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- DGCA digitalises with eGCA 05
- Tapping heritage potential of Ayodhya 08
- Back-end solutions with tech..... 16

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Waxpol wins big at wtm LONDON

Waxpol Hotels & Resorts has won the **TRAVTALK** -WTM World Travel Leaders Award **Akanksha Garg**, Director & CEO, Waxpol Hotels & Resorts, shares what made the big win possible.

 Nisha Verma

Waxpol Hotels & Resorts was given this honour because it set up a COVID-19 taskforce to help its teams stay safe, providing access to medical care if needed, and extending additional financial support. Furthermore, it worked with others in the industry to develop COVID-19 guidelines and training for homestays, camps, resorts, and hotels.

Looking at 2022

Speaking to TravTalk, **Akanksha Garg** shares that while international borders were closed



Akanksha Garg
Director & CEO, Waxpol Hotels & Resorts

during the lockdown, it was domestic travellers that kept the business going for them. "We are just waiting to get international travellers back. It is

exciting to know that our agents around the world are checking on our staff's itineraries, safety protocols, and vaccination status. We used the COVID period to innovate and design curated itineraries for much smaller and more focused groups," she said.

Rebuild, reconnect and innovate

Agreeing that no one was prepared for a global pandemic, she said, "We have a very small team, which is used to multi-tasking. Our biggest USP is that we were able to work from home, and apart from curating

new itineraries, we could come up with the concept of education for the children. We adopted three schools and focused on girls' education because, usually in India, girls are stopped from going to school after reaching puberty because of a lack of proper sanitation facilities. We rebuilt toilets, got chairs and tables, and made a playground too, to encourage them to go to school. We are located on the periphery of the national parks, and all locals are dependent on working in tourism. While there was no money coming in, it was the financial planning for the

Contd on page 20 ►


Travel curbs eased

The Indian government has forged a vaccine certificate agreement with 96 countries for both inbound as well as outbound travel.

 Hazel Jain

The Ministry of Health & Welfare has released a new list of 96 countries with which the government of India did an agreement for mutual recognition of the vaccinations for individuals who are fully vaccinated with either the nationally-recognised or WHO-recognised COVID-19 vaccines. The list was released on November 9 that includes the UK, USA and European countries. The ministry is in talks with more countries for the same with the aim of easing travel for education, business and tourism. The move will ease travel for those vaccinated with Indian-

manufactured Covishield and Covaxin. Consequently, persons travelling from these 96 countries are provided certain relaxations as per the health ministry's guidelines on international arrivals.

The development takes place shortly after the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued an Emergency Use List that included India-made Covaxin. As a result, it will now be recognised in the UK government's inbound travel rules from 4am on November 22, benefitting fully vaccinated people from countries, including India. The US also recognises the vaccines on the WHO EUL list for inbound travel. 

'Need cooperative federalism'

The conference of Tourism & Culture Ministers of Southern Region had **G. Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister, Tourism & Culture, address the inaugural session, highlighting MOT initiatives in the region.

 Nisha Verma

G Kishan Reddy praised the vaccine effort in his address, saying, "It only took us 281 days to administer 100 crore COVID vaccine shots." Vaccination is the single most important factor in the resurgence of tourism. "The Tourism & Culture Ministers Conference of the South Indian Region to discuss and deliberate on the tourism development strategy for the region, is in line with the Prime Minister's idea of Cooperative Federalism, where the Government of India and the state governments come together to find solutions for a better India," he added.



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister of Tourism & Culture

He asserted that the Southern states have their own distinct offerings, and that MOT has prioritised infrastructure, on-the-ground capacity, and skills development. MOT has sanc-

tioned 15 projects totalling Rs. 1,088 crores in the Southern States under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme. "MOT has sanctioned six projects in the region that amount to 15 percent of the entire scheme budget, under the PRASHAD plan (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spirituality Augmentation Drive)," he added.

In addition, Reddy stated that the Ministry of External Affairs, at the request of the MOT, has assigned 20 dedicated tourism officers to Indian missions around the world. "This will enable us to widely promote Indian tourism in

Contd on page 18 ►

Shoot films in India; get perks

Requesting all states in India to encourage and incentivise film shoots in their region, **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, said that entertainment industry can in turn boost tourism.

 Hazel Jain

The government will develop a draft Model Film Policy based on the film facilitation policies rolled out by 14 Indian states. This was announced recently at a symposium focused on film tourism in Mumbai. Two ministries – the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting – came together to discuss the issues and possible roadmap with the entertainment industry.

The symposium was jointly chaired by **Arvind Singh**, Secretary of Tourism alongside **Apurva Chandra**, Secretary,



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. Singh said, "I request all states in India to establish film promotion offices that will help co-ordinate with all necessary departments to give

permissions for film shoots on time. And of course develop film tourism policies if you don't have them."

Nine states made presentations to the film industry on possible locations and incentive schemes offered for shoots. This included Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Maharashtra. Also present at the event were **Kamala Vardhana Rao**, Director General, Ministry of Tourism; and **Rupinder Brar**, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism.

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DGCA digitalises with eGCA

eGCA, an online portal aimed at automation of the processes and functions of DGCA, has been implemented in line with the Prime Minister's vision of Digital India. The platform will provide a strong basis for IT infrastructure and service delivery frameworks.



Janice Alyosius

The DGCA has implemented its e-governance platform, eGCA, in line with the Prime Minister's vision for Digital India. The project has been implemented with TCS as the service provider and PWC as the project management consultant. The platform, which is aimed at automating DGCA operations and tasks, will serve as a solid foundation for IT infrastructure and service delivery frameworks. It will also give an end-to-end solution, which will include a variety of software applications, as well as communication with all regional offices.

In 2019, TCS was selected as the service provider and 30 million pages were digitized. Various challenges in setting up the logistics were faced by DGCA and, despite the challenges, in 2021 the DGCA project was completed and eGCA was launched. The launch of eGCA will ease the way of doing business in India and give



Jyotiraditya Scindia
Union Minister, Civil Aviation

focus to working on the e-governance model. It will make sure the regulatory processes are much more efficient and much more customer-driven as now propounded in the eGCA initiative. "India is at the cusp of a major change in the world. In times of adversity, one must look for opportunity.

One must look for challenges and problems that can be solved," **Jyotiraditya Scindia**, Union Minister, Civil Aviation said. About 298 services have been moved to the e-GCA platform, 99 in the first two phases and 198 in the next two phases. The first 99 cover almost 70 per cent of what the

DGCA does, including pilot licensing, medical examinations, flying training, and connecting regional offices to the headquarters. The balance two phase will cater to the balance 30 per cent services.

The launch was attended by Secretary of Civil Aviation **Rajiv Bansal**, Director General of Civil Aviation **Arun Kumar**, and other prominent civil aviation figures. The Union Minister of Civil Aviation also launched a case study titled "DGCA Takes Off on a Digital Flight," which details the DGCA's journey through the eGCA's deployment. This case study includes the difficulties the DGCA experienced and the strategies they took to address them using the eGCA platform.

Pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers, air traffic controllers, air operators, airport operators, flying instruction organisations, maintenance and design organisations, and other stakeholders can access eGCA online services. Appli-

cants can apply for a various services and upload their documentation. DGCA officials, will process the applications, and approvals and licences will be issued online. Pilots and




eGCA will ensure that the regulatory processes are more efficient



aviation maintenance professionals may now access their profiles and update their data on the go, thanks to the new mobile app.

The eGCA initiative is a milestone in the digital transformation journey of DGCA and would enrich the experience of its stakeholders. It is a step in the direction of 'ease of doing business'. This change would value add to the safety regulatory framework of DGCA.

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TRAVELTALK

VIEWPOINT

Vaccinated & vacation ready

The travel industry's biggest win, this month, has been the emergency approval of Covaxin by the WHO. Yes, a moment for the country and the tourism industry. The world has opened up to receiving more Indian travellers and I am confident that our colleagues have their phones ringing nonstop!

Over the last few months, most travel agents have been scrambling for information on the vaccine status and trying to plan domestic holidays. While short breaks and weekend getaways have all moved domestically, now is the test for domestic tourism. Will they be able to stand the test of time and continue to attract travellers? While domestic tourism did flourish and showcased luxury like never before, what does the sector plan to do, to stay relevant? I hope there is an answer this time and that private players don't just say, they are waiting for the ministry to lead the way. MOT and state tourism boards have done a lot in the last year to promote domestic tourism and showcase India's vast beauty, but now it's time for the private players to move ahead and compete with foreign offerings!

Will costs play a role in decision-making any longer? Has Indian travel matured enough to consider comfort and luxury? Though this topic can be discussed in length and usually ends with "Time will tell," I feel the rich Indian traveller is waiting to be unleashed! There is demand and desire, and now the 96 countries (recognising the WHO vaccine) can compete for the Indian traveller.

While travel bubbles and restricted flight capacity are currently limiting numbers, are they doing more damage to inbound travel? Where are the foreigners? We can see that Indians are eager to travel, but are we seeing the same eagerness for foreigners to holiday in India? We all know the answer to this, but are we doing enough to promote India as a safe destination? A huge opportunity is knocking on our doors, with India being the second country in the world to administer over 1 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses. I wish Incredible India just changed its tag line to 1 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses administered and counting. Show the world that India is safe, fierce, and resilient!

Indians accord travel top priority

As per the survey conducted in mid-October 2021, on 10mn plus member base by The InterMiles, to understand the pulse of consumers across various travel & lifestyle categories, 70 percent respondents are willing to spend over ₹ 10,000 per person on travel.



TT Bureau

Following the pandemic, a new order has emerged in the realm of travel and tourism. InterMiles, a prominent loyalty and rewards programme, has released the results of its third travel survey, which was based on responses from 2,276 InterMiles across India.

a change of scenery and want to connect with nature. Staying at home has reawakened the desire for adventure in 23 percent of respondents, who want to go to new local (14 percent) and international (9 percent) destinations.

Physical separation from loved ones during the pandemic has re-emphasized the importance

The traveller consideration list has evolved significantly during the pandemic – pushing health & safety to be primary factors when it comes to choosing a destination as well as accommodation properties. Major deciding factors included COVID-19 protocols (26 per cent), the number of current COVID-19 cases at the destination (13 per cent) and the ability

to be a major factor of concern while choosing a destination – only 6% respondents consider the flexibility to shift dates or cancel at no cost, to be the most important factor while choosing an accommodation option.

Vaccinate, test and mask-up!

Travellers are seeking out areas with safety and hygiene measures



dia in mid-October 2021. Nearly two-thirds of respondents plan to travel in November and December 2021, to break up the routine of WFH and reconnect with loved ones. Rampant vaccinations and a decrease in the number of Covid-19 infections have boosted consumer confidence in travel. A whopping 95 (per cent) respondents are either firming up travel plans or are contemplating travel during November and December 2021.

