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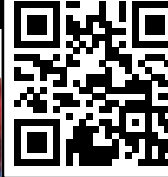
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India says 'Namaste World'

Ministry of Tourism has recently launched its India reopening campaign 'Namaste World' on social media, which welcomes tourists from around the world, showcasing its varied offerings.



Nisha Verma

Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General (ADG), Tourism, shares how the campaign came into being. "Even though the visas had opened on 15 November 2021, but in terms of reverting to the pre-COVID regime, the visa opened on 15 March 2022. Even regular commercial flights have resumed from 27 March 2022. Also, under the vaccination campaign, over 183 doses have been completed in India. So, this was the right time for us as all three things were happening. We have managed the COVID situation really well during the Omicron phase as the numbers were not very high, considering a very robust vaccination campaign. With all these three reasons put



Rupinder Brar
Additional Director General, MOT

together, it was time for us to welcome back inbound tourists. Hence, the Namaste World campaign was launched because we greet with Namaste in our country," she explains.

She adds, "Hence, we welcome all our guests back into our country and through Namaste we also

want to show them the diversity that exists in India, because they can go to the mountains in the north, or to the Northeast of the country and enjoy the beautiful landscape. They can go to Madhya Pradesh or Karnataka for national parks. They can go to the Kutchh area for salt pans or visit the Statue of Unity. The list is endless. Thus, the idea behind the Namaste campaign is to welcome everybody back and also through that, show the diverse offerings that our country has."

Brar informs that for promotions and campaigns currently, they are going to remain in the digital space. "It has a very wide outreach at a minimal cost. It creates a very effective campaign and also in terms of user profile, most people these days prefer

the digital space for getting information for bookings. Hence, this is a space that will create informational height for Incredible

We welcome our guests back and through Namaste we also want to show them the diversity that exists in India

India. There is so much diversity in the country that we will continue to bring different offerings of India as we go along with the opening," she says.

Asego's new tool

Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO, Asego, shares that launch of its all-new tech platform will ensure partners issue policies on-the-go.



Hazel Jain

What is new with Asego and how is it different from your previous business model?

The pandemic created positive disruption also, providing a plethora of opportunities spearheaded by technology and innovation. We are glad that our business, Asego, is also a part of this great revolution. We are about to launch our all-new tech platform which will allow our partners to issue policies on-the-go in just three clicks. Furthermore, we have moved to a multiple underwriter model, which will provide our partners more flexibility to customize products and services as per their needs.

Could you elaborate on your offerings and how is it helping clients?



Dev Karvat
Founder and CEO, Asego

Our bouquet of travel assistance services and new-age bundled products have always been customer favorites. Nevertheless, we realised that tailoring offerings at a micro level is the need of the hour. We are now offering an array of relevant standalone products, such as quarantine cancellations, visa refusal, flight delay/interruption covers and gadget

Contd on page 10 ▶

First, get the basics right

Ajay Singh, CMD, Spicejet, says that from getting ATF under GST to excise duty, there is a need to get all the basics right before the government thinks about making India a hub for global aviation.



Nisha Verma

Speaking at Wings India 2022 recently, **Ajay Singh**, CMD, SpiceJet, said that getting ATF under the GST ambit is an issue they have been discussing for a long time. "We have been talking about this for more than 15 years. No country in the world does not include ATF in the central taxation ambit like the GST, and it is really counter-intuitive a country aspiring to be a global leader would handicap its airlines so strongly," he said.

COVID assistance

Singh highlighted that for most countries around the world, it is



Ajay Singh
CMD, SpiceJet

unbelievable that there was little assistance provided to the aviation sector during COVID. "Airlines around the world tell us that it is shocking how Indian airlines are still around, with no assistance

high taxation, low yields and shut down of the sector. Hence, it has been very difficult. We had a meeting with the Finance Minister a few weeks back, in which we had put out all the issues in front of her. It is not just about bringing ATF under GST, it is also excise duty, which is around 11 per cent. The excise duty was hiked at the time when oil prices went down. Now that oil prices are at a record low, excise duty is not coming down. Hence, we need to be very cognizant of the fact that aviation sector has suffered huge losses. It is a chronically ill industry," he said. He claims that the industry has huge potential, we only need to get the basics right.

'Indian hospitality set to rise'

India seems to be in a sweet spot at the moment for Radisson Hotel Group, as the group plans to double its Indian footprint with addition of 148 hotels and resorts by 2025.



Hazel Jain

Radisson Hotel Group, planning to double its portfolio in India, unveils plans to add 148 hotels and resorts in the country by 2025. These will be in addition to more than 140 properties the hotel group has in operation, or under development nationwide. At present, Radisson Hotel Group operates 106 hotels and resorts in India, covering seven of its brands.

Showing faith in the India market, **Katerina Giannouka**, President (Asia Pacific), Radisson Hotel Group, said, "I am so impressed by the way the India market has



Katerina Giannouka
President (Asia Pacific), Radisson Hotel Group

rebounded successfully, much faster than the last wave. After the first wave, we took about seven months to recover RevPAR. In the second wave, we took only four months and we have seen

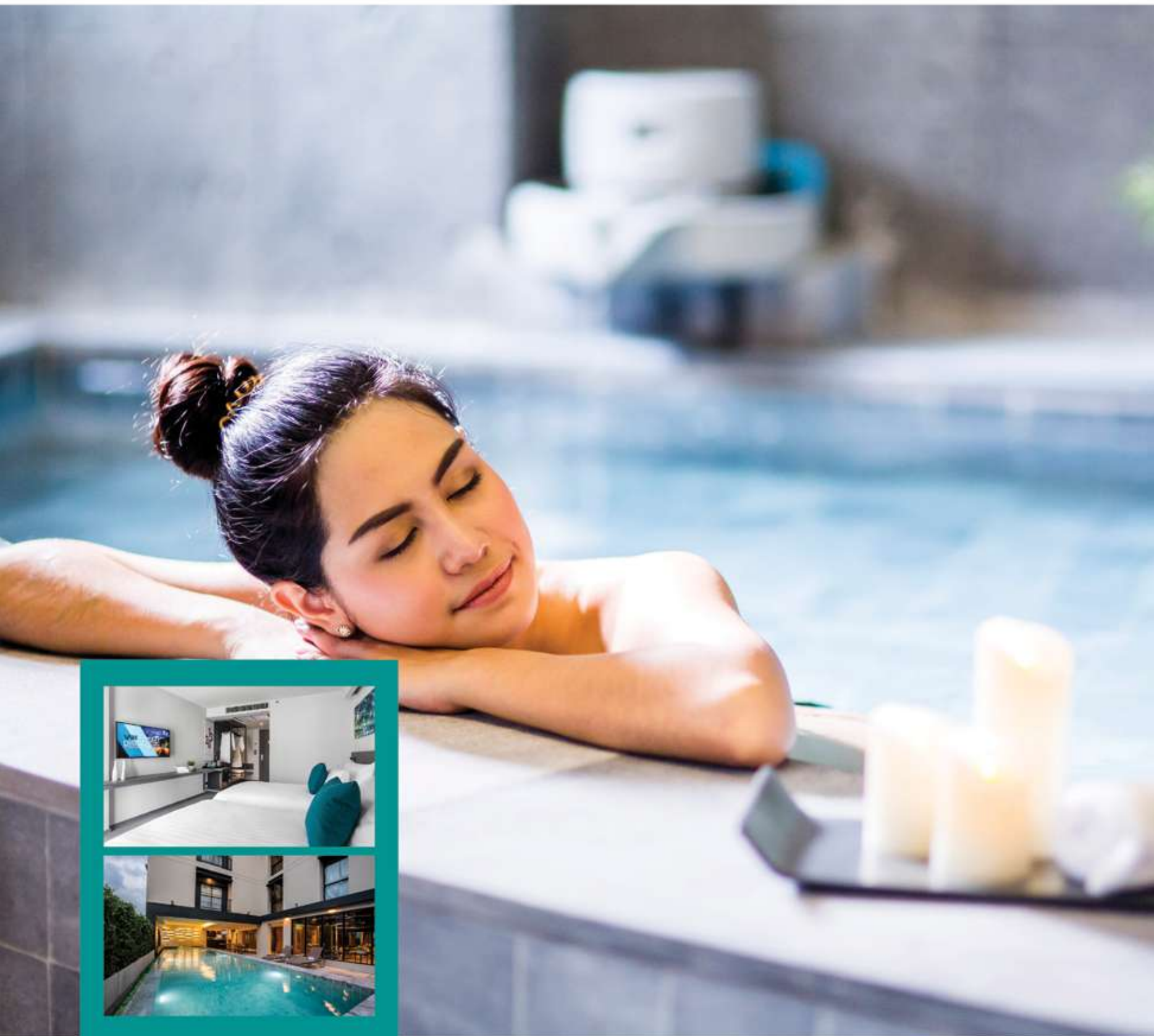
with Omicron that our hotels have rebounded in less than a month and a half. So, we see a very strong recovery trend, illustrating the resilience of the market predominantly driven by leisure travellers in India. And now I am happy to see that MICE segment is coming back along with corporate demand."

