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Aviation spreads wings

Union Minister of Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia claims that Indian aviation sector will witness unprecedented growth in terms of connectivity and developing an ecosystem that will benefit all stakeholders.

Nisha Verma

Union Minister of Civil Aviation **Jyotiraditya Scindia** inaugurated the Wings India 2022 at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad recently, where he claimed that the Indian aviation sector has passed through a lot of trials and tribulations during the pandemic period, but it is emerging stronger, fitter and ready to face challenges and tap the opportunities. "The sector has shown resilience, and by next year, we will surpass the pre-COVID number of domestic passengers. The international flights are going to fully resume and number

of international travellers from India will also jump rapidly," he said.

Collaboration is key
Scindia said that the government will be a constructive collaborator with all stakeholders of the aviation sector and work with them for the development of civil aviation in the country. "We don't believe in square tables, we believe in roundtables at our ministry to ensure the success of this sector and our country at large," he said. "Wings India 2022 is a watershed moment, as it is being organised in the 75th year of Indian independence- Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. The agenda of



Jyotiraditya Scindia
Union Minister of Civil Aviation

Gati Shakti given by the Prime Minister, a twin-pronged initiative and synergy of giving speed and the power, will drive India for years to come. Various

departments of the Government of India across the umbrella have come together to power India. As India moves from 75 to 100 years, it will emerge as new power as paradigm has changed and there is lot of focus on infrastructure development. The building of infrastructure is not confined to the economic centres but being provided in all parts of the country for everyone," he added.

Turning a new page
Scindia claimed that the civil aviation sector will play an important role in the country's

Contd on page 10 ▶

Tourism & ties

Rupinder Brar, Addl DG, Union Ministry of Tourism, talks about plans to promote tourism and relations with neighbouring countries.

Janice Alyosius

As per the data from Trip Advisor, travellers in South Asia, South East Asia and the neighbouring countries are showing a lot of interest in India. "It is very hearting that research data suggests that in times to come, India is going to be a highly favoured destination," said **Rupinder Brar**, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.



Rupinder Brar
Additional DG, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

"I think it is a very exciting time for India as the visa regime has been announced. Previously we were issuing tourist visas from 15 November, but now it has gone full throttle with 156 countries on

e-visa list and regular commercial flights starting from 27 March. We have been in contact with the civil aviation and airport authorities to make sure that all travellers

Contd on page 10 ▶

A range to reckon with

For Accor the idea is to offer choices for travellers in terms of varied options of stay and experiences with a host of properties in different genres across the country.

Nisha Verma

Puneet Dhawan, Senior Vice President Operations, India and South Asia, Accor, has claimed that the company was expanding even during the pandemic. "In the last two years of the pandemic, from a hospitality industry point of view, from Accor, we have more than 50 properties in 16 key cities within India, ranging from The Raffles in Udaipur, which opened in August in the middle of COVID wave last year, right up to a smart economy brand with Interglobe Hospitality called the ibis," Dhawan said, while speaking on the 'New Ways of Marketing to Recharge Tourism'



Puneet Dhawan
Senior Vice President Operations India and South Asia, Accor

by PATA India Chapter and BBC. Talking about the company's strategy, he revealed, "We very soon found out that we need to be agile, adapt and go inwards the domes-

tic market. It was the only market at that time, as borders were shut and there were many restrictions. India will take a long time to recover the images of wave two and we really need to work together as an industry with all travel partners to get those images out of the minds of international traveller."

However, Dhawan said that weddings have been the main source of business for a lot of our hotels during this period. "Just to share an example, in the state of Rajasthan, we operate the Fairmont Jaipur, which will do about 100 weddings this year alone, despite the setbacks in January and February," he added. ▶

'Inbound revival by 2023'

Inbound tourism will restart by last quarter of 2022 and the year ahead and it should be a hockey stick revival for Incredible India, says **Vikram Madhok**, Honorary Secretary, PATA India Chapter.

Nisha Verma

Inbound business will revive only after international scheduled flight operations start, said **Vikram Madhok**, Honorary Secretary, PATA India Chapter and Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent (India). "We have a war going on, and I understand we have come out of a pandemic, but we are really off the grid in front of the consumer. Hence, notwithstanding all the good efforts that the Ministry of Tourism as well as the various departments have made and now the missions internationally will represent the country, but we need to get back in front of the consumer. If you are not in the face



Vikram Madhok
Honorary Secretary PATA India Chapter and Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent (India).

of the consumer, you are nowhere around the radar and they are not going to consider you. Everything will sort out once we open up our

borders to international flights," he added.

Speaking on when luxury travel will revive, Madhok said, "It will revive starting last quarter of 2022 and 2023 and it should be a hockey stick revival for Incredible India."

For states to ride on the growth wave, Madhok advises that everything starts with infrastructure. "If you want to emulate Rajasthan or Goa, you need to have world class products in place, and infrastructure is key. Secondly, if you have infrastructure in place, work with the tour operators, travel agents and with the media to put your state in front of the customer. ▶

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Malaysia opens for travel

Malaysia is ready to welcome international travellers from 1 April 2022, especially from the Middle East region. With 90 per cent of its population being fully vaccinated, including booster dose, tourists should feel confident to visit the country.



Nisha Verma

Manoharan Periasamy, Senior Director, International Promotion Division (Asia & Africa), Tourism Malaysia, speaking at the 4th edition of Gulf Travel Show (GTS), shared that it was their fourth participation at the show. "Participating in GTS 2022 is one way of confidence building and to rebuild our tourism industry. We want to give confidence to our travel partners in Malaysia as well as overseas that we are ready. The good news is that by 1 April 2022, we are opening the borders. Not only Tourism Malaysia and industry partners, but even our travel partners overseas are also waiting, so that they can continue to get back their business and send the passengers to Malaysia," he shared.



Manoharan Periasamy
Senior Director, International Promotion Division (Asia & Africa), Tourism Malaysia

2022 is the best platform and an opportunity for us to network with the entire travel agents fraternity and tour operators, especially in the Middle East."

Protocols to follow

Saying that the protocols after the opening on April 1 will be different from what it was during the Langkawi International Travel Bubble, which started in November 2021. "While we got a very good response for the Langkawi International Travel Bubble, from 1 April 2022 when we are having a border opening, it is much more relaxed in terms

Tourism Malaysia, being the platinum partner for GTS 2022, is especially preparing to welcome back Middle East tourists to experience the country again, revealed Periasamy. "For us GTS

of protocols. Firstly, one needs to just get a RTPCR test done two days prior to departure and after departure another test needs to be done within 24 hours, as compared to the Langkawi international travel bubble, where it was to be done almost every day. Secondly, insurance details are being finalised, but it should be in the range of US\$ 30,000-40,000 and it should cover the traveller in case they are contracted with COVID. Also, before departure, travellers need to download the mysejahtera app from <https://mysejahtera.malaysia.gov.my/intro/> wherein they need to fill a traveller form and answer a few questions and they are free to visit anywhere in Malaysia," he informed.

On ground situation

Claiming that they are one of the countries with the highest percentage of vaccinations received, Periasamy shared, "More than 90 per cent of the population has been vaccinated along with the booster dose. This is the reason

the government decided that we are moving from the phase of pandemic to endemic. However, the endemic status will be declared by the WHO, but the government has decided that this is the perfect time for us to open the border and all the restrictions, which have been imposed during

Tourism Malaysia is preparing to welcome back Middle East tourists to experience the country again

the pandemic time, have been lifted up, starting April 1." However, he claimed that there is a need to follow the SOPs.

"All hotels are maintaining the cleanliness and sanitisation of amenities, right from F&B, to the swimming pool and other facilities that are accessible to the public," he explained.



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Explore Britain in different way

India, one of the lucrative markets for the UK, which saw a huge jump in number of tourists from the country in years before COVID, continues to hold importance, which reflects in the UK offering a variety of experiences and products to the Indian travellers.



Nisha Verma

Dame Judith Macgregor DCMG LVO, Interim Chair, British Tourist Authority (BTA), claims that Britain is open for tourists. "We have no further requirements for people who are not vaccinated and no further requirements for people who are vaccinated," she said at an exclusive interaction during ExploreGB, which was held virtually recently.



Dame Judith Macgregor DCMG LVO
Interim Chair
British Tourist Authority (BTA)

of travel trade and media from India, who were interested about everything in the UK. We have put a great effort in promoting the Commonwealth Games (CWG)."

Response from Indian trade

Sharing details of her meeting with the travel trade from India in Dubai, Dame Judith shared, "It was interesting to understand the nature of the market and of people who might travel first. They confirmed our own sampling, which had shown about 75 per cent people saying they

wanted to travel overseas, but 50-60 per cent have not yet booked or have not yet determined where they want to go. Hence, it is an opportunity to put the message out that the UK is an easily accessible destination in terms of COVID, as compared to some countries."

She added, "Secondly, we found out that people are looking to do something different and want to have their social experience, especially tempted after COVID. Hence, we launched a multimillion multimedia campaign in February to see Britain in a different way. Under the campaign we are presenting all the icons and destinations of Britain differently. This year is very special because it is the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Hence, there will be many things going on in our country where visitors will be welcome to join the local festivals, artists and exhibitions." Other than that, she said, under

the year-long celebration called UNBOXED, there will be some whacky AI ideas coming up in many different locations. "Finally, we are putting emphasis on cities because cities have been the place that people have been wary and chary about, because of COVID," she said.

It is an opportunity to put out a message that the UK is easily accessible in terms of COVID

What lies ahead

She claimed that they are expecting this year to reach about half of what they achieved in 2019. "Hence, we are looking at about 21 million visitors coming, which would be around two-third or maybe half of the volumes we had in 2019," she added.