Only a miniscule 5 percentage of respondents are keen on staying indoors.

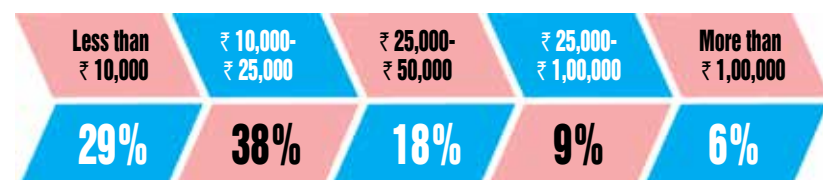
95 per cent of respondents are either finalising travel arrangements (65 percent) or considering travel (30 percent). Staying indoors is preferred by only a small (5 percent) fraction of responders.

After a year and a half of monotonous WFH routines and a lack of distinction between personal and professional life, Indian travellers are eager to leave their homes. 34 percent of respondents said they wish to travel because they need

of connections, with 31 percent of respondents planning to visit family and friends or return to their hometowns. A tiny percentage (12 per cent) will travel to

to have an isolated getaway (10 per cent). Experiences offered by the destination (22 per cent), accessibility (14 per cent) and value for money (13 per cent) follow

in place. As one-third of all travellers say, they are comfortable travelling to countries that only allow, fully vaccinated visitors. Another 27 per cent said they would have



religious events or local celebrations. Further, as millennials prefer to invest in experiences rather than assets, 70 per cent are willing to spend more than ₹10,000 (per person) on a vacation. While 15 per cent are eager to loosen their purse strings even further, spending over ₹50,000 (per person) on travel alone.

Flights are still the most popular means of transportation.

Self-driving continues to be popular, with 20 (per cent) opting for hired or personal automobiles to travel.

on the traveller priority list while scouting for destinations.

45 per cent stated that safety & hygiene standards by the accommodation property was the most important deciding factor, while choosing a stay option. Price (16 per cent), experiences offered (13 percent), accessibility to attractions (11 per cent) and accessibility to transport hubs (9 per cent) follow at a distance on the priority list. With borders consistently remaining open for a while, reduced situational volatility and confidence in travel restored, flexibility no longer seems

faith in destinations that need negative RT-PCR testing in addition to full immunizations. Further, 16 per cent prefer destinations with short quarantine periods.

In travel, there is a growing reliance on technology.

With the onset of the pandemic, 42 per cent travelers say that contactless technologies boost confidence while travelling – these include contactless payments (22 per cent) and digital IDs (19 per cent). Having an eye on travel developments via mobile apps helps boost confidence in 24 per cent travellers.

travelbullz

destination management company

taps the cricket craze

TravelBullz claims to have a strong foothold in India and Thailand, and plans to keep it that way. TravelBullz, in collaboration with Thailand's Tourism Authority (TAT), is organising the Indian Travel League (ITL) and partnering with Destino, Chennai-based representation organisation to expand their reach in Southern India.



Janice Alyosius

TravelBullz is set to become the world's foremost marketplace, linking supply and distribution whilst improving both sides technologically. They are hosting an online quiz, the Indian Travel League, in collaboration with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), to promote tourism in India and Thailand. They've also formed a partnership with Destino in order to expand

ised an Indian Travel League for Pan-India travel agents.

ITL is a weekly quiz campaign with a total of four rounds. The campaign started on October 20 to engage the travel agent com-

munity in India. The participants register and log on to TravelBullz website, attend the live event every Wednesday and answer the questions featured at the end. Each week results are announced on social media and gift vouch-

ers and the name of the qualifying participants for next round are announced every Friday. The campaign's objective is to generate interest, awareness and to educate sellers about the destinations, hotels & attraction partners.

The last round of the ITL will take place on November 17th, with Singh and **K. Vachirachai Sirisumpan**, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, as panelists. The top ten winners will each receive a four-night stay in Phuket.

Destino will manage all tourist board requirements, DMC representation, hotel chain representation, tourism attraction representation, marketing activities, promotional initiatives, and all other travel verticals in South India. ➔



KD Singh
Founder and President of TravelBullz

their reach in the country's south. TravelBullz had previously launched a dynamic packaging engine to enable agencies book hotels and transfers with a single click.

Travelbullz claims to have a strong presence in India, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, the Maldives, Dubai, and Indonesia, with a pre-COVID hotel sales

ITL is a weekly quiz campaign with a total of four rounds to engage with travel agents

turnover of 22 million dollars in Thailand, Macau, and Hong Kong. **K D Singh**, founder and president of TravelBullz, recently stated that they have also started their Thai domestic business, which is currently the largest in the company's distribution portfolio, and have further expanded their product in Dubai, which has resulted in increased agent traffic. The Tourism Authority of Thailand, India and TravelBullz Indian Travel League have organ-

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CIEO Global Summit to be held on January 25-26, 2022 in Dubai

Tourism Ministry and Ministry of I&B organise symposium to promote film tourism

First ever open-air floating theatre launches at Dal Lake in J&K

EaseMyTrip to acquire Traviata- India's first B2B travel marketplace

India mutually recognises vaccination certificates from 96 countries

India projected to reach record levels of 29 million outbound trips by 2025: GlobalData

Promoting religious tourism

The UP government held Deepotsav in Ayodhya on the banks Saryu River. The Dept of Tourism is giving subsidy to hoteliers to set up hotels and resorts in the state in order to exploit the tourism potential of more religious sites across the state.



Janice Alyosius

The Department of Tourism, Uttar Pradesh have taken initiative to showcase Ayodhya, especially Deepotsav, which is the flagship event of the UP government. On the fifth Deepotsav of Ayodhya, more than 9 lakh lamps were lit up on the banks of the Saryu River, breaking all the previous records. The Deepotsav program and the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya will boost the tourism opportunities in UP. About 60 operators from across India were invited for the event by the UP govt along with people from media, press, travel bloggers and travel writers. Special guests from embassies, The High Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago, the ambassador of Vietnam, High Commissioner of Kenya and a huge delegation from Korea, attended the event. **Prateek Hira**, President, Tornos

and State Chairman, IATO said, "We are very excited as tour operators because after a long sabbatical, Deepotsav comes as a welcome change. The UP government is quite proactive and focused on promoting tourism to make it a driver of growth and development, for the state of UP."

Hira commented, "Uttar Pradesh has done wonderfully well in terms of COVID management, we have ensured that all the guests invited for Deepotsav are double vaccinated. CM **Yogi Adityanath** is particular about the COVID management, hence all officers worked amazingly well to keep COVID at Bay"

The UP govt. is also planning huge Ramayana circuit to promote religious tourism. Buddhism is practiced in major parts of Uttar Pradesh like Kaush-



Mukesh Meshram
Principal Secretary, Tourism and Culture, Government of Uttar Pradesh



Prateek Hira
President/CEO at Tornos and State Chairman, IATO



The UP government is offering 15-20% subsidy to the hoteliers

ambi, Sankisa, Kushinagar, and Sravasti. **Mukesh Meshram**, Principal Secretary, Tourism and



The UP government is focused on promoting tourism as a driver of growth

Culture, Govt. of UP, said, "The govt. has envisioned to develop Ayodhya as an international

tourist destination. Construction of international airport is going on; roads are being developed and more than 100 guides have been trained in Sanskrit. UP has tremendous potential, we have a lot of spiritual and religious sites that are not properly marketed and the government is proactively working on it. The UP government is offering 15-20% subsidy to the hoteliers to set up hotels and resorts in UP and on purchase of land, an exemption on land duty is also being offered."

Meshram said that the vision of re-creating Ayodhya is to re-create some of the facets of Ramayana. "We want to transfer the values, ethics, the morality which the Ramcharitmanas and Valmiki Ramayan preaches. Ayodhya is more of pilgrim place than a tourist place, so it is more of religious tourism that we aim to promote."

Tapping heritage potential of Ayodhya

The development of Ayodhya is a priority for the Uttar Pradesh government. Ayodhya will soon become a popular tourist attraction for both domestic and foreign visitors. To exploit its heritage, the government along with Indian Association of Tour Operators, invited 60 tour operators exclusively to the state, for tourism development.



Janice Alyosius

The Uttar Pradesh government has highlighted the measures it has done to encourage tourism in the state, particularly in Ayodhya. The celebrations began the day before Diwali with the lighting of diyas. On the banks of the Saryu River, almost nine lakh diyas were lit, setting a Guinness World Record. The Deepotsav festival and the construction of the great Ram Temple in Ayodhya are both part of the state's tourism efforts. The UP government in collaboration with the Indian Association of Tour Operators, invited about 60 tour operators from throughout India.

The government of UP has showcased the initiatives taken to promote tourism in the state, especially in Ayodhya. "Diwali was celebrated in Ayodhya at a very high level, breaking the Guinness world record," **Manmeet Singh**,

Chairman of IATO, Punjab, remarked during the ceremony. The event was a watershed moment in the history of tourism in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Ayodhya has a long history, and connecting it to tourism is a natural fit. The efforts of the Uttar Pradesh government will bear fruit since we have a large Hindu diaspora and people of all faiths, not just Hindus, would love to visit Ayodhya given the current state of development."

Talking about the future prospect of tourism in Ayodhya, **Amit Gupta**, General Manager, Indo Asia Tours, said, "I think Ayodhya can easily be promoted as an additional destination to Lucknow, especially for non-resident Indian (NRI) clients and for domestic clients as well. For inbound tourism we might need more facilities but the way Uttar Pradesh tourism is working, is commendable. The way Uttar Pradesh government is developing the city, in days to come, Ayodhya



Manmeet Singh
Chairman of IATO, Punjab



Amit Gupta
General Manager, Indo Asia Tours



Vishwamitra Singh
Director, Leisure & Pleasure International



Ayodhya celebrated Diwali by lighting over nine lakh diyas breaking a world record

will definitely come up as a great destination especially for domestic and the international tourists.



Ayodhya has a huge heritage potential, the city is not just about the Ram temple

Ayodhya has a huge heritage potential and the city is not just about the Ram temple but there is much



We would like the Uttar Pradesh govt to have local travel operators to visit Ayodhya

more to do in Ayodhya and that is what the government of Uttar Pradesh is trying to promote".

"We are honoured to be invited by the Uttar Pradesh government and Indian Association of Tour Operators, to this Fam Tour and to witness the beautiful Deepotsav celebration in Ayodhya," **Vishwamitra Singh**, Director, Leisure & Pleasure International, said. "The government of Uttar Pradesh has pleased us with its efforts. In the future, Ayodhya will be compared to the Taj Mahal or India's prime representative. The master plan that was presented to us is fantastic. The construction of the temple may take a long time because it is a massive undertaking which will definitely require time to come up. We would like the Uttar Pradesh government to make arrangements for local travel operators to come to Ayodhya and view the birthplace of Lord Ram, as this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," he concluded.

