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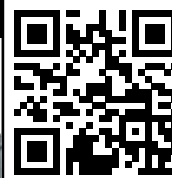
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## Aviation taking big flight

Ministry of Civil Aviation is taking a number of initiatives to make sure ease of flying, as well as servicing aircraft within the country. The aim is to create a healthy aviation ecosystem that benefits all, says Jyotiraditya Scindia.



TT Bureau

**Jyotiraditya Scindia**, Union Minister of Civil Aviation (MoCA), claimed that the Indian aviation sector is touching new heights with a large fleet of aircraft operating in the country, which is being supported by a vast network of airports.

"I am performing with full diligence as this ministry was served by my father too. The time has come to set up an ecosystem around the aviation sector and India will soon not only be capable of servicing aircraft engines that fly domestically, but also aircraft of international airlines around the globe," he said.



**Jyotiraditya Scindia**  
Union Minister of Civil Aviation

### Rise in aviation traffic

He said that the annual passenger traffic increased from 2.6 lakh to 33 lakh in five years under UDAN Scheme. Government has approved the 'Revival of unserved and underserved air-

ports' scheme at the total cost of ₹4,500 crore for the revival and development of unserved and underserved airports of State Government, Airports Authority of India(AAI), Civil Enclaves,

**Necessary steps must be taken to revive circuit tourism by holding Fam trips and Buddhist Circuit family tours, conferences**

Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), Helipads and Water Aerodromes. The expenditure incurred up to June under this scheme is ₹2,610 crore.

During 2021-22, Indian airports carried around 83 million domestic passengers registering a growth rate of 59 per cent as compared to 2020-21, he informed. As compared to the pre-pandemic domestic passenger traffic of around 136 million (2019-20), the traffic in 2021-22 has declined by 39 per cent.

### Overcoming challenges

The government has taken some steps to overcome the challenges.

Contd on page 22 ▶

## QualStar audits hotels for industry status

Maharashtra's Directorate of Tourism has initiated the audit of hotels in the state for awarding industry status to them.



TT Bureau

The Directorate of Tourism (DoT), Maharashtra Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, is finally kick-starting the inspection of hotels for awarding industry status to them. The Tourism Directorate of Pune is the first one to commence the inspection on August 3 and 4, 2022.

Total 181 non-classified hotels have registered and applied since June 2021 in Pune region.

The Government of Maharashtra had awarded Industry status to the hospitality sector in the April 1999, but that remained on paper for a long time. In 2020,



**Dhananjay Sawalkar**  
Joint Director, Directorate of Tourism (DoT)

there was a development in the decision when the state government issued the Government Regulation announcing the criteria for levying taxes and charges at the industrial rate for the industry. Contd on page 21 ▶

## Tourism roadshows in Italy

Ministry of Tourism recently showcased India's tourism offerings at the Italy edition of the virtual roadshow, where Director General, Tourism, claimed how Indian diaspora can play a critical role in promoting India.



TT Bureau

The Union Ministry of Tourism is conducting a series of virtual roadshows, called 'Incredible India Reconnect 2022', in collaboration with Indian Missions abroad to reconnect and welcome back partners from different countries.

One such roadshow was held in Italy recently. **Dr. Neena Malhotra**, Ambassador of India to the Republic of Italy, San Marino, & UN Organizations in Rome, who took part in the road show, highlighted the efforts in rekindling tourism and travel interest between India and Italy. The Ambassador shared, "India and Italy are fertile grounds for film and cultural tourism to thrive."



**G Kamala Vardhana Rao**  
Director General, Union Ministry of Tourism

**G Kamala Vardhana Rao**, Director General, MOT, also addressed the gathering and recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's slogan 'Chalo India' to Indian diaspora in Denmark. He said each one of them should invite five non-Indian friends to visit India.

"There is a need to enable each person (Indian diaspora) to talk about diverse Indian tourism offerings in their respective places of work. It is essential. India is a tourist destination that offers the most economical and luxurious of tourist offerings at each of the 165-170 tourism destinations," he added.

He claimed Italian tourists prefer India's traditional culture, heritage, wildlife, and nature. "The country's success story in COVID-19 vaccination has made tourism recover at a faster pace than was forecast by UNWTO and WTTC. In this regard, India is taking forward-thinking steps with respect to rural and homestay tourism," Rao informed. ▶

## Bringing M!CE back on track

Jagdeep Bhagat, National Coordinator, Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA), shares updates on MICE industry and the network's upcoming initiatives to revive the Indian MICE segment.



Janice Alyosius

India has become one of the most sought-after MICE destinations in recent years. The country offers an impressive array of accommodation and conference support facilities that meet global standards.

**Jagdeep Bhagat**, National Coordinator, Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA), while giving information about the network's work in sector, said, "We have been fortunate that our membership base has not been squeezed during COVID. We were actively in touch with our members even during lockdowns. At that time, everyone knew that business had stopped



**Jagdeep Bhagat**  
National Coordinator  
Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA)

ness, we got some good MICE players as our members."

Speaking of the strategic changes in the association, Bhagat said, "We may have a young dynamic team following us sometime soon. Strategically working style will not change; our core objectives remain the same. We want to remain relevant to our members and that is where we don't want to compromise."

### Key obstacles or challenges in the MICE industry

According to Bhagat, in certain parts of the world restrictions related to the pandemic are still in place, which are a deterrent for effective restart of MICE

Contd on page 21 ▶





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# MOT takes global marketing seriously

Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture recently presented a report titled 'Role of Indian Missions Globally for the Growth of Tourism in India' in the Rajya Sabha, where it recommended MOT on how to work along with overseas offices and use Indian Missions globally to their full potential.



