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SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

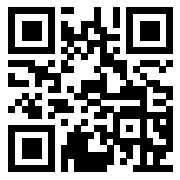
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Inclusivity is the way forward

Ministry of Tourism (MOT) celebrated the World Tourism Day with a physical ceremony that saw in attendance tourism leaders from the government and the private sector.

Nisha Verma

With the theme 'Tourism for Inclusive Growth', World Tourism Day 2021 focused on inclusive, responsible and sustainable travel.

While **G Kamala Vardhan Rao**, DG, MOT, welcomed everyone at the event, a video message by **Zurab Pololikashvili**, Secretary General, UNWTO, set the right tone for the day. The Chief Guest for the day was **Om Birla**, Lok Sabha Speaker. In his address, **G Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture & DoNER, said that vaccination will be a



Dignitaries at World Tourism Award ceremony release tourism statistics 2021

huge confidence booster for the tourism industry. "Today, there is a need to focus on safety and health-related issues, and hence we have the biggest vaccine

drive in the world, running in our country. The tourism sector has the capability to boost the social, cultural, economic and human resource develop-

ment of the country and it can bring all the sectors together, in turn contributing to our national integration. In addition, we are

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Empower by skilling

G Kamala Vardhan Rao, DG, MOT and CMD, ITDC, shares significance of need-based skill development in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Nisha Verma

Stating the plight of the tourism and hospitality industry, **G Kamala Vardhan Rao** shares that every day they come to know that many hotels have been sold across the country. "If you see the WTTC report, which was released around 6 months back, globally over 27% of the hotels may not be reopening again, which is alarming. It also mentioned that many of the hotels in Dubai and the Middle East also may not be seeing light of the day. This severely impacts the employment. I keep saying that ow-

G Kamala Vardhan Rao
Director General, Ministry of Tourism

ing to the pandemic, tourism sector is the first hit, hardest hit and the longest hit. Hence, we must wait and see, when the tourism & hospitality

Contd on page 18 ▶

SEIS disappoints industry

Ministry of Commerce & Industry has released amended rates for SEIS claims for FY 2019-20, but tour operators and hotels are not happy with the cut in percentage and capping of payment.

Nisha Verma

Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS) for services rendered in the Financial Year 2019-20 have been due since March 2020. It has been a long standing demand by the industry, and now in the latest amendment to the rates, a limit on the total entitlement under SEIS has been imposed for service exports rendered in the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March, 2020, and capped at Rs. 5 crore per IEC. Also, the admissible rate in percentage, on net Foreign Exchange Earnings, for FY 2019-20 has

Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

been reduced from 7% to 5% for travel agencies and tour operator services, and from 5% to 3% for hotels. The industry of course, is disappointed. **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO,

KB Kachru
Vice President, HAI

says, "We welcome the decision by the government to release the SEIS. However, the percentage of scrips we used to get earlier has been

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SAT's first virtual show

South African Tourism is all set to kick off the last quarter of 2021 with their maiden virtual roadshow titled 'VirtuallyYoursSouthAfrica' starting from 20th to 22nd October, 2021.

Hazel Jain

Capitalizing on high traveller intent to visit destination South Africa, a diverse South African trade delegation of about 100 suppliers will take the opportunity to collaborate with Indian trade partners to sell the destination holistically and safely. In addition to experiences, representatives from accommodation establishments, destination management companies, South African provinces, VFS, and airlines will showcase their products. The tourism board expects lucrative partnerships to emerge given that 1,000 Indian buyers and

Neliswa Nkani
Hub Head - MEISEA, South African Tourism

corporates from across India will attend this virtual event.

The three-day roadshow will include an exclusive CEO address to the top travel trade and cor-

porate CEOs in India. It is also slated to host an exclusive industry panel discussion, breakout rooms for participants, photo booths, interactive maps and brochures as well as one-on-one access to select meetings and extensive corporate engagement.

Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head - MEISEA, South African Tourism said, "This show is a testament of our commitment to the Indian market, especially in the face of a global pandemic. India houses massive potential when it comes to long-haul outbound travel. We are seeing a huge uptake for travel." ▶



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Strong economy, stronger tourism

Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog, explains how a firm economy is directly proportional to the growth of tourism in India, while a fast-paced vaccination drive, digital and sustainable growth would just be the right propellers in this regard.



Nisha Verma

Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog, has said that the confidence within the travel and tourism industry is coming back.

Vaccination is the driver

"India's vaccination drive has been at the forefront of restoring normalcy. Without vaccination, tourism can never grow. I have been a witness to the travel and tourism sector going through many crises. We had launched the Incredible India campaign after the parliament attack, the Afghanistan war and other adversities. Every crisis is an opportunity and I am sure that tourism will bounce back and that too with a vengeance," he said.

Dependence on economy

He insisted that tourism is very intricately linked to the economy. "If Indian economy does well, tourism will do well. If the Indian economy doesn't grow at a rapid rate of 9-10 % per annum year after year for the next three decades or more, it will be very

difficult for India to emerge as the leading tourism destination. Thus Indian economy must grow rapidly and at a higher rate on a sustained basis over a long period of time," stressed Kant.

Road to recovery

Claiming that India is getting back into a high trajectory growth than its expansion across the entire economy, he said that the recovery is firmer, which will sustain. "I have seen the tourism



Amitabh Kant
CEO, Niti Aayog

important to understand that the basic nature of the industry will undergo a change. There will be a radical difference from how the travel and tourism industry was working earlier and how it will operate in the future," he shared.

Go digital & green

He further claimed, "My belief is that not merely in the tourism industry, but around the world, in future only those companies will survive, which will go digital and green. Only such companies would be able to attract capital and grow & prosper."

Future is shared economy

Another point Kant highlighted

was that tourism industry is moving towards a sharing economy. "Take for example Airbnb. Its valuation is around US\$100 billion, which is more than any of the large hotel companies, just because it's a sharing company. The world is moving towards sharing economies and experiences. Hoteliers will now have to look at creating unique experiences for the travellers in the world," he explained. Lastly, he claimed that technology will be the key driver for growth.

Domestically forward

Commenting on the growing Indian domestic market, he continued, "The size and scale of the domestic market will enable you to benefit global markets. Hence, domestic market will be the key to the growth in the tourism sector, while we open in a calibrated manner as the world normalises. People will then be looking at unique experiences across the world and there will be no one better than the Indian tourism and hospitality sector to provide that."

The world is moving towards sharing economies and experiences

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Exhibit A



Covishield

Highly advanced vaccine to tackle the pandemic of Covid-19 undergoing multiple manufacturing checks before it is made available to the public.

Exhibit B

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A highly credible magazine developed to tackle the pandemic of fake news curated via multiple sources undergoing rigorous fact-check practices before being made available to the trade.



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TRAVELTALK

VIEWPOINT

Growth for all

What if this time we don't treat the World Tourism Day theme as just a theme? In fact, we put this into practice as an experiment, and see if one good deed leads us to better fortunes. Take for instance Iceland. According to Dutch sociologist Ruut Veenhoven, Iceland ranks as one of the happiest countries in the world. This is because, as he found out, that interdependence is the mother of affection. Humans need one another, so we cooperate.

Inclusive growth is just about that and we can do so much more through tourism. There are many in India who are already doing their bit – whether it is emancipating the ethnic tribes of the north east or encouraging traditional art forms in Rajasthan by highlighting them to the world. Still, a lot needs to be done. Our national associations are also working towards this by voicing concerns of a large community in a single voice. The pandemic has shown that only by helping one another can we rise again as a community, a sector, and a nation. Collaboration will be key going forward, and we must remember this even when we are thriving.

Regional recovery

Ever since international borders have closed, domestic tourism has been the only focus for the industry, and the same goes for Ministry of Tourism. While inbound had been the apple of MOT's eye earlier, domestic tourism is getting its share of limelight during the pandemic. MOT started its domestic tourism campaign with its 'Dekho Apna Desh' webinars, which continued with a few boutique events in some states last year. First in line was Kevadia, Gujarat, which saw not only an event from MOT, but a full-fledged convention by ADTOI in Feb. There were events in Kerala, Goa, West Bengal and Northeast as well.

After the second wave, MOT's strategy has changed. It is concentrating on regions, tackling issues and initiating infrastructure projects by involving stakeholders at all levels. This was visible in the recent Northeast tourism ministers' conference. Another such conference for South Indian ministers is also on cards. While what's next is still awaited, we hope that this zeal for domestic continues even after borders reopen.

NDC and the opportunities ahead

Year 2021 marks a milestone in the industry's NDC. It's an exciting time to be involved in airline distribution and there is an opportunity to transform the indirect distribution channel to be more effective, less complex and better able to deliver on the needs of travellers and the industry today.



TT Bureau

To build a more responsive and agile industry capable of meeting the changing needs of travelers, IATA's New Distribution Capability (NDC) is proving to be a foundation for digital retailing across the sector. Some are unclear about the impact the pandemic is having on the progress of NDC. However, a new report from Amadeus provides visibility on the standard's readiness across the industry. Insights from airlines, travel agencies and corporations, as well as Amadeus' own experts demonstrate that NDC momentum has accelerated over the past 18 months, concluding that



Ángel Gallego
Executive Vice President
Travel Distribution, Amadeus

scaling over the coming months and years.

Ángel Gallego, Executive Vice President, Travel Distribution, Amadeus, had this to say on the findings in the report: "If we compare where we were 18 months ago to today, it's clear that despite the strain

tion of mid- and back-office systems for travel sellers.

The report calls on the industry to prioritise collaboration and experimentation to advance NDC adoption.

The success of NDC remains dependent on the industry's ability to keep talking. Through greater collaboration, it will be easier to recognize each other's challenges and interests, helping to align goals and deliver the end-to-end value the entire ecosystem expects.

NDC represents a key pillar of the airline industry's digital transformation, modernising the way airlines create and present tailored offers to different traveller segments. It's an exciting time to be involved in airline distribution and there is an opportunity to transform the indirect distribution channel so it is more effective, less complex and better able to deliver the needs of travelers and the industry. It's understood, there are still some issues to overcome around servicing, integration and lack of standardization to obtain the full benefits of NDC. NDC is a journey, and working together with the industry we will not only overcome these issues but unlock possibilities to improve travel retailing.

COLLABORATION IS KEY

Achieving the benefits and overcoming the barriers identified within this report require one trait above all: collaboration. As long as all stakeholders collaborate together and recognize each other's challenges and interests, we can align goals and deliver the expected end-to-end value. Following a series of interviews with experts from airlines, sellers and corporations, general consensus emerged on the next steps needed to further accelerate NDC.

Until this point NDC has been in the 'early adopter' phase

as interested airlines, travel sellers and corporations have worked to achieve live NDC bookings. The content, technology, understanding and commercial agreements around NDC have now advanced. Over the coming months, extensive NDC deployment is expected so commitment to NDC is critical as failure to prepare people, processes and technology could see some participants left behind.

EXPERIMENT

New airline content is now coming with new shopping and servicing experiences for travel sellers. Now is the time to ramp up NDC experimentation to understand how digital retailing can improve

New airline content is coming up with new shopping and servicing experiences



2021 is the year that NDC is being adopted at scale.