Need for joint mobilisation

Setting a positive note at the Tourism and Culture Ministers' meeting of the Southern states, **Rupinder Brar**, ADG, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India, shared that the region has a lot of potential and there is a need for the states to work in tandem with the central ministry to bring it forward on a global scale while ensuring that regional initiatives and festivals get right publicity.



Nisha Verma

Rupinder Brar shared that COVID is behind us and the 100-crore vaccination objective has been attained. Her presentation, she said, was focused on what tourism is doing for the economy and what kind of potential it has for India. Tourism is not just about picking memories, but it also creates employment. It adds to the value of the GDP.

Engine for growth and employment

She revealed that according to the data on the number of jobs created, both direct and indirect, "From



Rupinder Brar
ADG, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India

for the organised labour force. The total contribution in 2019-20 towards employment in tourism came up to 15.34 percent, which involves 6.69 percent of direct jobs and 8.65 percent of indirect jobs. "When we talk about indirect jobs in tourism, we mean so

in 2049-50, and for a country like India, the potential is enormous. Furthermore, with the service sector accounting for 60 percent of the Indian economy, it is predicted that GDP contributions in 2029-30 will total 304.5 billion dollars."

She advised, we need to focus on growth, jobs, and tourism with a lot more intensity. She also remarked, "The importance of community participation, particularly in rural areas, cannot be overstated. Because we recognise that we are a country with a long history and culture, we must also pay attention to the cultural components."



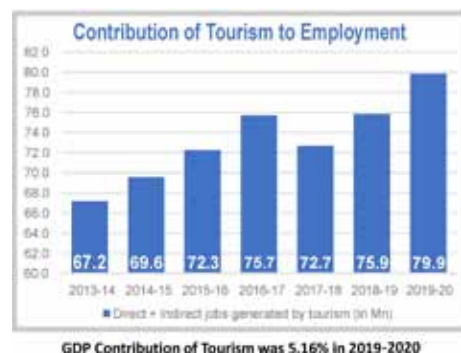
Way forward

Brar believes that the adversity of COVID has shown us the capacity that digital transformation can bring to the tourism sector. "When we have our interactions with stakeholders, we look at how can we digitally transform the experience from the travellers' perspective, manage travellers, promotions and mappings, in a far more contemporary manner. MOT has been doing a lot of work, with **Rakesh Verma**, Joint Secretary, MOT, himself steering the NIDHI and SAATHI schemes. A lot a synergy is needed between states and MOT, so that they can showcase together the digital content at a global level," she claimed.

local economy without harming the local culture while building sustainable models. "There are 14 commercial airports operating on 2892km of coastline, nearly 3,000km of interior waterways, over 2000 GW of solar energy potential, and 1400+ GW of wind energy potential in this region. All we have to do now is tap into it" she stated.

budget. She mentioned that this region has a variety of circuits, including spiritual, rural, coastal, and heritage. "There are projects in all of the southern states under the PRASHAD scheme, with nearly Rs 177 crores already spent. Many have been completed, while others are still in the works," she said.

Growth and employment generation



Employment generation of Tourism has increased over the years.

In 2019-2020, Tourism contributed to 15.34% of the total jobs created in the country.

In 2019-2020, direct job creation was 6.69% and indirect job creation was 8.65%.

The Ministry has launched several HRD initiatives to create further employment.

67.2 million people employed in tourism in 2013-14, there were almost 80 million jobs generated by tourism in 2019-20, just before COVID broke out, which recorded a healthy growth factor of 2.93 cumulative average. The GDP contribution of tourism in 2019-20 was 5.16 percent. In 2017-18, there was a blip owing to a change in methodology that was adopted in taking statistics

many supply chain components that are in some way directly involved with the promotion and development of tourism," she explained. While the COVID period was difficult for the entire world, she stated that in 2019-20, 5.16 percent was the GDP, and if we continue to grow at that fixed rate of 5 percent, the potential is enormous. "Tourism will employ 190 million people

"If Thailand could come up to a 20% GDP contribution, one can just calculate the kind of GDP that India could manage," Brar shared.

Southern Region

Brar said that there was a need to figure out how to increase international tourist arrivals in different South Indian states and ensure that these states attract tourists and contribute to the

South India has a variety of resources. "The PM had last year flagged the lighthouses as important part of our heritage. We need to work on that. The region has rich flora and fauna, 19 national parks, Lakshadweep, UNESCO world heritage sites, Ramappa Temple, Hampi, Meenakshi temple, and many other attractions. There is so much available and what we have in India, no one in the world has," she added.

MOT initiatives

The Swadesh Darshan scheme, which is the MOT's flagship scheme, has sanctioned 15 projects in the southern region across four states and union territories. We have already approved a budget of ₹ 1000 crore, or roughly 20 percent of our total

"We encourage all the states to keep the dialogue open with the MOT. We are already supporting a few festivals like the Hampi

In 2049-50, one can look at 190 million people being employed by tourism

Utsav, International Kite Festival, Bathukamma Festival, etc. Another key part is human resource development. There are state IHMs, central IHMs, food-craft institutes, where we really need to be globally competitive," advised Brar.

Festival calendar

Brar suggested that the southern region of the country is known for its brilliant festivals and that the states and the MOT can work together to develop a festival calendar and promote them well in time so that people can time their travel and holidays, not only from India, but from overseas as well. She reiterated, "The role of unorganised service providers cannot be undermined in the sector, which truly goes right into the smallest part of our country. We need to make efforts to bring them into the fold and also make sure that they do not go untrained or remain without capacity building, which will in turn empower them to employ themselves and get better returns on the labour time." 🐦

Unfurling another Fortune in Goa



Fortune Hotels, a member of ITC's hotel group announced the opening of its upscale resort in the serene backdrop of Benaulim, South Goa. Fortune Hotels' third alliance in the state; the premium resort with its pristine tropical setting and a mix of vantage venues, open spaces and a lawn, with an idyllic spot to discover the serenity of Goa and have a relaxed holiday

Etihad's soiree with senior agents



Etihad Airways hosted a meeting to explore market prospects, which saw in attendance the creme-de-la-creme of the industry. Martin Drew, Sr. Vice President, Global Sales, and Murlal Krishnan, Vice President, Revenue, from Abu Dhabi; Neeraj Bhatia, Vice President for Indian Subcontinent; and Salil Nath, Regional Sales Manager, North Central India, Bangladesh, and Seychelles.

Gearing up for cooperative federalism

Govind Mohan, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, shares how important South Indian states are and what needs to be done at the state level to ensure the right publicity for their flagship programme - Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav. He suggests the need for equal participation of states and centre towards pushing for publicity of local events.



Nisha Verma

At a recent conference of the Tourism and Culture Ministers of the Southern Region, Govind Mohan emphasised the importance of South India, stating that the southern region of India has almost 40 percent of the total number of centrally protected sites. "There are 506 such sites in Karnataka alone, out of a total of 3,600 that are centrally protected by ASI." As a result, these sites, as well as the entire region, are absolutely vital to ASI. South

Indian states and union territories are an integral aspect of the Ministry of Culture's outreach effort (MOC). "We're in constant contact with these states' concerned departments and will continue to engage with them," he said.

Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav

This year's flagship programme for MOC is Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav. Mohan highlighted the position by saying, "It is a significant Ministry endeavour, and we have concluded approximately 7000 programmes as part of it,



Govind Mohan
Secretary, Ministry of Culture

with many of them taking place in the Southern states. The goal is to raise the visibility, reach, and impact of these programmes and take them to a new level."

He urged the southern states' tourism and culture ministers and secretaries to treat these initiatives as a national project and a shared legacy. "We want you to push it very vigorously and effectively to various other departments in the state government," he added.

He also stated that MOC is fully cognisant of the southern states' rich cultural heritage and will continue to engage with them to further the cause of art and culture. "We will also be celebrating Gurudev Shri Aurobindo's 150th anniversary that will be centred in Puducherry and Auroville, however the entire country will participate as he was an idol for everyone" Mohan explained.

Seeking states' support

Despite the fact that the MOC has launched the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav Program, Mohan claims that the level of spread and reach that they had hoped for has yet to be seen. "We haven't made much of an effect on social media either. We still have a long way to go in terms of social media reach. I suggest that ministers and secretaries of tourism and culture in South Indian states collaborate with their other departments."

"At the national level, there is a national implementation committee headed by the Home Minister and overseen by the Prime Minister at regular intervals. All states must place the same priority on execution, and

a lot of reach, impact, and visibility, or you can curate smaller programmes that fit into one of the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav's themes," he indicated.

You might brand them with the Prime Minister's approved logo and the hashtag #AmritMahotsav. The aim is to spread awareness through social media and print media, so that more people are aware. As a result, I'd want to encourage our states and our friends in the states to take this event seriously and work towards putting on large-scale activities and publicising them so that the events and message reach the final link in the chain. Also, keep the central ministry aware of the efforts being made in all states so that we can publicise these programmes at a national level and make them a huge success, as our Prime Minister envisions."

There should be state level committees under senior ministers

state-level implementation committees led by senior ministers who can examine review what has been done, what needs to be done, and then carry out those programmes. You can either design huge programmes with



Organisers must commit resources

GB Srithar, Regional Director (India, Middle East, and South Asia), Singapore Tourism Board, speaks about Singapore's preparedness for the safe resumption of MICE events. He also highlights the role that technology, as well as the government, plays in this effort.



Hazel Jain

What is the significance of successfully holding the Joint Leadership Summit in Singapore?

The Joint Leadership Summit, held from October 5 to 7, convened regional government representatives, major global organisers, and trade association leaders on an action plan for the safe reopening of the business events industry in the region. They discussed the need to re-open inter-and intra-regional travel routes while ensuring the safety of travellers. Accordingly, the leaders are calling on the authorities to put into place clear policies and common operating protocols across the region.

The Summit witnessed the signing of MoU by the Association of Event Organisers, Singapore Association for Convention &

Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers, Society for Independent Show Organizers, Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, and Singapore Tourism Board (STB). The MoU showcases the commitment to revitalize the regional exhibition industry and strengthens Singapore's long-standing position as a safe and trusted Global Asia hub for business events.

What role does technology play in making safe hybrid events a reality?

Experimentation with event formats is an up-coming trend, with organisers trailing events in virtual or hybrid models. In terms of innovation, this is the most fertile period in our industry's history, and we have seized this by piloting and scaling many new solutions.

For instance, AR content for our visitors. We will be creating a repository of high-quality AR content that our industry stake-



GB Srithar
Regional Director (India, Middle East, and South Asia), STB

holders can leverage to enrich their digital platforms and will guide them on deployment of this technology.

STB has also launched TCube (Tourism Technology Transformation Cube), which provides a holistic suite of tools to guide tourism businesses in Singapore to build capabilities for the digital age. We partnered with the Agency for Science, Technology and Research to conduct simulation studies by measuring air flow,

fomite, and air transmission. This ensured our approach to running safe business events is academically sound and scientifically proven, and to give delegates peace of mind.