TT Bureau

The report by Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture gave recommendations to the MOT, while Secretary of Tourism shared updates about the steps and initiatives taken by them.

## Take cue

After observing the models of other developing nations such as Thailand, the panel suggested, "Thailand utilised diplomacy and tourism promotion to attract foreign tourists, despite their small population and geographical area as compared to India. The same strategy may be applied in India for growth of inbound tourism."

## Focus on neighbours

"South Asian nations are marketed as part of a package tour and, therefore, linkage between India and South Asia is of importance for the sector. Cooperation with other South Asian countries on joint tourism and advertising



drives would promote inbound tourism in India," the panel felt.

## Circuit tourism

Talking about the tourism circuits, Buddhist Circuit and Ramayana Circuit, the committee recommended that necessary steps must be taken to revive circuit tourism by holding Fam trips and Buddhist Circuit family tours with the help of Indian Overseas Tourism Offices and Missions.

## MICE focus

Commending the ministry on strategic promotion of MICE tour-

ism, the Committee stated, "Many Indian cities have good infra for hosting conferences or are in the process of developing the same. What is required is linkage between the cities to enable the growth of MICE tourism."

## Medical tourism

Mentioning that India has a huge wellness tourism potential and appreciating its inclusion in the tourism strategy, the committee felt, "India receives most of its medical tourists from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Oman, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nigeria, Kenya and Iraq.

There is a huge potential for India to advance towards attracting medical tourists from Europe and USA among others."

## Film tourism

In view of how countries offer incentives to encourage film producers to use sylvan locations to shoot films, the committee stated that the incentives offered by the Indian government appear to be meagre as compared to global norms. "The committee asked the MOT to review the perks provided to foreign film producers as per globally competitive rates," it added.

## Overseas tourism offices

The report stated that out of the 31 vacant posts in the Overseas Tourism Offices, only seven have been filled, while 24 lie vacant. About 12 vacancies have been vacant for five years. There are six vacancies in the local staff. Mentioning that three fourths of the posts in the Overseas Tourism Offices are vacant, some for years, and oth-

ers with a bare minimum staff, the committee recommended that steps be taken to fill the positions lying vacant immediately.

## Tourism Missions' staff

The Overseas India Tourism offices, handling the responsibility of tourism promotions, have now

which would enable the government to appoint officers in as many nations as required, while setting up a tourism office. Only a certain number of Overseas Offices can be appointed, while the Indian embassies and consulates around the world can be a marketing model for tourism promotion."



**Necessary steps must be taken to revive circuit tourism by holding Fam trips with the help of Indian Overseas Tourism Offices**

"The MOT, along with External Affairs Ministry, formulated norms to link Indian businesses seeking to conduct trade and agri exports," it stated. It may be noted that security of tourists is vital for projecting India as a tourist haven. Only 39 sites spread in 15 states and UTs have been identified for implementation of Tourist Police Scheme.

## Last mile connectivity

Good quality last mile connectivity is important to ensure a positive experience for tourists visiting an Indian tourist destination. "The MOT must examine the quality of roads/highways at all tourist spots near the national highways," the committee stated. ↴

been consolidated to eight offices, and the mandate of promotion of Indian tourism abroad is with them. The committee shared, "This is a cost-saving measure,

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### Soaring high

It's not just the traveller movement that is soaring, the airfares and hotel room rates have also skyrocketed. Whether it is Asia or the US or Europe, the trade has been complaining of high fares. But are travellers willing to shell out? Yes and no. When a trip is important and unchangeable, travellers are going ahead and booking it – high rates or not. When it's for leisure, travellers are largely going ahead, and in some instances, changing their destination – but not cancelling trip.

This shows the resilience of Indian travellers; they are spending money on travel regardless, and despite the fact that some economists feel that the world's economic power – the US – may be heading towards a recession. This also shows that airlines and hotels are making hay while the sun shines. This is the way of the world, as the natural forces take over and demand and supply balance each other out. Until that happens, the travel trade must also show resilience.

### Time to get real?

Ministry of Tourism is going all out with its virtual roadshow series 'Incredible India Reconnect 2022' in association with all the overseas tourism offices and Indian Missions abroad. While the initiative was taken to apprise the FTOs about border opening and get the 'India is safe' message across, the travel trade in India is questioning the need for virtual roadshows despite international flights re-starting. Many believe that this was the best time to showcase India on a global platform by meeting international associates unabashedly and showing them that we are ready to receive them. Others, at the same time, also applaud the efforts of the government in starting engagements with FTOs through online as well as hybrid mediums, wherein international clients were invited by the embassies for presentations by Indian suppliers. In any case, the underlining message remains that it's time that the government makes the two sides meet in real time, and make sure that everybody benefits in the process.

# Indian aviation facing headwinds

Competition among aviation companies, elevated ATF cost and rupee depreciation to maintain turbulence in the aviation industry. However, near-term revenue growth will be supported by passenger traffic growth, which has seen recovery over the last few months.



TT Bureau

The Indian aviation industry is witnessing headwinds from the rising fuel costs, along with the depreciation of the Indian rupee against the US dollar, which has escalated the overall costs for the industry. This apart, the re-launch of Jet Airways and the entry of a low-cost carrier, Akasa Air, is expected to intensify the competition for Indian carriers.