India story

She claimed that India is an important market for them. "It is one of the markets that saw a huge jump in the years before COVID. Hence, we ended up with almost 700,000 visitors and a considerable value from the UK economy, which is good for us. The market is beginning to pick up again," she added.

She said, "I was in Dubai in February where I met representatives

TRAVTALK

VIEWPOINT

Up, Up and Away

I could not be happier while writing the editorial for this edition of the magazine. Finally, the Indian skies are open, and our tourists are ready to travel! Yes, after two years of the international flight ban, this day has come.

DGCA has approved foreign and Indian airlines to operate 3,200+ weekly international departures during the summer schedule — from March 27 till October 29. 1,466 departures per week have been approved for Indian carriers to 43 destinations in 27 countries. On the other hand, 1,783 departures per week will be operated by foreign airlines.

As per the approved schedule, IndiGo has been approved to operate 505 international departures per week, followed by Air India at 361, Air India Express 340, SpiceJet at 130, GoFirst at 74 and Vistara at 56. Besides, a total of 60 foreign airlines of 40 countries have been given approval to operate 1,783 frequencies to and from India during the summer schedule for this year.

Among foreign carriers, Emirates will operate 170 departures per week, followed by Sri Lanka Airlines at 128, Oman Air at 115, Air Arabia at 110, Qatar Airways at 99, Gulf Air at 82, Etihad Airways at 80, Singapore Airlines at 65, Saudi Arabian Airlines at 63 and Kuwait Airways at 56.

British Airways at 49, Thai Airways at 36, Lufthansa German at 32, Malaysia Airlines at 30, Japan Air Lines at 22, Air France at 20, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines at 18 and Aeroflot Russian Airlines at 6.

In addition, the Centre has allowed operations of airlines such as Salam Air, Air Arabia Abu Dhabi, Qantas and American Airlines.

Under the previous air bubble agreements, the number of flights was restricted to around 2,000 a week and ticket prices soared high. While a big correction in the flight tickets was expected, and ideally, airfare should go down, but the Ukraine-Russia crises has led to oil prices to rise sharply, and it might be a while before we see the ticket prices coming down.

While the aviation ministry has done its part, all eyes are now set on the Ministry of tourism to ensure that India is flocking with foreign tourists.

Inbound travel to India on rise

India received 24.4 per cent share of inbound travellers to the Asia Pacific region in Q1. It is not bad considering the air ticketing data from ForwardKeys, which shows that international arrivals in the region in the quarter was down by 86 per cent.

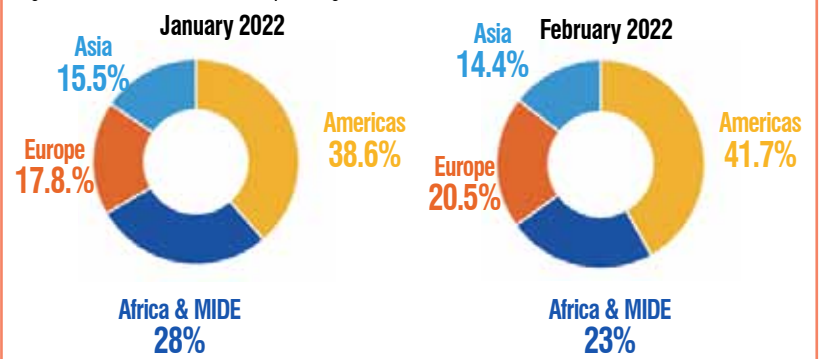


India continues to have the largest share of inbound travellers to the Asia Pacific (APAC) region at 24.4 per cent of total arrivals in Q1 as of 11 March. It is not bad considering the air ticketing data from ForwardKeys, which shows that international arrivals in APAC in Q1 was down by 86 per cent.

However, in terms of recovery India as a destination is performing at -59 per cent versus 2019. The best performing region in APAC for on-the-book arrivals is Pakistan with a 0.2 per cent increase versus the same period in 2019. The Maldives and Bangladesh are also showing strong signs of resilience. The APAC region was the most adversely impacted in terms of travel and tourism,

Travel intent for travel to India from the Americas and Europe is growing

Flight searches for India from the top 14 origin countries from 3-30 Jan, and from 31 Jan to 27 Feb, 2022



Source: ForwardKeys Flight Search Data

Philippines: 48 per cent recovery; Singapore: 43 per cent recovery and Australia 38 per cent recovery. "The success behind India's reactivation is the fact that India had announced in advance its reopening plan for this year, generating awareness and interest. While Fiji is a leisure island destination and I think

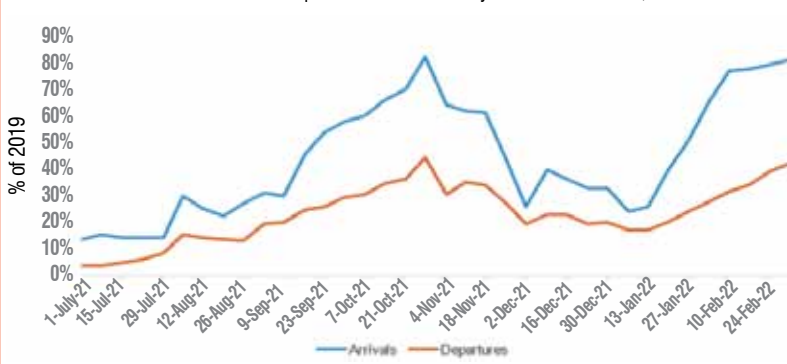
Australia's role

When observing the most recovering source markets to key destinations in the Asia-Pacific region, this is where the ForwardKeys analysts noted the importance of Australian outbound travellers. Take the examples of India and Fiji. Travel from Australia to India has

of February. "India removed the requirement for quarantine and facilitated travel by adding more countries to its "Category A" country list (Australia included); allowing for entry with proof of vaccination," added Dai.

New tickets for arrivals to India are rapidly picking up

International tickets issued for arrivals and departures in India from 1 July 2021 to 9 March 2022; as % of 2019



The success behind India's reactivation is the fact that India had announced in advance its reopening plan for this year

Travellers' behaviour

Dai favoured real-time trends and having useful data to give more hope to destinations in the region. "Many APAC government bodies and destinations may feel like travel is unlikely to take place soon to their destination, thus continue their protective travel rules and/or closed borders. However, as other destinations and travel tactics have shown from Mexico, Greece to the UK, restarting travel safely and healthily is possible if led by data and clear travel rules that don't get changed frequently," Dai said. "For example, in Singapore, the leisure market is showing more resilience than in 2019 and there have been growths in issued tickets from Thailand (12%) and Denmark (9%) to Singapore — these are new opportunities worth exploiting via new flight frequencies for the tourism boards," she added.

Most resilient destinations in Asia Pacific

On-the-book arrivals in Q1 2022, as of 11 March 2022, versus 2019

1.	Pakistan		0%
2.	Maldives		-4%
3.	Bangladesh		-17%
4.	Sri Lanka		-54%
5.	India		-59%

*Out of destinations with a share of >2% total arrivals

largely due to having one of the toughest travel restrictions in the world. However, one by one, nations in Asia are not only announcing reopening but scrapping challenging travel barriers such as quarantines and the number of PCR tests.

Tickets to APAC on the rise

Tickets for travel to key APAC destinations are on the rise and India is leading the way forward. India has recovered 80 per cent of 2019 level in the week of 5 March 2022. Next is the Pacific Island of Fiji, recovering 61 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, followed by the

that is its main advantage during this recovery phase as people may feel safer to travel to less crowded (than cities) places with a variety of outdoor activities," said Nan Dai, Market Analyst at ForwardKeys.

been improving, with arrivals from this origin market at +16 per cent versus 2019 during same period.

The pickup in tickets from Australia started to jump at the beginning



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Address the core issues:



Travel industry is facing challenges on several fronts as it starts almost from scratch after the pandemic. As things opens up, Travel Agents Federation of India taking several measures to help the business, but there are issues that can only be addressed by the government.



Nisha Verma

Anil Kalsi, Joint Secretary, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), said that the challenges are even greater for the industry as everyone is starting from scratch after the pandemic. "We have to see the best ways forward. We have been working on many things at TAFI," he informed.



Anil Kalsi
Joint Secretary, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI)

amount of bank guarantees that one has. Despite having finances of Rs 20-30 lakh, a normal IATA agent cannot issue tickets, unless he has a capping from the airline. Thus, we have taken it up ferociously with Airline Passenger Joint Council of IATA (APJC). We are trying that IATA and their airlines see our point of view. We have also apprised the minister about the same," he said.

Credit card

Kalsi claimed that they are in talks with credit card companies for better pricing for TAFI members. "We want the edge of the online players accepting credit card payments at very low cost. We are at a disadvantage because we do not make enough money to accept or to be able to absorb the credit card amounts. If we have a good rate and we have a package of things, then we can roll it out to our membership and they can make use of it at a national level," he added.

Embassies and visa

Apart from that, TAFI also had some meetings with embassies to sort out how the visas will pan out. "Since visa for many countries is taking time to come, many people have been losing money in cancellations because they do not get passports back in time. I think for visa there should be more providers, because with only one provider for each embassy, the service is compromised and cost is going up. Those who have more providers and service points that process visa like for Thailand and Singapore are benefitting. There should be at least two visa facilitators for each country, so that there is more value for Indian nationals who are travelling," he suggested.

Convention in India

For the first time, TAFI is set to have its convention in India. "TAFI has never had a convention in India. We spoke to the Secretary

Tourism as well as the DG Tourism, and we are looking at certain places to decide which would be the best," he said.