Airlines have begun to make tailored offers available, to experiment with innovations like 'continuous pricing' and new types of bundled offers. Travel sellers of all shapes and sizes are now going live across the world, with over 2,500 travel agencies across 50 markets are now able to book and service airline content via NDC.

The technology underpinning NDC has advanced significantly. Travel sellers are now able to consume NDC and EDIFACT content, alongside LCC content delivered via APIs. Importantly, the report cites recent improvements in servicing and preparation of travel agency mid- and back-office systems as key to

caused by COVID-19, the industry has not sacrificed its commitment to NDC. On the airline side, we are now seeing new differentiated product bundles and price points. It is encouraging to see that the industry increasingly views NDC as a key pillar of recovery. With modern digital retailing, travel will be based around dynamic offers and this will deliver a competitive edge to airlines and travel sellers that embrace this change. Now is the time to engage with NDC to power great journeys for travelers and rebuild travel.

The report also sheds light on some of the remaining barriers to widespread NDC adoption, which include the need to upgrade airline systems, embrace a common NDC standard, and the transforma-

the travel experience and the bottom line. By trying new offers, analysing the impact and refining flows and processes, NDC delivers an innovation playground the industry hasn't had before. It is critical to start working with NDC by testing and learning to obtain the maximum benefits from NDC.

KEEP TALKING

Airlines need to know what offers travellers want. Travel sellers need to discover what airlines will bring with NDC. Technology partners need to understand the issues travel sellers face when delivering for airlines. It's only through dialogue and partnership that the industry will achieve the maximum benefits from investments in NDC.



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Hazel Jain

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North East on high priority

Underlining her ministry's focus on the North East region, **Rupinder Brar**, ADG, Ministry of Tourism, has said that road and air connectivity is a priority area here, while parallelly developing tourism infrastructure such as homestays to ensure quick and holistic tourism development.



Hazel Jain

Speaking at a webinar on developing tourism in Mizoram, **Rupinder Brar**, ADG, Ministry of Tourism, said that her ministry wants to make a difference in the next two months. "This subject is becoming extremely high priority at the ministry, for us, to take up the development and promotion of tourism in the north east region, including Mizoram. There is so much to be done. In that spirit, we were visiting the North East region in Guwahati for a two-day conference, led by

the Tourism Minister. We also had other ministries such as Railways, Roads, Civil Aviation, DoNER, NEC and even Telecommunications. This is because the Minister said, we cannot just talk about connectivity and leave out digital connectivity in today's world. Shipping was the only one, not present because that is a dimension that doesn't need to be worked on, right now. We probably will add them later when we will look at more customised things around the Brahmaputra," she elaborated. Mizoram launched its Mizoram Responsible Tourism Policy



2020 that will drive the state's recovery process.

Air connections for priority areas

This puts in perspective the kind of priority given by the government of India to the entire region. "Tourism is a huge employment generator for the region. In the long-term it will help conserve the very unique cultures of this region. That's the idea behind tourism development here and the two-day seminar in Guwahati. Discussion on logistics made us realize that there was so much happening in area of roads particularly as well as civil avia-

tion. The MOT is discussing with MoCA about adding more routes on the Viability Gap Funding to be done by the MoT for priority areas and Mizoram is going to be a significant part of that strategy," Brar reveals.

From the infrastructure point of view, Swadesh Darshan is a work in progress. A lot of projects got reviewed in Guwahati recently and the Tourism Minister recently approved a project along key pilgrimage sites under PRASHAD. In addition, there was also a lot of discussion on another key segment – developing home-stays and capacity building.

specific verticals with stakeholders that are actually located in the North East region. We definitely want to make a difference in the next few months and it has to be a perceptible difference.

Before we can do that, we would need to craft out focussed work groups. The strategy needs to be very clear, and once etched out, we need to deep-dive and start working. The NE is one of the most beautiful parts of India and so much needs to be done."

Projects worth Rs 200 cr sanctioned

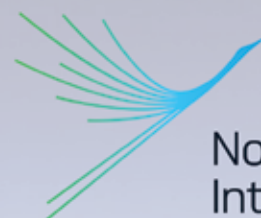
Speaking at the two-day forum in Guwahati, **G. Kishan Reddy** said that the Ministry has sanctioned 16 projects under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme in the North Eastern region. He added that through the schemes, his ministry is giving special emphasis on developing infrastructure, ground capacity and skills in the region as well as providing branding and marketing assistance. He revealed that projects worth approximately Rs 200 crore has been sanctioned for these projects.

Creating small work groups

So how will the MOT take the promotion forward? Brar says, "Outreach and promotion is a significant part of our strategy for the NE. We want to create small work groups around the

15 new airports to ensure efficiency

Garima Singh, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, emphasized on the development of connectivity in the region. There are altogether 15 airports ensuring efficiency of travel in the region. She also spoke about the new Greenfield Airport Project which is under development; the aim is to inaugurate it by 15th August '22. The commencement of operations at Tezu Airport in Arunachal Pradesh is also being discussed.



Noida
International Airport

RFQ(Request for Qualification) for "Selection of Licensee to Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer the City Side Hotel" at NIA

Yamuna International Airport Private Limited ("YIAPL") has been granted the right to develop, operate and maintain the Noida International Airport ("NIA") on DBFOT basis.

YIAPL intends to select a Licensee to award the right to "Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer the City Side Hotel" at NIA (the "Project") pursuant to and in accordance with open bidding process. YIAPL wishes to receive Applications in response to this RFQ to short-list experienced and capable Bidders for the RFP Stage. In line with the same, YIAPL has Published RFQ(Request for Qualification)for above captioned project on NIA e-tendering Platform.

Interested parties can download the RFQ upon successfully registering at YIAPL's e-portal, accessible at:
<https://niaairport.abcpocure.com>

For further clarification, interested parties can communicate at tenders@niaairport.in.

Elevating India's tourism industry

To elevate India's tourism industry to new heights, it is important to explore the potential of investment in the tourism sector. **Suman Billa**, Director, Technical Cooperation & Silk Road, UNWTO, spoke how crucial investment is in tourism, at present and that UN is propagating the idea of investment in travel and tourism within the countries.



Janice Alyosius

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) aims to catapult India's tourism industry in the post-Covid era and to encourage investment in tourism infrastructure development. To revive the tourism industry, the FICCI organized the 6th National Tourism Investors Meet (NTIM) to bring together different stakeholders from the Investment and business community along with the Ministry of Tourism, State Govt s, and Financial Institutions. To elevate the India's tourism industry to new heights, experts explored the potential of investment in the tourism sector, during the event. Bihar was selected as the 'Theme State' for the investor meet.

Suman Billa, Director, Technical Cooperation & Silk Road,



Suman Billa
Director, Technical Cooperation
& Silk Road, UNWTO

UNWTO, said, "UN is propagating the idea of investment in travel and tourism within the countries. Investment is crucial at this point now than it has ever been before." He spoke about, how the travel and tourism sector has taken the biggest hit due to COVID. He added, "We have seen a lot of businesses with no international invoicing for the past year or so."

Forward linkage

Talking about the impact of

COVID on domestic and international business, several businesses got impacted in the past one year. Despite the dip in business, a lot of entities are buying businesses that are going blip, as a way of consolidating their footprints and as a way for its forward linkages. "Stressed companies which are in difficulties have been bought over by their stronger rivals because they feel that, once the pandemic is over, they will be able to come back much stronger. Similarly, in terms of forward linkages we have seen instances where tour operators have bought off their transport suppliers to ensure their forward linkage stays intact when the business resumes."

Stock markets

If we look at the way the stock markets have responded to COVID, we see big companies investing in travel and hospitality regardless the dip in business.

"The valuations of the tourism properties tend to be close to the pre pandemic level, we also see a lot of activities of the private equity

that we need to be proactive and should reach out to the prospective investors.

Creative destruction

Billa explained his idea of creative destruction; "We all know that the world, post pandemic, is going to be very different from the one we knew before. If we are a destination, it would be surprising if post pandemic we start with the same products and same businesses that we had earlier, as the world has changed tremendously since then. Every business and every product that is out there has been questioned, investigated and have taken new forms. There are several new ideas, new products that have come which makes more sense in the present situation."

The government needs to facilitate the system of creative destruction; that means to replace the outdated products with

new ones in the changing world, emphasized Billa. "Two things we need to focus on, the first is encourage and ensure that we create a framework for new business to come in with new products. And the second is the impact of digitalization as apart of creative destruction. One fact that we see now is; anything can be digitized. Not just the way tourism services are being sold but also the way they are experienced in terms of tour guides. So, essentially the post pandemic world is going to be much digitalized and that's going to chip away the core business of tourism sector. Lots can be done through electronic medium." In the end he mentioned, "The most important thing of having investment forums like this is, not for us to come together but see, what we need to do, to be able to support our industry and create avenues for them to try and flourish." 🐦

Investment is
crucial at this
point now, than
it has ever
been before

players who are going in and investing big time in business even in travel and hospitality enterprises and especially in India because this is where they see a large amount of growth that is likely to come. The world today assumes that we are very close to recovery and therefore they are putting their money," said Billa. He also said

Way forward with MoCA & MOT

Usha Padhee, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), shares her views on how they are collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism to boost connectivity to both metro and non-metro destinations across the country, and in turn increase the number of domestic, as well as international tourists in the country.



Nisha Verma

Acknowledging the growth of air connectivity across India, **Usha Padhee** has said that there are many destinations where unimaginable progress in connectivity has happened.

Domestic success

Padhee claimed that post-COVID, MoCA has done very well in the domestic sector. "In 2019, we were the third largest domestic market with 140 million domestic passengers and around 70 million international passengers and had hoped that by 2024, India will be the third largest aviation market overall. While the target would still be reached, it will take a little more time."

She revealed that they have many domestic routes opening, especially for non-metro cities.

"Since the opening has been calibrated, we have only 85% of the capacity opened up. Perhaps in a month or so, we will be having 100 % capacity, which would increase domestic connectivity, including regional, that has contributed hugely in shifting people from metros to non-metros," she commented.

Tourism & Aviation

Citing that earlier the Ministries of Civil Aviation and Tourism were same and were subsequently bifurcated, Padhee said, "A different vertical doesn't mean that the collaboration or dependency on each other has been reduced. Under the collaboration with MOT, MoCA has specifically formed some tourist routes where some VGF is coming from the tourism ministry. We are also focusing domestically on the helicopters as new mode of transportation. Under



Usha Padhee
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil
Aviation (MoCA)

Buddhist Circuit, destinations like Kushinagar, Gaya, Shrawasti, may have helicopter operations, which would support tourism. Water aerodromes, on the other hand, have not been very upcoming. However, once it is adapted by the tourists, there would be many sea plane operations, especially in the Andaman and Lakshadweep, where we are developing around 15 destinations," she informed.

Padhee added that the support from state governments is significant, both for domestic and international connectivity. "Support from states through promotion can make international routes very attractive. States can also contribute in reducing the taxes on ATF, and we are taking it up with them. State governments, for the aviation sector, have been very progressive and many airports are being developed. If everything goes well, 17 airports will be coming up in the state of Uttar Pradesh. I believe that MoCA and MOT working together can bring substantial changes and take the sectors to greater heights."