She added that the team has a pipeline of about 40 more properties, which roughly puts the group into 150 hotels in operation and pipeline. "Our target is to double that to 300 hotels within the next five years. We do have a focus on tiered cities in India. We already

Contd on page 16 ▶

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Goa needs to revive old markets

With its main source markets of Russia and Ukraine closed down, Goa will need to revive its traditional markets such as Germany, Poland and the UK by this October, says Nilesh Shah, President, Travel & Tourism Association of Goa.



Hazel Jain

Goa's tourism industry is facing a difficult time. Not only the two key charter markets for Goa have come to a standstill, but the rising fuel prices are also discouraging domestic tourists to come to Goa. However, **Nilesh Shah**, President, Travel & Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG), is hopeful. He recently led his team to meet the new Tourism Minister of Goa, Rohan Khaunte, to seek his support for the tourism industry. "He (Khaunte) is a dynamic leader and has experience in the hospitality industry. He sounded very positive during our meeting and promised he will go all out to resolve our issues. We want a tourism minister to execute the vision outlined in the tourism masterplan. We hope under his leadership our industry benefits," said Shah, adding that the new tourism minister expressed his interest in promoting hinterland and backwater tourism.

He said, "This was always on the agenda for Goa. We have a unique rural culture, which was not tapped and it had to be done in a sustained manner. Promotions were done on the local culture and the cuisine. The govern-



Nilesh Shah
President, Travel & Tourism Association of Goa

ment had also informed the local panchayat that tours would visit the village. Several companies were providing experiences and it was important to have connections to these places."

Shah and his team had also met Goa Chief Minister

Dr Pramod Sawant to seek more support for the sector.

Old source markets key

Shah is hopeful that Goa will see some good inbound tourists from the next season, which will start from October 2022. "We will need to revive our old source markets now such as Finland, Germany, Poland and the UK now that Russia and Ukraine are halted. This also means charters from these countries. And with the new Mopa airport opening in August 2022, we are hopeful that the frequency of the scheduled flights from airlines such as Oman Air, Emirates and Air India will also go up," he said.

Talking about the situation in Sri Lanka, he said that the island nation's loss could be India's gain.

"Sri Lanka was one of our competitors, especially for charter business. Now that international travellers are changing their plans, we can hope to see some of them change to Goa," he said.

Rising fuel costs may hurt

The rising petrol prices are also expected to hit domestic tourism in Goa. "It is expected to hit restaurants and hotels, which may increase their prices. But the one group that is expected to increase fares is the taxi drivers. All costs

Now that international travellers are changing their plans, we can hope to see some of them in Goa

will increase but I hope the situation will be brought under control soon. The costs of flight tickets had increased. Tourists were already paying 20 to 30 per cent more for taxis. Taxi associations will have to think before increasing fares," Shah opined.

Booking travel not easy: Travelport

Travel ranks high among people's wishlist, but at the same time they find booking travel a tedious and frustrating experience. On average, travellers visit a whopping 38 different websites before booking their trip, according to recent research.



Nisha Verma

Travelport has unveiled findings of a new survey that highlighted excitement to travel in 2022. The study, commissioned by Travelport and conducted by Toluna Research, polling more than 2,000 respondents from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Hong Kong SAR, India, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.

It found that people would even be willing to give up some of their favourite things for six months or longer in order to travel. The research saw 71 per cent of respondents saying that they would forgo concerts; 64 per cent would stop buying new clothes; 63 per cent would give up spa treatments; 60 per cent would skip the cinema; 53 per cent would give up playing sports; while 36 per cent would stop dining at restaurants. "While the last two+ years have been a signifi-

cant challenge, the global travel industry recovered more than 50 per cent of its gross activity by the end of 2021. Should this trend continue along the same trajectory, it could reach 85 per



Jen Catto
Chief Marketing Officer, Travelport

cent recovery by the end of this year. The pent-up desire to travel is strong," said **Jen Catto**, Chief Marketing Officer, Travelport.

On the other hand, while the idea of travel saw a high degree of enjoyment, the same wasn't true for booking the same trip, which

involved frustration on behalf of the travellers. The study noted that 43 per cent of US respondents, the largest travel region, do not find booking travel enjoyable. However, 95 per cent of that same group enjoy the experience of being on holiday.

Globally, travel was ranked as the number one most enjoyable activity, but when it came to shopping for travel, the industry dropped to the number four spot, trailing the worlds of clothing, restaurants and electronics. This is not just a generational issue. A quarter of Gen Z respondents agreed the complexity of searching, comparing and booking travel offers just is not fun.

On average, travellers' visit a whopping 38 different websites before booking their trip. Other industries have steamed ahead in terms of simplicity and innovation, evolving with their consumers' sophisticated expectations,

and shifting perceptions over time. Study respondents found the travel industry to be an outlier. "With demand for travel rebounding at its strongest pace since the pandemic began, it is imperative

With demand for travel rebounding at pace since the pandemic began, it is imperative the industry listens to its customers

the industry listens to its customers. Now is the time to fix travel retail, putting consumer convenience, digital experience, and breadth of choice above all. By restoring clarity, confidence and fun to travel shopping, we can grow trust, generate business and inspire loyalty," added Catto.



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TRAVELTALK

VIEWPOINT

Visa Troubles

A few months back, I would not have imagined writing this editorial, but a lot can change in a matter of weeks and COVID-19 has shown us so. Let us discuss a problem that the travel fraternity is facing, the problem of visas! Travel demand is multiplying daily, but are the visas holding us back?

In my last few chats with industry colleagues, they all seem to be asking about the visa processing time. Name the country and the list of visa questions are endless, from change in process to vaccination status and most importantly the processing time. Luckily, the increasing number of COVID-19 cases globally has not deterred the demand for travel, but we have to wait and watch.

So, what does it take to ramp up visa facilitation? Why are not the embassies doing so? I believe, group travel and MICE travel is being largely impacted because the slow visa process. I wonder what our travel associations are doing about this. Have not seen anyone making noise yet.

Over the last two years, many foreign destinations have invested in the Indian traveller and now it is time for them to reap the benefits of revenge travel. Will MICE be the driving force behind the popularity of the Indian outbound traveller?

While I really want to see this sector explode across the globe, let us hope that the airlines and embassies are also prepared for this demand.

Yes, the rising cost of air tickets is another factor hampering the growth. While we all hoped to see a slow but steady slide in air ticket prices, but unfortunately that has not been the case till now.

Going back to a critical issue, I want to circle back to conversations on e-visas and visa on arrivals. Different governments really need to start easing the travel process. Tourism was majorly impacted by the pandemic, and now that we are on the way to recovery, we should not let visa processing time be the reason to delay its comeback. The industry, across the globe, is waiting to welcome Indian travellers. Till visa processing does not happen under three days, let us hope that the authorities decide to issue longer term multiple entry visas as a helping hand to rebuild tourism.

Hospitality sector recovering fast

Hotels witnessed a countrywide occupancy of 42-45 per cent in 2021. Domestic leisure travel growth, significant pent-up demand, partial resumption of business travel in the country, as well as wedding and social events have all contributed to the recovery.

TT Bureau

The Indian hospitality sector, which was among the hardest hit sectors due to the pandemic, has been recovering faster than expected, according to a study by the HVS ANAROCK. India commenced its vaccination drive on 16 January 2021, and by 31 December 2021, the country had administered 1.45 billion doses.

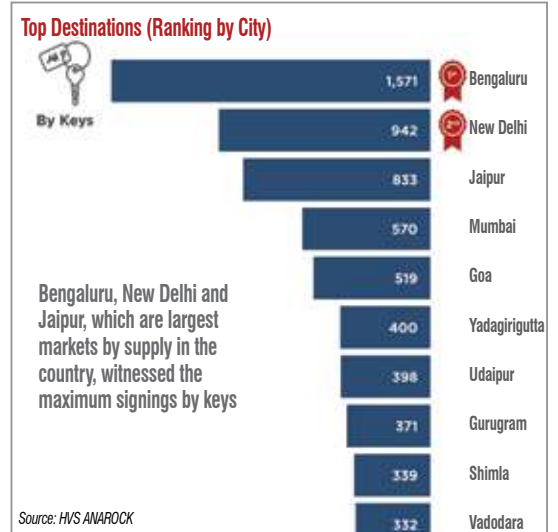
With the increasing momentum of the vaccination drive, travel demand – both leisure and business – gradually started improving in the country. As a result, hotel occupancy began a strong recovery in the third quarter of 2021. Domestic leisure travel growth, significant pent-up demand, the partial resumption of business travel in the country, as well as wedding and social events have all contributed to the recovery.