As per a report from ICRA, the near-term revenue growth will be supported by passenger traffic growth, which has witnessed a notable recovery over the last few months with a steady rise in leisure and business travel subsequent to the waning scare of the pandemic; and the commencement of international travel operations for Indian carriers with effect from 27 March 2022. However, profit margins will remain under pressure due to the increase in costs and the limited ability of the airlines to pass on the same to the consumers.

Commenting on the issue, **Suprio Banerjee**, Vice President & Sector Head, ICRA, said: "The earnings of Indian carriers are



### Re-launch of Jet Airways and the entry of a low-cost carrier, Akasa Air, is expected to intensify the competition for Indian carriers

expected to have been impacted in Q1 FY2023 owing to an unfavourable cost environment and limited flexibility to pass on the cost increases. The average domestic aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price increased by 68 per cent YTD to ₹124,391 per kilo litre in FY2023 compared to an average of ₹74,171 per kilo litre in FY2022 due to the ongoing geo-political issues. "This apart, on a YoY basis, the INR depreciated against the USD by a steep 5.2 per cent in YTD FY2023. Since 35–50 per cent of the airlines' operating expenses, including operating lease payments, fuel expenses, and a significant portion of aircraft and engine maintenance expenses,

are denominated in USD, it has further pressured the earnings for the industry.

"This aside, some airlines also have foreign currency debt. Despite the significant improvement in passenger traffic, the revenue per available seat kilometre (RASK-CASK) spread for the Indian carriers in H1 FY2023 is expected to be unfavourable, owing to the significant surge in

costs and the limited ability of the airlines to pass on the same to the customers."

The impact of the increase in ATF prices on the industry's operating profit margins (OPM) depends on the industry's ability to pass on the same to the customers.

As per ICRA analysis, if the fuel cost increases by 30 per cent from FY2022 levels and the industry can pass on only 10 per cent of the increase by way of a rise in fares, the industry's OPM will moderate by a whopping 10 per cent. ICRA believes that the domestic yields have increased by 25–30 per cent over pre-COVID levels. The cost headwinds will result in an increase in air fares. However, it will be limited by the intense competition and endeavour of airlines to maintain and/or expand their market shares.

### Impact on consumers

- ❖ An increase in air fares likely
- ❖ However, the airfare rise will be limited due to intense competition among aviation companies

### Total contribution of travel & tourism to employment in millions - World vs India



Source: WTTC Annual Research INDIA



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## Palm Express

From St. Moritz to Lugano: the Palm Express offers a Postbus journey rich in contrast. Behind the Maloja Pass, the street winds its way down the Bregaglia Valley. The journey's final destination is Lugano, city of Mediterranean flair and one of Ticino's main urban areas.

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# Now, focus on franchise business

Giving a status check on the state of existing travel industry, as well as how UNIGLOBE Travel is the right model for the agencies today, Ritika Modi, Regional President, UNIGLOBE Travel, South Asia, says that travel is back with a bang, though corporate travel is not up to the mark.



TT Bureau

Despite opening of borders, and India being the front-runner in APAC, the airline capacity is not yet back to what it should be, informed **Ritika Modi**, Regional President, UNIGLOBE Travel, South Asia. "As soon as the capacity resumes to pre-pandemic levels, there will be pent-up demand. We have been waiting for this for the past two years. While leisure and business travel are back, corporate travel is still not up to the mark. Since companies are being careful, there is going to be a hybrid model, including online and in-person meetings," she said.

## Rebound

Claiming that UNIGLOBE agencies have a rebound, Modi shared, "We have crossed the 2019 numbers. On the domestic front, we are achieving higher numbers and higher in terms of travel spend, but for international we are not yet there, though every month we

see an increase." When it comes to target setting, she explained, "If you look at volumes, every airline is giving targets based on the current numbers as they cannot look



**Ritika Modi**  
Regional President  
UNIGLOBE Travel, South Asia

at 2021 numbers. However, we need to help members regain their lost revenues. The challenges include people and even IATA. Thus, the agencies were stretched to the full, having to pay salaries to their people and managing businesses," she said.

"Though the credit flow is more because when a customer goes

online, he/she does not take credit from the vendor, he/she takes it from the credit card company versus the agency from where he/she has got the tickets issued. Our mantra this year is how do we do more with less because we have less resources and less people. We are working with many technology improvements in order to help our members achieve a lot more with less. We have 35 member agencies in India and have added another during COVID-19," she said.

## Helping hand

Modi claimed she brought the concept of franchising to India in 2002. "It has taken the pandemic for the members to realise the value of being together and being a part of the same ecosystem. They have learnt how this could benefit them in terms of technology, training, and preferred supplier relationships. We have been looking at the changing landscape of the travel industry and structured ourselves on four strategic

pillars in the organisation. These include technology, commercials, alliances, and consulting piece. This is the core focus for go-

**It has taken the pandemic for the members to realise the value of being together and being a part of the same ecosystem**

ing forward this year to help the members get the revenue back," she elucidated.

## Everyone wins

When asked how every UNIGLOBE members are getting business, she claimed, "Agencies prior to COVID-19, and even before that, literally struggled to charge a fee

for the services they had rendered. The ongoing pandemic has taught the consumer to pay a fee for everything that he/she has bought, which is a big shift and will enhance revenue. Thus, the agency must understand how they want to service their customers better and charge them accordingly."