What kind of push is Singapore's MICE segment seeing from the government?

MICE and business travel are strategic industries, which bring about significant benefits to the country's overall economy. This approach continues to be refined, as Singapore resumes larger-scale events, such as TravelRevive in 2020 and Geo Connect Asia 2021, where stark protocols were trialled. STB has worked with the MICE industry to become more COVID resilient through the adoption of new business models and technologies. Beyond encouraging event organisers to organise hybrid events, STB has collaborated with organisers on ways to better extract value from and

monetise the data that they collect. The SACEOS became the first MICE industry association worldwide to launch a set of technical references for the ex-

(SBE) framework, considering the event risk profile and the readiness of event organisers and event venues to mitigate these risks.

We will see all of the overseas destinations open during the first quarter

hibition industry and partnered with local institutions to develop formal avenues for training and upskilling.

What is the Safe Business Events Risk Management Framework about?

In July 2020, STB developed the Safe Business Events

Under STB's SBE Framework, EOs must achieve five outcomes, that are, Infection control measures for every stage of an event attendee's journey,

How is Singapore forging ahead in MICE recovery?

STB is constantly engaging our intermediary and corporate stakeholders across our key markets, including India. We have also stepped up marketing Singapore as a MICE destination, through media partnerships, digital and social channels. In India, our recent engagement session with 30 corporate decision makers from various industry sectors provided useful takeaways that will help us chart our pathway towards MICE recovery from India to Singapore.

Pet friendly hotels on the rise

Pet-friendly hotels take extra precautions to guarantee that the needs of pets and their owners are addressed without jeopardising the comfort of other hotel guests. Pet-friendly lodging enhances the brand's value, occupancy levels, and competitive advantage, opening doors for an inclusive environment across hospitality units across India.



Ananya Kukreja

Pet-friendly hotels are the ultimate niche, with major players of the industry actively adopting inclusivity. Brands in India are emerging to provide pet getaways and accommodations designed specifically for one's woofers.

The increasing number of pets is a crucial factor driving this segment's growth. Accord-



Amit Kumar
General Manager at Courtyard
by Marriott, Pune Chakan

Challenge was in developing mindset of all team members towards pet inclusivity

ing to a survey conducted in 2021, 59 per cent of Indian families have pets, and this number is expected to rise as the epidemic continues. With current travel restrictions across geographies, the focus has turned to vacations in drivable and nearby locales, frequently as a getaway if not a long holiday, and in either case, people want their pets to accompany them.



George Bennet Kuruvilla
General Manager
The Westin Pune

Inclusion of pet-friendly rooms has allowed to collaborate with a variety of businesses

While some brands are still working on pet features, others anticipated this need and made special accommodations for pet owners, including extra amenities for both guests and their pets. IHCL, Marriott, Hyatt, Tree of Life Resorts, and Ibis hotels are among the brands that give such features and develop guidelines.

People pet predilection

Pets are not only considered a part of the family, but they are an essential part of the family for many people, according to most pet-friendly property managers. In present era, everyone owns pets, including bachelors, as opposed to just millennials and a few couples in the past. People do not want to entrust their pets' care to others, and they also want them to engage on their adventures. For one thing, they miss each other, and besides, no one wants to leave

their family behind. It is clear that people have a unique attachment for their dogs, to the point where they will strive to ensure their comfort and company. The hospitality industry, hence, must go beyond to render the same.

Pet-friendly properties

The fundamental difference between pet-friendly hotels and traditional hotels is that extra precautions are made to ensure that the needs of pets and their owners are satisfied while not jeopardising the comfort of other hotel visitors. Pet accom-



Himmat Anand
Founder
Tree of Life Resorts

The resorts are the first branded group to grab the area of pet accommodation seriously

modation inclusion also adds to the brand value, occupancy levels, and competitive advantage of many hoteliers, who understand that it takes a lot of time and care to ensure the comfort of everyone concerned. The brand/property prefers to include as much as possible for their splooting guests in order to ensure their comfort and experience, whether two or four legged.

IHCL is proud of its brand portfolio, SeleQtions, which includes pet accommodation as a part of all properties under it. SeleQtions hotels launched the 'Paw cations' package in October 2020, after recognising the growing demand for this segment of travel.

The Taj Gateway Resort Damdama Lake, is a great alternative



Elena Dede
Co-Founder and CEO
Woof Together

Allowing pets or tolerating them is not really being pet-friendly

for guests looking to relax with their four-legged friends. With a well-defined pet policy, the resort attempts to alleviate the difficulty of leaving a vital member of the family behind.

In a conversation with **Amit Kumar**, General Manager at Courtyard by Marriott, Pune Chakan, it was understood that cleaning after pets and their rooms is a challenge, where the room must be deep cleaned so as to not cause successive guests any allergic reactions, if at all and also not apprise the room as previously used by a pet; this holds true for all pet-friendly properties. Another such challenge the property faced at the inception of its pet-friendly services is developing the mindset of all team members toward pet inclusivity and training them with the added policies and protocols. These challenges have been easily eradicated by following the SOPs, regulations, and policies put in place before the programme launch.

Pet accommodations, according to **George Bennet Kuruvilla**, General Manager at The Westin Pune, result in increased revenue and a competitive ad-

vantage, if not necessarily an increase in occupancy. Their inclusion of pet-friendly rooms has allowed them to collaborate with a variety of businesses and foundations across the city to engage with local pet owners.

The idea of making Tree of Life Resorts not just pet-friendly, but pet-loving came about when **Himmat Anand**, Founder of Tree of Life Resorts, frustratingly, came across hotels labelled "Pets Not Allowed" while travelling with his pet Labrador, Jugnu. The resorts are the first branded group to grab the area of pet accommo-



dation seriously. Pets, according to Anand, are the most accommodating guests one can have; they seek nothing in return and are content with whatever is done for them.

Another recognised smart and economic hospitality brand that recently announced its new tail-wagging offering which is perfect for a pet parent's getaway is Ibis India hotels.

Elena Dede, Co-Founder and CEO of Woof Together, elaborates on pet-friendly hospitality, saying, "Allowing pets or tolerating pets is not being pet-friendly." She claims that pet-friendliness is comprised of four main pillars: pet policy, pet facilities, emergency readiness, and training employees. There are many other things that need to be addressed which cover each aspect of having a pet-friendly environment where a set of rules and regulations must always be pre-decided.

A Dog's Story founded by **Himmat Anand** provides pets that getaway, where one's dog is the focus and the time spent with them is the priority. These retreats are intimate, with only two to three rooms and a dedicated team to look after the pets. The properties have the most amazing open spaces and are pure heaven for pets staying in cities. Initially they allowed guests to stay with them only if the guests were travelling with pets. However, they have slowly opened to letting people who are pet lovers and do not have their own pet to also stay amidst the furry ones.

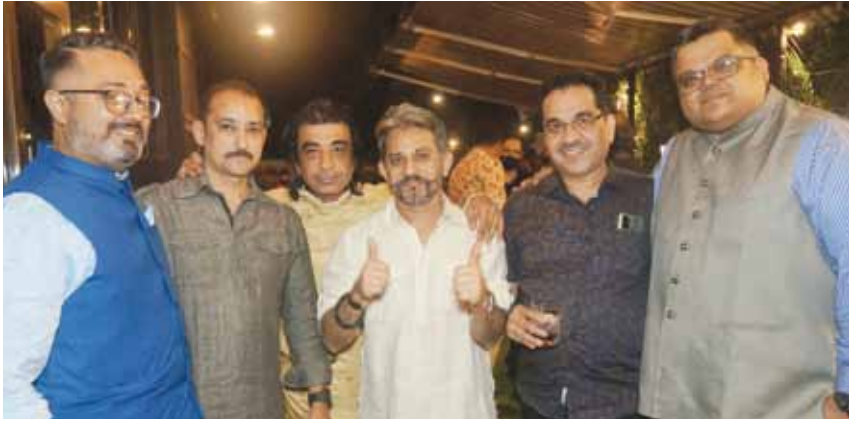
Way forward – A succeeding segment?

As goes the popular proverb, also quoted by Kuruvilla, "Necessity is the mother of invention". Rightly said, the time is now for pet-friendly excellence and there is no return from accommodating and serving pets like their human counterparts. With no huge investments required, pet getaway properties really do pose to have a prominent future and a potential "need of the hour." There is a debate on whether pet-friendly is the focused niche to follow, or must companies expand their horizons towards specially designed getaway accommodations for pets. While some see it as a growing niche that can give more money opportunities, others see it as a heartfelt pursuit that should only be pursued with true passion. Inclusivity and diversity are important criteria in today's growth, and a holiday with a difference welcomes both, via one's passion for animals. 🐾

India is projected to reach record levels of 29 million outbound trips by 2025 as per Global Data. Indian tourists will be some of the most desirable travellers, given India's growing economy, young population and rising middle class.

Travel 'mayhem' in Mumbai

'Travel Mayhem Bash', the most buzzing Diwali party in Mumbai, was organised recently by Ajay Chhabria, Rishabh Shah, Vikram Kajaria and Aakash Shah. About 200 people attended the party, which saw the who's who of Mumbai travel fraternity coming under one roof after a period of lull, let their hair down and network.



Pace of networking in full swing



Zooming in on film shoots

The Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting recently came together in Mumbai to discuss the issues and possible roadmap to promote film tourism and facilitating film shoots in India along with the entertainment industry. The government will develop a draft model film policy based on the film facilitation policies by 14 Indian states.



IATA needs to pull up its socks

Ajay Prakash, President, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), says that some airlines are not giving capping to a large number of agents, which is bizarre. International Air Transport Association (IATA), therefore, needs to pull up its socks and tell its airline members to follow the association's resolution.

Hazel Jain

The new team at the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) has been busy rousing its members, International Air Transport Association (IATA) and airlines from the lockdown inertia.



Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, shares, "All the chapters are doing their meetings regularly now in physical format, finally after a long break. We recently conducted another chapter meeting in Kerala. We have also started having physical presentations for members from different products."

TAFI, also recently had an APJC meeting where a large number of long-standing contentious issues were discussed including the use of ADMs (Agency Debit Memo) and the issue of airlines not refunding agents on time. He says, "It was a positive virtual meeting where we really could get to cover a lot of issues. The airlines were quite receptive our suggestions."

Though airlines not accepting cards from the agents is still a work in progress. "While some airlines are agreeable to this, there is a mechanism which IATA has also created called TIP – Transparency in payments where agents can register cards they would like to use on IATA portal. The airline can then approve them – or not. But a lot of agents are also not aware of this facility



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI

being available. This is another thing we are sharing with our members, that this is a mechanism that they ought to be using. When you have a greater number of agents registering cards, it also creates the ground work for us to take this forward with the airlines. It hasn't happened yet, but it's a work in progress and we hope that we will be able to get that going," Prakash says.