International border opening

While Padhee doesn't see international borders opening very soon, she said there have been efforts from the Ministry of Ex-

ternal Affairs. "The two major issues to be addressed include mutual recognition of the vaccination certification and the test-

States, for the
aviation sector,
have been very
progressive
and we are
developing
many airports

tween them, whether it is with the IATA pass or what ICAO is working on. With the bilateral agreements, international flights would gradually open. Currently, it's not more than 20%, but in the coming days, it might go up to 50% even if international borders don't open completely. We are also working on a portal, which will give a third-party key, although, we have Cowin that gives certification. ICMR now has come up with QR based certification and madetest reports available online."

She highlighted that the good news is that Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is working on tourist visas. "When that comes up, the numbers may improve almost immediately, especially to states that receive many international passengers," she said. 🐦

ing protocols. We already have bilateral agreements with 28 countries. Once we have bilateral agreement with a country, we need to ensure that there is seamless movement be-

A glimpse of luxury in Abu Dhabi

Department of Culture & Tourism - Abu Dhabi recently organised a webinar to target the leisure market in India. Titled 'Reunite #InAbuDhabi', the exclusive presentation made the trade familiar with luxury experiences, iconic sights, Instagram-worthy locations and new destinations on the anvil in Abu Dhabi.



Nisha Verma

In the introductory video, **HE Ali Hassan Al Shaiba**, Executive Director of Tourism & Marketing at DCT-Abu Dhabi, shared that they look forward to continue fostering relations with India. "India remains a very important source market for us," he claimed.

Set to welcome Indians

Sharing details, Al Shaiba added, "In the past few months, we focussed on preparing Abu Dhabi for a safe and well-planned re-opening to see a rise in tourism activities for both business and leisure travellers with safety and hygiene, paving the new wave of travel."

"Abu Dhabi's efficient vaccination drive has further resulted in increased confidence. On return of normalcy, we look forward to welcoming visitors from the Indian market. Abu Dhabi is a diverse destination and boosts distinct range of leisure and MICE offerings, providing visitors unforgettable experiences. Abu Dhabi features an year-round schedule



HE Ali Hassan Al Shaiba
Executive Director of Tourism and Marketing at DCT Abu Dhabi



Nikhil Jeet
Country Manager India
DCT Abu Dhabi

We look forward to welcoming visitors from the Indian market

— Al Shaiba

Rest assured, wherever you visit Abu Dhabi, it's safe, secure and healthy

— Jeet

partners and thank them for their continuous efforts and look forward to more growth and prosperous alliances."

Exciting times ahead

Nikhil Jeet, Country Manager India, DCT Abu Dhabi, stressed

stunning Sir Bani Yas Island; Saadiyat Island- a desirable location; Al Ain Oasis that boasts 147000 trees; ZayaNurai Island- a paradise for honeymooners; to the Jubail Mangrove Park known for Instagram-able locations. "Also, there are other iconic attractions like

He also spoke about diving and snorkelling. He highlighted the shopping options, including the huge Yas Mall to traditional souks.

Under upcoming attractions, Jeet spoke about Al Qana, a 700 sq m aquarium. "There is also Sea World Abu Dhabi and the Snow Park in Reem Mall, which will dwarf any other snow park in the world and will open towards end of the year," he pointed out.

Speaking about Go Safe initiative, Jeet said, "This programme is monitored and run by the DCT



Nath also discussed the Abu Dhabi entry conditions. "Tourists are permitted in Abu Dhabi. We encourage them to book their visa in advance. Having a valid US visa or UK resident visa makes one eligible for visa on arrival. If you are fully vaccinated, there is a series of 5 PCR tests in a span of eight days (before and after travel). If you are not vaccinated, then quarantine for 10

chambers, Yas Mall, eight hotels and the Yas Marina Circuit where the Etihad Abu Dhabi Grand Prix is scheduled in December," he updated.

Kapoor suggested that 2-3 nights on Yas Island is ideal. "Best thing to do is book packages of hotel room with attractions to save 40-45% of total cost. 95% of Yas Island employees are vaccinated.



Salil Nath
Regional Sales Manager
Etihad



Mikhail Kapoor
Business Development Manager
Yas Island



Lahcen Elmiftahy
Cluster Associate Director - Leisure
Yas Plaza Hotels

There is a home check-in facility available for visitors in Abu Dhabi

— Nath

Book packages of hotel room with attractions to save 40-45% of total cost

— Kapoor

Indian market was amongst the top three markets before the pandemic

— Elmiftahy

- Abu Dhabi, so travellers can be rest assured wherever they visit Abu Dhabi, it is safe and secure."

Wellness in air

Salil Nath, Regional Sales Manager, Etihad, highlighted the Etihad wellness programme "It starts with dedicated ambassadors, right after booking is done. They are experts in wellness and will comfort the customers about the measures we have put and answer their queries."

Other facilities include flexible fares, free date change under the COVID Waiver Policy. "There is a 'Verified to Fly' initiative, which is a pre-check, where passengers can get verified and need not worry whether their documents are in order or not. Also, there is a home check-in facility available in Abu Dhabi and will be expanded to other parts of the world soon," he highlighted.

days and on the 9th day is a PCR test. Besides, tourists need to have a green tick on their Al Hosn app to cross borders to Dubai and vice versa, as well as for entering malls and other places. It's the main app for certifying wellness in Abu Dhabi," he informed.

He suggested Etihad Hub (etihadhub.com), which is a self-service one-stop solution for all queries.

Fun, Up & Close

Mikhail Kapoor, Business Development Manager, Yas Island, presented the various attractions on Yas Island. "We are home to award winning theme parks and world-class facilities. We have three theme parks— Ferrari World, Yas Waterworld and Warner Bros World; Clymb, which is the tallest and the largest sky-diving

Also, we have launched destination specialisation programme called Yas Expert, which gives various advantages to agents," he shared.

Hospitality for all

Lahcen Elmiftahy, Cluster Associate Director - Leisure, Yas Plaza Hotels, claimed that the Indian market was amongst the top three markets prior to the pandemic. "Since Abu Dhabi is open now, we are looking for more support in the coming days. As Yas Plaza Hotels, we are handling three luxury four-star hotels (Crowne Plaza Abu Dhabi - Yas Island, Yas island Rotana and Yas island Rotana) and two three-star hotels (Centro Yas Island and Park Inn by Radisson Abu Dhabi Yas Island). Our location is the attraction as we are in the heart of Yas Island with all attractions within a five-minute drive."



of events from sport, culture to food and music. We have demonstrated our commitment to the Indian market through various training initiatives, a renewed focus on our specialist programme and wider-reaching marketing campaigns," he stressed.

Highlighting the safety and hygiene standards in Abu Dhabi, Al Shaiba said, "Abu Dhabi can achieve its safety measures through a rigorous implementation of the Go Safe certification. Abu Dhabi promotes inclusivity and we welcome people from all backgrounds and cultures. We stand by our trade

the point further and opened the discussion with the announcement that from 5th September Abu Dhabi is open for fully vaccinated travellers.

Jeet highlighted the nature and beach offerings, right from the

The Louvre; Qasr Al Watan and Sheikh Zayed Mosque," he said.

In terms of activities, he mentioned, "The Al Khazzan region can elevate any other desert experience. Then there is Al Ain Zoo for families and kayak experiences."

Abu Dhabi e-learning and specialist programme

Sharing details of the Abu Dhabi e-learning and specialist programme, Jeet, said. "It is a learn on-the-go programme, and agents can learn on their mobile or laptop, wherever they go. It will help them increase bookings, learn about new products in Abu Dhabi and get lots of perks by being an Abu Dhabi specialist. The website is www.abudhabispecialist.com. After completing the programme, they can win smartphone and Amazon gift vouchers every month."

Tourism Breaking News

■ Kerala announces Caravan Tourism policy

■ Govt to focus on air connectivity with all Commonwealth countries: Scindia

■ India launches 'Su-Swagatam' mobile app to simplify aisa application process

■ South Korea inside Indian homes through KXperience by Korea Tourism Organization

■ Ministry of tourism sanctions Rs 200 cr and 16 projects in North East

■ Jammu and Kashmir gets its first-ever cruise facility with musical fountain lake in Dal Lake

■ Nepal removes quarantine for all vaccinated tourists

■ Air India chairman Rajiv Bansal named as the new aviation secretary

■ Kovalam and Eden beaches receive the esteemed 'blue flag' tag

Conrad Maldives: India's top bet

Carla Puverel, General Manager, Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, shares why the resort is the perfect getaway for Indian travellers looking for a holistic leisure experience, while making sure that they cater to small group business as well.

 Nisha Verma

Maldives has reopened for Indians after the devastating second wave of the pandemic, and the island nation is seeing a rush of tourists from the subcontinent again. Agrees **Carla Puverel**, "India is a key and important market for the Maldives, being an ideal distance for travel and offering travellers a tropical escape in less than 5 hours of flying. At present, the arrivals from India have increased significantly, and August was a positive month for The Maldives, with the Indian market continuing to be one of the country's top travel hubs."

Ever since it's opening, the resort has gained a well-deserved reputation as a pioneer, known for offering exciting and inspiring experiences that enhance the guest experience. Puverel in-



Carla Puverel
GM, Conrad Maldives Rangali Island

forms, "One of our most exciting editions is The Muraka, a first-of-its-kind residence which sits above and below the surface of the Indian Ocean, with the master suite located underwater. It's this kind of experimental approach that sets Conrad Maldives Rangali Island apart."

The resort offers a twin island experience set across Rangali and Rangali-Finolhu. "There are unforgettable offerings, including the mesmerising sight of Manta Rays

at night from the 500m bridge, Whale Sharks, marine life, corals, naturally pristine beaches, spacious villas and the total seclusion and privacy that affluent travellers often seek. We also offer an ex-

August was a positive month with the Indian market continuing to be one of the Maldives top travel hubs

tensive choice of 12 dining options including the award-winning Ithaa, the world's first undersea dining restaurant," she shares.

To promote it further in the Indian market, Puverel shares that they have diverse activities and excursions on offer, and lots of entertainment on the resort. "We are extremely active on social media, run various digital campaigns and host many virtual tours for our partners. Our hotel representation in India through ISA Tourism Pvt Ltd, is actively engaged in ensuring that we build strong relationships with our travel partners in India.

For MICE, they have had queries for small niche groups for late 2021 and in 2022 as of now. Puverel says, "If we can address them and welcome the small niche groups, we will. YPO from India has always been a great supporter to the Maldives."

Meanwhile there has been the addition of new Deluxe beach vil-

las and Grand water villas. "They have elevated and enhanced our resort and villa product. They are far bigger, have high ceilings for added sense of space, and bring elements of the area's natural beauty into our guests' living space. The furnishings have been refreshed to be more relevant, and the space has an increased sense of seclusion – it has proven incredibly popular with our guests and, as a result, we have seen a significant upswing in private dinners in the villas on the beach or the deck overlooking the water," shares Puverel.