Small to medium-sized domestic MICE events also made a come-

back, fueling demand for hotels. The sector ended the year with a countrywide occupancy of 42-45 per cent, up 10-13 percentage points over the previous year. Driven by the strong recovery in demand, average rates also began to improve after the second wave, progressively approaching pre-COVID levels.

We expect India-wide occupancy to improve to 66 pc in 2022, which will push RevPAR. Mandeep Singh Lamba, President (South Asia), HVS ANAROCK

recording all time high occupancy and ARR. Some leisure markets such as Goa surpassed pre-pandemic levels of performance by the end of the year. Luxury and upper upscale properties performed exceedingly well in these

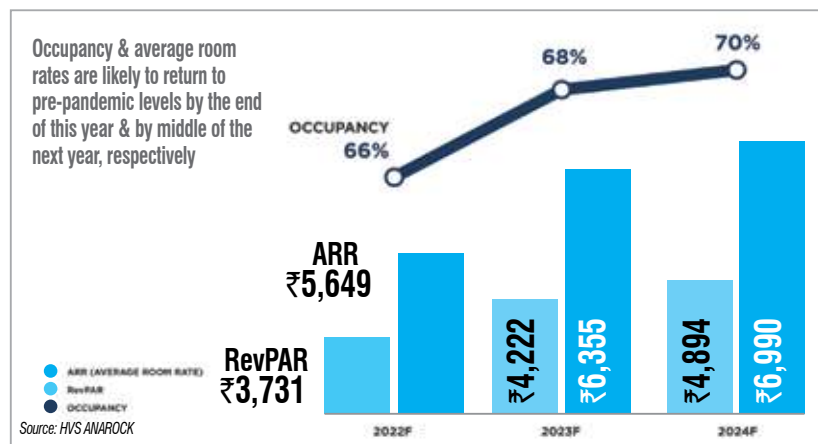


Source: HVS ANAROCK

as well as Tier 3 and 4 cities, having recognised the enormous potential of domestic tourism, which has gained long overdue industry respect in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, 2022 has started on a challenging note, with subdued demand in the first few weeks of the year due to the pandemic.

expanding the guarantee cover by ₹50,000 crore to ₹5 lakh crore, with the additional corpus exclusively earmarked for the hospitality and related segments, will bring some short-term respite to hospitality players. Moreover, the government's greater focus on large-scale infrastructure development, including roads, railways, airports, ports, and waterways, will aid long-term growth in the tourism and hospitality sectors. For instance, the introduction of



Source: HVS ANAROCK

back, fueling demand for hotels. The sector ended the year with a countrywide occupancy of 42-45 per cent, up 10-13 percentage points over the previous year. Driven by the strong recovery in demand, average rates also began to improve after the second wave, progressively approaching pre-COVID levels.

The robust growth in occupancy and average room rates (ARR) resulted in a 24-27 per cent increase in revenue per available

markets given that the upwardly mobile were unable to take any overseas vacations.

In 2021, hotel companies continued to grow their development pipelines, resulting in over 24 per cent rise in brand signings by keys compared to the previous year. During the year, 135 new hotels with 12,359 rooms entered the branded hotel market, while 58 hotels with 3,108 rooms were rebranded. Hoteliers continued to focus on leisure destinations,

This has been followed by the Ukraine-Russia conflict. However, strong domestic travel demand is expected to continue in the year ahead as people have embraced the "new normal" of travel in uncertain times.

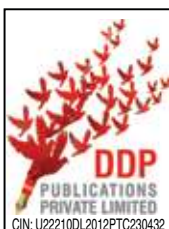
Outlook for 2022

With the Union Budget considering some of the recommendations made by industry stakeholders and extending the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) till March 2023, and

In 2021, hotels in India saw 10-13 percentage points more occupancy (Y-o-Y), which resulted in a 24-27 pc increase in RevPAR

400 new Vande Bharat trains over the next three years, as well as the development of 25,000 km of new highways this fiscal year, will improve last-mile connectivity to several tourist destinations in the country. All this is expected to increase the hotel transaction volumes in 2022.

In conclusion, we can say that the travel industry will witness a bounce back soon.



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DDP is printed, published and edited by Sanjeet on behalf of DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd., printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001
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TourismNews

India's outbound trips will reach 29 million by 2025 and outbound market surpass \$42 billion by 2024 end: GlobalData

Online travel market size expected to reach \$1 trillion by 2028 at a CAGR of 7.5 per cent

Air Austral to resume two weekly flights from Reunion Island to Chennai from 6 May

Centre plans an 8-hour road connectivity from Delhi to Srinagar in order to increase visitor numbers to Kashmir

Rajasthan Tourism to organise second Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart from July 22 to 24 in Jaipur

Royal Caribbean International's 'Spectrum of the Seas' sets sail for maiden voyage in Singapore

Tourist footfalls in India expected to touch 4.5 lakh by end of this quarter: Trading Economics

Tourism backbone of Uttarakhand's economy: CM

Telangana plans tourism push

Telangana, trying to make sure that tourists not only come to the state, but also have an extended stay, has several projects in pipeline, including promotion of Hyderabad as an aviation hub. Announcement of infrastructure development worth more than ₹2,000 crores for the state capital is also likely to help the tourism sector indirectly.

Nisha Verma

Valmiki Hari Kishan, Chairman, Tourism Committee, Federation of Telangana Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI), claimed that Hyderabad and Telangana state at large are making sure that tourists not only come to the destination, but also have an extended stay.

Infrastructure development
Valmiki revealed that infrastructure development to the tune of more than ₹2,000 crores has been announced for Hyderabad by the Chief Minister. "All these are positive signs for the tourism trade. Despite the central and state governments not directly supporting tour operators and travel agents, the budget is being rolled out for infrastructure. Once infrastructure is developed, the tour operators and travel agents would also get benefited," he pointed out.

Tourism Committee

Valmiki said that after being appointed as the Chairman of the Tourism Committee of FTCCI, it was he who organised the first Telangana Tourism Conclave with Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) in 2018, which was a huge hit. "Now, we are brainstorming its second edition in October or November," he added.

Hyderabad hub

Valmiki claimed that Telangana is a tourist's paradise. "Ramappa Temple, Pochampally village and Statue of Equality are well-known destinations. Tourist infrastructure in Telangana is growing at a rapid pace. Pilgrimage tourism to Telangana will grow rapidly too. Also, a lot of airlines started connecting to Hyderabad. Many domestic airlines have positioned Hyderabad as their southern hub, and we from the travel trade are requesting Air India and other airlines to

consider Hyderabad as southern hub for international flights going out to the Middle East, Far East and even the Americas," he said.

"Hyderabad is the place both for a common man to



Valmiki Hari Kishan
Chairman - Tourism Committee, Federation of Telangana Chamber of Commerce and Industry

a luxury aficionado, with hotel rooms available from ₹500 going into lakhs per night. Hyderabad is a culinary paradise. It is a great MICE destination too. In terms of wedding destination,

Ramoji Film City and many other venues make Telangana at par with the best," he added.

He mentioned that Hyderabad would also be a hub for adventure tourism with a school coming up for paragliding, hot air balloons, and many other aero sports activities. "Even for medical tourism, Hyderabad is number two in India. Within India, it is among the top destinations when it comes to film shootings. There is also great opportunity for water sports in places like Hussain Sagar Lake and other water sports. Even for Buddhist Tourism, Hyderabad has its own history. The Buddha Vanam project is going to attract good numbers," he informed.

Challenges

Unfortunately, said Valmiki, Telangana still has not released the tourism policy which they have been pushing for past few years. "How-

ever, the news has come that it will be released soon," he said.

Putting things in order

Valmiki believes that despite OTAs taking away the maximum of tourism business, travellers still want to approach a professional travel agency. "However, OTAs can take only a certain

In terms of wedding destination, Ramoji Film City and many other venues bring Telangana at par with the best

segment of business, because when it comes to customisation or counselling, we need a person to be available 24/7," he said.

Sindhudurg: Maha's hidden treasure

Sindhudurg, unknown to many in India, is the only place in Maharashtra that is approved for scuba and deep diving, apart from many other unique things. Red Carpet Travels has decided to promote this beautiful destination under the banner of Konkanut Cove and act as a Destination Management Company for Sindhudurg dwelling in B2B segment.

TT Bureau

Tell us about this familiarisation trip (to Sindhudurg) and what does it focus on?

Our idea behind developing this itinerary was to offer a multifaceted glimpse of Sindhudurg including the best experiences one can have. It was a tough decision to choose a few from the vast range of experiences Sindhudurg offers and on top of it, to club them in a stipulated number of nights was even tougher. Still we feel that we managed to showcase the various purviews, as the itinerary focused on the experiences covering serene natural settings, adventure, culture, local cuisine, the unique fauna and the legendary history

What is the idea behind this fam? Is your focus now more on domestic destinations? If yes, why?
The focal thought behind this fam is to create an awareness

about this mesmerising destination - Sindhudurg and to uncover its potential to our prominent trade partners. Though our core



Rajesh Kakade
Founder & Global Director
Red Carpet Travels

business focuses on international destinations, it is our attempt to promote the hidden treasures of Maharashtra and showcase it globally.