Modi said, "The customer will be willing to pay the fee when he/she experiences a different quality of service. The good news is that with the pandemic, people are coming back to brick-and-mortar agencies because they want to talk to somebody and not do everything by themselves and pay for the services too. Even the larger OTAs have started charging a fee other than convenience fee, which is a good sign. Thus, we see that not only in India, but also globally people are returning to brick-and-mortar agencies."

## Revenue

When it comes to revenue, she said instead of focusing on

revenues from various sources such as inbound, outbound, corporate travel, leisure or leisure travel, agencies need to decide on their specialisation.

## Events & engagements

Modi said they have multiple meetings for their member owners. "We have our conference, which we delayed owing to pandemic. We will be organising it soon. We had our first in-person meeting with all our members on the 1 July 2022 at the Andaz New Delhi and it was well attended. Everybody was happy to meet each other. Amitabh Khosla, Country Director, IATA, came and interacted with us. Each of us could discuss the challenges we foresee and how we could accomplish a lot more," she shared. While they have been holding many meetings, seminars and trainings online, they are planning to have more physical conferences. "We are planning an event in November, most likely in Mumbai," she informed.

# Sustainability the new mantra

Addressing India Tourism Sustainable Development webinar, Anita Mendiratta, Special Advisor to Secretary General, UNWTO, says COVID-19 crisis has left an indelible mark on industry, which can only be erased by advancing through sustainable approach.



TT Bureau

Stating that ongoing COVID-19 is Mother Nature's way of "reminding us of the priorities in tourism", **Anita Mendiratta**, Special Advisor to the Secretary General, UNWTO, shared, "Prior to the ongoing pandemic, we grew at three to four per cent per annum for over a decade. We were too busy to talk about diversity, equality, equity and sustainability. Thus, Mother Nature gave us the past two years to think about what these words meant. It is not about improvising or going back to normal. We need to go forward, otherwise, we are engineering some of the challenges of the past into our future."

## Global crisis

She claimed the world has gone through the past traumatic two years. "The crisis has impacted everyone. The duration was particularly stressful for our industry.

Although we have moved on from all that, the two years of COVID-19 have forced us to dig deep as a global community and recognise the fact that we will not get through unless we are not an integrated



**Anita Mendiratta**  
Special Advisor to the Secretary  
General, UNWTO

industry. It is a healthcare crisis, which is linked to the economy and tourism, airlines, airports, tourist destinations, tour operators, interactions and mega events," she said.

However, on an optimistic note, Mendiratta said, "There is 'hope

at the end of the tunnel'—we went through many ups and downs as COVID-19 has been mutated. However, it will continue to grow, and we can see the challenges. The WHO has announced a new strain is causing increased infection. In terms of statistics, in January, the UNWTO in its latest economic impact announced there was 120 to 130 per cent growth compared to the year before. The WTTC economic reports are showing growth, and that is a good thing."

## The India perspective

She said the impact of mental health on travel and tourism is there. "People need to get out. WTTC has revealed that the contribution to the Indian economy is going to be 20 per cent more this year than last year and one per cent higher than 2019. Thus,

the rate of growth that we are experiencing in India, for inbound, domestic and outbound, is huge.

After resumption of international flights in March, every week more than 1,500 flights took off for 27 foreign countries. The world is excited to welcome Indian travellers, as much as the world is happy to visit Incredible India," she claimed.

## Sustainability

"Everyone is talking about sustainability, because to avoid it will be to avoid our responsibility. It is important to understand what are the dimensions of sustainability that we cannot take for granted. Pre-COVID-19 sustainability was about green and blue. It was about the environment, which everyone focused on as the backbone of sustainability," she explained.



Mendiratta added, "Importantly, it comes at four levels. Firstly, its economic sustainability, and we have seen its impact when the several countries shut down their borders. Around 80 per cent of our industry is made up of Small

**The contribution to the Indian economy will be 20 per cent more this year than last year and one per cent higher than 2019**

Micro Enterprises (SMEs) that needs tourism to keep their economies operating at a micro level and activate the economic supply chains." "Secondly, it is cultural

sustainability. Travel and tourism keep people interested, curious, and appreciate the subtle nuances of culture and its beauty. It allows us to celebrate our differences and in doing so, we find how we are all connected. Travel and tourism are levers for peace," she claimed.

The third dimension, explained Mendiratta, is social. "One of the benefits of travel and tourism is that it keeps the economies and communities going, but social sustainability is vital. We saw that when the world was shut down, we were thinking of small businesses that depended on people and their traveling," she said.

Finally, "Our industry has been deemed to be critical in protecting environments and promoting them. At the same time, making sure that the world praises the beauty that Mother Nature gave us now," pointed out Mendiratta.



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International tourist arrivals in India likely to reach 30.5 million by 2028

India seeing democratisation of aviation, to reach 40 crore air travellers in 4 years: Scindia

InfoComm India 2022, premier audio-visual tech event, to be organised from 5-7 September

Each state should focus on promoting its 3Ts - Trade, Tourism, Technology - through every Indian Mission: PM

India constitutes 2.2 per cent of global share of domestic passenger market: IATA

Goa Tourism needs only three documents to register a new hotel in the state

New Delhi and Mumbai top airports with 36 per cent and 15 per cent foreign tourist arrivals in India in Q1

India leads APAC in its intent to travel with 50 per cent Indians expressing desire to spend more

# Time to find your niche

Niche tourism is gaining popularity, but it's not everyone's cup of tea to find the right niche. **TRAVELTALK** speaks to travel agents who have found their niche, which is their passion, and seem to be quite successful at what they do.