Rangali Island will be relaunched at the end of December. "It is our all-water villa adult Island, and will be popular with the Indian market for honeymoons and extended weekend getaways. The 'Teens club' is opening in December," she announces.

SL accepts vaccinated travellers

Sri Lanka welcomes fully vaccinated travellers with the second shot taken at least 14 days before the trip, with no quarantine for those who test COVID negative on arrival in Sri Lanka. All arriving travellers will have to go through a mandatory PCR test that will be conducted on arrival.

 Janice Alyosius

To strengthen ongoing operations, SriLankan Airlines introduced a host of frequency enhancements out of key Indian cities into Colombo, effective September 1, 2021.

In an interview with **Dimuthu Tennakoon**, Head of Worldwide Sales and Distribution, SriLankan Airlines, said, "The airline has resumed services between Colombo and the Indian points; Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Trivandrum and Cochin with flights once a week, whilst Hyderabad and New Delhi will be connected to Colombo with twice-weekly flights".

Further, the Airlines' operations out of Chennai and Mumbai have been expanded up to five times a week whilst its Bangalore-Colombo services have been enhanced to three times a week.

Countries allowed traveling to Sri Lanka

When asked about the countries that are allowed to enter, he said that Sri Lanka currently accepts travellers from all countries except South American Countries as well as a few South African countries (namely South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

Travel procedures for people flying to Sri Lanka

Dimuthu said, "Considering the Covid scenario in the subcontinent, all travellers arriving in Sri Lanka from India & otherwise will have to go through a mandatory PCR test that will be conducted on arrival".

He also added that Sri Lanka is accepting fully vaccinated travellers with the second shot taken at least 14 days before the trip and there will be no quarantine for those who test COVID



Dimuthu Tennakoon
Head of Worldwide Sales and Distribution, SriLankan Airlines

negative on arrival in Sri Lanka. One needs to have a valid tourist visa which must be applied online. Also a hotel booking & health insurance is mandatory along with a negative PCR test in English done within 72 hours prior to embarkation.

Exemptions from quarantine measures

Dimuthu mentioned that the Travellers who are not vaccinated or are partially vaccinated or fully vaccinated travellers who depart-

ed from the originating country within 14 days of receiving the final dose will be considered as unvaccinated travelers. Such travellers will have to adhere to the Tourist Bubble Protocol where they will need to stay at a Certified Safe and Secure L1 hotels for the first 15 days of the visit if found negative after the on-arrival PCR test.

Upon on-arrival PCR being negative, travelers are allowed to stay at any number of the many Certified Safe and Secure L1 hotels and are permitted to use all facilities of the hotel. They are also allowed to visit all the approved tourist sites in the bio bubble and hence would still be able to

SriLankan Airlines brings to India the invitation to explore Sri Lanka and assures of warmth and hospitality onboard

experience most of Sri Lanka's hospitality experiences and all it has to offer to a tourist. Dimuthu said that SriLankan Airlines

brings to India the invitation to explore Sri Lanka and assured the warmth and hospitality that will be extended onboard will continue right through the journey of exploring the destination, Sri Lanka. The country is open and all global protocols like social distancing, Covid tests etc. are being strictly followed.

"We recently introduced 'buy one get one free' offer for Indian travellers to visit Sri Lanka in the months to come. The offer is valid for all the seating categories and is applicable to the bookings made for flights between India & Colombo for leisure travel. This offer will be valid on bookings made until 31st October 2021". Said Dimuthu.

In an attempt to make flying easier for passengers, aviation companies have been developing new products and strategies – and ushering in a new age of travel. We can expect more and more innovative trends to develop as technological advancement increases.

J&K goes full throttle

The UT welcomed more than 2,60,000 tourists this year after re-opening, which bodes well for the destination that has largely depended on tourism. It is now promoting offbeat destinations and has planned B2B roadshows towards the end of 2021 with a budget that is 4X from the previous year.



Dr GN Itoo
Director Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir



Hazel Jain

A three-team delegation from the Department of Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir government was in Mumbai recently to meet with key tour operators as well as members from the film fraternity. Dr GN Itoo, Director Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir, said, "We are here to build confidence among the trade and promote little-known destinations in the UT. The J&K government has put tourism on top priority. As a result, the promotional budget has been enhanced manifold from this financial year – it is now four times over the previous one."

Talking about funds, Itoo says, "We took a calculated risk to re-start promoting tourism in J&K and luckily it was a good move. Tourist traffic has picked up very well, particularly adventure tourism from Maharashtra and Gujarat. We've also had good demand for offbeat destinations and come up with a plan to promote them. For the 75th Independence Day celebrations, we will promote 75 offbeat destinations such as Gurez

months. Tourists need negative RT-PCR test 48 hours prior to arrival, even if they are fully vaccinated. However, for those who don't have this can take a rapid antigen test. Majority of tourism workforce in the UT is

vaccinated. "As on date, almost 95 per cent of them are fully vaccinated including taxi drivers, shikara operators and hotel staff. Jammu & Kashmir is completely safe for tourists," Itoo says. So far, his team has travelled to Hy-

derabad, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Chennai and Delhi that are the main markets. "We have plans to conduct roadshows soon. As border restrictions ease, we will start promoting in the international markets as well. We have al-

ready planned collaborations with the MoT for any tourism event that they will participate abroad. Until then we will continue to have virtual conferences with our key partners abroad who are eager to visit J&K. We have a lot of

experience in handling tourists. But when we started promoting tourism again, we did not expect so much traffic of tourists. Fortunately, from March onwards, the issues have now been streamlined," Itoo adds.



Our promotional budget has been enhanced manifold from this financial year – it is now four times over the previous one

and the Bangas Valley. These places have not been promoted much, but now we will hold some mega festivals, to attract more tourists. Apart from this, the tourism department will conduct a week-long physical festival from October 23-29, 2021 including Houseboat Festival, Sufi Festival, Literary Festival, etc."

Concern for tourists

Itoo claims that the UT has already welcomed approximately 2,60,000 tourists since January 2021, despite the fact that the destination was completely shut down for a couple of

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Resurrecting the India market

With an extremely targeted marketing and communication approach, South African Tourism is ready to resurrect India as one of its top-performing source markets. **Neliswa Nkani**, Hub Head – MEISEA, South African Tourism, discusses various strategies and offerings that the NTO has recreated to suit the changing traveller profile.



Hazel Jain

Prior to the pandemic, India was the eighth-largest international market for South African Tourism. In fact, South Africa was seeing tremendous interest by Indian travellers even right before the pandemic hit in March 2020. For the months of January and February 2020, the destination saw about seven per cent YoY increase from the India

This approach seems to be working well for the tourism board, as they are witnessing heightened interest and intent to travel by Indian travellers. Given the increase in demand, Emirates, Qatar Airways and Ethiopian Airlines have regular flights scheduled from India to South Africa, with layovers at Dubai, Doha and Addis Ababa, respectively. Additionally, Air Seychelles is also scheduled to resume flights from



avoid a mismatch in expectations and allow for smooth journeys,” she says. We are also looking at videos highlighting safety regulations for MICE experiences, and curating videos displaying precautions that travellers can expect at various transit touch points including international and domestic airports, and car rentals. Additionally, we are looking at leveraging film tourism, and have been in talks with a couple of big banners in India to launch South Africa on the silver screen, by way of Bollywood movies, web series

and an online learning programme, is witnessing an increase in the number of Indian travel trade undertaking the training, as

area for us will be mobilising niche communities in India. We want to invite biking groups to explore the spectacular South African terrain. We are also looking at having more runners from India participate in South African ultramarathons like the Comrades Marathon and the Two Oceans Marathon. We expect self-drives to be popular with Indian travellers given that South Africa has some of the most beautiful self-drive routes in the world. Safe car rentals will play an important role in

unexplored Port Elizabeth, Robertson, West Coast, Drakensberg in KwaZulu-Natal, Panorama Route (Mpumalanga) and Garden Route.

With regards to experiences, South African Tourism will focus on leveraging the USPs South Africa has for the evolved and cautious post-Covid traveller. For example, the appeal of a safari holiday has increased given its natural ability to support social distancing. With the natural world as its stage, the essence of a safari has not changed.



market with 14,437 business, leisure, and MICE tourists.

Affirming that India continues to be a key market, Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head – MEISEA, South African Tourism, says, “India still holds much promise in the coming years. Indian travellers are resilient, with a large appetite for travel and new experiences. They may, however, now choose to travel differently – we can expect to see a rise in FITs, demands for drivecations, and flexible booking dates. We are looking at introducing newer, customised experiences and itineraries for this FIT traveller segment.”

India to South Africa. To facilitate a smooth travel journey for them, South African visas are now being made available within five to seven working days or less from the date of application.

Marketing efforts

Nkani adds that the NTO's marketing and communication approach is extremely focused and targeted. “We are looking at maintaining a consumer-centric approach, while also building trust and aspiration. Consumers will be made well aware of all processes and requirements by the destination or transfer facilities in order to

We can expect to see a rise in FITs, demands for drivecations, and flexible booking dates

or ad shoots. We look at offering easy permits as well as competitive pricing,” Nkani reveals.

During the lockdown period, the tourism board also noticed an increase in screen time by consumers, and hence promoted virtual tourism in a big way. Nkani adds, “We used digital mediums to educate our trade partners, who ultimately sell the destination. SA Specialist, our fun and interac-



trade agents seek to upskill and reskill themselves to cater to new age travellers.” Her team is also reworking itineraries to ensure consumers get value-driven packages at the best possible rates. Over the next few months, South African Tourism hopes to have productive conversations with the travel trade – to explore mutually beneficial collaborations and associations.

Future outlook

In India, a consumer-oriented campaign targeting the desi audience is in the pipeline. “At South African Tourism, we have enhanced efforts to make our itineraries, properties and transport facilities more sustainable. We also intend to market our sustainable product offerings and ecotourism experiences, like cycling tours, nature safaris, conservation projects and rural experiences,” says Nkani.

This year, South African Tourism will be specifically targeting niche communities and promoting newer regions. “A large focus

the tourism ecosystem, as larger number of travellers are turning to self-drives for the assurance of privacy and safety,” Nkani adds.

Promoting newer regions

For the next couple of months, travellers can enter through cities that have restored international

However, guests will experience enhanced sanitisation policies, regular temperature checks for guests and staff, smaller camps and smaller game drive groups to ensure social distancing is maintained even in the safari vehicle. These safety and hygiene protocols can be expected across as



connectivity. Which means they can either enter through the Mother City – Cape Town, Johannesburg or Durban, and use these cities as a gateway to the rest of these picturesque new regions, including the stunning and relatively

all adventure, culinary and cultural attractions as well.

“We are aware of the effect the pandemic has on the global economy, and have been repackaging accordingly, with the intent to offer consumers’ deals and discounts. There is no surprise or extra-cost to travellers. We are also in conversations with several airlines to understand how we can best optimize and reduce travel costs,” Nkani promises.

Health and safety

South Africa currently has internationally benchmarked health and safety protocols in place at all private game lodges and government-owned national parks, shopping hubs, restaurants and accommodation facilities.



Open to Indian tourists

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

Re-engaging with trade

EbixCashTravels(Via.com) has taken the bold initiative to re-engage with the trade by conducting travel sub-agent meets across the country, making sure that all COVID protocols are followed.