What destinations in India are you promoting right now?
We would like to be focused on what we are offering.

Sindhudurg, which is unknown to many people in India, is the only place in Maharashtra, which is approved for scuba and deep diving. Besides, there are many other unique things. Hence, we have decided to act purely as a Destination Management Company dwelling in the B2B segment (wholesaler) only for Sindhudurg.

What destinations/ itineraries outside India are you promoting now that scheduled flights are restarting?

We cater to the long haul luxury destinations named the USA, Canada, Scandinavia, Europe and Australia as a Destination Management Company. We have our prominent presence there, with our owned offices and team. We are working on the promotions and product development plans in collaboration with our clients. We are powering our trade partners with



destination excellence information and related content while supporting them in crafting their flagship itineraries.

How do you see the traveller behaviour among domestic and international tourists evolve? What traveller trends are here to stay according to you?

Currently, we foresee a tremendous urge among people to travel after being stuck in a forced lockdown for around two

years. People prefer to travel to short haul destinations for now, but we anticipate a change in this trend soon with the revocation of the commercial flights ban.

Please share some news and developments from Red Carpet that will interest the travel agents?

With the advent of technological advancements we have noticed that travellers from varied demographics are adopting

digitisation as the primary support system for booking their holidays. Therefore, we would be soon empowering our trade partners with an effective digital platform which would cater to the ever changing requirements of the travellers.

We foresee a tremendous urge among people to travel after being stuck in a forced lockdown for around two years

The platform would also educate them about the long haul destinations along with the nitty-gritties involved while planning an itinerary.

Azerbaijan reconnects with India

After a long pause, Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB) reconnects with industry partners in India to update them about the new products that they can offer to their clients. It has already started to see confirmed groups from India now after the entry to Azerbaijan from India is relaxed.



Hazel Jain

Bahruz Asgarov, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Azerbaijan Tourism Board, is excited to return to India after such a long time and share what is new in Azerbaijan.

“India has been an important market for us since the beginning when the Azerbaijan Tourism Board was established. It was one of the six key source markets for us. In 2020, we saw a 67 per cent increase in the number of arrivals from India. This has been a very good indicator of the interest in our destination. During the pandemic, we did not stop working with the market. We continued to have a lot of engagement with the travel trade. We also had a lot of new projects that we are offering to our partners in India. For example, one of them was the Azerbaijan One-on-One platform

where we were training our trade partners in India on the tourism products of Azerbaijan. We were also constantly updating them on what was happening inside the country. In fact, the highest num-



Bahruz Asgarov
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Azerbaijan Tourism Board

ber of certificates were awarded to Indian partners. We were also doing virtual meetings during the lockdown,” he shared.

He is optimistic of the numbers from India in 2022. “We have



relaxed the protocols for Indian visitors, which means they can easily visit Azerbaijan. They only need the full vaccination certificate or COVID recovery certificate. We also have a very easy visa process. You only need a passport, a scan of which you can upload on the website and get your visa in three days or you can apply for urgent visa and get it in three hours. It is a very straightforward process. There are no quarantine requirements as you enter the country,” Asgarov explained. “In

fact, we have already received a lot of queries for groups that were already in the pipeline. Now, with the restrictions lifted we already have a few groups confirmed,” he added.

He said that Azerbaijan is a year-round destination, so it will appeal to all segments – MICE, weddings, corporates and FITs. Right now, it has easy air connectivity from India via GCC on Qatar Airways, FlyDubai and Air Arabia. “We see Indian travellers

stay for three nights but I would recommend five to seven nights. We are currently exploring options of what we can do in India and how much we will invest in the country. We will definitely do B2B meetings, roadshows and familiarisation trips for agents this year,” he shared.

What travellers can expect

ATB has also managed to achieve considerable progress in developing hiking routes, with 16 new trails marked across the northern and north-western routes of Azerbaijan, passing through remote mountain villages surrounded by breath-taking nature. Moreover, 97 km of hiking trails through the lush, forested mountains of Sheki and Zagatala has recently been added to the Transcaucasian Trail, and more routes are still to be added in cooperation with the Transcaucasian Trail Association.

Azerbaijan is becoming an increasingly attractive bird-watching destination thanks to its mixed landscapes and interesting bird species, and there is more to be done in this direction as well. ATB is planning to organise a bird-watching festival where partners will also be invited.

ATB has also managed to achieve considerable progress in hiking routes, with 16 new trails

Another integral part of ATB’s activities is to continue research on how best to develop tourism offerings in Karabakh. 🇦🇿

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Centara expands its portfolio

Thailand's Centara Hotels & Resorts, planning to be among top 100 global hotel operators within five years, signed a Hotel Management Agreement (HMA) with Chiangmai Riverside Plaza Hotel Co. for a new property, Centara Riverside Hotel Chiang Mai, at a ceremony held recently in Bangkok.



Centara Hotels & Resorts, Thailand's leading hotel operator, has signed a Hotel Management Agreement (HMA) with Chiangmai Riverside Plaza Hotel Co. for Centara Riverside Hotel Chiang Mai. Senior management teams from the two companies were present at the agreement signing ceremony, which was held at Centara Grand at CentralWorld in Bangkok recently.



The latest signing is the first following the announcement by Centara of its bold expansion plans, which will help the group reach its goal of becoming a top 100 global hotel operator within five years. Located next to Ping River close to the Old Town, the 27-storey hotel has been re-branded as Centara Riverside Hotel Chiang Mai from 1 April 2022 onwards.

Centara Riverside Hotel's 526 guestrooms range between 45 and 223 square metres and feature floor-to-ceiling windows looking out over the city, Ping River, and Doi Suthep. Apart from the spacious rooms, facilities include a wide range of culinary experiences across the varied restaurants and bars, a large outdoor swimming pool, sauna and steam rooms. An al fresco Sunset Pool

Deck near the pool offers comfortable bean bags to sink into and watch the changing colours of the sky, while Riverside Pavilion offers guests the perfect spot to enjoy river and mountain views from the riverfront patio lawn.

The hotel is already a well-known MICE destination in the region, offering 14 versatile indoor event spaces certified by the Thailand

Convention and Exhibition Bureau for meeting the Thailand Mice Venue Standards (TMVS).

"We are delighted to kick off our 2022 expansion drive by welcoming Centara Riverside Hotel to our growing portfolio, one of several hotels and resorts we plan to open this year. Chiang Mai is a beautiful province, and we are excited to expand our footprint in the region

through strategic partnerships, including this one with Chiangmai Riverside Plaza Hotel Co. Ltd.," said **Thirayuth Chirathivat**, Chief Executive Officer of Centara Hotels & Resorts. "Chiang Mai is a key destination in Thailand for international as well as domestic travellers. With this new partnership with Centara Hotels and Resorts, we are confident that it will strengthen our presence for both leisure and MICE market in Chiang Mai," said **Amarin Narula**, Board of Director of Chiangmai Riverside Plaza Hotel Co. Ltd.

From its prime riverside location, Centara Riverside Hotel places guests within convenient reach of the region's natural, cultural, and shopping attractions, which range from the Central Festival lifestyle and shopping centre to artist villages and night markets. Chiang Mai Old Town is a few minutes away, and Chiang Mai Interna-

tional Airport is a 15-minute drive from the hotel. Centara Riverside Hotel is the group's second hotel in the northern Thai city after Khum Phaya Resort & Spa, which is a member of Centara Boutique Collection. A third Centara hotel is in the pipeline and scheduled

Centara plans to increase its portfolio from 90 properties at present to 200 hotels and resorts by 2026

to open in Q1 2025. Centara will see the group's portfolio increase from nearly 90 properties at present to 200 hotels and resorts by 2026.

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Travel policies on-the-go

► Contd from page 3

protection pertinent to the current scenario. This will not only help our partners to design customised, relevant travel protection plans for their customers, but also give them an up-selling edge to increase revenue.

Travellers are seeking products that can help them during unforeseen situations. What is your plan of action for this?

What differentiates us from other companies is the way we work. During emergencies, we immediately bring together all stakeholders such as the affected family, the underwriter and hospital on the same platform and everyone is kept apprised on the progress and gravity of the situation. This helps us to maintain complete transparency among the stakeholders and ensure that assistance is provided with the fastest turnaround time. Apart from providing cashless claims and reimbursement facilities to the customers in need, we also provide them relevant assistance services, including doctor on call, support during baggage loss

and missed flights and other related services.

