo, shares how they are focusing on short and middle haul international flights despite a capacity increase in the domestic segment, and why privatisation of Air India is a much-needed move, beneficial to the country.



Nisha Verma

Just like all other airlines, the pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown hit IndiGo hard as well. Ronojoy Dutta, speaking at CAPA Live, agrees saying, "We dropped from 1,200 departures in February to 350 departures by May. We went up as high as 420,000 in May, per day increase to 20,000 per day increase, now. With COVID numbers being down, things are looking better again."

### Bullish on international

Indigo is focusing on international, especially the short and medium haul sector. "Internationally, after the government opened Doha, Dubai and Sharjah, things are much better. My next push is to get Saudi and Thailand to open because those are important markets for us. Hence, international is still lagging at around 35-40 per cent," he informs.

"I'm very strong on international because we have a fantastic geography and a four-corner strategy. We can fly seven hours from Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai &

Kolkata, which gives us a circle that goes to Moscow, Barcelona, Nairobi, Manila, Beijing, Shanghai. That's a very wide and high-growth circle. Most of the traffic right now is carried one stop. COVID has shown us huge

I'm very bullish on international because we have a fantastic geography and a four-corner strategy

amount of demand from places we hadn't considered on our radar earlier, like the CIS countries, Milan or Manila. We are going to go non-stop to all these places," he adds.

### Scheduled v/s bubble

Dutta agreed that there is a big debate regarding scheduled flights versus bubble

arrangements. However, he says, "I think the issue in the government's mind is once you get to schedule, you get so much connectivity at the other end, you don't know where people are coming from. With bubble between two countries, we know it's point to point and gradually, I'm sure they'll open. Starting tourist visas to people coming to India is good. I'm quite supportive of the way the government is doing things gradually, step by step. Let's take it in a measured way instead of a big bang," he pointed out.

### Competing with full-service carriers

Dutta believes that they are in a strong position to compete with full-service carriers in the future. "No one prefers a non-stop flight over a one-stop flight. Non-stop flights are more expensive since more fuel is carried and used. As a result, you'll need some differentiation to make it work, which was difficult to come by in the past, but today people are afraid to stop anywhere in the middle. As more people travel non-stop, the one-stop route through Frankfurt, Dubai, and Doha will decline, but we are also competing in the local market. As a result, it's beneficial for us to simply take a shot at all of these hubs," he stressed.

### Sustainable aviation

At a recent meeting in Boston, Dutta revealed that the focus was on emissions and carbon footprint. "The airlines are united in their commitment. By 2050, we will be carbon neutral and each airline is taking steps. There are three avenues to being carbon neutral - to reduce

emissions; go to sustainable aviation fuel; and offsets. The emission and the offset can be done immediately. Sustainable aviation fuel clearly needs a lot of technological breakthroughs from fuel manufacturers. In the last five years, emissions have gone down for IndiGo by 16% as we are getting more fuel-efficient engines.

While working with the government, we are doing more straight-line flying and have made significant progress in lowering flight times and ground emissions. We have a very strong programme with the government to construct mobile gas facilities. The problem is finding a long-term solution for aviation fuel. Whatever is available is about three to four times more expensive than fossil fuel. "We're collaborating with the Petroleum Institute of India on some test pilot projects," he said.



Ronojoy Dutta  
CEO & Whole Time Director, IndiGo

## Air India privatisation & competition

The privatisation of Air India, according to Dutta, is a positive step. "It was supposed to happen a long time ago. It's beneficial to the country. Air India is sitting on a lot of bilateral rights, and not using them. As we expand internationally, we'll face challenges. That's one problem. Second, I believe they are becoming more fiscally prudent. It is not healthy competition for us to have a huge opponent who is supported by taxpayers. I'm overjoyed and relieved that this is taking place. We are a strong contender on the international stage. Domestically, they now have three carriers—Vistara, Air Asia, and Air India—all of which will be fierce rivals. In terms of international competition, it will be a wide-body, long-haul Air India vs a narrow-body, short-haul IndiGo battle. As a result, we won't be going head-to-head to the same extent. They're huge on India to the US and UK. The Bangladesh, Kathmandu, and Thailand routes are essential. As a result, I don't believe we'll be going head-to-head right away," he continued.



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