Nisha Verma

Naveen Kundu, MD, EbixCash Travel Services (parent company of Via.com) says that the aim behind these meets is to bring agents, to get back to their businesses. "These are small and medium enterprises, whom we have been ensuring that, as a conglomerate we will



Naveen Kundu
MD, EbixCash Travel Services
(parent company of Via.com)

nars is to bring them back into the business."

These engagements with travel agents started in July and with 40 cities covered with road-shows and we will continue other cities too. We will keep taking

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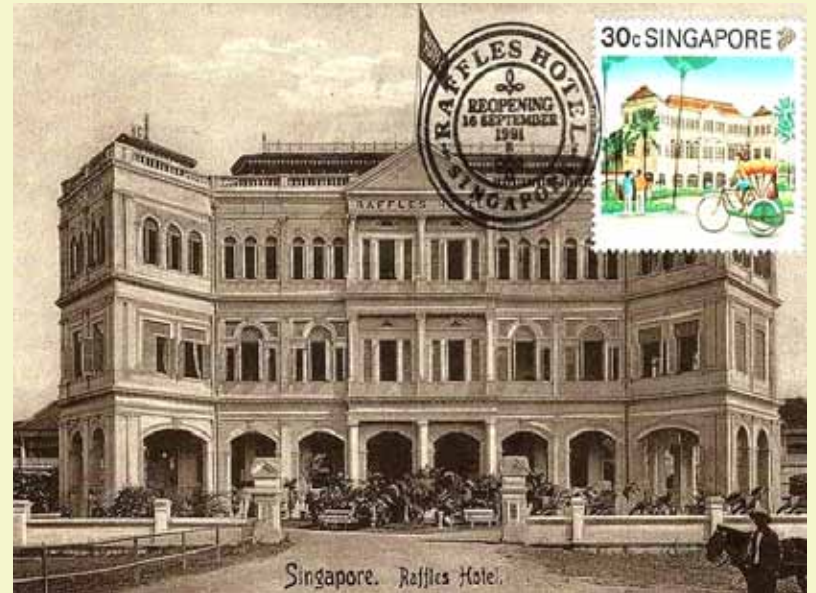
help you with technology, credit lines, efficient payment remittances. These are the efforts we are making and rewarding them for staying with us, even during the pandemic," he adds. With improving situation, EbixCash Travels (Via.com) is all out to support, reassure and extend help to its trade partners to grow their business, he insisted. "As

we believe in developing and keeping the personal connection with the community and expanding it by creating physical community meetings. And to have a closed group conversation with the partners to understand challenges and help them overcome," asserts Kundu.

The small and medium agents are trying to revive themselves "However, they need help from larger companies and hence we have offered ourselves. The prime objective of agent semi-

more initiatives for our partners. We are also going to launch several reward and recognition programmes for the trade."

Treasure trove from philatelist



Gajesh Girdhar, owner Paryatan Holidays ;Chairman, Governing body NIMA (Network of Indian Mice agents) and a corporate travel advisor, shares this rare stamp of Singapore from his personal collection. Singapore post released a stamp & cover in 1991 on re-opening of Raffles Hotel in Singapore on celebration of its 134th Birthday.



Gajesh Girdhar
Paryatan Holidays Chairman,
Governing body NIMA

British Airways has created an online interactive map showing the entry requirements for every destination the airline flies to. This heat map tool brings together the latest information for more than 100 countries. Users will be able to see what travel restrictions each country has in place and searching visually by typing in their choice of destination.

Q&A with...



WTM London Exhibition Director, Simon Press

What is the theme for WTM London 2021?

WTM London is the leading global event for the travel industry.

WTM London was the last travel trade show to take place before the pandemic, and will be the first one to take place after COVID-19. These will be the first contracts signed after almost 2 years.

It aims to support the industry in recovering, rebuilding and reconnecting as quickly, efficiently and sustainably as possible after COVID-19.

With over 40 years of experience, we are considered a solid knowledge centre for the tourism economy and a reliable source of data and ideas for our exhibitors, buyers, visitors and media.

WTM London is the brand that unites the industry and facilitates businesses to build their businesses across physical and online platforms.

In essence, WTM London is a strategic partner supporting all members of the global travel industry to promote their assets and attract targeted travellers.

What is new for WTM London 2021?

So much is new for WTM London 2021. This year WTM London will be held for the first time in an innovative hybrid format.

The physical event will occur at ExCeL, London on Monday, November 1-Wednesday, November 3, 2021, and will be followed by WTM Virtual - November 8-9, 2021.

I have already highlighted the recovering, rebuilding and reconnecting concept - essential for this year's show to help exhibitors get back on track reconnecting with the right buyers, suppliers, visitors and media.

Responsible Tourism is one of our core pillars. We'll run content sessions around the topic and host the Responsible Tourism Awards during WTM London on November 2. The

awards recognise and reward businesses and destinations contributing to a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry.

Travel Forward, the travel technology event co-located with WTM London at ExCeL, will also take place physically from 1-3 November and virtually from 8-9 November. The show inspires the travel and hospitality industry with the next generation of technology.

Across the WTM Portfolio, **WTM Buyers' Club** has over 10,000 qualified international buyers, and as before, we will be focusing on quality over quantity. Representatives from more than 60 countries have signed up to WTM London's Buyers' Club.

Buyers from Jet2Holidays, easyJet Holidays, Saga Holidays and British Airways Holidays are among the companies confirmed at WTM London's Buyers' Club.

We are pleased to announce that we will be running our very successful buyers speed networking again - in person. This is where buyers and exhibitors have short meetings then hold longer meetings during the show open hours.

We understand the need for the industry to reconnect. We are anticipating a huge demand to gain access to speed networking from both exhibitors & buyers. The new formats deliver better connections and more meetings, all in a safe environment.

Connect Me is our networking and meeting tool that will help you find buyers that match your business needs so you can arrange meetings in advance of WTM London and WTM Virtual.

London Travel Week will be a seven-day travel celebration over the week of WTM London - taking place from 30th October - 5 November. It will allow the travel industry to come together and collectively shape the next 12 months of travel and tourism.

WTM London will have two seminar theatres and will live stream all content sessions during the physical event.

What is WTM London doing to ensure the health and safety of its attendees during the show?

WTM London and Travel Forward are working closely with local authorities, ExCeL, London, Public Health England, and Transport for London to ensure attendees' highest possible levels of health and safety.

Attendees will need to demonstrate their COVID-19 status by one of the following:

- Proof of vaccination
- Proof of negative test
- Proof of natural immunity

Visitors must not travel to ExCeL, if they feel unwell.

Admission will only be for those who register in advance and visitors are encouraged to use WTM & TF's planning tools before they arrive.

Delegates can show their badge for contactless scanning, either on a smartphone or printout - and there will be no badge holders or lanyards.

WTM London will be a 'mask-friendly' event as delegates are strongly recommended to wear face masks, especially in enclosed or crowded spaces. Those using public transport will be required to wear a face mask on the Transport for London network.

Back in May this year, we organised a very successful Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai - the largest face-to-face travel and tourism event in the world since the pandemic. ATM also hosted a virtual show the following week.

What will the conference programme include?

At this year's WTM London physical show will bring two seminar theatres - WTM Global Stage and Travel Forward. We'll be live streaming all content sessions during the physical event, and those will be available during WTM & TF Virtual event.

WTM London 2021 will host a series of high-profile industry conferences that will formulate the future of global travel and help guide the industry after COVID-19.

Informative and fascinating conferences will take place, allowing delegates to get insights from industry-leading professionals.

Conference-goers will have the chance to hear from global ministers during our traditional **UNWTO, WTTC & WTM Ministers' Summit** on Tuesday, November 2; an extensive **Responsible Tourism** programme throughout WTM London also includes the **WTM Responsible Tourism Awards**.

The **International Tourism & Investment Conference Summit** (ITIC) is also taking place during the 3-day show. Investment in tourism will create new jobs and economic growth, and the ITIC event will facilitate vital financial and business partnerships that will pave the way for innovation and recovery.

At **Travel Forward**, we'll bring the Start-Up competition, Digital Marketing Sessions - in partnership with The Five Percent, content Payment Solution and many other topics.



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5,000
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media

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Show Dates and Location

WTM London & Travel Forward - Physical Events

- Monday, 1 November - 10:00-18:00 (invite only)
- Tuesday, 2 November - 10:00-18:00
- Wednesday, 3 November - 10:00-17:00

Location: ExCeL, London, Royal Victoria Dock,
1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL

WTM & TF Virtual - Online Events

- Monday 8 November 07:00-22:00
- Tuesday 9 November 07:00-22:00

Registration is now open for the event

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ADTOI Maha Chapter's tour to J&K

Members of the ADTOI Maharashtra Chapter recently returned from a study tour to Jammu & Kashmir, led by Chapter Chairman Dharmendra Singh. The 32-member delegation from Maharashtra and Gujarat visited Kashmir, Sonmarg, Kargil, Leh, Nubra, and Pangong on a 10-night tour.



Fly Delhi to Maafaru & Male

Maldivian is all set to start direct flights from New Delhi to Maafaru and Male' on 21st October 2021. It will operate A321 & A320 on this route with both business and economy class configuration.

TT Bureau

Maldivian, the national carrier of Republic of Maldives, owned and operated by Island Aviation Services Limited (IAS), will operate A321 & A320 on this route offering both business and economy class configuration. Currently, flag



for Maldivian and will be managing their sales and marketing activities in New Delhi.

On the new route, i.e. New Delhi to Maafaru, flights will operate on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Maafaru International Airport, which is located in Noonu atoll, was opened in 2019 and is also managed by Island Aviation Services Limited (IAS). With three direct weekly flights to Maafaru, another international hub of the largest source market, the new flights will connect North Maldives to India. Cocooned by some of the most sought-after luxury resorts in the destination, along with many

guest houses, the region is home to over 10,000 tourist beds spread across four atolls making this new route a highly lucrative leisure market.

Vijay Bhatia, President, Bird Group said "We are delighted to launch this new service connecting New Delhi with Maafaru and Male' effective 21st Oct 2021. This direct flight will offer the fastest connection for Indian travellers looking to holiday in North Maldives luxury resorts".

Bird Travels will help Maldivian to further strengthen the airline's sales team and provide support to the Indian travel trade.

Tourism for inclusive growth

▶ Contd from page 1

planning a conference with the tourism ministers of South Indian states on the same lines."

Shripad Yesso Naik, MoS, Tourism, said that "The tourism sector touches almost every part of our economy and society there by benefitting historically marginalised people



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

and those at risk of being left behind. There is no other industry that plays a crucial role in the overall development of the country, by creating job opportunities for all sectors of the society. Hence, revival of tourism plays an important role in recovering the global economy, and sustainability is relevant for

both the developed and developing countries."

In his keynote address, Birla said that committed and collective efforts will ensure that India emerges as the best tourist destination in the world. "India's domestic and foreign policies have provided an enabling environment for promotion of tourism. Our goal must be to make India the number one tourist destination in the world. In this regard, more and more efforts should be made to develop tourist-friendly destinations." Birla also laid emphasis on using IT tools in order to promote tourism, both at the domestic and the international levels.