How different is the travel insurance market when compared to the Pre-COVID times? Awareness and need for the right travel protection has increased manifold. Many countries have made it mandatory to travel with the right insurance coverage and it is no longer limited to the United States, Canada and the EU. Also, on

We realise that the customers have now grown highly product sensitive. They now seek more value

analysing customers' recent buying patterns, we realised that they have now grown highly product sensitive. They now seek more value, rather than just going for undervalued and inexpensive ones. Travellers are looking for products with higher sum insured and

value-added services relevant to their needs. For instance, we have witnessed a 50 per cent growth in February 2022 business as compared to the pre-COVID February, not because the prices have increased, but the value of policies have grown tremendously. Today, customers are willing to pay more for their products, provided the price of the product justifies the value they offer.

Your learnings from the pandemic, if any?

For me, COVID-19 has been a great eyeopener. The pandemic did affect our travel business radically, but it also gave us an opportunity to take a step back, reassess ourselves, figure out what was missing and integrate the lessons learnt to come out stronger than ever. The pandemic related uncertainties has increased the demand for all kinds of insurance, not just travel. Our new proposition and value-added services has not only opened the revenue opportunities for our partners, but will also ensure customers' satisfaction. I feel when we change the way we look at things, the things you look at change!

India top market for Abu Dhabi

Miral, leading creator of immersive destinations and experiences in Abu Dhabi, has not stopped developing tourist attractions in the UAE capital since 2010, with a new attraction coming up every year, says CEO Mohamed Abdalla Al Zaabi. Yas Island is now getting ready to host one of the biggest events from India – the IIFA Awards.



Hazel Jain

Yas Island is preparing to host this year's International Indian Film Academy Awards (IIFA Awards), which will take place at the Middle East's largest state-of-the-art indoor entertainment venue, Etihad Arena in May this year. It will be organised in collaboration with the Department of Culture & Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) and Miral, Abu Dhabi's leading creator of immersive destinations and experiences.

Sharing some insights is **Mohamed Abdalla Al Zaabi**, CEO, Miral, Abu Dhabi, who says, "We are honoured to host the most awaited mega event of 2022. Etihad Arena is an ideal setting for world-class events and hosting this grand celebration reinforces Yas Island's position as a top global destination for entertainment and leisure, while cementing Abu



Dhabi's place on the world tourism map." He recently handed Ranveer Singh, the ambassador for Yas Island, the prestigious 10-year residence visa.

India in top two source markets India, he says, is a very important market for Miral. "It is in the top two source markets for Yas Is-

land as Indian visitors enjoy our world-class attractions such as Ferrari World, Warner Bros and many others. Abu Dhabi is ready to host massive events such as IIFA. We have lifted many of the restrictions with regards to COVID-19 and Yas Island is designed to host such big-ticket events. Our latest flagship

attraction is the Etihad Arena. It has the largest hotel in Abu Dhabi - the Hilton Yas Island – as well as more than 25 restaurants that our visitors from India will enjoy very much," Al Zaabi adds.

MICE is also a very important segment for Yas Island and Abu Dhabi at large, he says. "In fact we just launched a new Abu Dhabi Incen-

tive Programme for MICE as we would like to attract more MICE to Abu Dhabi. It is the safest city in the world and our vision is to offer something for the entire family," he adds.

Al Zaabi is a big fan of Bollywood and some of his favourite actors are Salman Khan and Ranveer Singh, who is also Yas Island's

ambassador for the next two years. He adds, "We have not stopped developing Yas Island since 2010 and we launch a new attraction every year. Sea World Abu Dhabi should be completed this year and we will soon announce its grand opening soon. It

Among other things, MICE is also a very important segment for Yas Island and Abu Dhabi at large

will be the first one to be located outside the US. Miral will continue to work towards positioning the island as the top destination for leisure and entertainment as well as MICE." ↴

Saadiyat Island

The Department of Culture and Tourism — Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) has appointed Miral to oversee the destination management strategies of Saadiyat Island. DCT Abu Dhabi and Miral have a track record of collaboration and partnerships and share a commitment to propel the growth of the tourism sector in line with Abu Dhabi Vision 2030. The entities have already created top-tier products that have generated a dynamic tourism ecosystem in the emirate. Miral has been playing a crucial role in shaping a robust destination strategy for Yas Island. Miral will be responsible for building on Saadiyat's current reputation of offering exceptional art and cultural experiences, raising awareness of the destination's unique proposition and growing local and international visitor numbers.

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Cathay Pacific aims net-zero by '50

Cathay Pacific understands its responsibility towards sustainable aviation and is committed to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. For this, the airline is focusing on many areas, including use of sustainable aviation fuel for 10 per cent of its total fuel consumption by 2030.

Janice Alyosius

Cathay Pacific, a founding member of the Aviation Climate Taskforce, understands its responsibility towards sustainable aviation.



Anand Yedery
Regional Head, Marketing and Sales - South Asia, Middle East and Africa
Cathay Pacific

"We have established a timeline for making carbon neutrality a reality, thus committing to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Our goals align with

UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C above preindustrial levels and pursue efforts to limit this increase to 1.5°C," said **Anand Yedery**, Regional Head, Marketing and Sales - South Asia, Middle East and Africa at Cathay Pacific.

The airline has been focusing on many areas to meet the carbon neutrality targets. Some of the key focus areas are:

Investing in SAF

Cathay Pacific has made pioneering efforts in supporting SAF for more than a decade. "We continue to reaffirm our commitment to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 by pledging to use SAF for 10 per cent of our total fuel consumption by 2030," said Yedery. Besides, Cathay Pacific has been the first airline to partner with Airbus in 2016

and used SAF during aircraft delivery flights. "Since 2016, we have taken delivery of over 41 Airbus A350-900 and A350-1000

We have fixed a timeline for making carbon neutrality a reality, committing to net-zero CO₂ emission by 2050

aircrafts from Toulouse to Hong Kong using a blend of SAF made from sustainable sugar feedstock," he said.

"We are also the first airline to invest in Fulcrum BioEnergy in 2014 – a sustainable aviation fuel manufacturer. As a next step,

we will begin taking deliveries of SAF produced by Fulcrum, which we will use for our selected operations out of USA starting 2024 onwards. Additionally, we have committed to purchasing 1.1 million tonnes of SAF over 10 years, covering around 2 per cent of our pre-COVID-19 fuel requirements on an annual basis," he added.

Offsetting carbon emission

Cathay Pacific is also a pioneer in developing and launching the Fly Greener, a carbon-offsetting scheme, that provides passengers the opportunity to offset their flights based on the CO₂ emission generated from their flight.

"In 2020, as an airline, we offset 41,134 tonnes of carbon emission that was produced by us during operations. Since the launch of Fly Greener, we have offset more than 300,000 tonnes of carbon emissions from the atmosphere," Yedery shared.



Efficiency enhancement

Yedery said, "We continue to explore and implement comprehensive solutions that help address our environmental impact. Some of the solutions adopted by us include improving operational fuel efficiency, using alternative jet fuel and reducing engine use on-ground. Additionally, we have invested in younger more fuel-efficient fleets, which include the latest Airbus A321neo, A350-900 and A350-1000. The newer generation aircrafts are lighter and more cost-efficient with reduced

maintenance requirements. Moreover, the combined technological advancement enables these aircraft to be up to 25 per cent more fuel-efficient compared with previous generation aircraft."

"Cathay Pacific has also invested in technology that provides operational improvements such as e-Enabled Aircraft Programmes, Reducing Engine Taxi-In (RETI) and electronic Flight Folder that help us achieve operational efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emission," he added.

Bicester Collection woos India market

The Bicester Collection, along with its newly appointed representative in India, Avant Garde Consulting, recently hosted intimate networking evenings in Mumbai and Delhi to showcase its collection of luxury shopping villages across Europe, to a select audience within the travel trade.



Tailwinds prop up Virgin Atlantic

Resumption of regular international commercial flights and easing of travel restrictions by the Indian government has given a boost to the aviation sector. India being Virgin Atlantic's third largest market, the airline is excited to launch an additional flight from Delhi to London in June.

Janice Alyosius

During the pandemic Virgin Atlantic accelerated the planned retirement of its all four-engine aircraft. Their twin-engine fleet is now one of the youngest and greenest fleets in the sky. "In September we will receive our first A330-900neo aircraft, another crucial step in our fleet transformation programme. Fleet modernisation is the single biggest driver of some substantial savings in our CO₂ emissions, we already achieved an 18 per cent reduction in CO₂/RTK by 2019 and are targeting a further 15 per cent reduction by 2026," said Alex McEwan, Country Manager – South Asia, Virgin Atlantic.

Outlook for Indian market
McEwan said, "India is our third largest market globally, and we are really excited to launch an additional flight from Delhi to London in June. This will give us a total of

three daily departures to London from India - two from Delhi and one from Mumbai. This will be our largest flying programme ever to



Alex McEwan
Country Manager – South Asia
Virgin Atlantic

India, marking our 22nd year of service here in style. Our longevity in India and our growth plans demonstrates a strong and continued commitment to the market."