“The niche tourism we are focussing right now is exotic experiences within the destination. Curating exotic experiences for an experienced traveller is niche in itself. For example, in a Spain itinerary, giving self-drive in a vintage car, organising Astro-tourism with night star gazing spots and local culinary gastronomic experiences make a trip more memorable. The reason behind creating exotic experiences within any place is to stand out with the regular run of the mill itineraries. The only way to stand out is with the destination knowledge, impeccable service levels and out of the box experiences. Doing this makes our clients come back to us and passing the word around.”



Anshu Tejuja  
MD, Ashoka Dream Holidays



Arun Iyer  
Founder & MD, My Golf Tours

“We focus purely on golfing vacations, corporate golf events and major golf tournaments. Our aim is to promote golf as a sport and India as a top golfing destination. The Ministry of Tourism, under the Niche Tourism policy has brought in a lot of support for the trade. Interest in golfing is growing. As a result, the number of golfers going abroad to play and vacation is also increasing. What's important is golfers are big spenders if the average tourist will spend USD 2,000, the golfer would spend USD 5,000-6,000. Also, golfing vacations are also longer - more than 2-3 weeks. We now have offices in the USA and Dubai as they are big source markets.”

“We have always been into promoting niche destinations. One of them is marathon hopping. I am a runner myself and in 2018 I took a group of runners for the Tromsø Midnight Sun Marathon. It was an amazing experience for my runners and many of them did post-tours around the Scandinavian and Baltic regions. Thereafter in 2019, we became the official operators for the Berlin Marathon and we had about 20-odd runners going for this. We gave them options of doing a run, spa and celebrate itinerary. So active holidays, especially since the pandemic, is catching on in India. This year too, we have 24 runners going for various marathons.”



Subhash Motwani  
Director, Namaste Tourism



Veneeta Rawat  
Director, Amazing Vacations

“I focus on niche products such as honeymoons and self-drive holidays, especially in the luxury and experiential space. Such kind of holidays are gaining popularity among the clients that I cater to. With the festive and the wedding season coming up, we do see an increase in demand for this. On the other hand, self-drives are popular year-round with FITs and corporates alike. We have traditionally been curating vacations as per the client needs, so it is important that we know and understand the pulse of the client and their preferences for travel. With so much pent-up travel, demand has increased, and people like to do a lot of exploration on their own, and we help them tie it all up all together.”

“Post COVID, I had some clients who wanted an experience. These clients had survived cancer. What I see is that people want to experience and feel alive - celebrate life! So, we recently did an only-women group to Sicily. It involved a lot of local cuisine and local experiences. Personally, it was such a joy planning this for these clients who have bounced back to life and want to re-experience life. So, we did Sicily and Greece. We also do a lot of reunions of families and alumni groups, which is curated to their taste. They do not want to go on any fixed package.”



Vasuki Sundaram  
Founder & CEO, Wings Travel & Tours  
Inputs by Hazel Jain

## Big expansion on cards

Moumita Mukherjee Paul, Director Sales for India Market, Centara Group of Hotels, says that the group kept its feet firmly on the ground during COVID times and has plans to expand business this year.



Janice Alyosius

**Moumita Mukherjee Paul**, Director Sales for India Market, Centara Group of Hotels, is hopeful that the hotel's business will grow this year. “I think this is a showtime for Centara in 2022, we are hopeful and positive. We have very aggressive pricing for all the properties in Thailand, and talking about our hero product, that is Maldives Centara Grand Island Maldives, has a promotion of 40 per cent off from the contract and it has been given to all our long-standing contractual partners,” she said.

Speaking of the pandemic times, Paul emphasised on the fact that Maldives has been “the bread and butter for all of us”. “The outbound has survived because of this destination, so we should not be forgetting this at any point and in any chance, it is a paradise very different. It is a niche destination and Centara has some brilliant resorts out there. The brand stands strong with two brilliant properties target-

ing different segments altogether. So, yes. I mean all goes out for Maldives this season,” she said.

Revealing the brand's expansion plans, Paul said that the hotel's Japan expansion plan is on the cards next year. “We are already



Moumita Mukherjee Paul  
Director Sales, Centara group of Hotels

expanding; our expansion has not stopped even during the pandemic. We had one of the highest inventories opened in Vietnam, which is Centara Mirage. Our property in Dubai, the much-awaited property with 600 plus room nights, opened during the time of lockdown. We had a lot of Centara properties opening

across the Kingdom of Thailand during the lockdown. So, our expansion had never stopped. We didn't stop during the time of COVID, so hoping that we will not stop now as well,” she said. Speaking of the offerings for the travel trade, Paul said, “Our policy for the travel trade partners has always been considered keeping

**We have very aggressive pricing in Thailand, and talking about our hero product, that is Maldives Centara Grand Island Maldives**

how their relationship has been and we value relationship always. So, we have booker incentives, which cater to the top sellers of each company.”

## Indian agents to build business

Inspiring Vacations, making foray into the Indian market, focuses on agents by building quality relationship with business partners across the country through visits, email marketing and webinars.



Janice Alyosius

Inspiring Vacations offers enriching and affordable travel packages for small and large groups to the world's most iconic destinations. These premium travel packages are backed by award-winning customer service and an excellent, agency-friendly website that provides a hassle-free booking experience. This Australian-owned tour operator has achieved great success in overseas markets and now India is on its radar.