He also launched NIDHI 2.0 (National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry) and released "India Tourism Statistics: At a Glance, 2021. In addition, MOT, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI) have signed an MoU to actively promote and support 'sustainability initiatives' in the tourism sector, which was also exchanged at the event.

For **Arvind Singh**, Secretary Ministry of Tourism, World Tourism Day is a critical moment as countries around the world look up to tourism for being an economic driver. "It is possible to revive the tourism sector quickly by reviving

Tourism sector has the capability to boost the social, cultural, economic and human resource development

demand especially of domestic tourism. We are targeting last-mile connectivity through Viability Gap Funding to MoCA under RCS UDAN scheme. Also, we are in discussion with the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways for improving road connectivity to important destinations," he said.

With three direct weekly flights to Maafaru, they will connect North Maldives to India

carrier of Maldives operates to Trivandrum, Cochin and to Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Bird Travels, the airline management arm of Bird Group, is the General Sales Agent (GSA)

Workshop on gender sensitisation

Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) Women's Collective organized a Gender Sensitisation workshop with the purpose of making travel an equal experience for women and to help the travel industry understand the importance of gender roles and expectations.

Janice Alysius

Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) Women's Collective organized a Gender Sensitization workshop for the adventure travel industry. The workshop was conducted to help the travel industry understand the importance of gender roles and expectations.

The workshop was conducted by 'Devee', an organization that seeks to empower women by building equitable workplaces that will help them achieve their full potential, at the same time, help men understand that gender sensitization is an important first step, for a workplace to thrive.

Arshdeep Anand, Chairperson, ATOAI Women's Collective, introduced the workshop. She brought to focus that more than 50% of the workforce in the adventure



Arshdeep Anand
Chairperson
ATOAI Women's Collectives



Priyadarshini Narendra
IIM and INSEAD
Alumni



Doorva Bahuguna
Alumna of
IIM Ahmedabad

We all know
gender
equality is the
new reality for
us today

— Anand

Every individual
is different and
should not be
differentiated
based on gender

— Narendra

Safety is not just
about physical
violence but
feeling safe to be
themselves

— Bahuguna

travel industry are women. Almost 14% of entrepreneurs in our country are women and they

comprise of 52% of travellers. She said, "Men and women are rubbing shoulders in most fields. While we

have come a long way, from seeing women in purely traditional roles as homemakers, there is immense

scope for better gender parity and sensitivity. As we all know gender equality is the new reality".

The workshop was then led by **Priyadarshini Narendra**, an IIM and INSEAD Alumni, and **Doorva Bahuguna**, an alumna of IIM Ahmedabad. They spoke about the increasing number of women travelling independently and how the travel industry can serve them better. They both showcased the issues and challenges of gender inequality, especially in adventure travel and by large in travel and tourism industry, and significance of gender sensitization.

"Mostly, men have been decision makers even in travel as entrepreneurs but now that is changing. Trips, systems, facilities, etc were all designed by keeping men in mind but the fact is that women have different needs which we need to keep in mind, particularly



given the huge consumer base they are today." said Priyadarshini.

She also added, "Every individual is different and should not be differentiated based on gender. We should not use gender to define who can do what. We should start looking at people as individuals, rather than male or female. Everyone is capable of doing something or other."

Women safety is the biggest need and the biggest challenge. Doorva said, "Safety is not just about physical violence but feeling safe to be themselves. Express themselves completely, with no judgment about their bodies, their clothes, their capabilities".

GTFF takes off on 21st Oct

The 2021 GTFF Virtual Edition is produced in association and support of Netherlands Tourism, with the mission to acknowledge and reward talented tourism filmmakers.

Janice Alysius

Global Tourism Film Festival (GTFF) is a groundbreaking Film Festival presenting films that have the power to raise awareness about the vital role destinations play, in the success of cinema and television. GTFF is the world's first nomadic Tourism Film Festival to be held in support of tourism destinations and local economies.

GTFF recognizes international filmmakers and audio-visual productions that fundamentally integrate and advance global destination awareness. Driven by a powerful mission statement, GTFF activities include film industry workshops and seminars, exploring sustainable tourism; inspiring audiences to take positive preservative action.

The 2021 GTFF Virtual Edition is produced in association and support of Netherlands

Tourism with the mission to acknowledge and reward talented tourism filmmakers, to promote the latest trends in tourism film making, to inspire film industry professionals to turn their efforts and specialize

shared with active foundations ready to advocate for sustainable tourism principles.

GTFF is produced by Canadian and US tourism and film industry leaders that have a demon-



in tourism film making, to draw the attention of film production companies, media, tourism, and the public to one platform and create conditions for highly effective promotional content. A portion of the GTFF revenues is

strated prominent background in Film and Tourism including appointment to regulatory commissions' of film and tourism. Festival information is available at www.tourism-festival.org.

Spree Hotel in Tumkur

Located near Bengaluru in the industrial city of Tumkur, the 45-key hotel will also have a conference as well as a banquet hall and cater to both corporate and social events.

TT Bureau

Spree Hotels has announced the signing of a new hotel in Tumkur, Karnataka that further cements its presence all over India including developed and developing cities. It currently operates over 20+ properties across India, with many upcoming proper-

Bengaluru and its emerging success, the city is a hub for transit and local business. Spree will bring the first boutique and mid-market hotel to this town on the cusp of its economic surge.

The hotel will boast 45 comfortable rooms with several dining options such as, a multi-cuisine restaurant, an open-air bar, as

ally, the hotel is a great venue for both corporate and social events, with a conference hall as well as a banquet hall which are tailored to suit larger events or more intimate gatherings.

In COVID times, with greater need for sanitised stays, travellers to Tumkur can rest easy with Spree. Spree looks forward to hosting tourists from India and the rest of the world shortly.

Spree is a brand created from the ground-up paying close attention to the wants and needs of the Indian traveller and meeting them with international standards. Founded by **Keshav Baljee** in 2010, Spree Hospitality is India's boutique and mid-market hospitality operator. Spree focuses on full-service, high-quality hotels. Its tagline is 'Do More' – which means going above and beyond for guests, its partners, and its employees. By doing this, they convert normal 'stays' to 'Sprees'.



ties. Tumkur is a major industrial city located in the southern part of Karnataka, situated at a distance of 70 km northwest of Bengaluru. With its proximity to

well as a pub. The hotel will be equipped with a host of additional facilities to help the guest to unwind such as a spa, and a well-equipped gymnasium. Addition-

AIUla: The world's masterpiece

In addition to focusing on leisure and MICE segments, AIUla will also leverage on the connection that Indian Muslims have for Saudi Arabia. It will be sold as a solo destination clubbed with key cities in Saudi Arabia and also promoted as a combo destination with neighboring countries like Oman, UAE, Jordan, Israel and Egypt.



Hazel Jain

It is a perfect destination not just for families, couples, adventure seekers and honeymooners but also MICE. Its vast open landscapes which is great for outdoor activities such as zip-line, hiking, cycling, a bike park, and horse trails. A place of extraordinary human and natural heritage, AIUla is located in the northwest of Saudi Arabia. The world's masterpiece, AIUla, is a living museum that holds 200,000 years of largely unexplored human history.

Underlining the importance of the India market for this destination, **Beena Menon**, India Representatives, Royal Commission for AIUla, says, "India is an important source market for AIUla. Once borders re-open, AIUla will be an interesting destination to explore as it has vast open spaces, natural



Beena Menon
India Representatives
Royal Commission for AIUla

We are promoting it as a destination for leisure and MICE travellers

— Menon

beauty, outstanding landscape, and highest standards of visitor



Huzan Fraser Motivala
India Representatives
Royal Commission for AIUla

We will conduct roadshows and organise travel trade famils

— Motivala

experience." She adds that AIUla is a year-round destination. "We

are promoting it as a destination for leisure and MICE travellers. It will be sold as a solo destination and can be clubbed with key cities such as Riyadh and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. In addition, AIUla can be promoted as a combo destination with neighbouring countries like Oman, UAE, Jordan, Israel and Egypt," she explains.

MICE segment will love it

AIUla is home to series of historical and archaeological sites. Menon explains that AIUla is great for MICE and boasts of a state-of-the-art multi-purpose conference and entertainment venue, Maraya. "A glass structure covered in mirrored panels reflecting AIUla's beauty, Maraya is the world's largest mirrored building according to Guinness World Records. In addition, we will be looking at tapping the Umrah segment and promote AIUla as an extension to Umrah tours," she adds. AIUla is being



promoted as a three-night itinerary covering the four heritage sites, adventure activities and other unique experiences. Travellers can even spend a week in AIUla and include a road trip as it is two to three hour drive from the Red Sea.

Trade engagements

Huzan Fraser Motivala, India Representatives, Royal Commission for AIUla, shares that all marketing activities will be focussed on B2B and B2C platforms. "We have been working with travel trade to create aware-

ness and interest in AIUla and engaging them through webinars, trainings, and trade shows. We will also closely work with key trade partners on joint promotional activities and continue to disseminate monthly newsletters to travel agents across India. Once borders open, we will conduct roadshows and organise travel trade famils," she reveals. The team has already organised three webinars since the launch of AIUla in the Indian market. Motivala adds, "We believe in the sensitive and sensible development of the destination."

J&K puts tourism as top priority

A three-member delegation from the DoT, Jammu & Kashmir Government, led by **Dr GN Itoo**, Director Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir Tourism, was in Mumbai recently to meet key tour operators as well as members from the film fraternity. The UT has put tourism as a top priority and has enhanced its promotional budget by at least four times the previous year.



Sitamarhi for religious tourism

Improving socio economic status of border districts, especially aspirational districts is one of the priorities of the government of India. An action plan is devised to lead to successful tourism in Bihar. Key priorities as well as a clear action plan to be followed by tourism authority.