Delhi-London traffic
Travel between India and the UK has always been large, with a range of different types of passen-



gers. The most significant of these are passengers visiting friends and relatives, holidaymakers, students and business travellers. "Even amid the tightest restrictions during the pandemic, students and passengers visiting friends and family continued to travel in reduced but substantial numbers. Holidaymakers and business travellers have been travelling in far fewer numbers than pre COVID-19 times, but since vaccinated travellers are no longer required to test or quarantine when they travel between India and the UK, we anticipate strong growth this summer," he said.

"This growth in demand will drive passengers on to our second daily Delhi to London flight launching in June. We are confident passengers will like the choice of a morning or a night departure from Delhi, and we



look forward to welcoming more passengers. With the removal of the air bubble, passengers will also be able to connect outside of London to our extensive US network, including New York JFK, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Atlanta," he added.

Drivers of growth
McEwan said, "Lifting the air bubble and relaxation of travel restrictions have been the key enabler of the growth in air travel in recent months and in the future. Now is by far the best possible time to book travel compared with the last two years. There is also a segment of passengers who have

accumulated savings from not traveling or spending on hospitality in the past two years and are eager to get back on flights and see the world once more."

He added, "We can expect a few macro trends to affect the industry in the months to come. Firstly, higher fuel prices are bound to impact all airlines' operating costs, so a continued and sustainable recovery in revenue and demand is essential to protect financial performance. Rising global inflation will also have an impact on passengers' pockets, so airlines will need to strike a fine balance when defining their pricing strategy."

McEwan had a word of caution for the sector. "The airline industry should continue to put passengers' safety and health first and expect passengers to continue looking for booking flexibility. With our flexible policy and 'Fly Safe, Fly Well' programme we will ensure passengers are

Even amid the restrictions, students and passengers travelled in reduced but substantial numbers

well looked after," he said, adding, "Our trade partners are integral to our success and we want to thank each one of them."



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Agents meet old friends in France

Ten travel agents from four Indian cities recently travelled to France to attend Rendezvous 2022, which took place in Nantes, in the Pays de la Loire region. The two-day expo gave them an opportunity to meet nearly 668 exhibitors from all over France, including Marseille Tourism, Chamonix-Mon Blanc Valley Tourist Office, Auvergne Rhone-Alpes Tourism and of course Le Voyage A Nantes.



Palladium plays host to travel partners

Spanish hotel chain Palladium Hotel Group, represented by Global Destinations in India, recently hosted exclusive cocktail dinners for their top 50 travel and trade partners in Mumbai and Delhi. Sandra Polo Canudas, Asia & ME Commercial Director, Palladium Hotel Group, spoke about the group's new openings this year.



One Above organises dinner for trade

Mövenpick Resort Kuredhivaru Maldives, along with One Above Destination Management Services, recently hosted an exclusive dinner for more than 100 travel trade partners in Mumbai. Jenna Gangmei, Sales Manager, Mövenpick Resort Kuredhivaru Maldives, said India has been one of the biggest source markets for them in Asia and thanked the trade for their support.



A change of course

Airlines globally have had to tweak strategies in order to face headwinds caused by the ripple effects of the pandemic. We present a glimpse at what seven airlines did in order to stay relevant.



British Airways

Catching up on the sustainability trend, British Airways will soon become the first airline worldwide to use UK-produced sustainable aviation fuel from this year. The fuel is produced from waste feedstock. It will purchase enough



sustainable fuel to reduce life-cycle CO2 emissions by almost 100,000 tons. Its test London-New York flight is believed to be the first commercial transatlantic

flight to ever be operated with a percentage blend of sustainable aviation fuel as high as this.

Malaysia Airlines

BA isn't the only one to go the sustainable route. Malaysia Airlines' parent company has unveiled a range of handbags made from repurposed aircraft materi-

als. Malaysia Aviation Group has partnered with a fashion brand to produce a range of handbags that have been named after IATA codes for destinations within the carrier's

network. Materials sourced from Malaysia Airlines aircraft for the project include leather seats, belts, buckles, tablecloths, and life vests, as well as cabin crew uniforms.

Air India

Perhaps it is a sign of what we may expect to see more of in the next five years. Air India's complete disinvestment recently means that it will now become a Tata-owned company. The Tata Group won a bid to buy a 100% stake in Air India along with AI Express and a 50% stake in ground handling company AISATS. After the handover, the Tata Group is likely to operate three airlines – Air India, Air India Express, and Vistara – after the government transfers the airline to the group and upon the merger of AirAsia India and AI Express.

Air New Zealand

It's a move that could appear to be vaccine coercion, but it is safety

first for Air New Zealand. The airline is demanding that all passengers be double vaccinated before being allowed to fly. The airline recently confirmed that people planning to travel on its international flights will be required to be fully vaccinated from 2022. At the moment, about 50% of the country's population is double jabbed. Its 'no jab, no fly' policy will come into effect for people travelling anywhere on the carrier's international network from February 1, 2022.

Wizz Air

Despite being a long way off from returning to operations as usual, Wizz is keenly orchestrating its pathway to recovery. During the quarter, it opened new bases in Italy, and several of those bases have seen additional aircraft. In total, it would see the backlog for the airline stand at an incredible 419 aircraft. The airline remains one of the youngest and green-

est in the world, with an average fleet age of just five years. Despite short-term headwinds, the airline

British Airways will soon become the first airline worldwide to use UK-produced sustainable aviation fuel from this year

which will see new amenity kits, bedding, and cutlery and beverage selections available across most of its flights. The nose-to-tail product revamp was completed with two goals in mind: to reduce single-use plastic waste and to support minority and women-run businesses. And if Delta's latest product choices are as sustainable as the company says they are, then the airline is making significant progress in its eco-conscious initiatives.

Lufthansa

Lufthansa cannot resist an Italian opportunity. It has expressed an interest in wresting state-owned ITA away from the SkyTeam Alliance to add it to its own roster of carriers. The airline, along with MSC, has made a joint bid to take over Italy's new ITA Airways. The new ITA has acquired many of the assets of Alitalia, including the brand. The appeal of the Italian market will be good for the airline.

remains confident in a continued recovery, projecting full utilization from the summer onwards.

Delta

Delta is rethinking many aspects of its onboard experience with sustainability in mind. The Atlanta-based carrier has announced an overhauled inflight service concept,

Stag Club elects new office-bearers

After three years of gap, Stag Club held its annual general meeting (AGM) and elections recently. Praveen Saxena was elected unopposed as the new Chairman of the club. The New Stag Core Committee comprises following officials.

Executive Committee



Kumar Baveja
Founder Chairman Emeritus



Praveen Saxena
Chairman



Rajiv Anand-RJ
General Secretary



Ashish Malhotra
Treasurer

Let's Go Korea



Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) New Delhi, Shinhan Bank and Utazzo Travel have signed an MoU to promote a one of its kind savings cum recurring deposit scheme called "Let's Go Korea". The plan allows travellers to invest for their future trip to Korea and receive exclusive offers on their Korea travel bookings from Utazzo Travel.

Radisson to add 148 hotels by '25

Contd from page 3

have a large network of hotels across the country. If you take a car, you can reach one Radisson hotel every five hours. So,



Zubin Saxena
Managing Director and Vice President, Operations, South Asia Radisson Hotel Group

we have a very good distribution of properties across India," Giannouka added.

Sunrise industry of India

Echoing similar sentiments, **Zubin Saxena**, Managing Director and Vice President, Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, said, "We see Indian hospitality as the sunrise industry. We are seeing a good recovery in which the larger economic factors are lining up, whether it is the large-scale infrastructure growth in

terms of highways, ports and airports, or the young population of India, where 65 per cent are under 35 years. The larger traveller trends of India that we are seeing are all conducive to a big boom, so we are expecting both for the Radisson Hotel Group in India as well as the hotel industry in India at large to narrate a huge growth story in the coming years. We have also observed that over the course of the pandemic, various additional segments have

expand thereby increasing the total demand." Saxena added that the group saw occupancy levels at 70 per cent in Quarter 1 of 2022.

Individual Retreats

The group recently unveiled its Individuals Retreats brand extension specifically designed and launched only in the India market.

It is an extension of Radisson Individuals launched last year.



opened up and the domestic traveller has really started experimenting with branded hospitality and experiencing hospitality products. We foresee that with international skies and the market opening up, the slab of base demand will

It will be a collection of upper-upscale and luxury lifestyle retreats across India that will offer experiences to guests – wellness, adventure and culture. They will be located in off-beat destinations such as Goa, Kashmir, Coorg and Kabini.



OTOAI takes members to Paris

OTOAI recently organised a familiarisation trip to Paris for its members in association with Vistara and Accor. During the four-day trip, not only did OTOAI showcased the usual destinations and sightseeing, but also some unseen and less explored destinations and restaurants in and around the city.