Post budget gloom

There are certain things which must be done immediately in the larger interest of the country, and not just for the travel agent, said

We (travel agents) have to see the best ways forward. We have been working on many things at TAFI

and GST is going out. Billions of dollars from India are going out after remittance, which stays out after credit card direct payment on hotel website or OTAs, because nobody wants to pay TCS. If the government must have TCS, they should make it obligatory for PAN card numbers to be reported to the government. It must have a simplified manner—it should be one per cent TCS across the board as the five per cent or 10 per cent is a difficult thing."

Airline issues

"We have also asked the minister to start an insurance scheme against airlines winding up. Major airlines have made cancellations non-refundable on even first class, like Singapore Airlines and Lufthansa. We told the minister that it is fine if they want to regulate things, but there must be some sanity to things somebody is allowed to do," he explained.

TCS factor

Kalsi shared, "We have met a lot of people in the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Civil Aviation to push for TCS withdrawal. A lot of business is moving to online players due to TCS. In the COVID period already a lot of people got used to online channels. We are working on this aspect."

NDC a disadvantage

Kalsi said that a major issue is of disparity in fares between NDC and travel agents. "If you work

on Amadeus and book on NDC and everybody goes online and checks, then even in a zero commission scenario, with no PLBs, you are at a disadvantage if you are not on NDC. Hence, we have to help our members get into the right portfolio, because in NDC as well, even after having bank guarantees in place, you still need a capping from the airline. This issue is India specific because anywhere else in the world, except for the Indian subcontinent, one can issue tickets up to the

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TourismNews

Indian hospitality industry is set to expand at 10.35 per cent between 2019 to 2028: Noesis

Ranked as one of the safest countries in the world in 2022 by Numbeo, Qatar welcomes travellers from over 95 countries, including India

Thailand lifts pre-travel testing requirement for international arrivals beginning 1 April

Finnair expands Indian footprint; launches direct flights between Mumbai and Helsinki

Air Mauritius to increase its Mumbai operations to five weekly flights from 27 March

Government gives 'in-principle' approval for setting up 21 Greenfield airports across India

MoT introduces 'Medical' visa for foreign travellers coming to India for medical treatment

Indonesia plans extension of 'VoA to Bali' programme for Indian nationals

HAI gears up to bring change

MP Bezbaruah, Secretary General, Hotel Association of India, shares why it is important for the government to prioritise giving industry status to tourism and hospitality industry in the country, as industry opens up for business.

 Nisha Verma

The Hotel Association of India (HAI) recently held its 25th Annual General Meet (AGM), in which the executive committee, in recognition of the current team's efforts during the pandemic, decided unanimously to re-elect the management committee for another two-year term.

MP Bezbaruah, Secretary General, HAI, said that there has been a slight change in approach for HAI. "Our aim is creating awareness about the industry, and not just creating demands. We are about advocacy with the government, the public and other stakeholders, because people considered it as an elitist industry and did not require any support. With the government we do not have a demand-based approach, but a dialogue based approach, where we work towards solution of problems," he shared.



MP Bezbaruah
Secretary General, HAI

He informed, "The tourism minister announced in the parliament that the job loss in the industry was more than one crore. We have been saying from the beginning that we need a mix of short term and long term approach."

"We are looking at the future, which has to be based on a long-term restructuring, for which the most important consideration is liquidity support. It is something like moratorium and its extension. For surviving, we had

asked for waiver on those statutory dues, which was a creation of circumstances beyond the control of the industry or force majeure. Some things have been done, some are not. The moratorium was essential, but came a little late. However, it needs to be extended to be effective. We have asked for long-term restructuring of the interest rate applicable and for that we have asked for industry status as well



as infrastructure status. The Finance Minister spoke about infrastructure being given a boost and that is where we think hospitality industry fits in," he added.

Re-elected team of HAI

President: Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & CEO The Indian Hotels Company Ltd. (Taj Hotels)

Vice President: KB Kachru, Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia Radisson Hotel Group

Hony. Secretary: JK Mohanty, Managing Director, Swosti Premium Limited

Hony. Treasurer: Patu Keswani, Chairman & Managing Director Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd.

Bezbaruah said that the association has told the minister the same thing. "The government's own policy says that we will be one of the top five destinations in the next eight years. Thus, they must look at accommodation creation with the help of the industry and infrastructure status will help," he said.

Border opening

Bezbaruah shared that while the industry is "very happy" about

border opening, a lot needs to be done about it. "Firstly, we need much more connectivity. If we need large number of tourists, we must open the whole country and not just the five metro cities as arrival points. There is a need to improve accommodation, which should not be limited to five-star hotels, but good decent accommodation. COVID has changed tourism and hospitality completely. The future is going to be based on confidence," he said.

South African trade visits India

To provide trade partners a touch and feel of the destination and to share their heritage with a country they share deep bonds with, the tourism board brought South Africa to Indian shores via a networking dinner. What followed was a delightful evening of song and dance, delectable dinner cooked by South African chefs, wine tasting and networking!



LOT Polish starts flights

LOT Polish Airlines has announced the starting of passenger flights to Mumbai effective 31 May and has also resumed passenger flights to Delhi from 29 March.

TT Bureau

The Polish flag carrier resumes flights to Delhi after a two-year break due to the pandemic situation in India. LOT Polish Airlines will be operating these flights by Boeing 787 thrice weekly, just like its other long-haul flights, with a capacity increase to five weekly flights effective May 2022. Fares and schedule have been updated in all booking systems already.

Rafał Milczarski, President of the Management Board, LOT Polish Airlines, said, "India is one of the most exotic destinations in our flight network. We are delighted that after a pandemic-related break, our flagship aircraft can again land at Delhi's IGI Airport. Ensuring a direct connection is



Rafał Milczarski
President of the Management Board, LOT Polish Airlines

an essential element in strengthening Polish-Indian cooperation. It is also a great offer for Poles choosing India as their holiday destination. I believe that passengers originating from Delhi will also appreciate the relaunch of this connection, which will enable them to comfortably travel to many cities across Europe and North America."

"India is the world's seventh largest economy and the most important Polish trade in South Asia. We can spot opportunities for cooperation in sectors where Polish companies lead the way. These include green technologies, agriculture and agri-food processing as well as medical equipment," he added. Apart from Delhi, Mumbai (BOM) will be added to LOT's global network effective 31 May.

"LOT Polish Airlines is pleased to provide India originating passengers a convenient flight option to Europe, the United States and Canada. Passengers can seamlessly and stress-free connect via Warsaw, giving guests what they value. LOT deploys its flagship aircraft on the Delhi and Mumbai routes, and to cater

Flights through Warsaw

Warsaw Delhi				
Flight Number	Day of week	Departure Time	Arrival Time	Season
LO-071	2, 4, 7	18:25h	06:00h	29.03.22-01.05.22
LO-071	1, 2, 3, 5, 7	18:25h	06:00h	02.05.22-29.10.22
Delhi Warsaw				
LO-072	1, 3, 5	08:00h	13:10h	30.03.22-01.05.22

to the Indian consumer, Indian meals and inflight entertainment including Bollywood movies will be available for guests," said Amit Ray, Director India, LOT Polish Airlines.

Swiss show concludes



The Switzerland Travel Experience (STE) 2022 brought together more than 60 travel agents and tour operators from India and 21 partners from the Swiss tourism industry, including destinations, hotels and attractions at its annual event organised in the state of Goa between March 14 and 17 this year.

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Atout France mega event in Dubai

Atout France organised a B2B multi market event at the Dubai Expo in March after a gap of two years. A delegation of 15 key Indian trade members represented the country at Marhaba 2022. The two-day event, first of a joint collaboration between the Atout France offices of Dubai, Israel, India and Russia, brought together travel professionals from these markets and the French industry.



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▶ **BAHAMAS** **3** NIGHTS 2022

Departure Port : Port Canaveral, Orlando
Departure Months: 2022 all year round

Day 1	Port Canaveral
Day 2	Nassau
Day 3	Fun Day At Sea
Day 4	Port Canaveral

▶ **BAHAMAS** **4** NIGHTS 2022

Departure Port : Port Canaveral, Orlando
Departure Months: 2022 all year round

Day 1	Port Canaveral
Day 2	Nassau
Day 3	Princess Cays
Day 4	Fun Day At Sea
Day 5	Port Canaveral

▶ **BAHAMAS** **4** NIGHTS 2022

Departure Port : Miami
Departure Months: 2022 all year round

Day 1	Miami
Day 2	Fun Day At Sea
Day 3	Half Moon Cay
Day 4	Nassau
Day 5	Miami

▶ **MEXICO** **3** NIGHTS 2022

Departure Port : Los Angeles, Long Beach
Departure Months: 2022 all year round

Day 1	Los Angeles
Day 2	Fun Day At Sea
Day 3	Ensenada
Day 4	Los Angeles

▶ **AUSTRALIA** **4** NIGHTS 2022

Departure Port : Sydney, Australia
Departure Months: Oct to Dec 2022

Day 1	Sydney
Day 2	Fun Day At Sea
Day 3	Tangalooma - Moreton Island
Day 4	Fun Day At Sea
Day 5	Sydney

▶ **ALASKA** **7** NIGHTS 2022

Departure Port : Seattle, Washington
Departure Months: May to September 2022

Day 1	Seattle
Day 2	Fun Day At Sea
Day 3	Cruise Tracy Arm Fjord
Day 4	Skagway
Day 5	Juneau
Day 6	Ketchikan
Day 7	Victoria
Day 8	Seattle



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24/7 Pizzeria



Mega Pool Party



24/7 Ice-cream & Frozen Yogurt

• *Itineraries are indicative and subject to change
• Terms and conditions apply. Contact for more details.