There is also issue of airlines not giving capping to a large number of agents. That, explains Prakash, is detrimental to the membership because it compels them to necessarily buy tickets only from those agents who have capping on that airline. He says, "It defeats the purpose of an agent applying and getting IATA accreditation. We took this up strongly with IATA. Because the resolution is very clear – that the agency administrator is deemed to have the authority to appoint an agent on behalf of its 194-odd member airlines. If that is the resolution, then it needs to be definitely followed!" Prakash says vehemently. This issue, he says, will need follow-up because there are airlines that refuse to talk to agents, and have even cut off their inventory. "This means I can't even see the airlines' inventory online, let alone

issue a ticket on it. That is bizarre! I am an accredited IATA agent and I ought to be able to issue tickets on an airline as long as they are insured," he adds.

cable on all airlines. So yes, IATA needs to pull up its socks and tell its airline members that they need to follow the IATA resolution."

Convention in India

Sharing some initial plans for the association's annual convention, Prakash reveals that this year, the team is looking at hosting it within India. He says, "We are talking to various state governments on the possibility of holding our convention within India next year. We would like to do a convention or a conclave or a congress in India which TAFI has not done. It is important that with the entire Dekho Apna Desh campaign, I think it is necessary for our members to explore newer destinations within India. We are talking to states to see where we can get some assistance. Hopefully, we should be able to plan something in India."

Resolution passed
by the Passenger
Agency Conference
is equally
applicable on
all members

The president adds, "When a resolution is passed by the Passenger-Agency Conference, it is applicable on all agents. By that same yardstick, it is equally appli-

Education course launched

FHRAI-IHM in collaboration with regional associations have launched scholarship scheme for the children of employees of the member establishments of FHRAI and its regional Associations.

TT Bureau

The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), in collaboration with its regional associations, has announced the launch of a scholarship programme for students interested in pursuing a three-year B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration at the FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM) in Greater Noida. This is the first and only private institution associated with the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT), an autonomous entity under the Ministry of Tourism of India

Children of employees of FHRAI member establishments and regional associations will receive a 50% discount on admission, enrolment, tuition, and examination costs, while children of hospitality clients or employees will receive a 20% discount. As a unique situation, the scholarship will be given to the children



Gurbax Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

of hospitality sector employees of member establishments who lost jobs during the pandemic, based on certification from the member establishment and regional associations. The admissions will be based on the merit of class 12th result.

"With the launch of the scholarship scheme, FHRAI and its regional Associations will take the lead to promote hospitality education in the country to pick up from where we left, prior to the pandemic," said **Gurbax Singh Kohli**, VP, FHRAI.

"The scholarship scheme can be availed by children of employees

working in the member establishments of FHRAI and its regional Associations who fulfil the age and eligibility criteria for admission as per NCHMCT norms. Associations will shortlist the eligible candidates from their region and recommend them for enrolment in FHRAI – IHM under the scholarship program. It is our

FHRAI-IHM
and its regional
associations will
take the lead
to promote
education

endeavour to create a qualified and committed workforce for the sector and we would like a maximum number of students to avail of this scholarship opportunity," says **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, VP, FHRAI.

Emerging travel trends

With the growing travel trend in India, Thomas Cook observes 60 per cent increase in leisure travel bookings, with Delhi being their best performing market in the country.

Janice Alyosius

A combination of shut-down fatigue, borders re-opening and vaccine approvals have sparked, India's interest to travel.

As compared to September 2019, domestic travel climbed by roughly 300 per cent, while international travel increased by 55 percent. Hence, the overall trend in domestic business is amazing across the country. Thomas Cook India has seen a 60 per cent increase in leisure travel bookings since June 2021, according to **Romil Pant**, Senior VP, Leisure Travel.

Thomas Cook has initiated TravShield programme in association with Apollo to cover the safety aspect of passengers, a prerequisite for travel.

Domestically, Pant said the most popular locations lately have been the Northern Hills in Leh-Ladakh, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Goa,



Romil Pant
Senior Vice President, Leisure Travel

which are popular all year. "Delhi continues to be one of our best-performing markets in the country, contributing considerably to, both our foreign and local holiday businesses," Pant said.

The Andamans, Goa, and Kerala are the most popular emerging choices. Kerala had a large number of cases but a low fatality rate, so people felt at ease. "The image of Kerala as a destination is much better, and people are eager to travel there," he said. A huge demand is also seen for Sri Lanka, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.

For international travel, "The Maldives was the only des-

ination open after July and is still a popular honeymoon destination along with Russia and Egypt that have recently opened up and are attracting lot of Indians. Early bookings in early July were for Egypt, Russia, and the Maldives, before France, Switzerland, Aus-

We will see
all overseas
destinations
open during first
quarter of 2022

tria, and Germany opened up at the end of July. The recovery process is slow and steady." All of the worldwide destinations will open during the first quarter of 2022," Pant predicted, "and the actual scope of travel will unfurl in all of its splendour."



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Back-end solutions with tech

Backed by substantial funding, travel technology start-up Tourwiz is not only looking at offering agencies complete back-end support with their SaaS-based products, but also aims at building an online marketplace for the trade on its platform by taking care of their back office requirements.



Hazel Jain

TourWiz provides travel professionals with all the digital tools and content they need to work more efficiently and grow their business in the post-pandemic world. **Swapnil Shaha**, CEO of Tourwiz, explains the concept behind the start-up. He says, "Tourwiz was launched for all the smaller travel agents, taking care of all their back-office needs and providing them with an office on-the-go. We offer back-end solutions, starting from creating leads, sending itineraries and quotations to clients, invoicing, and recording this for their financial analysis. This includes revenue and sales reports. With this product, we want to help them so that they can focus on marketing while we support them in operations."

TourWiz is a joint venture between TravelCarma, a global travel

technology brand, and Monarch Network Capital, a financial services company in India. It is relevant for leisure travel agencies, home-based agencies, outbound operators, DMCs, and inbound operators. It is a user-friendly, SaaS-based product, and it comes with a subscription. "In essence, agencies get a readymade product from us. We are continuously adding features to it based on their feedback. Moreover, each of the tour operators can avail of our Partner With Us programme. Here, they can start putting in their special deals and promotions for all our subscriber agents to see and promote them to their own clients. In essence, we are building a community for the travel trade on our platform where the travel agent can come and place a request and benefit from our wide network of tour operators, our partners, and other travel agents," Shaha adds.



Swapnil Shaha
CEO, Tourwiz



We are building a community for the travel trade on our platform

The product is now on trial and the subscription will start on January 1, 2022. Shaha reveals, "We have a monthly, quarterly, six-monthly,



Saurabh Mehta
Co-Founder, Tourwiz



This is a SaaS based model, customisations and upgrades are free

and yearly plan for subscriptions. The monthly fee will be Rs. 625 plus GST. We have kept it very affordable. And as soon as they get

rewards points, and if they are able to stretch those rewards points to this value, they can use the system for free!" It is now moving to launch in the northern and eastern states of India, so by the end of December, it will have covered the entire country.

Sharing the technology side of the product, **Saurabh Mehta**, Co-Founder, Tourwiz, says, "As of date, we have 5,000 subscribers on our platform. So we don't sell anything on our platform. Our partners directly connect with the agencies. These partners can be hoteliers, or tour operators. Our focus is on subscriptions and bringing them together. So it is like a marketplace. And since this is a SaaS-based model, customisations and upgrades are completely free. We will take ideas from our customers and incorporate them."

He reveals that the team is now working on multiple tem-

plates. So, if a client grows tired of one template, they can change it while the content remains the same. So during Diwali, you can have one template, and another one for Holi. Clients get pretty excited about it. The product is completely mobile friendly and can be operated off of any device. Right now, we are trying to automate the entire accounting process. This is especially helpful for smaller agencies," Mehta says. The content includes over 600 airlines, 135K hotels, 400K activities, and 10K transfers.

Shaha adds, "We are looking at reaching out to the trade through all the national travel associations such as TAAI and TAFI, ETAA UTEN - all of them. We have already started talking to them and tried to become their Allied members since booking isn't part of our business today, and we are not an IATA organization."

Technology and the SMEs

While technology has had a transforming impact on tourism, its uptake will vary across different operators. The large and financially enterprises are rapidly adopting and leveraging the benefits of technology, and the traditional micro and small businesses are yet to adapt to the change. **Nikitesh Joshi**, Delivery Director, ATCS India, shares his perspective.

The tourism industry is slowly reviving from the screeching halt imposed by the outbreak of COVID-19. The government has been trying to pull the segment by announcing several relief packages. It has announced financial support to more than 11,000 registered tourist guides/travel and tourism stakeholders across the country. This package would give financial stability to small and medium-sized travel agents and tour operators. However, they would continue to face challenges as the segment is grappling with the adoption of emerging technologies.

The application of digital technologies has been transforming our lives and the tourism sector is no exception. However, the scope and uptake of digital technologies vary across different operators. While the large and financially-strong enterprises are rapidly adopting and leveraging its ben-

efits, traditional micro and small businesses are yet to adapt to the change. The SMEs face an uneven playing field.

Challenges SMEs face

SMEs and traditional tour operators are unable to progress rapidly. Some primary challenges faced by the SMEs are demand-supply disequilibrium, lack of skilled human resources and frequent changes in policy guidelines. The tourism sector is turning digital rapidly; the customer no longer consults his nearest tour operator to plan his trip. They try to find the solution digitally! Small and medium tour and travel operators have limited or no digital presence, and hence, they can't cater to this demand and lag behind.

The small and medium operators are generally family-run businesses that operate traditionally. Another hindrance is the rapidly changing policy guidelines.

With their digital handicap, they cannot educate consumers about the developments, and hence, lose business.



The SMEs face an uneven playing field heightened by the growing gap

Tech can pave the way

Digital marketing and e-commerce can facilitate the local tour operators in spreading their reach. They can capture new markets, engage customers and build a brand for their business. While building a

dedicated website or application might be too much to ask for from a small and medium tour operator, they can explore the possibility of tie-ups with travel aggregators who can display their services on their websites.

With the penetration of the internet in the remotest location of the country, small tour operators can use social media to promote their service with no (or limited) costs involved. They can get in an agreement with travel aggregators to expand their reach. Further, they can accept digital payment instead of cash.

While these technologies facilitate market access and awareness, develop reach and help with financial transactions, they are less effective in improving productivity or variation in a competitive global marketplace. Innovative technologies (e.g. augmented reality, geo-tagging) and productivity-enhancing technologies (e.g. cloud computing,

data analytics, revenue management software) can help small businesses scale up operations and match the standard of services offered by travel corporations.

Productivity-enhancing technologies have not been a popular choice in the tourism industry. However, these technologies can help in understanding and developing market trends. Revenue management software can help small businesses in remodelling the financial structure of their organisation. The tour operators can prioritise necessary costs while ignoring unnecessary expenses that have been incurred traditionally.