Accor. During the four-day trip, not only did OTOAI showcased the usual destinations and sightseeing, but also some unseen and less explored destinations and restaurants in and around the city.



adtoi launches new chapter in UP

Varanasi emerging as one of the key pilgrim centres in the country after opening of Kasi Vishwanath Corridor by the Prime Minister and spurt in tourism activities in the area prompt ADTOI to add new chapter in Uttar Pradesh, With this, the association adds to its strength in the country.

Janice Alysius

ADTOI launched its 12th Chapter in Uttar Pradesh on cruise in Varanasi. The initiative supported by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism saw presence of Avinash Chandra Mishra, Joint Director, UP Tourism, and Amresh Kumar, Joint General Manager, IRCTC among others.

Speaking of the motivation behind the 12th chapter, **PP Khanna**, President, ADTOI, said, "There are constitutional requirements for launching ADTOI State Chapters on PAN India basis. We have members on pan India basis and as and when a particular state fulfills the

requirements of a strong base to launch the Chapter, we initiate the process. Varanasi has emerged as one of the pilgrim centres and with the opening of Kasi Vishwanath Corridor by our Prime Minister there is a spurt in the activities of tourism in the area. Varanasi is also connected with Ayodhya making a pilgrim circuit for everyone to visit from all over the country."

Rajesh Arya, Vice President, ADTOI, said, "ADTOI is the only association for domestic tourism, as a pan-Indian association, it is our aim to increase the strength of our members by opening new chapters from time to time. Our aim is to provide our members with



P P Khanna
President, ADTOI

a platform to discover new opportunities for growth, to discover new destinations with the help of product knowledge, seminars, and educational tours from time to time." The association officers work with stakeholders in the State and outside State to

assist people to visit destinations in the State like Agra, Kushinagar, and Sarnath.

During the launch of the ADTOI UP Chapter in Varanasi, the association has nominated Sushil Kumar Singh as the Chairman, Abhishek Sankrit as the Secretary, Neeraj Kumar Neotia as the Treasurer and Sunil C. Gupta of Travel Bureau, Agra, has been nominated as the Advisor to the UP-State Chapter. The association also has a woman executive officer, Anamika Mishra. The new chapter will work with the stakeholders and take a lead in the promotion of tourism in the state. "In order to work with the

stakeholders and industry, it will take the assistance of UP Tourism to assist in their endeavor

road shows in other states," Khanna added.

Speaking of future plans, Khanna said, "We have plans to launch chapters in other states too. Our members have suffered a lot due to pandemic for the last two years. Hopefully, with support of the government and people we shall see the way forward."

ADTOI is also working to promote women in the industry. The association recently held a webinar on women empowerment, where all the female members joined to discuss the involvement of women in the travel trade, shared Arya.

As and when a particular state fulfills requirements of a strong base to launch the chapter, we initiate the process

to undertake promotional activities to promote destinations like organising study tours,

Demand for airport lounges to go up

Liberatha Peter Kallat, CMD, Dreamfolks Services, talks about the impact of resumption of international commercial flights on airport services. She said it will naturally increase passenger footfalls at airports, thus resulting in more travellers opting for lounge and other services.

 Janice Alyosius

DreamFolks Services is India's largest airport service aggregator facilitating an enhanced airport experience to passengers. "Since we started in 2013, we have built a strong position in the airport services segment. Our technology platform integrates global card networks, credit card and debit card issuers, corporate clients and others with airport lounge operators and other airport related service providers seamlessly," said **Liberatha Peter Kallat**, Chairperson and Managing Director, Dreamfolks Services.



Liberatha Peter Kallat
Chairperson and Managing Director
Dreamfolks Services

"This is done by our proprietary technology platform, which offers solutions through omni channels such as issuer card/ digital card/ DreamFolks card/ mobile

app-based access, tracking live benefits on each card. This is one of the key elements that enables our clients to provide value added

services to their end customers as a part of their customer engagement and loyalty management programmes," she added.

Resumption of flights
Commenting on the resumption

of commercial flights, Kallat said, "With international commercial flights resuming, there will be an increase in airport footfalls and travelling passengers. This will naturally result in more travellers opting for lounge and other airport services. Since most airport lounges have been reopened, there will be an increase in business for operators. This will accelerate growth in the lounge and airport services industries, which will return to normal in a relatively short period of time."

New developments

Speaking about new offerings and developments, Kallat said, "We cover 100 per cent of the 50 lounges operating in India in all the major cities. In addition, we have an exclusive arrangement for card-based transactions at 11 lounges across 10 airports in India, which



is about 22 per cent of domestic lounges for India issued credit and debit cards. On new airports, there are about 125 operational airports in the country, which are expected to increase to 295 by 2040. The Indian government plans to spend around ₹1 lakh crore to set up new airports in India."

Factors driving growth

The airport lounge access market in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 43.11 per cent

by 2030 to ₹5861.9 crore from ₹358.9 crore in 2022. "There are many drivers of growth. First, the number of passengers using air travel is growing. Passengers travelling by air increased from approximately 99 million in CY 2015 to 167 million in CY 2019. Second, the increase in airport lounge usage by passengers is rising. We believe that ease of travel is being considered as an integral element of the airport experience, and lounges are a

key component of the airport experience. The number of passengers availing lounge facilities has increased from 5.1 million in 2018 to 7.5 million in 2020," she said. "We believe DreamFolks' coverage of lounges across

Passengers travelling by air increased from 99 million in CY 2015 to 167 million in CY 2019

Indian airports coupled with our technology platform should see the demand continue for our services," she added.

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:




APRIL 2022

Date	Event	Time
22-24	Eastern India Travel Mart	10:00am
23-24	Travel Mice Show	10:00am
28Apr-1 May	International Tourism & Travel Industry Show	9:00 am
28Apr-1 May	ITF SlovakiaTour	10:00am
29 Apr-1 May	The Outdoor Adventure Show-Toronto	10:00am

MAY 2022

2-4	Global Travel Marketplace West	9:00am
3-5	World Travel Expo	9:00am
5-8	KeralaTravel Mart (KTM)	10:00am
5-8	Thailand Dive Expo	11:00am
8-11	IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism	9:30am
9-12	'Arabian Travel Market Dubai (ATM Dubai)'	11:00am
10-11	ILTM Arabia	9:00am
10-12	Asia Amusement & Attraction Expo	9:30am
17-19	Airport Show Dubai	10:00am
18-20	SATTE 2022	6:00am
25-26	CAPA Americas 'Aviation & LCCs Summit'	TBA
31-2 June	IMEX Frankfurt	10:00am

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

Chalo DMC adds 2 partners

With the appointment of two partners, Pranav Kapadia and Sumit Jain, who bring unique skillsets and fresh perspectives with them, the company plans to move towards expansion and strengthen its business presence across India.

 TT Bureau

Chalo DMC LLP has appointed Pranav Kapadia as the Director Sales and Marketing, and Sumit Jain as Director Finance to the organisation. A leading destination management company with a philosophy to specialise in key destinations, ChaloDMC recently merged its domestic arm Sapphire Ventures and brought its South Africa vertical Chalo South Africa, powered by Albatros Travel, under the parent Company ChaloDMC.



Chalo DMC Founder Director Siddharth Jain with Pranav Kapadia and Sumit Jain

With these two significant appointments, the firm now plans to move towards expansion and strengthen its business presence across India. These leaders bring unique skillsets and fresh perspectives to the business and are much admired by their peers for their expertise and management styles in their respective fields. Together they aim to exemplify Chalo DMC's reach and business with innovative think-

ing, passion, and business-like mindedness.

Founder Director, Chalo DMC, **Siddharth Jain**, says, "This is an exciting time for Chalo DMC and our team. Our success has come from putting our clients first and by making these strategic appointments we aim to build on a stronger brand with a focus on a PAN India presence and client service. These ap-

pointments will serve to bolster our already impressive capabilities. I wish to formally welcome both Pranav and Sumit to the team, I look forward to our ever-growing success."

Pranav Kapadia comes with a tourism experience of over 30 years in sales and marketing.

He started his career in Mumbai with Lufthansa German Airlines

and held leadership roles at Air New Zealand and South African Airways prior to starting his own travel representation company, Global Destinations in 2008. His experience has ensured a 25% YOY growth for all companies represented by Global Destinations. Sumit Jain an alumnus of IIMA and JBIMS with experience

Our success has come from putting our clients first. We aim to build a stronger brand with new appointments

of 22 years in Finance, Supply Chain is currently focussed on building an organizational culture of performance-based service delivery, driven by IMU philosophy translating to the customer and employee experience.

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INDIGO New Delhi

VINAY MALHOTRA has been appointed as the Head of Global Sales at IndiGo. Earlier, he was the Regional Group Chief Operating Officer – South Asia, Middle East & North Africa and Americas for VFS Global for 9 years. Vinay was responsible for VFS Global's overall business and operations across South Asia, Middle East & North Africa and the Americas. He was also responsible for allied B2C businesses of VFS Global. Additionally, he served as Emirates Airline's Regional Manager for North India, East India, and Nepal for over a decade.