E-visas to be a game-changer

While India continues to retain its place among the top three focus markets for South African Tourism, it has the potential to reach the number one source market for the destination, says Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head, MEISEA, South African Tourism.



Hazel Jain

Boosting connectivity and ease of travel to South Africa was a core area of focus for the tourism board of the country this year. The destination, which remains open to Indian travellers,



Neliswa Nkani
Hub Head, MEISEA
South African Tourism

is also processing tourist visas on priority. Also on track is the e-visa pilot programme for India. **Neliswa Nkani**, Hub Head, MEISEA, South African Tourism, said, "E-visas are going to be a game-changer for India as a source market for South Africa. It is also the affordability in terms of air connectivity and direct connection that will put India at number one position immediately."

TRADE SPEAK

"When it comes to South Africa, clients usually look out for soft adventure, hard adventure, and a lot of experiential travel and outdoor activities. We met a lot of old friends from South Africa at the Mumbai leg of the roadshow and made some new ones as well. Some of the new suppliers include Glamping Adventures."



Burjis Mehta
CEO, Skyworld Tours & Travels

"My clients are looking at health and safety first. They want to ensure there is nothing like a quarantine in the destination they visit. It not only makes travel costlier, but dampens the mood a bit. Once South Africa opens up, clients will look to travel there. It makes me happy to see 35 suppliers from South Africa at roadshow in Mumbai."



Purvi Jhaveri
Director, Sunday Pure Holidays

Prior to the pandemic, India was the eighth-largest international market for South African Tourism.

She re-asserted, "If we get a direct airline that is affordable, and easy to access from the main cities, which is New Delhi

and Mumbai, India will be sitting at number one. I foresee India climbing up to number four in the next 18 months if we continue on this trajectory and we continue to receive the support from the travel trade! This is the market to watch out for."

"Since we sell experiential and adventure travel, South Africa is the best location for both these things. It offers safaris, motorcycling tours and diving, and we try and combine all these activities for our clients. It is a holistic destination for our clientele. We have had a few high-end queries, who have booked South Africa, including Sabi Sabi Game Reserve and the Garden Route."



Sunil Bijlani
CEO, Vacation World

"I met some old friends at the South Africa roadshow. At this point of time, we are just waiting for the flights to open up because the airfares right now are a little ridiculous. So, suggesting any client a South African holiday may not be a good idea because the packaging is incomplete without the airfare. If the client takes an open-jaw journey."



Mit Bhatt
Managing Partner, The Grand Vacationist

At present, several stop-over flights fly from India to South Africa, including Emirates, Etihad, Qatar Airways, Air Arabia, Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways and Air Mauritius. Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Pune continue to be

top Indian source markets to South Africa, with 48 per cent of total Indian visitors from Mumbai. Forty-five per cent of them travel for business. "We are in the process of testing e-visas. Travellers can apply but it must be made clear to them

"When my clients think of outbound travel, they think of safety first, and South Africa is very safe destination to visit. Moreover, South Africa has a lot of things to offer right from the highlands to adventure activities, nice hotels, good people and great hospitality. In fact, we sent a honeymooning couple to South Africa."



Jagat Mehta
CEO, Trans Travel International

that it is a pilot programme, so we do not create high expectations. There might be some teething issue, so please be patient. Alternately, we are currently turning around normal tourist visas in five days," Nkani added.

Aviation all set for growth

► Contd from page 1

development. "This sector has economic multiple of 3.1 and employment multiple of 6.1, which means that the investment of a rupee in the civil aviation space adds ₹3.1 to the economy in the long run, and for every one direct employment, 6.1 indirect jobs are created. Civil aviation is one of the largest employment and output generating sectors in the world," he explained.

Exponential growth

Commenting on the metamorphosis in the Indian civil aviation sector in the last seven years, Scindia said, "India is the fastest growing civil aviation market in the world. There has been expansion across the spectrum in the sector with the number of airports in the country going up from 74 in 2013-14 to almost 140 (including Heliports and water domes). The number is likely to go up to 220 by 2024-25. There were 400 aircrafts in the country then and the number has gone up to 710 in seven years.

It is intended that more than 100 aircrafts should join every year. Regional connectivity is the focus of the government, with provision of last mile connectivity. UDAN is a mission to connect every single citizen and make flights accessible

Civil aviation sector is one of the largest employment and output generating sectors in the world

to common man. More than 409 routes have been identified under the scheme, over 1.75 lakh flights have taken place and 91 lakh passengers have benefited."

Nurturing an ecosystem

The civil aviation ecosystem contains other components like cargo, MROs, FTOs, ground

handlers, drones, and requisite action is being taken for all these, shared Scindia. "New policy for MROs has been announced. More training centres are being added, so that Indian pilots get trained within the country. Around 15 per cent of the Indian pilots are women, which is the three times the global average. For the drones, new policy has been announced and PLI scheme has been initiated, so that the Prime Minister's vision of making India a global leader in the sector is realised. A new helicopter policy has also been announced," he informed.

An MoU between Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) and Pawan Hans Limited (PHL) was also signed. He also visited the chalet and viewed Aerobatics display by Airforce, SARANG Team. There was also a static display area showing a range of aircrafts from wide body Airbus 350 to small aircrafts and helicopters.

Focus on ties with neighbours

► Contd from page 1

arriving in India have a smooth experience at the airports," she added.

Promotional strategies and upcoming events

Commenting on the government's promotional strategies and upcoming events, she said, "We have been reaching out through social media and working through our trade and stakeholders to spread the message that 'India is ready to welcome you back'. We have also reached out to the embassies in the countries that are top source markets to spread the message.

"ITM is slated to take place with IATO in the near future," she said.

Regular visa regime

Regarding visa, she said, "On 15 November we introduced a special visa system and announced that tourists were entitled to free visa. In fact, 500,000 free visas were issued for a month. How-

ever, with 15 March the regular visa regime has resumed and travellers can apply for long term visas and come visit our beautiful country."

Infrastructure

Infrastructure plays a crucial role in tourism. Brad said that there are two components; infrastruc-

We look forward to creating itineraries that will enable tourists to travel seamlessly from country to country

ture in terms of making sure the tourist facilities are available, and connectivity that drives tourism. "We have been working with the ministry of civil aviation to provide viability gap funding for certain prominent tourism tools," she said. The Buddhist circuit in India has gained a massive boost with the addition of the Kushinagar airport, which is an airport with the capacity to receive international flights. India now has 140 airports, and 20 of them are international airports. There will be a number of airports being added to India as we move forward, she added.

Building relations with neighbouring countries

As most of the borders have either reopened or are reopening, building relationship with neighbouring countries is pivotal. "India has had great relations with its neighbours, and we look forward to leveraging those relationships as we create tours for foreign guests, who will not only visit India, but also our neighbouring countries and have a holistic experience of the sub-continent. Additionally, we look forward to creating itineraries that will enable tourists to travel seamlessly from country to country," she said.



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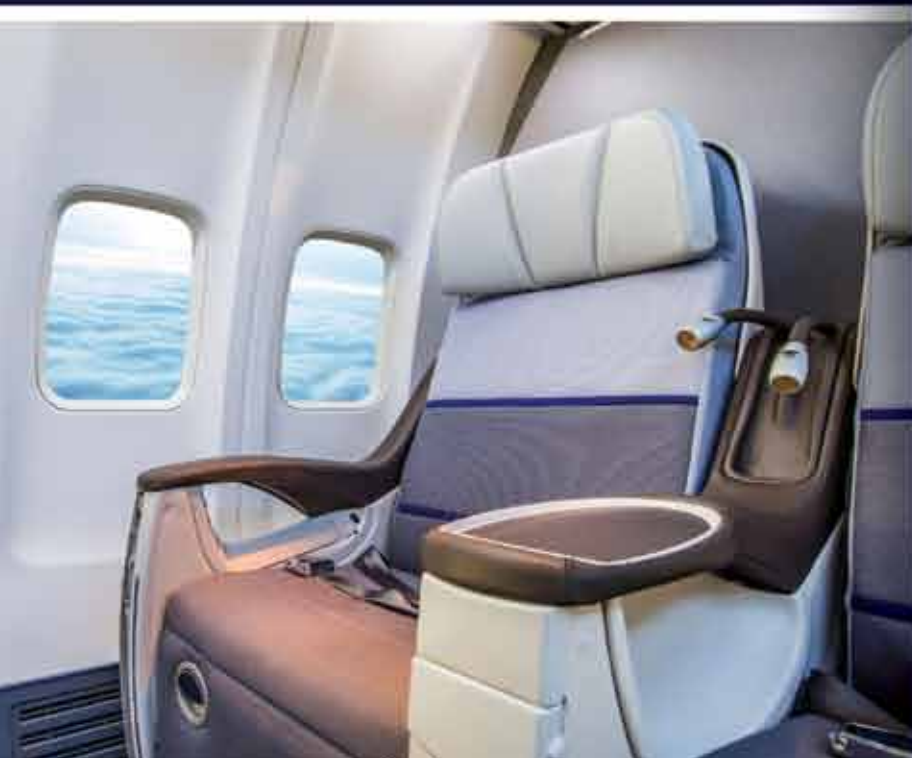
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Gearing up for the big leap

Wedding tourism turned out to be a game-changer for Rajasthan during the pandemic, and now the state is pushing for border tourism, experiential tourism and also bringing in a film incentive policy among things to bring more revenue for the state coffers.

Nisha Verma

Claiming that being the largest state of the country gives a vantage point to Rajasthan, **Dr Punita Singh**, Joint Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, said that most attractions are positioned at different places, particularly the heritage properties, which are all spread out across the state.