Travellers always wanted to explore the unexplored and feel the adrenaline rush. Innovative technologies facilitate that experience. Tour operators can use these advancements in generating, customising and delivering new visitor products and experiences that will

continue to attract customers.

SME tour operators need to up-skill themselves and upgrade their services based on the insights gathered with the help of new technologies to emerge out of the shadow of large enterprises that are eating away their businesses. While this is easier said than done, the process must start now to make the most of the supportive government initiatives and the renewed interest of travellers.



Nikitesh Joshi
Delivery Director, ATCS India

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

ITC Hotels assure a 'healthy' stay

The safety and security of associates and guests is a top priority during this unprecedented pandemic. ITC Hotels launched the 'WeAssure' initiative, which demonstrates a dedication to health, hygiene, and a safe environment, as indicated by National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH) accreditation.



Janice Alyosius

Due to the COVID-19, travel and tourism came to a halt, and no one knows when it will fully resume. **Rishi Mattu**, General Manager, ITC Rajputana, Jaipur, responded, "ITC Rajputana has gained momentum since COVID-19." "Yes, indeed. After the initial unlock, they identified signs of recovery. The movement came to a halt as soon as the second wave began. People were hesitant to leave their homes and only travelled when absolutely necessary. The ITC Hotel's bookings have been progressively decreasing."

People wanted to get out again, but in the absence of international travel and in the climate created by the lockdown, they decided to travel by car, and any location within a fair driv-



Rishi Mattu
General Manager
ITC Rajputana, Jaipur

ing distance was chosen, and demand soared following the second wave.

Further, Mattu said, "Winter is the season for visiting Rajasthan and since the wedding season is all set to start, we are expecting demands to go up, along with leisure. However, we do not see any international travel but the MICE is also trying to get back and hence we are hopeful to see some activity in this segment

as well. The industry is all set to welcome the guests with all safety and precautions".

When asked about the hotel's present focus, he responded, the first priority is the staff and tourists' safety and security. ITC Hotel is committed to health, hygiene, and a safe environment through the 'WeAssure' programme, which is backed by the NABH.

About the new COVID-19 protocols, the hotel is taking very strict precautions. Upon reaching the hotel, a shoe sanitization station awaits. The security check is contactless, thermal screening of the guest is undertaken along with luggage sanitization. Floor markings indicate physical distancing norms. Posters from the porch to the Check-in counter inform the guests on the safety measures. The hotel has a contact life check-

in / check-out service design along with transparent separators at the reception to ensure safe distancing. Guests are encouraged

The current focus is the safety and security of the employees and the tourists

to submit all the details and IDs through online forms before they arrive at the hotel. Guests are allotted rooms that are sanitized to ensure solid levels of cleanliness.

"We'd also like to mention that we're now pet friendly," Mattu



continued, "so you can enjoy your vacations with your paw-friend at the hotel." The ITC Rajputana is located in the heart of the Pink City. During a weekend getaway, yoga

sessions by the pool can help rejuvenate and relax. A city tour of Jaipur can be booked through the hotel concierge, giving tourists a unique perspective on the city.

Know India via water tourism

Rivers in India comprise a total area of 329 million hectares. They are significant in terms of culture, history, religion, and geography. India has long been known as the "Land of the Rivers." It is a country where rivers and other bodies of water are revered as gods or goddesses.

Rivers have aided the rise and development of numerous civilizations throughout history. It also performs a variety of roles in tourism, such as recreational activities, transportation or cruises, drinking water, food source, manufacturing support, and so on. The visual beauty and diverse scenarios seen throughout the water source, leave an indelible mark on the voyager's imagination. Rivers are intricately linked to tourism in a variety of ways.

Rivers are associated with beauty, tranquility, and ecstasy. They provide a spectacular natural landscape, a diverse range of flora and animals, as well as a glimpse into the daily lives of the indigenous people who live along the river's edge, as well as a history that draws visitors from far away. Most people are said to benefit from even brief periods of time spent near water.

As a result, people prefer destinations that promote rivers and man-made attractions with water. This not only increases tourism activities but also helps the economy. Rivers are vital lifelines for many large and small, old and new cities, and they are key tourism resources in today's world. Today rivers play an important role in tourism, both directly and indirectly:

Direct role includes:

❖ Providing a location for activities like water sports, fishing, etc., and tourism attractions, including both built and natural landscapes.

❖ Cargo, barges, and river cruising as mode of transportation.

Indirect role includes

❖ Food source, like fish and other food supplies and indirectly through agriculture that the river supports.

❖ Hydroelectric power generation, etc.

River tourism must be planned with multiple objectives in mind; the concept of river tourism should not be considered in isolation from the need for water transportation development, maintenance of navigable water-

River tourism must be planned with multiple objectives in mind

ways, and utilisation of potential opportunities, reduction in pollution levels in surface water resources, and increased aware-

ness of how to use and conserve water resources among locals and tourists, are all important factors to consider.

Planning:

River tourism might be a new marketing niche for tour operators who already provide packages in a variety of product categories. The government's "Know India by Water" campaign would undoubtedly aid in image building, as India is traditionally known as a cultural destination that wishes to transition to sustainable/alternative/eco-tourism practises. Infrastructure development and tourism marketing of navigable waterways are the best approaches to maximise their use and commercialization

Initiatives:

The government can plan to construct the concept of a major river connection and a water transportation reengineering, programme.

They can form a committee to oversee the potential for river cruise tourism, and they can collaborate with private stakeholders. Various programmes to promote river tourism, such as the National Vessel Building Scheme and the River Front Development Scheme, can be launched with the MoT's combined collaboration and public-private partnership. Along with that, different sorts of river tourism packages should be sold by tour operators throughout the country, and those packages can be promoted online. State governments can also take similar steps to promote river tourism.

River tourism and the accompanying infrastructure development, like many other projects, need not be confined to government help and support; rather, a qualified private sector participant is essential, and foreign direct investment can be considered. Above

all, engagement of local governments and citizens in conjunction with state, national, and international organisations must be ensured. Appropriate local authority should be tasked with determining the potentiality of water bodies within their jurisdiction.

These authorities should also reduce abuse, pollution, and unscientific meddling in order to protect the quality and attractions.



Dr Sumit Banerjee
Academic Administrator
Global Group of Institutions Haldia, WB

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

ETAA & IATA join hands to promote TIDS

The Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) has signed a Letter of Intent with IATA to promote the TIDS Seller Identification Program to its 800+ members on a pan-India basis. It is a significant achievement in the tourism industry. A letter of recommendation from ETAA can be used in place of a letter from airlines, GDS or other major industry suppliers. TIDS stands for Travel Industry Designator Services. The agency identification programme that allows for the bookings of travel sellers and intermediaries to be recognised by industry suppliers from airlines, hotel and resort chains, cruise lines, car rental companies, theme parks, and rail companies. Carl Dantas (Chairman Emeritus), ETAA, says, "It is a good move by IATA to include ETAA members in this program to enable them be part of the selling pro-

cess by Digital Identification. I urge all ETAA members to avail of this facility which will enable them to be identified through the TIDS certification programme."

As the digital transformation of the industry ramps up, industry-wide standard identification of sales intermediaries has become critical. To facilitate this, IATA TIDS is now free of charge. As part of this digital transformation, IATA has launched a new self-managed information platform to allow you to easily maintain your agency profile and details online. ETAA had organised a webinar with **Luc Debono**, Senior Manager of Product Development, (Identity Services), IATA to assist members with the process for TIDS onboarding. The webinar received great response and members have started applying for TIDS with Letter of Recommendation from ETAA.

The science of flying

It all boils down what India's priority is? Is it to build a stronger domestic push, or, new international inbound development? The key to have holistic tourism development is to have an integrated strategy. **Gavin Eccles**, Managing Partner, GE Consulting & Advisory.



Hazel Jain

There is a direct correlation between tourism and air connectivity. Do you think India is taking advantage of this?

Prior to the pandemic, according to the UNWTO, 57 per cent of all international tourism was related with aviation. So, connecting destinations with air services is paramount. For India, domestic tourism has been the key push. So, it is clear that schemes such as UDAN (fly for all) have helped to stimulate the Indian carriers to build a strong air service that links key Indian cities with second and third tier locations - so, if you have connections, it is inevitable you can have tourism. In moving forward, what is India's priority? To build a stronger domestic push, or, to look at new international inbound development. Key is an integrated strategy between the regional airports, regional/na-



Gavin Eccles
Managing Partner
GE Consulting & Advisory

tional tourism board of India, and, the airline/tour operator partners.

LCCs are now being touted as the best model to have. Will this be true for India as well?

The pandemic has shown that the LCC model has been more adaptive to changing conditions. As we come through the pandemic, we learnt, an airline that has the chance to make quick route decisions, and, build connections on changes in consumer demand will be more effective.

What do Indian LCCs need to do now to ensure they make larger profits?

It is ancillaries that are driving the vision of the European and US low-cost carriers. Recent research from IdeaWorks 2021 on Global Airlines and Ancillaries revenues, highlights that the Indian carriers have much to learn from their global counterparts. Ancillaries refer to monies that an airline can make from areas such as luggage, insurance, seat-assignment, priority-boarding, selling holidays, etc.

The new LCC Akasa is taking form and will fly from summer of 2022. Your predictions?

Key for Akasa Air is to differentiate through ancillaries. Make ancillaries a key part of the travel proposition. That means moving beyond ancillary development with seats, boarding, etc., but to look at the total travel proposition. Two areas are growing well

at the moment; building an in-house tour operator that allows the airline to sell the leisure/travel proposition via a controlled inventory system whereby the tour operator is able to get access to airline inventory and package-up as a fully bonded operator. Could we see Akasa Air Holidays? The

The future is ancillaries and owning travel. This is how LCCs can stay ahead

future is ancillaries and owning travel. This is how LCCs can stay ahead of the flag carriers and hub models. Be different, be pro-active, and, make your own differentiation.

Infra is priority for MOT

► Contd from page 3

countries such as Australia, Canada, the USA, France, Germany, and the Gulf countries. India's civilisation heritage goes back many thousands of years, and this Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is also an opportunity to pay tribute to all those people that fought for the preservation of our heritage," he added.



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister, Tourism & Culture

Welcoming the dignitaries at the conference, **G Kamala Vardhan Rao**, DG, Tourism, shared that India has the potential of improving its ranking in terms of tourism competitiveness, where it stands at 34th rank.

He also shared that all states are competing today in terms of their tourism budgets. "Maharashtra's budget of tourism is more than ₹ 1,000 crores, for Kerala it's ₹ 400 crores, Andhra Pradesh has a budget of over ₹ 300 crores. Every state has a different budget allocation. If states work in synergy with the central government, it's the right way forward by developing products. With products developing, we are seeing some green shoots after this

pandemic. Accommodations, including wildlife sanctuaries, beach resorts or hill resorts, everything is getting filled up. Today, there are 17 flights going to Leh alone and 30 flights are landing in Srinagar. Now, with borders opening, we must take this opportunity in a big way," he shared.