InterGlobe Aviation Ltd (IndiGo) appoints **RK SINGH** as Principal Advisor to the Managing Director with immediate effect. Singh, an IAS officer who worked in different capacities with the Indian Government from 1985 to 2009 and later as an Aviation Law specialist, will also be part of IndiGo's Leadership Team. He brings with him rich administrative, management and aviation experience. Presently, he serves on the Board of CAE Simulation Training Private Limited (pilot training organisation). He is an MBA from Southern Cross University, Australia, and holder of an LL.M degree in Aviation Law from Leiden University, The Netherlands.



STERLING HOLIDAYS

Mumbai

VIKRAM LALVANI has been appointed as the new Managing Director and CEO of Sterling Holiday Resorts. He has been overseeing various strategic responsibilities, including customer engagement, revenue maximisation, hotel sales and resort operations, at Sterling for seven years. Lalvani replaces Ramesh Ramanathan, who will now guide the company as its Chairman. "I am extremely pleased on the appointment of Vikram as MD & CEO, to lead Sterling towards newer avenues. I look forward to working with him towards our common vision of making Sterling No. 1 Leisure Hospitality brand in India," Ramesh said.



ACCOR New Delhi

Accor has appointed **VINAY GUPTA** as the Director of Operations for ibis and ibis Styles, India portfolio. Vinay is a veteran in the hospitality sector with more than 25 years of experience. He has handled different roles from being in an entry level role to managing different portfolios for a single brand, to being a General Manager of different hotels across three different continents. This is his second innings with Accor, as he was responsible for the opening of Grand Mercure at Bangalore as GM in 2008. Vinay has an MBA Degree from The University of Central Lancashire, UK and a Diploma in Hospitality from IHM, Pusa Road.



TAJ WEST END

Bengaluru

SANDIP NARANG has been elevated to the position of Hotel Manager at the Taj West End, Bengaluru. With nearly three decades of experience working as a chef at IHCL, Narang brings with him a repertoire of knowledge and experience both in the field of culinary as well as hotel management and operations. In his new role, he will be responsible for positioning the hotel as the landmark property in the heart of the city, in addition to managing the hotel's commercial objectives and delivering world-class experiences to its guests. He has led and been a part of various teams catering to heads of states and celebrities both in India and around the world.



THE WESTIN PUNE

Pune

The Westin Pune has appointed **GIRDHAR JANGID** as the Director of Finance. A qualified Chartered Accountant with nearly 10 years of experience in hospitality industry, Girdhar will be instrumental in the preparation of capex and operational budgets with regular forecasting of reports. He will also play a key role in helping drive financial results through optimisation of cost and materialising the potential savings. Prior to joining the current position, he started his career with a CA firm, J G Verma & Co. He holds a B.Com degree in Accounting & Finance (BAF) from Mumbai University. His hobbies include badminton and cycling among other things.



ACCOR New Delhi

Accor has appointed **ANIRUDDH KUMAR** as Vice President, Development, India and South Asia. Aniruddh, who comes with more than 23 years of diverse experience, will spearhead Accor's expansion strategy in the region in order to consolidate its current brand footprint and focus on expanding current and new brands. In the past, he has been associated with brands such as Marriott International, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Aman resorts, Leela Duet India Hotels and DLF Hotels. He is a certified Chartered Accountant and a Company Secretary. He graduated in Commerce from Rajasthan University, Jaipur.



FAIRFIELD BY MARRIOTT WHITEFIELD

Bengaluru

RIDHIMA NAIR has been appointed as the Hotel Manager – Fairfield by Marriott Whitefield. She began her career in Front Office with IHG and has been part of two accelerated leadership programmes during her career of 12 years. She comes with a rich experience of handling operations at hotels while catering to different markets and segments. She was awarded the "Operations Excellence Award" for H1 2019, "Trailblazer Award" in 2020 and also recognised as "Hotel Leader of Q3 2019" in the South-West Asia Region at IHG. In her free time, she enjoys travelling and reading short stories.



THE LEELA

Bengaluru

AKSHINA SAUHTA has been appointed as the Public Relations & Marketing Communications Manager of The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru, Hotel, Conventions, Residences. She has got numerous recognitions not just from the hospitality sector, but the Government of India and the Limca Book of Records. With her last stint as the Marketing & Communications Manager at the Hyatt Centric in Goa, Akshina had also been overlooking marketing strategy and public relations at Hyatt Regency Amritsar. Earlier, she worked with many brands, including Mahindra & Mahindra and Zomato.



TALKING PEOPLE

ANTARA PHOOKAN, Director - Business Development & Design, Assam Bengal Navigation, says there is nothing like being amid nature, while she takes her boat out on the Brahmaputra, do yoga and dance. "I was lucky to have spent my second half of lockdown at Diphlu River Lodge, so I was able to design an eco-chic spa. I love learning about history, sociology and culture, out of which what fascinated me the most was the medieval navigational history of Assam and Bengal," she says. She likes to travel to Kashmir and Goa in India.



MEERA CHARNALIA, Sr. Vice President & Head (MICE), Thomas Cook (India), de-stresses by spending time with her daughter and watching content on OTT platforms. "The lockdown has taught us many things and few of us have used this time to evolve ourselves. I have personally learnt the importance of appreciating what I have; accept things as they are and be grateful for my achievements and focus on improving inter personal relationships. I love travelling to nearby places," she says.



Music and dance is the mantra followed by **MEGHA SINGHANIA**, Head (Cabin Crew), AirAsia India, for de-stressing. "I just plug in my favorite music and follow the beat. This hobby keeps me going and helps me channel my inner calm. During the lockdown I tried to learn some Zumba and yoga to create variations in my existing gym routine. I started tracking my steps to ensure that I complete 10,000 steps a day," she says. She likes to travel to Kashmir and Rajasthan.



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Atout France focus on experiences

With France becoming standalone destination for Indian visitors, Sheetal Munshaw, Director - India, Atout France, speaks to **TRAVTALK** about their strategy for this year, on the sidelines of their annual show **Rendezvous 2022**, held in Nantes recently.



Hazel Jain

The market was already fast maturing pre-pandemic, says **Sheetal Munshaw**, Director - India, Atout France, implying that the Indian outbound traveller's behaviour has seen a further shift since. "As we have all seen, there has been a huge shift during the pandemic in the way people want to travel. The most important segment we are looking at will be people who are used to travelling, who are discerning travellers, simply because they are less apprehensive to travel under the current circumstances, and also who are less impacted economically by the pandemic," she adds.

Contrary to what experts had predicted, France actually saw a boom in meetings and incentives in early 2021. "We had incentives in October, November and December of anything from 50 to



for the India market, Munshaw says, "We will do an event on wine tourism in October 2022 in Aix en Provence. We will also do our own showcase in Udaipur in the last week of September," she shares.

Social media is key

Munshaw says social media has become a part of everyone's DNA and an extension of every corporate identity. "We have reworked social media strategy with a global Instagram and Twitter account," she shares.

ing about price points here; we are talking about people staying longer, about having immersive experiences in France, families, and couples, be it honeymooners, retired couples, etc."

First-timers and repeat visitors

Earlier, it was 40 per cent GIT market into France. Now it is going to be different given that commercial flights have started. "We now expect to see groups coming back. But in any case the trend was more towards FITs for France, and of course when we say FIT, it is a very large umbrella – youngsters, women, friends, families, special interests, etc. Then there is MICE and weddings. These are the three key segments we are really focussed on. We would also like people to come and stay longer in France because it is more in sync with sustainable tourism," Munshaw explains. She also wants them to indulge in authentic French experience – whether

it is the cuisine, the local life or nightlife. "Pre-COVID the average stay in France was 6.7 nights for Indian travellers. Incentives were four nights, groups were three nights, FIT was a week. We would love for this to be longer with FITs staying for 10 nights or more because there is so much to see," Munshaw adds.

The good news is that more and more Indians are showing an inclination to visit France as a standalone, or at least doing not more than two countries at a time in Europe, says Munshaw. "India is no longer a summer market, we are an all-year round source market and France is a year-round destination so it's a perfect fit," she adds.

Speaking about the various engagements that her office will do

We would love FITs staying for 10 nights or more because there is so much for them to see in France

200 people. That was totally unexpected. The same thing happened with weddings and mini social ceremonies. We incidentally had the biggest wedding in France in November 2021 of 700 people in Paris!" reveals Munshaw.

Among the things Atout France India wants to focus on are experiences. "We are not talk-

Good to know

There is no quarantine in France for fully vaccinated travellers. For those who are unvaccinated, or vaccinated with a vaccine not recognised by France (ex: Covaxin), restrictions will apply.



Sheetal Munshaw
Director - India, Atout France

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