“Inspiring Vacations has made changes between 2020 and 2022 (mostly pandemic-driven) by expanding its Australian tour, while focusing on successful international expansion, but remaining fully committed to the brand. Customers around the world love what Inspiring Vacations does, and it's important to follow through on this combination of enriching and value-for-money escorted travel with a simple, user-friendly booking process and outstanding service

and support,” says **Ujjwal**, Director, Inspiring Vacations India. “We are thrilled to be in India. We have an innovative range of escorted tour packages at a compelling, value for money price. The typical Inspiring Vacations customer closely resembles our local In-



Ujjwal  
Director, Inspiring Vacations India

dian market. We are focusing on our India agents by building quality relationships with trade partners across the country through scheduled visits, email marketing, webinars and trade advertising. This, of course, complements our handsome incentives and commission,” he adds.

The Inspiring Vacations' travel packages and trips focus on a holistic experience, which includes must-see attractions alongside “authentic hidden gems” all over the world. “We already have a wide range of 2023 departure dates for tours available to book now, and our user-friendly booking system with live availability

**We are thrilled to be in India. We have an innovative range of escorted tour packages at a compelling, value for money price**

and guaranteed departures means you can secure your clients' travel plans now. Most of our tour packages come with, or can be, packaged with flights,” he says.





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# Luxury the only way forward

Among many changes that happened after the pandemic struck is how travel has changed, especially luxury travel, which has seen a shift from tangible and expensive amenities and experiences to sustainability, personalisation and discovering places before they become overdone and overrun.



Nisha Verma

Luxury travel was always synonymous with staying in a 7-star property with hands-on butler service and especially curated personal visits to the most popular tourist sites. Today, the pandemic has changed what it means to people, and the tour operators and hotels are making sure they get what they want, in a whole new way.

## Changing luxury

**Arun Ashok**, Regional Manager of Luxury Escapes India & Middle East, claims that after the pandemic, the world of luxury has undergone a transformation where consumers now look at it as a basic necessity rather than a mere indulgence. "Every time a COVID wave ends, we see luxe vacations in exotic destinations like the Maldives, Dubai and Bali taking the top spot in terms of sales. Luxury is not just about five-star resorts, lavish brands and opulent experiences anymore, but rather it's about mindful spending where the purchase adds value to one's life experiences. Sustainability is now of paramount importance wherein any luxury purchase is expected to offset one's carbon footprint. Emotional connections are paramount," he says.

**Joerg Drechsel**, Owner of Malabar House & Purity (Proud Relais & Châteaux members) and Delegate, Indian Sub-continent, Greater China & Southeast Asia and Member on the Board of Directors, Relais & Châteaux, explains, "Pre-COVID, the 10 Relais & Châteaux members in India had an average of 80 per cent foreign inbound guests pulled by the R&C brand ethos. Then came March 2020, the two years of lockdown, no scheduled international flights and no tourist visas. Depending on the destination and the experiences they offer, some of our members succeeded well to compensate for their loss of global visitors in the domestic market, others have suffered till now. Luxury is now not about premium hotels, but what every hotel offers, whether it's in the form of culinary enriching experiences or

the attention to the smallest details in the rooms. The post-COVID traveller is more aware of his/ her need and only decides once he/ she is well-informed about what the benchmark of the quality of service is. This has been one of the biggest changes, especially in the domestic traveller."

Echoing the thought, **Puneet Dhawan**, Sr. Vice President, Operations, India & South Asia, Accor, says, "The perception of luxury has changed due to a pandemic-driven focus on embracing essentials to improve overall well-being, and prioritising fulfilling experiences. Guests

service, or the best linen or the sceneries. It's all about the kind of experience you are giving to your customer."

## Shift in demands

**Anand**, MD, Holiday Moods Adventures and EC Member, ATOAI, claims that luxury had a different definition before COVID and we have clients who were actually gung-ho about how their luxury holiday would take place, in terms of what they need, making sure it doesn't go wrong. "Suddenly and for the good, things have changed. Even the most luxurious of clients have realised that they will only live once. Thus, they have found



When it comes to guest demands, Ashok claims that they are now willing to invest more in luxury holidays. "Whether it's choosing an all-inclusive vacation in the Maldives, or a curated tour in Turkey, guests are now willing to go the extra mile to turn their holiday into a wholesome one," he says.

Drechsel adds, "The demands of guests in India are similar to the global trend. Our audience is getting younger. The millennials

everything else. Travellers will turn inwards and focus on their personal well-being during their vacations rather than sticking to set itineraries. Wellness is certainly the new luxury. Travellers will focus on connecting with the local environment and surroundings and slow travel will rise. Customised itineraries will be the rage wherein travellers will expect holidays that cater to their interests. Mass tourism is now out the window, as far as

vidual properties. We as dedicated hosts, work all on more engaging content for enriched extended stays, combining culinary, health care and cocooning experiences with wildlife, culture, nature and community-based discoveries. Every stay in a Relais & Châteaux property has to be an unique experience, one of its kind. Our diversity is unique, it is our wealth."

Dhawan also said that the future of tourism — especially in the luxury



**Arun Ashok**  
Regional Manager  
Luxury Escapes India & Middle East



**Joerg Drechsel**  
Owner of Malabar House & Purity (Proud  
Relais & Châteaux members)

**Every time a COVID wave ends, we see luxe vacations in exotic destinations like the Maldives, Dubai and Bali**

**The post-COVID traveller is more aware of his/ her need and only decides once he/she is well-informed**

are willing to pay a premium for luxury services, which create meaningful experiences and which are truly immersive."