Ajay Bhatt, Minister of State, Tourism, has said that tourism and culture are two sides of the same coin. He also suggested that border tourism should also be part of the Ministry's concerns. Talking about how the MOT is working for the Southern region, he said, "Under Swadesh Darshan scheme in South Indian states, MOT has listed 15 projects, which include investment of ₹ 141 crore in

Andhra Pradesh; five projects in Kerala worth ₹ 413 crore investment, around three projects in Telangana worth ₹ 266 crore investment, Tamil Nadu has ₹ 73 crore, while

20 dedicated tourism officers appointed in Indian Missions abroad

Puducherry has around ₹ 148 crore investment. In the same way, under the PRASHAD scheme, we have accepted many projects, which include one each in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Telangana, and two in Tamil Nadu. For other states too, we have given whatever was needed. "Bhatt also shared that the government is also working on a concept wherein roads and trains go under the Brahmaputra River, the same way they go under the English Channel in the UK.

Need film promotion office

► Contd from page 3

Incentives a state matter

Singh added, "The federal system of our governance makes such film incentives mostly a state subject and there are many states which actively encourage film tourism and are quite successful in this regard. The MoT recognises such efforts through the National Tourism Award given each year under the 'Most Film Tourism Friendly State' category."

He suggested that state governments should consider establishing a film promotion office, preferably in the CM's Office. "Accordingly, there is a need for the state governments to consider establishing a film promotion office at the highest level, preferable in the CM's Office, which can coordinate with the various departments to get the permissions processed on time. The office should also have the authority to intervene and sort out issues at the local level wherever required," Singh said.

Bottlenecks

Singh added, "There needs to be a concerted push." This



Apurva Chandra
Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting

should be a two-pronged approach - one at the policy level by making it procedurally easy for the producers to shoot in India and the other with a promotional effort by making them aware of the vast potential of India as a shooting destination."

The MoT has inked an MoU with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and the NFDC, for promoting cinema of India as a sub brand of Incredible India at various international film festivals like the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) Goa and the Cannes Film Festival to develop synergy between tourism and the film industry and to provide a platform for enabling partnerships between the In-

dian and global film industry. The government will come up with a model film policy and share it with states to help them adopt a policy document to facilitate more film making across India.

States play key role

Apurva Chandra spoke about the reasons behind Indian films being shot outside India.

Filmmakers feel getting permissions for shooting in India is costlier

"Despite the cost being much lower in India, film makers feel that getting permission for shooting in India is costlier, whereas it is easier to shoot abroad. And for that, we have to look at ourselves, especially state governments. The States play a very big role in this," he added.

Getting familiar with Lucknow

Indian Association of Tour Operators in association with Uttar Pradesh Government organized Fam trip to celebrate Deepotsav 2021, to boost tourism opportunities in Ayodhya. About 60 operators from across India were invited for the event by the Uttar Pradesh Government. Also present were special guests from embassies.



EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



NOVEMBER 2021

Date	Event	Time
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
26-27	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 am

DECEMBER 2021

3-5	India International Travel Mart Hyderabad	11:00 am
3-5	India Travel Mart - Lucknow	9:00 am
6-9	ILTM	10:00 am
14	Austrian Tourism Webinar - Belvedere Museum	2:30 pm

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

Centre-stage at IMWF 2021

The IMWF 2021 to be held for the fifth time in Antalya, Turkey, between November 18 and 22, 2021, with representatives from airlines, hotels, and suppliers, in international meetings, incentive trips, conferences, congresses, events, and destination weddings.



At the IMWF in Antalya, the Sector's Stars will gather. IMWF, the only and most ambitious event in its sector, will be held in Antalya from November 18-22, 2021, with Turkish Airlines as the major partner, Titanic Mardan Palace as the host, and with the cooperation of Inventum Global.

After a mandated one-year pause owing to the pandemic, IMWF'21, the most important tourist event of the year in its field, will return to Antalya. The IMWF, which has been widely anticipated by the industry's most important players from across the world, will once again leave a lasting impression as a magnificent organisation where unforgettable moments will be shared for four days and four nights. IMWF Managing Partner Necip Fuat Ersoy will host

the meeting in the industry, which is anticipated by all stakeholders; the biggest names in the industry, will come together and meet again to

Inventum Global Founding Partner **Bünyat Özpak** expressed his thoughts on the IMWF on Wedding Planners community, which has been badly affected by the



leagues and friends very much. We have taken all necessary measures and there is very little time left until we meet, our preparations are complete. We will welcome all our friends with our warm hospitality."

The fifth International MICE & Wedding Forum, will start with the opening ceremony on November 19, 2021. IMWF promises its guests from nearly 40 countries the opportunity to experience their destination, get to know it, and have many good memories. In the Forum, international chain hotels and airline companies, as well as MICE and Wedding planners of important countries such as America, India, England, Italy, Lebanon and Russia, will get to know each other better and improve mutual business.



The fourth International MICE & Wedding Forum

share an unforgettable time. On the main stage, the most innovative and assertive names in the sector will share their experiences. The IMWF will welcome all of its participants under the roof of the Titanic Mardan Palace, and will mediate the growth of relations as well as business.

most difficult times in the human history, and he shared his belief that MWF'21 will send a positive message to the whole world, signalling that those difficult days are coming to an end.

Inventum Global Founding Partner **Asil Akar** said, "We missed our business partners, col-

Going local is the key

► Contd from page 3

whole team over the years that helped us sail through. Whatever profits we had made, we reinvested in the business, and started giving out sustenance pay to the whole team. This allowed them to take care of the households. Hence, they did not get motivated to go out and poach," she explained.

Training the locals

Garg gives all the credit to her team. "During COVID, they trained the locals in the region

conferencing, and medicines were being couriered from city to city. We could save around 25 lives with this initiative. Apart from that, she says, "There was so much non-biodegradable, we had a green team that took the initiative of segregating it, fixing it up on a system to dispose it, and getting in touch with different authorities that helped local communities." In places like the Sunderbans, which were remote, they did a pandemic drive and distributed masks, food, and medicine to the local villages as

ducing, reusing, and recycling. "Our biggest USP is that all our properties are spread over large expanses of greenery. We have a small number of rooms, ranging from 12 to 21, each spread over approximately 600 sq ft with natural light coming in," she elaborates.

"We inform tourists that luxury is in being minimalistic, being in nature, not creating waste, and trying local food hence, giving an opportunity to the local farmer to grow local vegetation. We are encouraging local produce and experiences like bird watching, observing local insects, and even knowing about local festivals & offerings," she adds.

She further said that to attract inbound again, India needs to picture itself as a COVID-safe destination. "We need to focus on India being a major adventure tourism destination as well as, for both soft and hard tourism. Secondly, India shouldn't be considered only a mass-tourism destination, one should make long trips of at least 10 days," she said.

they were not only distressed by COVID, but by certain cyclones affecting the region as well.

Future forward

Marketing for the future, Garg shares that they already follow their company's motto of re-



and encouraged them to get vaccinated," she added.

"We must take care of our people. We created a COVID task-force in the company. We had a doctor on call to attend to our staff and their families on video

Luxury trends of 2022

What are the defining desires of tomorrow's luxury travellers? From hedonism to nostalgia, the revival of luxury travel will be shaped by the changing attitudes and demands of wealthy global consumers.



Mindful travel

According to Oxfam data, the world's wealthiest 1 per cent emit twice as much carbon as the poorest 50 per cent. We may anticipate a surge in more environmentally conscious luxury travellers who wish to vacation in a low-impact manner in the future.

Getting nostalgic

After a long time away from visiting favourite destinations, and an on-going moral hangover, many luxury seekers will be craving the good old days when life seemed safer and better. They'll return to areas they've enjoyed in the past and seek out sites that offer elegance, comfort, and a sense of the Golden era.

Opulence galore

We can expect many luxury travellers to want to truly flex their muscles when it comes to exhibiting how free they are, and letting people know about it. Feasting,

entertainment and frivolities of all kinds will define the years ahead – 2022. Opulence and maximalist will be back in vogue.

Time with loved ones

Even people who have been fortunate enough to spend lockdown in beautiful homes, it's been an enforced period of contemplation. Spending quality time with friends and family will remain high on the agenda.

Solitary moments

There will still be segment of luxury travellers who desire seclusion and will look for places that offer them a chance to reconnect with nature, with themselves and with others.

Elite wellness

There is a widespread desire to improve one's life, find meaning, and reinvent oneself. There will be a high demand for experiences that help wealthy travellers grow as people. These could take the form of ex-

clusive wellness retreats or solo adventures.

Adrenalin experiences

People will be able to finally fulfil their daring, bucket-list style journeys and adventures that they have been anticipating for so long if the money is invested in 2022.

As a result, many high-net-worth individuals may seek out a sense vitality through travel. They'll be looking for adrenaline

The world's wealthiest 1% emit twice as much carbon as the poorest 50%

rushes and motivation to train for new challenges. A trip into space might be next on the list for those who can afford it.

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THE LEELA PALACES, HOTELS AND RESORTS

Mumbai

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts appoints seasoned luxury hotelier and entrepreneur **HEMANT MEDIRATTA** as Chief Advisor for its International Leisure business. He has completed 16-year tenure with The Oberoi Group and has been pursuing an entrepreneurial journey as Co-Founder of a sales and marketing organisation catering to global ultra-luxury and luxury brands. He will drive the international leisure strategy and mentor and guide the travel trade team along with International Sales Offices at The Leela to strengthen the positioning of the brand and help garner its rightful share from this segment.



OMPL GROUP

Delhi NCR

RENU KUNDALIYA, a senior marketing executive with the OMPL Group, has been awarded additional responsibilities of the company. Renu will be the Assistant Director Sales at Naad Wellness, in addition to fulfilling all of her current responsibilities. Renu has been based in Delhi and has more than 20 years of exuberating expertise in the tourism industry. During all these years of her career, she has worked with a variety of Overseas Tourism Boards and travel related agencies.



THE WESTIN

Pune

VINAY OBEROI joins The Westin Hotel in Pune, as Director of Catering Sales after notable career with a decade of experience in the hospitality sector. He has a great track record of successfully building and converting multiple luxury hotels and concept-driven restaurants in India. From his initial position as a manager with Oasis property to leading the operations with Hyatt Group, he had established a firm foundation in the hospitality sector at a young age while also becoming extremely prominent in Mumbai's social circuit. Throughout his career, Vinay has occupied senior roles in hotel Grand Hyatt Mumbai.