"All these properties are in remote villages or far off places. This puts us in an advantageous position. In the new normal, people like to travel to quiet resorts or places little away from the city, looking at experiences close to nature. Hence, apart from heritage, for which Rajasthan is known for, in the new normal it proves advantageous that these properties are being sought after more. Wellness resorts have also come up. Indian government is also marketing

these places. Hence, Rajasthan is focusing more on experiential tourism," she said.

Repositioning Rajasthan

Singh revealed that Rajasthan came up with their new tourism policy in 2020 amid the COVID lockdowns and the waves. "The policy focuses on enhancing our product experience and experiential tourism, under which we majorly look at heritage properties, resort experiences and vast experiences, which Rajasthan offers. One of the new products that has emerged owing to lockdown guidelines is wedding tourism, which has become a big component now. Earlier considered a luxury segment with only celebrity weddings at palace hotels, but now it is common. People with lower budgets are also going for destination weddings or resort weddings with 200-250 guests," she claimed.



Dr Punita Singh
Joint Director at Department
of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan

I feel this (industry status) is a milestone for Rajasthan tourism and the state as a whole, which would benefit greatly

Promotions galore

Right after the first lockdown, Rajasthan came up with COVID guidelines for the tourists, which

were predominantly domestic. "We started a campaign called Rajasthan from home. Initially, we were visible on our social media platforms and we did a lot of engaging activities, like best of the chef, photography competition and videography competition for people who had already travelled. Post lockdown opening, restrictions started coming down, and the surge of domestic tourism was so much that all our properties, both in private and public sector were full. We were the number one state in SAATHI guidelines as we did the certification for proper hygiene. Thus, some of our destinations like, Udaipur, Jaipur, Mount Abu, did not have rooms," she informed.

Saying that she is proud and happy to share that the Chief Minister of Rajasthan has given tourism industry status in the latest budget announcement. "I feel this is



a milestone for Rajasthan tourism and the state as a whole which would benefit greatly," she said.

Millennial focus

Singh believes that like Rajasthan, other states should also focus on millennials. "They can offer new experiences like adventure tourism, cycling, or other activities. For any small event happening anywhere, should be marketed well, so that people would go and see. Just like we are a land of

fairs and festivals, which can be promoted and yes infrastructure is very important. We are also focusing more on our budgets and allocations for the tourism infrastructure, which helps the local people too. Other states can also work on film tourism. Rajasthan, despite being a natural winner in film tourism sector, we are coming with the film incentive policy very soon to give a healthy competition to rest of the states," she claimed.

A380 back in service



Singapore Airlines' iconic Airbus A380 Superjumbo aircraft landed in Mumbai on 14 March 2022 after a two-year break in services. The aircraft replaced the Airbus A350-900 on the SQ 424/423 Vaccinated Travel Lane services between Mumbai and Singapore.

'Godmother' of NCL ship



Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) has announced that pop icon Katy Perry will serve as the godmother to its newest ship, Norwegian Prima, debuting August 2022.

Rising against the odds

It is encouraging to see women leaders taking up challenges and growing professionally and financially in tourism industry, says Monia Kapoor, Executive Committee Member, OTOAI.

Janice Alyosius

In recent years, we have seen a steep rise in women leadership in the tourism industry, be it managing a travel company or working in various other tourism fields. "It is encouraging to see more and more women are taking up challenging in field jobs, such as a tour facilitator and heading company sales. This surely opens up the possibility of women's empowerment since it gives them responsibility to use their skills to manage multiple tourism ancillaries and at the same time engage equally with men on a professional level. Tourism is a rapidly growing industry and today's women are confident and competent enough to conquer more spaces in it," shared **Monia Kapoor**, Executive Committee Member, OTOAI and CEO, Travel O Holidays.

Speaking of challenges and achievements, Monia felt that professionally women still face a number of challenges, including unequal or biased opportuni-



Monia Kapoor
Executive Committee Member
OTOAI

We need to sensitise more organisations to work towards making working environment more flexible and safer for women

ties for promotion and training. "Multitasking becomes crucial for them to balance their work and personal obligations. Many women find it difficult to accept qualifying promotions due to the dynamics of working in the tourism industry, such as long working hours and working during

the holiday season. At the same time, we can see more women overcoming these challenges, resulting in their professional and financial growth," she said.

"The advancement of technology has been especially beneficial, giving women the ease of working from home. Women are being offered decision-making positions and equal opportunities for training. We need to sensitise more organisations and entrepreneurs to work towards making their working environment more flexible and safer for women," she suggested.

Speaking of how the tourism industry could promote equal opportunities for women, she said, "The last few years have seen many companies and entrepreneurs taking initiatives to promote equal opportunities for men and women in their companies. The focus should be on giving an opportunity to the deserving candidate, be it a man or a woman and creating an unbiased, secure environment at work place for all."



Grand Sale a grand success

The Amazing Thailand Grand Sale campaign concluded with an overwhelming response from the travel trade. The campaign offered a wide range of products to agents, including a 'buy now travel later' option to pre purchase packages at discounted rates, which they can further sell to their guests.

Janice Alyosius

Thailand continues to be one of the top destinations for travellers. The Amazing Thailand Grand Sale, organised by TravelBullz and Thailand Tourism Authority (TAT) - India to help agents in India to sell travel destinations in Thailand and earn more profits, concluded successfully in February, with a number of agents showing interest in promoting destinations such as Phuket, Kabi, Phang Nga and Khao Lak.

Thailand welcomed the partners with enthusiasm. Thirty hotels from Phuket and Krabi took part in the campaign, each provided with a dedicated page on the domain providing specific information on Indian market needs in the form of a short fact sheet, including videos and images.

Under the campaign, more than 14,000 subscribers were reached



Vachirachai Sirisumpan
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), New Delhi Office

I am pleased to share that we had a very successful Amazing Thailand Grand Sale campaign, Buy Now Travel Later

through emailers and over 71,000 impressions were generated on social media. The campaign offered a wide range of products



K.D. Singh
Founder & President TravelBullz

We shall be launching more such campaigns to support agents to increase their earnings while selling the destination Thailand

at discounted prices from various tourism stakeholders in Thailand. It offered 3, 4 and 5-star hotel vouchers with special benefit on

advance purchase. Discounts up to 50 per cent were offered on rates currently available in the market, so that agents could pre buy the hotel vouchers, which their guests could use up to October 2022 and in some cases up to December 2022.

The month-long campaign evoked overwhelming response from the travel trade. About 198 pax from the Indian market were confirmed and 3,600 room nights/ 7200 pax vouchers were sold.

Vachirachai Sirisumpan, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), New Delhi Office, said, "I am pleased to share that we had a very successful Amazing Thailand Grand Sale campaign, Buy Now Travel Later, through the dynamic platform of TravelBullz for our travel trade partners from India and I would like to thank our partners from Thailand, who has

supported with such great deals and made it a successful campaign. We are thrilled with the participation and their involvement with Amazing Thailand."

K.D. Singh, Founder & President, TravelBullz, said, "We are very pleased to share with travel fraternity that the campaign of 'The Amazing Thailand Grand Sale' was a huge success. Thanks to the support from our agent partners, our hotel partners and encouragement from Tourism Authority of Thailand."

Singh said that the campaign was carried back to back with "Indian Travel League", which was a very successful agent engagement campaign. The Amazing Thailand Grand Sale in January came up with some very sterling numbers clocking 3,600 room nights pre bought by agents under "Buy Now

Travel Later" valid travel up to October 2022.

"The success of this campaign holds great importance, as agents made upfront payments to buy vouchers in the middle of Omicron wave. This strongly supports TravelBullz belief that Phuket would be one of the most sought-after destination once travel restriction would be lifted," he said.

For TravelBullz team this was the moment of truth, which saw agents buying pre-paid vouchers acknowledgment of the deals shared by TravelBullz valuable enough to invest their time and money for promoting Phuket. "We shall be launching more such campaigns for our agent partners to support agents to increase their earnings while selling the most sought-after destination Thailand," he said.

Qatar reaffirms trade partnership

Qatar Airways, in association with Qatar Tourism, hosted a networking dinner at The St. Regis Mumbai recently where guests were acquainted with the destination and informed about various tourism products, developments and projects underway in Qatar. The Qatar Tourism delegation was led by Philip Dickinson, Vice President, International Markets, Qatar Tourism.





Madhya Pradesh

A Teaching and Preaching Trail of Lord Buddha

- ❖ The Great Stupas of Sanchi are the first commissioned by Emperor Ashoka.
- ❖ If you are in search of inner peace, then explore Sanchi and other places of Buddhists Circuit.

India is known as land of Buddha and the heart of India. Madhya Pradesh has roots of Buddhism in it. Sanchi, a Buddhist complex famous for its Great Stupa on a hilltop at Sanchi Town, located nearly 50 kilometres in the northeast of Bhopal, is perhaps the earliest archaeological evidence of Madhya Pradesh's Buddhists connection.

Designated a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1989, Sanchi in Raisen district is the most well preserved and famous among all the monuments. Ashoka (The Grandson of Chandragupt Maurya, who founded the first imperial dynasty of the sub-continent) had commissioned. But it is not only about Sanchi, which is the hub of Buddhism in Madhya Pradesh, there are other Buddhist settlements in the region like

Andher and Murelkhard in north-east of Sanchi, and Sonari and Satdhara in the Southeast and Southwest of Sanchi, respective-

Attractions in and around Sanchi

- ❖ Mahabodhi Temple
- ❖ Buddhist Theme park
- ❖ Sound and Light Show
- ❖ World Peace Centre
- ❖ Fairs and Festivals
- ❖ Udaigiri Caves
- ❖ Heliodorus Pillar
- ❖ Bijamandal
- ❖ Archeological Museum, Sanchi & Vidisha
- ❖ Neelkantheshwar Temple, Udaypur

ly. These are the spiritual homes of the monasteries of Buddhism, religious temples and sacred shrines, where the followers of Buddhism are associated with the teachings of the Lord Buddha himself. Buddhist pilgrimage centres have developed as tourist centres not only for the followers of Buddhism, but also for others. Grand Stupas, ancient monasteries, meditation and worship amidst Buddhist chants are seraphic experience for Buddhist pilgrims. Stupas are also special because instead of wood and brick, craftsmanship was carved on stone.