“ In these series, six webinars have been organized focusing on Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Meghalaya, Gujarat and Nagaland that received an overwhelming response from the government officials and industry stakeholders. He spoke about the challenges faced by Bihar and gaps in accessibility, transport and economic infrastructure, required by tourists, need to be addressed. Experience in collaborating on tourism between stakeholders in border areas is indispensable. ”



Pradeep Multani
Sr. Vice President, PHDCCI

“ Border tourism refers to visiting border areas to experience diverse cultures, acquiring knowledge for trade or meeting local communities living on the border. Improving socio economic status of border districts are one of the priorities for the GoI. An action plan for successful tourism in Bihar, is the interdependence between MoT, state tourism, development boards, community participation and industry participation strategies. Key priorities and a clear action plan to be followed by tourism authority. ”



Jatinder Singh
Director, PHDCCI

“ We are creating a task force with the government and all the private stakeholders to enhance the image of Bihar as a safe and secure tourist destination. Since Sitamarhi is not very well connected to other places and does not have good tourism infrastructure, it becomes very important that rapid improvement in the local infrastructure and connectivity - whether by road, rail or air - should be majorly focused to boost tourism in the district of Bihar. ”



Taranjot Singh
Deputy Development Commissioner, Bihar

“ To improve the socio economic conditions of the people of the Sitamarhi district, the district administration has sent a proposal to the Ministry of Textile for training the local people in handicrafts. The handicrafts can then be sold at popular tourist attractions. This will no doubt help in not only improving the tourist footfalls to those spots but also help in the economic development of the people in Sitamarhi district in Bihar which will benefit the local communities. ”



Satyajit Kumar Singh
Chairman, Bihar Chapter, PHDCCI

“ Sitamarhi district is like a 'PunyaBhoomi' and shall be visited by thousands of tourists under the Ramayana Circuit which is going to begin from November 2021. The number of tribal population is another USP. The state government can tie up with Tribal Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (TRIFED) for marketing the products made by the tribals which can create excellent livelihood opportunities, while showcasing their talent ”



Rama Kamaraju
Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog
Inputs by Janice Alyosius

Ram's exile, now a tourism circuit

A new tourism circuit based on Lord Ram's stay in Chhattisgarh during his 14 year exile from Ayodhya will be inaugurated on Thursday, October 7, 2021 on the auspicious occasion of Navaratri. The State Tourism Board is using the occasion to introduce their new tourism circuit that follows the path travelled by Lord Ram in the region during his exile: Ram Van Gaman Paryatan Paripath. In the first phase, the plan is to develop the nine spots on the forested route that Lord Ram traversed. These sites include: Sitamarhi- Harchowka, Ramgarh, Shivrinarayan, Turturiya, Chandkhuri, Rajim, Sihawa, Jagdalpur and Ramaram.

The celebrations will be a visual spectacle combining music, dance, laser show and LED mapping highlighting the story of Lord Ram and his exile. The event will become an annual occurrence with fiesta and festivities. It is aimed at giving Chhattisgarh its place as an exciting destination for international as well as domestic tourists.

Kerala readies for caravan tourism



Caravan tourism is slated to be the next big thing for Kerala Tourism after houseboats in three decades. What's more, the Caravan Tourism Policy also offers investment subsidy to attract operators and incentivise the purchase of caravans.



Kerala has announced a comprehensive, stakeholder-friendly Caravan Tourism Policy that will offer visitors a safe, customized and close-to-nature travel experience. This marks a paradigm shift in almost three decades after the state made it big with houseboat tourism that provided a unique experience to visitors and positioned the state as a major destination.

Like other successful tourism products of Kerala launched since 1990s, caravan tourism is also to be developed on PPP mode with private investors, tour operators and local communities being key stakeholders. The policy offers attractive investment subsidy to caravan operators. Details of the subsidy will be announced soon.

The policy will incentivise the purchase of caravans and for



Launch of Caravan tourism policy in Kerala

establishing caravan parks, chalking out the process and procedures for its operations and approvals. The project will be rolled out in the next few months. **Dr Venu V**, Additional Chief Secretary, Kerala Tourism, says, "Caravan tourism imparts an added thrust to the state's inclusive approach of leveraging the tourism potential of the entire state by bringing to attention many an unexplored spot side-by-side the promotion of established destinations. Every unexplored destination can be made accessible with the roll

out of this meticulously drawn up policy."

The two major components of this activity are caravans and caravan parks. While the first involves specially-built vehicles for travel and stay, caravan parks are designated places to park the vehicles and enable the visitors to spend a night or a day or station for an extended period. There will be two types of caravans. In one model, two guests shall be accommodated, while the other is for a family of four members. The caravans will have the necessary

facilities for a comfortable stay such as sofa-cum-bed, kitchenette with fridge and microwave oven, dining table, toilet cubicle, partition behind the driver, Air-conditioner, internet connectivity, audio-video facilities, charging system and GPS. Preferably Bharat Stage VI compliant vehicles will be pressed into service. For the safety of guests, there will

be IT-enabled real-time monitoring of caravans.

A fool-proof mechanism is also put in place for according approval for the operation of caravans based on the procedures set by the State Motor Vehicles Department in accordance with the Central Motor Vehicles Rules.

A caravan park will be a completely safe and secure zone offering hassle-free and stress-free environment to tourists, protected with necessary features like compound wall, adequate security and safety arrangements, patrolling and surveillance cameras. The park authorities will maintain effective coordination with local authori-

ties and medical establishments to attend to medical emergencies. The parks will have at least

Caravan tourism imparts an added thrust to the state's inclusive approach

five parking bays and Tourist Facilitation Centres to inform the visitors of amenities and services available.

International Air Transport Association predicts that air travel numbers could double by 2038, affecting the environment, if steps are not taken to reduce the carbon footprints of aircrafts. Therefore, the aviation industry has seen the need for an eco-friendlier approach to air travel

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



OCTOBER 2021

Date	Event	Time
1	Dubai World Expo 2020	10:00 am
5-8	IFTM Top Resa	10:00 am
5-6	Annual MICE India and Luxury Travel Congress	8:00 am
6	Switzerland tourism Webinar - Zurich Tourism	3:00 pm
10	World Routes 2021	9:00 am
12-14	Gulf Travel Show 3.0	12:00 pm
13	TTG Incontri	10:00 am
20-22	VirtuallyYoursSouthAfrica	11:00 am
26	ILTM- LATAM	9:00 am
27	ITB Asia (Hybrid)	10:00 am

NOVEMBER 2021

1-3	World Travel Market (WTM)	10:00 am
9	IMEX America 2021	10:00 am
16-18	IATA Ground Handling Conference	9:00 am
16-18	Adventure ELEVATE 2021	9:00 am

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

20 European destinations confirmed

Exhibitors from nearly 20 European countries have signed up for WTM London, which will take place on the WTM Global Stage at ExCeL London from 1 – 3 November 2021, in order to seal meaningful business deals.



Exhibitors from nearly 20 European countries have signed up for WTM London to seal meaningful business deals as the world opens up for travel again.

One of the largest European contingents will be from Spain, including tourist boards representing various regions of Spain. Other major destinations include the national tourist boards from Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Tourism Ireland.

There are also exhibitors from France, Greece, Corfu, Malta, Holland, Brussels, Cyprus, Poland, Bulgaria, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Slovenia.

Dorota Wojciechowska, Polish National Tourist Office's New UK and Ireland Director, said: "The Polish travel industry is inspired



to make travel happen again and want to be a part of this year's WTM. It's vital for us to meet face-to-face with our British partners and renew our business relationships as we look to recover. We are looking forward to welcoming back all foreign tourists, particularly from the UK, we'll be promoting our key cities and regions, along with Polish tour operators."

Luis Araujo, President of Turismo de Portugal, said: "WTM is a fantastic opportunity to meet tour operators, media, buyers, and other delegates and promote Portugal's diverse offering. Portugal and the Portuguese continue to have all the attributes and competencies that took us to the top, so the ambition remains: it is time to

be, to leave the pause and press play, recalling the unique and emotional value of travelling."

Jeroen Roppe, a spokesperson for visit.brussels, said the tourist board was exhibiting "to show the world that Brussels is open. We are eager to give our partners opportunities to meet clients." Being at WTM London will enable stand partners to confirm contracts and make new contacts with professionals from around the world, Roppe added.

Darija Reic, Director at Croatian National Tourism Board - UK Representative office, said: "This year, we look forward to meeting with our travel trade partners, and potential new ones, and discussing ways of working together on making Croatia more attractive and accessible to UK travellers. A total of 4.3 million tourists visited Croatia in August 2021, which is an increase of 59% on 2020 and 86% of the result from August

2019. Our figures are being quite positive so far and I'm sure WTM London will help us promote Croatia even more".

Simon Press, WTM London & Travel Forward Exhibition Director, said:

"We're excited to welcome back so many European exhibitors at WTM as the travel industry rebuilds. They represent a wide cross-section of the trade, including tourist boards, hotel companies, destination management companies and more – all eager to create new partnerships and reaffirm existing relationships as we all prepare for recovery. Our exhibitor packages offer the best of both worlds as exhibitors will have a stand at ExCeL London as well as a global presence in the following week, so they can rebuild connections with established contacts and generate fresh leads from around the world."

Govt. for skill development

▶ Contd from page 1

sector will see brighter days," he says.

Govt. for Skill Development

Claiming that the government is highly focussed on skill development, he states, "For skill development, we have over 20 ministries working. India might be one of the few countries globally, which has a separate exclusively earmarked ministry for skill development. Apart from that, MOT, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Rural Development, and almost every ministry has some amount of their budget going for skill development, like the popular Pradhanmantri Kaushal Yojana. In 2019-20, Ministry of Skill Development earmarked Rs 2400 crore, and its budgetary allocations have increased to Rs. 3002 crores this year."

He said "Earlier, people were taking care of the hotels as hotels. Now, they should know about nursing also to take care of guests who suddenly fall ill. Hence, new skills are important. Owing to such a scenario emerging at the national level, all the 20 ministries are trying

to impart skills suiting their individual needs," he informs.

Tourism sector

Rao mentions, "We recently held a conference in Leh, Ladakh and even went to Assam as part of our outreach programme in Northeast. It's not possible to have 5-star hotels everywhere and hence homestays, budget segment hotels and boutique

There is no meaning of development anywhere unless local people are involved and engaged

hotels are coming up in the remote parts of Ladakh. The LG of Ladakh shared that one must come out with capacity building of different skills, which will suit the needs of foreign as well as domestic visitors. We are focussing on this through 'Hunar



G Kamala Vardhan Rao
Director General, Ministry of Tourism

se Rozgar' scheme or other schemes by the MOT."

He stresses that they are trying to look at the needs and then impart skills "In Kumarakom, Kerala for example, local self-help groups by ladies prepare fish and supply vegetables, linen, drinking water and coconut water to 5-star hotels. "State governments should get involved into developing responsible, need-based tourism and skill development," he says. He insisted that development is meaningless unless local people are involved and engaged in it. "We need to train the local people, including guides and taxi drivers. This kind of development will only take place when you have concentrated skill imparted," he adds.

Concern looms over SEIS

▶ Contd from page 1

reduced from 7% to 5%, that too in these hard times for travel trade. In fact, the biggest dent has come to the bigger tour operators, as the government has put a cap of Rs 5 crore."

Echoing the same thought, Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, shares that they have been sending regular recommendations to the Ministry of Commerce to increase the incentives to revive the industry. "Our main submission was 15% of SEIS during off season and 10% for season from October to March from 2020 to 2025. We had also suggested for a 10% SEIS instead of 7% for the previous year (2019-20) considering this was a crisis year. However, I think they have not even heard us and they have capped it from 3-5%, which I think will make it much more challenging an survival will get more difficult for this industry."

Mehra adds, "At all forums, IATO has been advocating 10% SEIS, and if not possible, at least 7% with no capping. How-

ever, the government has given us a maximum of 5% SEIS, with a capping of Rs 5 crore for all sectors. In fact, some of the large operators have already



Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI

spent this money on business promotion and this will be a very big loss to them."

Crashed hopes of hospitality

The hospitality sector has been requesting the government for some time to release SEIS benefits for 2019-20 under Foreign Trade Policy of 2015-20, says KB Kachru, Vice President, HAI. "The benefits already accrued should have been released in May 2020. The hotel industry was hopeful that the

government would enhance the SEIS benefits from 5% to 10% as it would infuse some liquidity into the cash strapped sector. The dependency of the hotel industry being high on import of goods to maintain global standards warrants SEIS benefits to be lucrative to reduce the import cost."