**Ravi Gosain**, Vice President, IATO, shares, "When it comes to luxury tourism, it is a sense and how one feels. Thus, whether it's a service, accommodation or an experience, everything mixed with the personalised efforts is luxury. I think in near future, the concept of luxury will be quite different. It's not about tangible things like accommodation, having first class staff at your

a new definition of luxury. If it's nature, they want to be in the nature, and ensure that they see the most beautiful places that Mother Earth has. They are willing to sacrifice a lot of the comforts to be in the nature. In fact, they are aligning their thoughts with sustainable tourism and want to meet local people, because that is where the first-hand experiences come from," he adds.

Dhawan says from the guests' point of view, they are seeing major trends in adoption of sustainable values and responsible tourism. "Furthermore, guests expectations have shifted further into personalised experiences as well as opting for tech-savvy hotels. They are also exploring staycations and wellness stays, which further have heightened the interest for local and unique experiences," he adds.



**Puneet Dhawan**  
Sr. Vice President, Operations,  
India & South Asia, Accor



**Ravi Gosain**  
Vice President  
IATO



**Anand**  
MD, Holiday Moods Adventures  
and EC Member, ATOAI

**Guests are willing to pay a premium for luxury services, which create meaningful experiences and are immersive**

prefer shorter stays, but load their stays with active experiences."

## Future of luxury

In the future, says Gosain, "I think people will be going to more remote places for luxury. It doesn't matter if it is small or big. However, they will be looking for more privacy, good food and also interaction with the locals."

Ashok believes that luxury travel will be all about mindful travel moving ahead. "Experiences will now be prioritised over

**Whether it's a service, or an experience, everything mixed with the personalised efforts is luxury**

this segment of travellers is concerned," he claims.

Drechsel adds, "Talking with tour operators and hoteliers, there seems to be a common agreement in the tourism sector that we will have a substantial recovery in this financial year, but the full recovery will only happen in 2023-24. My personal prediction is that we should recover 40 per cent of the pre-COVID international arrivals in November to March season. We expect guests to be less on the road and spend more time in indi-

**Even the most luxurious of clients have realised that they will only live once. Thus, they have found a new definition of luxury**

segment — is one where travellers don't have to think about being environmentally friendly, as it would already be ingrained in their design of operations. "Travellers are now looking for meaningful experiences under one roof to create deeper connections with their loved ones and the environment. Hence, our hotels, especially in the leisurely locations, are in demand. Staycations at holiday destinations are sought after. This is also reflected in an increase in FIT travel and demand across our properties," he concluded.

## Important takeaways

- ❖ Sustainability is now of paramount importance wherein any luxury purchase is expected to offset one's carbon footprint.
- ❖ Luxury is now not about premium hotels, but what every hotel offers, whether it's in the form of culinary enriching experiences or the attention to the smallest details in the rooms.



# Reinventing destinations for cruising

**Vasundhara Gupta**, Business Development and Marketing Head, Lotus Aero Enterprises (GSA for Costa Cruises), discusses its latest flagship Costa Toscana in Dubai from December 2022 to March 2023. For this, they have launched a simple rate sheet with good commission structures keeping the travel agents in mind and a great starting price.



Hazel Jain

**Tell us a little bit about the Dubai itinerary that you are currently promoting.**

Costa Cruises is excited to be deploying its latest flagship Costa Toscana, which is a large 185,000 tonnes ship with over 6000 guest capacity, in Dubai from December 2022 to March 2023. Costa Toscana additionally is one of the first few ships which is fuelled with LNG, making it environment friendly and a lot more sustainable. The itineraries ex Dubai or Abu Dhabi will have options of sailing from 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 nights. While the 2 & 3 nights itineraries cover mainly UAE ports, the 4, 5 & 7 nights cover three countries: UAE, Oman and Qatar. Dubai has always been a popular destination among Indians, but these cruise itineraries reinvent the destination and we believe that itineraries ex Dubai and Abu Dhabi will be the next big cruising destination for Indians. In terms of offers to travel agents, we have

launched a simple rate sheet with good commission structures and a great starting price.

**Tell us about the safety measures that Costa has put in place for this ship.**

We are one of the first cruise companies to have obtained the Biosafety Trust Certification from



**Vasundhara Gupta**  
Business Development  
and Marketing Head, Lotus Aero  
Enterprises (GSA for Costa Cruises)

RINA and we are carefully following the safety guidelines set down by the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). Additionally, we have introduced measures like Staggering boarding.



**What is the marketing strategy that you are deploying for Costa Cruises in India as its GSA?**

We have always believed in reaching out to the market, but since the travel trade has gone through so many changes after COVID, we have made sure to take part in trade events to not only connect with the trade, but also educate and equip them. We are additionally taking part in tourism body roadshows. Also, for ease, we have introduced INR rate sheets for our Dubai sailings.

**Have you already started seeing bookings on this ship from India?**

Yes, we are seeing a good number of MICE clients, who have already booked our Dubai sailings. It's encouraging to see that those MICE numbers are also for larger sized groups.

**Are you focussing on the MICE and wedding segment for this or any other Costa itineraries?**

Yes, we have always tapped the MICE and wedding segment aggressively for all our short itineraries in Dubai, Europe and Singapore.

MICE events on a Cruise are not only easy to handle logistically, but are great value for money vis a vis land, as cruise is an all-inclusive destination. Most of the MICE groups combine Work and Leisure activities on the ship. In terms of weddings, in 2017, Lotus implemented the largest ever wedding at sea of Sana Adel, whereby Costa Fascinosa, a 3,800 guest capacity, was chartered exclusively for four nights in the Mediterranean seas.