COLLIERS

Mumbai

An industry expert and trusted thought leader with more than 14 years of experience, **VIMAL NADAR** joins Colliers from JLL as Senior Director & Head, Research | India. Prior to JLL, Nadar spent time with Cushman and Wakefield and CRISIL. In his career in the real estate industry, Nadar has led thought leadership initiatives for all real estate stakeholders including occupiers, developers and investors. He has also led bespoke research for prominent clients. A chartered accountant, Nadar will collaborate with leaders across India and APAC to make Colliers a market leader and innovation frontrunner in Real Estate Research.



THE FERN HOTELS & RESORTS

South India

MALINI MENON has been appointed as General Manager - Sales & Marketing (South India) for The Fern Hotels & Resorts. Malini has completed her B.A (Psychology) and PGDBA in Marketing & HR from SCMS Kochi. She has over 20 years of hospitality sales experience with renowned brands like ITC Welcomgroup, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, Lalit Hotels and Resorts, etc. Her last assignment was with Raviz Hotels & Resorts handling pan-India Regional Sales Offices.



THE FERN RESIDENCY

Hubballi

AFROZ SHAIKH has been appointed as the Operations Manager for the newly-opened hotel, The Fern Residency, Hubballi. Afroz has over 11 years of work experience with The Fern Hotels & Resorts. His previous assignments with The Fern were at The Fern Residency Vijayapura, The Fern Kadamba Hotel & Spa, Goa and UK 27 The Fern, Belagavi. He has completed his bachelors in commerce from Karnataka University, Dharwad in 2008. His last employment was with The Belgaum Presidency Hotel and Club.



CYGNETT HOTELS & RESORTS PRIVATE LIMITED

Jaipur

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts Private Limited has announced the promotion and appointment of **SANDEEP BASU** as their Corporate General Manager – Pre Opening & Operations. He will play a key role in meeting the Cygnett's aggressive growth goals. He has over two decades of experience in the hospitality sector. His first assignment in his new role will be the opening and lunch of Cygnett Park BL, Jaipur. He has on experience of over two decades of experience in the hospitality sector, having essayed roles in various renowned companies like Park Hotels, ITC Hotels, Hyatt and Sheraton.



OAKWOOD PREMIER PRESTIGE

Bangalore

Oakwood Premier Prestige Bangalore appoints **VAMSI KRISHNA** as the Front Office Manager. He will be responsible for supervising the daily operations of the front office team and building strong customer relations. He started his professional career at the Green Park hotel, Vizag as Guest Service Associate. Subsequently he worked with Hampshire Plaza, Mercure Hyderabad, Mercure Lavasa, Airways Hotel - Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea and Grand Mercure Mysuru. Before taking up his current role, Vamsi was working with Heritage Park Hotel, Honiara Solomon Islands, as Rooms Division Manager. He has over 15 years of experience.



HOLIDAY INN

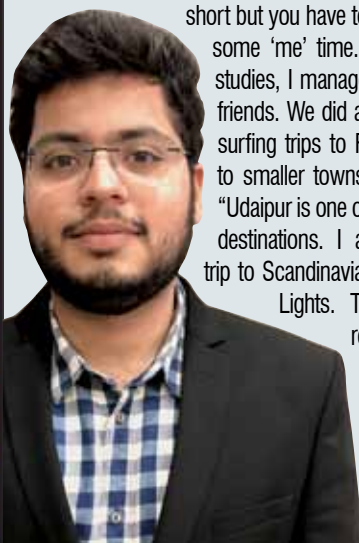
Jaipur

Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre appoints **IMIT ARORA** as the General Manager wherein he shall lead the operations of the hotel. He has hotel experience of more than two decades and over seven years as a General Manager with The Lalit, Chandigarh. Having worked across varied luxury brands like The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, Taj Hotels, and The Lalit, he has garnered an experience that especially catapulted his growth in the luxury arena and has successfully established a strong foothold as a seasoned hotelier and true hospitality professional.



TALKING People

HASAN PATEL, Director, Atlas Tours & Travels, who looks after the Hajj, Umrah and Halal tourism division, believes that one should take a holiday every three months. "They can be short but you have to keep giving yourself some 'me' time. While in the US for studies, I managed to travel a lot with friends. We did a skiing trip to Aspen, surfing trips to Frisco, and road trips to smaller towns," he says. In India, "Udaipur is one of my favourite holiday destinations. I am now planning a trip to Scandinavia to see the Northern Lights. That will also be a road trip," Patel adds. His dream holiday though is to go on a Four Seasons World Tour flying on its private luxury jet.



MADHU PAI, Marketing and PR Manager, Tourism Australia, de-stresses by reading fiction. "The last book I read was 'A man called Ove' by Fredrik Backman. I started cooking during the lockdown, it piqued my curiosity and passion," she says. Rajasthan is her favourite vacation spot. "From the national parks of Ranthambore to the highlands of Mount Abu, Rajasthan's warmth and charm are unrivalled, while Singapore is a wonderful country illustration of the adage that all good things come in little packages," she explains.



DILIP MODI, Founder, Travel Union, de-stresses by spending time with family. "We make sure we go on a vacation to places that are close to nature. I also love trying different cuisines. I also find reading a rather calming activity and like strolling in my backyard," he says. Modi also loves traveling. "In India, I love to visit Gulmarg and Srinagar, they have a certain stillness that other places don't. My next holiday will be exploring the island country of Australia. It is definitely a place that I want to visit soon," he shares.



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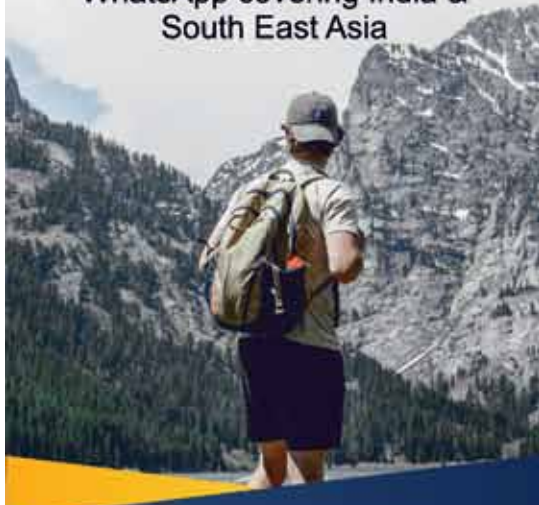
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Abu Dhabi taps MICE & leisure

H.E. Ali Hassan Al Shaiba, Executive Director of Tourism and Marketing at Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi, deliberates on how they are preparing to welcome Indian tourists, as Abu Dhabi opens its doors to global travellers.



Nisha Verma

The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) recently announced that the Emirate will accept fully vaccinated tourists and residents from all nations across the world, as well as unvaccinated visitors from countries on the 'Green List,' with no quarantine requirements.

India market

"UAE is home to the biggest number of Indians overseas, with 3.42 million Indians - roughly one quarter of all Indians abroad," Al Shaiba claims. "Indian trends indicate that the leisure travel revival will gain traction," he said.

Tapping Indian market

Al Shaiba claimed that various local training initiatives for the travel trade industry, have proven their commitment to the Indian market. "This involves a renewed focus on our Specialist E-Learning Program as well as marketing activities." Safety is a major concern for travellers, and Abu Dhabi has stringent standards in place over the previous 18 months," he said.

Trends in focus

According to the recent Global COVID-19 Sentiment Survey done by DCT Abu Dhabi, sight-seeing vacations are popular among Indian tourists, making Abu Dhabi an ideal destination. "In addition, 65 per cent of Indian travellers base their decisions on low COVID-19 case numbers in the destination, and 43 per cent consider Abu Dhabi as an ideal family holiday destination." As Indian travellers are more inclined to take short-haul flights than mid-long-haul flights, Abu Dhabi is ready to welcome both business and leisure travellers," said Al Shaiba.

Abu Dhabi with Dubai

Usually travellers combine Abu Dhabi with Dubai, but Al Shaiba mentioned that Abu Dhabi has some of the most diverse offerings in the luxury and affordable luxury segment for people to experience Emirati hospitality, unwind in luxurious resorts or on pristine beaches, or indulge in a huge variety of leisure and entertainment activities.

Leisure offerings

Abu Dhabi has a wide array of leisure offerings that cater to Indians' choice, ranging from delectable culinary experiences, incomparable 'staycations', and numerous shopping spots to unique entertainment and desert activities. "Apart from that, theme parks, heritage sites, and beaches are some of its perpetual attractions. Also, Abu Dhabi enjoys a year-round calendar of activities and events," he highlighted.

Our MICE team is collaborating with stakeholders to create new MICE-specific itineraries for Indian groups

Tapping the MICE

Over the last decade, Abu Dhabi has grown in popularity as a MICE destination, with an influx of business travellers from all over the world and India ranking among the top source markets for tourism. "Our MICE team is collaborating with stakeholders to create new MICE-specific itineraries for Indian groups. We



will also be holding many international events in Abu Dhabi over the next three months, including the ICC T20 World Cup, the Abu Dhabi T10 League, the Formula1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, and UFC 267, and we are prepared to welcome Indian MICE groups for these events," Al Shaiba said.

"We have a very attractive incentive and support programme for MICE groups called 'Advantage Abu Dhabi,' where we help organisations schedule meetings with local government or private institutions to facilitate business and investment opportunities, in addition to financial support." In 2021, our strategic approach has also been to include virtual and physical training and education for trade partners and corporations across India, we've organised virtual training sessions and webinars and arranged virtual FAM trips for key corporates in India."

Transit travel

Abu Dhabi makes for a great transit destination for Indians on a long-haul trip to the West, with easy and quick accessibility to a variety of diverse tourist spots, allowing travellers a

quick break to unwind before resuming their trip.

Going Forward

Emirati hospitality, bolstered by effective vaccination campaign, has improved confidence, with over 80% of all citizens and residents, as well as over 95% of all hospitality personnel, immunised. "The Go Safe Certification programme in Abu Dhabi ensures the highest levels of health and safety. Industry sources suggest that Indian passengers are positive, with safety and hygiene paving the new wave of travel," adds Al Shaiba.



H.E. Ali Hassan Al Shaiba
Executive Director of Tourism and Marketing
DCT Abu Dhabi



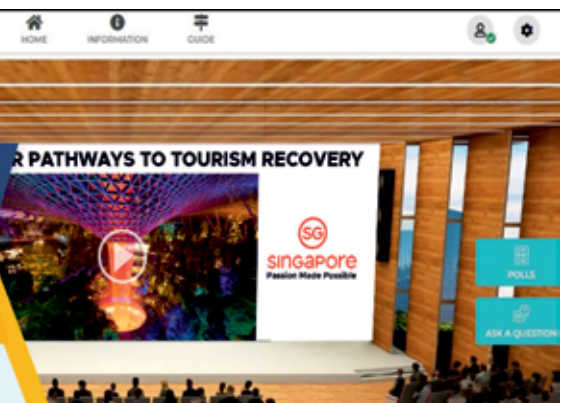
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