However, what happens is completely the opposite. "The reduction in percentage of SEIS benefits from 5% to 3% comes at a time when the industry is struggling for survival. The reduction of SEIS benefits is contrary to the expectations of the hotel industry."

Plea to the government

Kachru urges "We strongly appeal to the government to reconsider their decision and enhance the percentage of SEIS benefits for hotels."

Mehra adds, "The government is requested to at least raise it to 7 per cent and remove capping of Rs. 5 crore at least for the tourism and hospitality industry. We hope it will consider our plea."

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ECS GROUP

France

CEO **ADRIEN THOMINET** has been appointed Executive Chairman of ECS Group, succeeding Bertrand Schmoll. He took over the Executive Chairman role on 01 August 2021. Adrien Thominet has been with ECS Group for more than 25 years, becoming its COO in 2011 and then CEO in 2017. Over the past four years, ECS Group has seen enormous development, both in network and client base growth, as well as in innovation and technology.



MADHUBAN SAROVAR PORTICO

Mussoorie

Sarovar Hotels has appointed **SIDDHARTH SHARMA** as the General Manager for Madhuban Sarovar Portico, Mussoorie. With an experience of two decades in hospitality, from front office to training and operational management to business development, Siddharth is a seasoned professional and has worked with business hotel groups, resort groups, premium heritage hotels & pre-opening properties. Prior to this, he was the GM for Sarovar Portico, Surajkund. Started his professional journey in 1998 as Front office assistant. He has also worked with brands like Neemrana Fort Palace, V Resorts and Park Inn.



LORDS HOTELS AND RESORTS

Mumbai

Lords Hotels and Resorts has appointed **RAKHI PUROHIT** as General Manager – Revenue, at its corporate office. Rakhi has almost 15 years of experience in hospitality, having led the distribution and revenue management strategy for prestigious hotels. Earlier, she was associated with Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts Ltd as Director of Revenue Optimization in Malaysia and with InterContinental Hotels Group as Director of Revenue / Cluster Champion, Philippines. At Lords, she will be responsible for maximizing revenue by setting up proactive selling strategies and action plans.



AVIAREPS

Mumbai

AVIAREPS India appoints **MANSI OZA** as the Account Manager for Utah Office of Tourism. Mansi will be responsible for amplifying the presence of 'Visit Utah' in the India market. She will be handling the sales and marketing of Visit Utah and will aim to showcase the unique offering of the destination to the Indian traveller. She brings with her 10 years of experience in all functions of Sales, Marketing, Strategy and Digital Marketing. Being an avid traveller and adventure enthusiast herself, Mansi will work towards developing market share of Visit Utah as a destination which offers breath-taking views, tranquillity and adventure.



VIVANTA

New Delhi

Vivanta announced the appointment of **VIPUL CHOUDHARY** as Food and Beverage Manager. With over 16 years' experience in the restaurant and hospitality industry and gained invaluable experience at some of the prominent hotels of IHCL across the Taj and Vivanta brands. Vipul will be responsible to oversee the management and development of Food & Beverage and catering services and oversee the functioning of all Food and Beverage outlets at the hotel. He will work closely with the Sales and Marketing team to drive revenues and enhance brand visibility for the hotel's food and beverage repertoire.



EROS HOTEL

New Delhi

Eros Hotel announced the appointment of **ABHISHEK PRABHAKAR** as Associate Director of Sales - Leisure. He will play a pivotal role in strategically aligning and leading the business development goals in Travel Trade. Abhishek has 10 years experience in the hospitality industry. He has worked with brands like Taj Hotels & Resorts, Hilton Worldwide, Grand Hyatt Mumbai and Roseate Hotels & Resorts. He has also been a part of pre-opening assignments, regional sales and pan India sales. In his new role, Abhishek will be responsible for uplifting the segment & generating new business opportunities in Tier 2 & 3 cities.



IBIS

Pune

Elevating more women to leadership roles, ibis - an economy brand from the Accor group, welcomes **SHERYL DE SA** as the GM at ibis Pune. With two decades of experience, Sheryl will lead the hotel's overall management and operations. She has worked across key properties of Accor Group including Novotel Goa and ibis Styles Goa Calangute. She started her journey as the Associate Director of Sales for Novotel Goa Resort. She also played an instrumental part in setting up and positioning the first ibis Style hotels in India - 'ibis Styles Goa Calangute', as the Director of Sales & Marketing.



PATHFNDR

Bangalore

Pathfnr announced the appointment of **JOSEPH K JOSE** as its Vice President for Business Operations. Joe as he is known in the travel industry has over 24 years of experience in the travel industry and was last the CEO of BookCab. Prior to this, he was the Vice President & Head Wholesale at FCM Travels. Before that, he grew through the ranks to become the COO of Travel Tours Group. He has also worked with Via.com, Tourism Malaysia, and Cox & Kings earlier in his career.



NOVOTEL

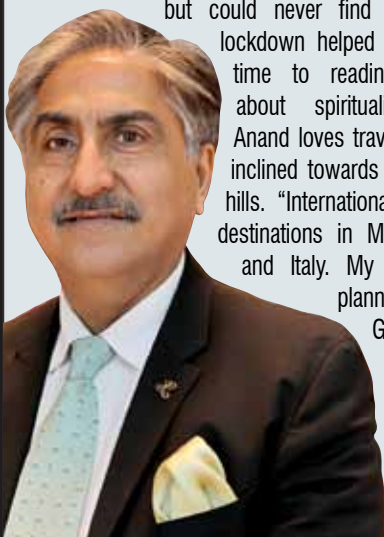
Chennai

GOPINATH JOHN Surendranath has been appointed as the Operations Manager at Novotel Chennai SIPCOT. John comes with over 18 years of experience across India and abroad. He has been with Accor for over ten years, and has grown up the ranks, starting as a Duty Manager at Novotel Ibis ORR Bengaluru. John will lead operations at SIPCOT and work towards strengthening its leadership positioning. In his last assignment, he was heading the Rooms Division Operations for the Novotel Hyderabad Convention Center.



TALKing People

For **JAIDEEP ANAND**, GM, The Leela Gandhinagar, exercising is the best way to de-stress. "I start my day in the gym. I have always loved reading books on spirituality, but could never find much time. The lockdown helped me devote more time to reading and listening about spirituality," he says. Anand loves travelling and is very inclined towards holidaying in the hills. "Internationally, I prefer hilly destinations in Maldives, London, and Italy. My next holiday is planned to Udaipur and Goa," he shares.



PARINITA SAMANTA, Director of Marketing & Communications at Pullman & Novotel New Delhi, cherishes old, happy moments by looking at photographs. "It keeps me going and motivated. I have tried my hands at Italian and Chinese dishes," she says. She also loves travelling. "India has many unexplored beautiful places; it's hard to just pick just one destination. But I'll go with Gulmarg in Kashmir. Outside India, Australia has been my best holiday so far."



ALLEN MACHADO, CEO of Niraamaya Wellness Retreats, de-stresses by reading books and listening to music. "I take an evening jog to unwind, followed by captivating series on Netflix. During the lockdown, I enhanced my cooking skills and have also taken up astronomy since I love stargazing," Machado shares. His favourite destination in India is Goa and internationally it is Eastern Europe and the USA.



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Prepping for the future

Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Tourism, shared how they are preparing to offer an experiential journey for tourists and also planning region specific events to trigger the travel bug amongst people, while ensuring the bottlenecks in infrastructure development are taken care of.



Nisha Verma

In line with the theme of this year's World Tourism Day— 'Tourism for inclusive growth', **Rupinder Brar** believes that MOT is looking at travel, tourism and hospitality providing a lot of employment opportunities across the socio-economic spectrum. "It's an opportunity to work at the grassroot level, to ensure community involvement and ensure that the benefits flow back to the society at large, through inclusive tourism in India. MOT is working on rural tourism with MSME ministry to identify such clusters. We are also working on the experiential journey of tourists, where one doesn't just see a monument or a place, but should be able to interact with the local people including artisans, musicians, or story tellers," she stressed.

of an opening and are in a state of preparedness."

Take away from Assam

After the recent meeting of tourism and culture ministers in Guwahati, Brar reveals that connectivity was the major focus. "We had everyone from Ministry of Roads, IRCTC and Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA). We discovered that a lot of work was

With Ministry of Culture, there was focus on cultural events. We had sessions on tourism infrastructure and progress under Swadesh Darshan and the PRASHAD scheme was keenly reviewed. There were also interactions on digital promotion and overall promotional strategy, all of which were chaired by the minister himself. We had discussions with the stakeholders, where many good suggestions, feedback, and ideas came forth. Under the MoU signed with IRCTC, many routes are being crafted beyond Guwahati and interesting itineraries will be coming up," she highlighted.

Also, on the lines of Northeast, an event will be held in South India. "A similar initiative shall be led by the Minister in South India in Karnataka. Either it will be in Bengaluru and Hampi, or just in Hampi."

While the participation in WTM is still under works, MOT is on track with organising the next ITM for Northeast in Nagaland. "It will be a physical event, and is scheduled just before Hornbill Festival, as suggested by the Minister. The idea is to benefit from the energy of Hornbill. Since the festival starts from December 1, ITM will be on 28-30th November and preparations are afoot for the event," she concluded.

MOT is planning more state specific events where more granular work shall be done

The key takeaway, said Brar "We need to do much more coordinated work with each state in Northeast. Also, there was a clear understanding that all need to work in a harmonised way so that the benefits of one department or one ministry flow back to all the sectors."

Way forward

MOT is planning state specific events where more granular work shall be done, said Brar. "We are trying to do as much as we can. In the first week of October, we will be taking a domestic Fam tour on the Buddhist train from Jaipur to Bodhgaya, Nalanda, Rajgir and closing in Varanasi and coming back. The idea is to showcase the IRCTC Buddhist-train as a product and these destinations as important part of the Buddhist circuit and beyond. Hon. Minister will also be present in the Varanasi leg of the journey," she updated.



Rupinder Brar
Additional Director General, Tourism

Opening of borders

Brar believes that, with the Prime Minister giving indication of opening borders, it shows that the government is also keen on this. "They understand how important travel and tourism are for the economy, and in bringing people together and bringing the joie de vivre back. While it's the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Home that will lead the discussion on opening, but as the Ministry of Tourism, we are beneficiaries

happening in all these sectors within the region, which spells for a very bright future for travel and tourism in the Northeast region," she said.

Under MoCA's UDAN 4.0 scheme, there is focus on Northeast, she revealed. "There are a number of routes being worked on by MoCA where we as MOT have suggested many of them and have also given Viability Gap Funding (VGF).

Digital vaccination visas

Various initiatives have been adopted to create digital health passports in the world. The Common Pass project was established in 2019 and the IATA has released the Travel Pass app to help passengers convey their test results to borderline authorities and airlines. It also allows governments to verify the genuineness of vaccination proofs and passengers' identities. Therefore, passengers who wish to skip quarantine must obtain this digital health passport proof of their tests, vaccination, and recovery.

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