The rise, fall and renewal of Sanchi

'Then hear my brothers, all that comes to existence must fade away. Let your striving alone never come to an end!' The rise

and fall and renewal of Sanchi encapsulate the truth of these last words of Lord Buddha. One of the notable rulers of world history, Devanampiya (Beloved of the Gods) King Ashoka created 84,000 stupas and reallocated the Buddha's ashes in all of the places. In Sanchi, a circumambulatory path was constructed around the Stupa, which was surrounded by a stone railing, which is also called the Vedika. Parikrama or Pradakshina is an important part of rituals and devotional practices in Buddhism. A Harmika (a square structure) was also added to the stupa. The Harmika is placed at the top of the Stupa and has a three-tier Chhatra or Chhatravali that represents the three jewels of Buddhism – Buddha, Dharma (the teachings of Buddha) and Sangha (Buddhism class). There are a



number of important archaeological monuments in Sanchi that date back to the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. The Sanchi Stupa is amazingly designed and its glory can be gauged through the Stupas and the elegant carvings on its frontage.

When to come

The best time to visit Sanchi and the nearby Buddhist sites - Sonari, Satdhara, Andher, Murelkhard - is from October to March. The days will be pleasant and sunny, and during peak winter (December to February) visitors will need woollens or jacket. While Sanchi itself will be beautiful during the rains (July to September), the Buddhist sites around Sanchi might become inaccessible.

November is special

Every year on last Sunday of November, Mahabodhi Society displays the relics of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana at the Vihara. Devotees from entire world gather here to pay their respects.

Activities to do in Sanchi

- ❖ Heritage Walk is the best way to explore Buddhist art, culture, and architecture embedded in great Stupas, temples, and caves.

- ❖ Be a part of Divine spiritual meditation at centres in and around Sanchi and make life a constant celebration.

- ❖ Be it Leisure, pleasure trip, MICE activity, wedding, or film shooting, Madhya Pradesh has a lot to offer.

- ❖ Do visit Sanchi University of Buddhist Indic Studies, which is preserving treasure of ancient Indian knowledge.

How to reach

By Air: The nearest airport is Raja Bhoj Airport in Bhopal (46 kms via Diwanganj and 78 kms via Raisen) that is connected by regular flights to Delhi and Mumbai. Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Airport in Indore is 181 kms away.

By Rail: Vidisha (10 kms) is the closest major railway station from Sanchi. Bhopal (46 kms) is the most well connected to Delhi and Mumbai.

By Road: Good motorable roads connect Sanchi with Bhopal, Indore, Sagar, Gwalior, Vidisha and Raisen. Buses, both State-run and private, leave from Bhopal at frequent intervals.

Places under MP Buddhist Circuit

- ❖ Sanchi
- ❖ Satdhara
- ❖ Sonari
- ❖ Andher
- ❖ Murelkhard
- ❖ Bharhut Stupa
- ❖ Ujjain
- ❖ Kasrawad



Inbound booking picking up

Antara Phookan, Director (Business Development & Design), Assam Bengal Navigation, confirms that the company has started receiving bookings from international clients for the upcoming season, which bodes well not only for tourism but also for river cruising in India.

Hazel Jain

Have you started receiving bookings for your river cruises?

We have already started receiving direct bookings from the inbound market for our upcoming season. Our Ganges cruises will start in August as we do our special cruise upstream on the upper Ganges, which is comfortably accessible only at this time of the year when it has sufficient water levels to cruise from Kolkata to Varanasi. Our Brahmaputra cruises will start by mid-October after the annual monsoon floods subside.

What kind of bookings are you receiving right now?

Our clientele is mainly in the leisure segment. Our strategy is to revive our trade network, build a new network with promoters of conscious luxury travel and add new value-added experiences. We are relying on our existing loyal

network in the trade that knows our reputed quality of service for years now. Additionally, when our season starts in the latter half of the year, we will selectively choose interested companies dedicated to learning about our unique product offering so that they can promote better.

What kind of future do you see for India's river cruising industry, especially in the light of the pandemic when ocean cruising is losing its allure?

India has immense potential in building the river cruising industry as we have so many culturally rich and naturally beautiful rivers. However, it is necessary to educate the domestic market to the unique concept of a 'conscious luxury' river cruising journey in India. We are at par with all the greatest river cruising journeys in the world and Assam Bengal Navigation is responsible for putting India's greatest Himalayan



Antara Phookan
Director (Business Development & Design), Assam Bengal Navigation

rivers on the river cruising map! Not many are aware that a true Himalayan river cruising experience is a long-distance cruising journey taking you to different sights and experiences over seven nights.

What kind of trends do you foresee in river cruising?

On the Brahmaputra River, which has a stunning natural landscape with flora and fauna in abundance, we are introducing a few special departures that will combine the



cruising journey with cycling experiences, hence offering adventurers to explore on foot, cycle or by car. It is an opportunity for MICE events with smaller groups that focus on nature and wellness; however it is not for the traditional MICE sector.

Our concept of long-distance river cruising for about a minimum of five to seven nights on the Himalayan rivers is slowly but surely becoming known in the domestic market, mainly from word of

mouth recommendations, which we find is our best, organic growth strategy. We encourage guests to take the full experience of our thoughtfully-curated long-distance river cruising journeys.

Have you launched any new product recently?

For clients interested in short experiences, we have a three-night river cruise journey, the 'Bengal Memories' itinerary on the lower Ganges that gives an introduction to the rich cultural history of this

river, whereas on the Brahmaputra, we have a four-night river cruise journey, the 'Brahmaputra Taster' itinerary that offers an introductory experience to this majestic Himalayan river. We have another houseboat joining our fleet, this time with two cabins, dedicated to adventurers, who will

We have already started receiving direct bookings from the inbound market for our upcoming season

be able to take it all the way up to the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh. We have also added our re-vamped boutique expedition ship to join our boutique luxury ship on the Brahmaputra River.

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Kerala reinvents tourism

With domestic and international flights are all set to operate at pre-pandemic level, Kerala is getting ready to receive both domestic and international tourists by offering a bouquet of new experiences and products, including caravans, longer stays and customised vacations.

Janice Alysius

With tourism activity back in full swing in the time-tested locales like beaches, hill stations, backwaters and houseboats in Kerala, the state promises a variety of choices for guests all through the year, said **V. R. Krishna Teja**, Director, Kerala Tourism.



V R Krishna Teja
Director, Kerala Tourism

"Approximately 35 domestic tourists and two international tourists arrive in Kerala every minute, making it India's number one up-scale tourist destination. The pandemic affected Kerala severely; however, the state has come out of COVID with its strategies to contain and manage the waves. The government is working on a comprehensive and speedy vaccination programme for almost all tourism stakeholders across the state. We have also developed a four-pronged approach – of testing, tracking, tracing and treating - to manage the curve," he said.

Speaking of the offerings, Teja said, "Kerala is well known for its Ayurvedic treatments, which is reliant on three factors. The first factor is its moist and warm climate, the second is the freshness of the oil made from fresh leaves, and the third is the right technique & skill. Ayurveda is a culture in Kerala; the terrain, climate, biodiversity, scientific approach and trained manpower, all make the state a wellness vacation destination."

Additionally, Kerala has reinvented itself as an adventure tourism

destination with special focus on nature-based activities in the hills and forests of the Western Ghats. Another aspect of Kerala tourism is responsible tourism, where the government is working to develop

Through experiential tour packages across Kerala, the state provides rural and cultural experiences for tourists

tourism to be environmentally sustainable, community-led and economically beneficial to the local people. "Each hotel seeks to procure items from locals, and every activity seeks to involve the locals," he said. "Each rupee you spend in Kerala, the maximum amount will go to the local people.

Through experiential tour packages across the state, the state provides rural and cultural experiences for tourists, as well as create job opportunities for locals," he added.

To provide travellers with new experiences, the government launched a policy of caravan tourism. Under the policy, specially designed buses take tourists to the unexplored destinations with caravan parks, where they are offered camping experiences and other fun activities. Over 100 caravan parks are coming up in the state. There are three sizes of caravans - 5m, 7m and 9m, which cost ₹7,000-₹8,000, ₹3,000-₹15,000, and ₹22,000-₹25,000, respectively. Each caravan comes with a chauffeur, and the smaller caravan allows self-drive as well.

While reinventing Kerala tourism, the government has also successfully converted the traditional



snake boat races into the championship boat league. "The race is to be held every Saturday from August to November at 12 different locations," Teja revealed.

Additionally, the state is committed to increasing the stay of domestic tourists. On an average, domestic tourists stay in Kerala for 4 to 5 days, but the aim is to increase this average up to 7 days. The government has prepared a schedule for each day to offer unique experiences.

A series of travel trade networking activities, including participation in trade fairs, and organisation of B2B partnership meets and roadshows have been planned to introduce the new products to a wider audience. Major international tourism events where Kerala plans to showcase its strength in the next three months include the 28th International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM) at Tel Aviv (Israel) and at BIT Milan (Italy). Also, B2B meets will be held in Madrid and Milan.

Excitement in the air for travel trade

The month of March came with a lot of hope and excitement for the travel fraternity. In Mumbai, the traders met, discussed business and let their hair down to have some fun. TravClan invited 100 travel trade partners to meet Chirag Agarwal, Sandeep Raghav, Vignesh Mohan and attend their presentations while networking and getting back to business.



Building trade relationships

The Eastern Himalaya Travel and Tour Operators Association recently organised the largest B2B travel mart in East and North-eastern India - Bengal Travel Mart. The 6th edition of BTM provided a platform for trade stakeholders to establish connections, besides giving an overview of Northeast's untapped potential.

 Janice Alyosius

The sole purpose of BTM 2022, organised from 5 to 7 March at Mayfair Tea Resort, Siliguri, West Bengal, was to establish Siliguri as a B2B platform for the Eastern Himalayas' domestic market. The market available at Siliguri comprises the host city, along with the Seven Sister states namely Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland & Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. The organisers included Bangladesh and Nepal in the mart to expand the circuit.

Odisha Tourism initiatives
Rina Mohapatra, Additional Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha, spoke on the occasion about the initiatives taken in Odisha to revive tourism. "Pandemic has given a big blow to the entire tourism industry. Odisha tourism with new initiatives has fortunately been able




Rina Mohapatra
Additional Secretary
Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha

 Odisha tourism with new initiatives has fortunately been able to recover from effects of the pandemic

to recover from the effects of the pandemic," she said.
Odisha Tourism has decided to organise 'Eco Retreat Odisha'




Sandipan Ghosh
General Secretary
EHTTOA

 MICE is a very important segment in the Northeast at the moment because MICE travel to Northeast is cheaper

at multiple tourist destinations in the state. The state tourism department introduced glamping, a unique experience of glamorous camping in luxury



Hemant Agarwal
Convener
Bengal Travel Mart

 While visiting Northeast, tourists visit Darjeeling and Gangtok, but there are plenty of unexplored destinations

cottages, delectable cuisine, spa, adventure and water sports activities, nature trails and wholesome day itineraries and cultural evenings.

Bhubaneswar, Konark and Puri make up the golden triangle, which is popular among domestic tourists. The state is working to develop the places and promote spiritual tourism. "We are working on revamping Puri and the Lingraj temple in Bhubaneswar. We are also planning to organise a bird festival at Chilika Lake for promoting wildlife tourism. As part of eco-tourism initiative, we have more than 50 eco-tourism resorts in collaboration with the forest department of Odisha," she added.

Northeast potential
Hemant Agarwal, Convener, BTM, said, "This is the sixth edition of Bengal Travel Mart. We have found throughout these six years that people are interested in learning about these locations, they want to experience these locations first-hand before they tell others about them. That is what we are attempting to facilitate over these 6 years."

Northeast has a lot of potential. Agarwal urged the authorities to assist the Northeast in harnessing its potential and to improve its infrastructure. "Tourists typically visit Darjeeling and Gangtok when visiting the Northeast, but there are plenty of destinations that remain unexplored due to lack of infrastructure. Therefore, we urge the government to work towards developing the infrastructure there. Let us work together in a manner that the region as a whole flourish," he added.

MICE in Northeast
Speaking of potential of MICE in Northeast, Sandipan Ghosh, General Secretary, EHTTOA, said, "MICE is a very important segment in the Northeast at the moment because MICE travel to Northeast is cheaper in comparison to international travel. Northeast combines leisure and business at a lower price than other destinations."

BTM event promotes Siliguri tourism

The Eastern Himalaya Travel and Tour Operators Association successfully conducted the 6th edition of Bengal Travel Mart, the largest B2B Travel Mart in east and north-east India. The event aimed to establish Siliguri as a platform for the inbound domestic market in the Eastern Himalayas.



EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



APRIL 2022

Date	Event	Time
31-2Apr	Travel & Tourism Fair - Chennai	10:00am
31-2Apr	Holiday Expo - Vadodara	9:00 am
6	World Tourism Forum (WTF) - New Delhi	9:00 am
5-7	World Travel Market - Brazil	12:00 pm
5-7	ITB India	10:00 am
7-8	CAPA Airline Leader Summit	TBA
11-13	World Travel Market - Africa	11:00 am
23-24	Travel Mice Show	TBA
28-1 May	International Tourism & Travel Industry Show	9:00 am

MAY 2022

3-5	World Travel Expo	9:00 am
9-12	Arabian Travel Market Dubai (ATM Dubai)	11:00 am
10-11	ILTM Arabia	9:00 am
17-19	Airport Show Dubai	10:00 am
18-20	SATTE 2022	6:00 pm
25-26	CAPA Americas Aviation & LCCs Summit	TBA

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Positive vibes only:

Opening of international commercial flights will give tour operators time to plan for the coming season, which will start from October. Indian Association of Tour Operators also welcome multiple entry e-visa, saying that it fulfills their long-standing demand.

 Nisha Verma

Sharing how happy they were at the news of opening of international commercial flights, **Ravi Gosain**, Vice President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), said, "We were waiting eagerly for two and a half years for the opening of scheduled international flights. This will give encouragement to both tour operators as well as travelers coming to India. While this season is already gone, we are expecting that we will get some good business in the coming season, which will start from October 2022. This will give us a lead time to plan travel and we may get some last-minute business as well. However, we are not focusing on that but we want to make plans based on this news. We also wanted the government to ease the e-visa, but that demand has now been fulfilled," he said.



Ravi Gosain
Vice President, IATO

He explained that multiple entry visa was a need since tourists coming to India also visit neighbouring countries like Bhutan and Nepal. "We need people to come with a multiple entry visa and I am sure that there will be more flights opening when traffic will increase, which, in turn, would really help tourism industry, which is suffering for two and a half years," he pointed out.

Gosain shared that they have been working closely with the Ministry of Tourism and vari-

ous stakeholders for the last two years to bring back tourism on track. "There are lots of changes happening every now and then and there have been various up and downs. One of our biggest concerns is that we will lose the skilled manpower and we have to work together to get them back on track. In fact, if one is out of business for two years and not doing the same activity, then they tend to forget many things. These are just a few things that are important. We did many presentations and will do again as the next season starts. The flights have restarted in summer, which unfortunately is the off season for us. Hence, we will have time to work on all our skills to be ready to cater to tourists when it is season time," he informed.

He further added, "We have been closely working with the MOT on the National Tourism

Policy as well as the National Tourism Digital Mission and overseas promotions and all other activities they are doing. We are happy with the policies the government is adopting and the work, which is being undertaken by the MOT. I hope

Opening of flights will give us a lead time to plan travel and we may get some last-minute business as well

all will be implemented in time. I was part of the meetings for new Incredible India website, which will be a great thing for India, as the MOT is working on a timeline, which will be great. I think then India will have the best website."

Equity more than equality is need

Union Minister of Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya M Scindia, while addressing an event celebrating women in aviation sector, said that it is high time that people should recognise the contribution of women in the industry, and also advocated equity over equality at workplace for them.

 Nisha Verma

Ministry of Civil Aviation, along with Women in Aviation India (WAI) and The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) recently organised an event acknowledging the contribution of women in Indian aviation sector.

Speaking on the occasion as chief guest, Union Minister of Civil Aviation **Jyotiraditya M Scindia** said, "This is a landmark day to be remembered. We are celebrating the achievements of women in the aviation industry, as we celebrate 75 years of Independence this year with the Aazadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. As a country with 1.3 billion population, world's largest democracy, with 70 per cent of the population below the age of 35, that is the potential India represents to the world. But this is a latent potential, which needs

to be converted to kinetic. Women in aviation has been working in this direction. "It is need of the hour, the clarion call to bring women to the forefront, so that we can achieve our dream of becoming a superpower. The role of women is not confined to airport and airplanes only and the number of ladies being recognised today are only a drop in the ocean, numerous other women have also made remarkable contribution in this industry. Our country has a rich heritage of women in aviation; 15 per cent of our pilots are women, while the average global rate is only five per cent. But we need to do much more and shift our parameters to bring this 15 per cent to 50 per cent. We all need to start at the grassroots by making STEM education accessible."

He added "In next decade, the backbone of Indian infrastructure is going to be civil aviation, which transports roughly 144 million

people and has a growth potential double that of Indian Railways. Therefore, there is a need to train more pilots. For this, we have

unleashing another avenue for our women to participate much greater in civil aviation."



Union Minister of Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya M Scindia looks on as Radha Bhatia, president, Women in Aviation India (WAI), lights the lamp at the event.

come out with a new FTO policy, through which we are looking to set up nine new FTOs in five new cities, as this will help in reducing the outflow of foreign exchange in training our pilots abroad and

He added, "The need of the hour is to establish equity more than equality for women at workplaces, with men partaking in responsibilities at work, as well as at home."

Many other senior dignitaries were also present on the occasion, including **Rajiv Bansal**, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; **Usha Padhee**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; **Radha Bhatia**, President, Women in Aviation, India Chapter and many other senior executives from MoCA, FICCI and representatives of airlines.

Radha Bhatia, President, Women in Aviation, India Chapter, shared, "It's an absolute pleasure to host this event along with the Ministry of Civil Aviation, which celebrates the contribution of all women achievers. This day would be remembered in the history of aviation where we have so many eminent stars of aviation present among us for the first time, along with a very dynamic Civil Aviation Minister and eminent dignitaries from the ministry, FICCI and the industry. Women in aviation, including the defence forces,

have also been felicitated today. Women have an important role to play in the aviation sector. India's biggest problem today is that of unemployment, and increasing participation in tourism and aviation might be one of the answers. We should all come together to

We are celebrating women in aviation, as we celebrate 75 years of Independence this year with the Aazadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

provide maximum opportunities to all in an endeavour to put women in the forefront. "

Around 30 women achievers, who have played a significant role in the aviation sector, were felicitated at the event.

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HILTON AND HILTON GARDEN INN

Bengaluru
MANISH GARG has been appointed as the General Manager of Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn at Embassy Manyata Business Park in Bengaluru. With hospitality leadership experience spanning more than 20 years, Manish brings a wealth of experience in planning, developing and directing effective business strategies for pre-opening hotels and revenue streams. Manish's appointment, as the General Manager for the dual properties, will witness him in an all-encompassing role responsible for positioning the hotels as a defining benchmark in modern hospitality in the region.



RENAISSANCE BENGALURU RACE COURSE HOTEL

Bangalore
MANISHA SHARMA has been appointed as the new General Manager of Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel. She comes with over 20 years of experience in the hotel industry. She has performed managerial and leadership roles at various established properties across the country and in Dubai. At Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, she has been entrusted to take care of complete hotel operations, elevate customer experience and further enhance hotel's positioning as a leading 'Lifestyle Hotel' brand of Marriott International in Bengaluru. Her forte includes strategic thinking; Sales, Marketing, MICE and Revenue Management.



HYATT REGENCY

Dehradun
PRATITI RAJPAL has been appointed as the Director of Operations of Hyatt Regency Dehradun. Pratiti brings along years of inspiring experience across Marriott & Hyatt hotels in India, with a decade of the journey being with Hyatt. Starting as the Marketing Communications Manager at Hyatt Regency Chennai in 2012 to cluster role at Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa & Grand Hyatt Mumbai and Cluster Director of Marketing Communications at Andaz Delhi & Grand Hyatt Gurgaon (Pre-Opening) her professional journey has been adventurous.



FAIRFIELD BY MARRIOTT

Jodhpur
HARSH MAHAJAN has been appointed as the Associate Director of Sales of Fairfield by Marriott Jodhpur. This will be his second stint with Marriott International, as he was earlier associated with Courtyard by Marriott Agra and JW Marriott Chandigarh for almost 4 years. With over a decade of experience, Harsh has worked with prominent brands like The Oberoi Group and IHG Hotels & Resorts. A seasoned and accomplished professional, Harsh is recognised for his capability to communicate with customers and provide exceptional service. In his new role, he will focus on developing and implementing sales strategies for Fairfield by Marriott Jodhpur.



UDAAN HOTELS AND AIR IQ

Siliguri
NEERAJ KUMAR AILAWADI joins Udaan Hotels and Air IQ as India Head Sales & Marketing. With an experience of more than three decades in Sales, Marketing, Distribution, Travel and Hospitality Industry, Neeraj will lead the Pan India team and achieve business targets for all Udaan Group Hotels and Air IQ. Throughout his career, Neeraj has been a key contributor to the Industry and a result oriented Individual driving business growth. The hotel chain boasts of unique variety of sightseeing destinations, splendid views, eccentric antiquity stores and a multitude of tea plantations. These facets make stay a wholesome experience of a lifetime.



HARKARAN SINGH has been appointed as the General Manager of Hyatt Regency Dehradun. He brings with him 15 years of experience across Marriott & Hyatt hotels in India. He began his journey with the Hyatt family 12 years back and has worked across Hyatt Pune in 2010 to Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli, Hyatt Regency Kolkata and was General Manager at Hyatt Raipur, before taking on his latest role at Hyatt Regency Dehradun. Passionate about delivering above-and-beyond moments for guests and colleagues, In his role as the GM, he is leading the team of this stunning 263-key hotel across all disciplines.



JW MARRIOTT

Bengaluru
 JW Marriott Bengaluru appoints **VARUN SUDEN** as its new Rooms Division Manager. With close to 16 years of experience with the Indian hotel industry, Varun exhibits a strong record of driving guest and employee satisfaction. At JW Marriott Bengaluru, his emphasis will be on customer satisfaction and rooms operation. Starting his career in 2006, Varun has been associated with some of the eminent hospitality brands like Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre and Goa Marriott Resort and Spa, Courtyard by Marriott Gurgaon, Marriott Whitefield Hotel Bengaluru, JW Marriott Aerocity and The Leela Palace Mumbai.



NIRAAMAYA WELLNESS RETREATS

Bengaluru
 Niraamaya Wellness Retreats elevates **DHAVALAKEERTHI M K** as Vice President - Marketing. Dhavalakeerthi has been a part of the Niraamaya growth story for over three years and brings with him an extensive travel and hospitality experience spanning nearly two decades. His strengths in branding, PR, and Digital Transformation have been a key contributor to his career path. He is a marketing expert with talents in developing and implementing strategies, driving profits and strengthening customer dominance. He is an MBA from the Institute of Business Management and Technology, Bangalore.



KUNAL DEWAN has been appointed as the Director of Operations of Hyatt Regency Delhi. A seasoned professional, Kunal possesses vast knowledge of the industry and has over 15 years of experience. In his new role, he will be responsible to oversee hotel operations, elevate guest experience and identify new revenue streams for the hotel. Kunal had been heading the Sales and Marketing function for Hyatt Regency Delhi since October 2018. His professional journey began after his PG diploma in international hospitality from Les Roches, School of Hotel Management, Switzerland.



TALKING PEOPLE

MEENA BHATIA, Vice President & General Manager, Le Meridien, New Delhi, enjoys ideating and using creative ideas for new personal or professional initiatives. She also unwinds by shopping. "One hobby I cultivated during the lockdown was online shopping and indulgence! I also de-stress by travelling. My favourite destinations in India are Punjab for good food and Uttarakhand for solace and rejuvenation. Overseas, I love New York for family and shopping. But my next holiday will be to Dubai," Bhatia said.



PAYAL SATISH, Commercial Director, Blade India, enjoys her work so much that she doesn't find it stressful at all. "I do however enjoy long drives, regular holidays and short breaks, spending time with my dog and a daily swim. During the lockdowns, I also took to gardening and improving my physical fitness. My favourite holiday spot in India is Goa and internationally it would have to be New York, which tops the list. My next holiday will be to Andaman," she said.



MOKSHA GANDHI, Founder, Vahn, said, "It is usually hiking up a hill with my family and friends to unwind and de-stress, or planning any other outdoor adventure or road trip. One skill I have learned during the lockdown was designing and making caravans! What started as a passion project during the lockdown turned into my first business, which now runs under the name Vahn." She loves travelling and says her next holiday will be to a place in Kumaon.





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Goa beyond the usual

Goa is known for the sun, sea and sand, but the state government also wants to showcase the other sides of Goa, and for that it has been focussing on heritage, hinterland, adventure and other facets of tourism in the state.



Nisha Verma

Claiming that the last two years have been a nightmare for the industry, **Nikhil Desai**, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) said that Goa being an industry leader is most affected by the pandemic.

“Nonetheless, we made the most out of this opportunity in the last two years. When tourism was almost zero, we decided where we head next. We spent a lot of time into planning. Several issues had to be addressed, like the formation of the new Goa Tourism Board, which has finally been

on 19 December. There is also a 1400 acre convention centre, which will be completed by the end of this year. It will give a massive boost to the MICE tourism segment in the state. We are also in the process of setting up our Western Ghats Nature Education Park in South Goa, which would be re-oriented towards nature based theme tourism, as well as heritage walking corridor that will showcase our beautiful heritage, history and culture to the visiting tourists,” he said. Claiming that they cannot put all their eggs in one basket, he said, “As far as sun, sea and sand is concerned, we want to showcase the other side of Goa. While it would remain our mainstay, the state government is clearly focused on heritage, hinterland, adventure and all the other facets of tourism.”

He added, “We are a small state of just 3,700 kms, but we have everything to offer to the tourists. Hence, no sooner the restrictions were lifted, the state government has made it 100 per cent back to pre-COVID times because everything is open fully without any restrictions, except for masks, social distancing and other norms. After that we saw plethora of arrivals to the state. The industry is doing extremely well. This proves that we are one big step towards recovery, but still there are challenges owing to the geopolitical situation. The Russia-Ukraine war has upset our plans with charter flights stopping from our key source market, i.e. Russia. The tourism charter season is looking bleak for the remainder of the season. However, I am sure all this will be behind us, and with the encouragement and constant support that we receive from MOT, Goa will bounce back in the coming season as far as international tourism is concerned.”



Marketing and technology

Desai said that the last two years, given the unique situation, left them with very little choice as far as marketing is considered. “However, whenever we had some small windows in between lockdowns and lifting of restrictions, we did some social media marketing. Now, we are going to up the tempo in the days to come. We have lined up a series of packages and roadshows across the country,” he explained.

Competition

Claiming that competition is good, Desai shared that many other states are competing for similar share of pie. “For MICE, we do have competition. Goa is one of the leaders in wedding tourism. Most of our star properties are absolutely full these days mainly driven by MICE and the wedding segment. I am sure Goa will do well because of the kind of products that we have added and managed to

successfully implement, mostly on a PPP mode. We believe that the government should step back, be a facilitator, encourage and cheer up the private sector and see that they introduce the best of products,” he shared.



Nikhil Desai
Managing Director
Goa Tourism Development Corporation



As Goa completed 60 years of liberation from Portuguese rule, we have dedicated Fort Aguda Jail and Museum to the tourism industry

achieved under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister. We also have the tourism policy and the master plan that has been laid out and it is a clear direction for the state of Goa to head towards a sustainable, responsible and an accessible tourism destination,” he said.

Repositioning Goa

He revealed that in December, they had a new heritage tourism product. “Since Goa has completed 60 years of liberation from the Portuguese rule, we have dedicated Fort Aguda Jail and Museum to the tourism industry, which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister

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