**Share your perspective on the future of ocean cruising post COVID and the kind of potential India has for this product.**

The cruising market in India is only set to grow, since India is the third-largest coastline in the world, Indi-

**Costa Toscana is one of the first few ships which is fuelled with LNG, making it environment friendly and a lot more sustainable**

ans have a natural affinity towards the sea and activities around it. Since cruise liners have now started having itineraries closer to home this experience has become real. Moreover, the cruise product has everything that an Indian wants.

# Inform travellers about flying rights

Passengers have many issues concerning airline services, which crop up from time to time. To redress grievances of passengers, Union Ministry of Civil Aviation has released 'Passenger Charter' to define the rights of passengers and the rules governing the airlines. Here is a what-to-do list of things that agents must inform passengers about.



TT Bureau

## Ticket cancellation

The airlines should inform the passenger of the flight cancellation at least two weeks before departure and arrange an alternate flight or give a full refund. If the carrier cancels a flight and provides an alternate flight to the passenger, it must bear the cost of flying him/her to/ from the alternate airport or terminal from/ to his/ her destination. If the passenger has been informed in advance, he/ she shall be responsible for making his/ her own arrangements.

If the passenger cancels his/ her ticket, the airline is obliged to refund statutory taxes, user development fee, airport development fee, and passenger service fee. This is applicable for all types of fares offered. At the time of ticket booking, the passenger must ensure that refund amount and its break-up are clearly mentioned.

Correction in the name of the passenger or error in the spelling of the passenger's name invites a penalty. However, there is a lock-in option for 24 hours after booking a ticket in which the passenger can either cancel or amend the ticket.

**If a passenger cancels ticket, the airline is obliged to refund statutory taxes, user development fee and passenger service fee**

## Medical emergency

All airports have a medical doctor, an ambulance, minimum medical support, including oxygen cylinders and defibrillators, trained



medical personnel, SOPs to take care of inbound and outbound passengers in medical emergencies. All these rights are over and above the ones that are existing.

This apart, all airlines should have designated seats for persons with disabilities, which will remain blocked until departure time. Unlike in the recent domestic airline incident, no airline can refuse to carry the disabled passenger, along with his/ her escorts. The airlines must be notified in this connection 48 hours prior to departure. If the passenger is denied carriage basis because of your

disability, the airline must specify in writing about the same. In case the disabled passenger is offloaded by the airline, the same must be given in writing.

## Compensation

The passenger will get his/ her ticket refunded in accordance with regulations of the airline's country of origin, if it is a foreign carrier operating to/ from India. In case of missing connecting flights, the airline is liable to pay compensation of ₹5,000 if the connecting flight is delayed by three hours and ₹10,000 in case the delay is between four and 12

hours. If delay is over 12 hours, the airlines will pay ₹20,000 as compensation. In case of death or bodily harm to the passenger onboard, the airline should pay compensation up to 113,100 SDR per passenger. However, in case of death inside the aircraft due to natural causes, the airline will not pay any compensation.

## Overbooking

In case of overbooking, the airline seek 'volunteers' to give up their seats for other passengers to travel on the flight. In exchange, they are given check-in facilities/ gate areas at concerned airports. The airline will not pay compensation if the passenger misses his/her

original flight on which he/ she did not board due to overbooking. If the airline arranges an alternate flight within 24 hours of the original departure due to overbooking, compensation equal to 200 per cent of one-way basic fare plus airline fuel charge will be refunded subject to a limit of ₹10,000 respectively. Similarly, the compensation is 400 per cent of the same subject to maximum amount of ₹20,000, if the airline arranges an alternate flight more than 24 hours of the original departure. Moreover, the passenger will be refunded 400 per cent of one-way basic fare plus airline fuel charge, subject to maximum of ₹20,000 if he/ she does not take the alternate flight.

## How long to get refund

- ❖ Immediately, if payment is made in cash.
- ❖ Within 7 days, if payment is made by credit card.
- ❖ If the payment is made through a travel agent, the passenger will have to collect the refund through the agent.



# PATA India promotes Kerala Tourism

During the pandemic, like many other tourism destinations, Kerala Tourism was also hit badly. However, the state is now all geared up to welcome tourists and is thus bringing new tourism products while making sure that the most popular offerings for tourists are also marketed well.



TT Bureaus

**V. Krishna Teja**, Ex-Director, Kerala Tourism, recently attended PATA India Webinar 'Jewels of India with Kerala Tourism' and updated the industry about the state's offerings.

## Kerala is ready

Teja said, "Every minute, Kerala tourism receives 35 domestic tourists and two international tourists. During COVID, like many other tourism destinations, even Kerala tourism was badly affected. In fact, two years — 2020 & 2021 — can be regarded as standstill in Kerala tourism. However, our government is successful in ensuring proper testing, tracking, tracing and treating of COVID related patients and I can proudly say today 100 per cent of the people above 18 years in Kerala are single-dose vaccinated, 88.5 per cent are double vaccinated and 50 per cent have got a booster dose. This shows how resilient and commit-

ted Kerala is in promoting safe and secured tourism. State is ready to receive tourists."

## Ayurveda

Claiming that Kerala is synonymous with Ayurveda, Teja said, "While Ayurveda treatments are available at all the places these days, there are four main reasons why people come to Kerala for getting an Ayurvedic treatment. The most important part of Ayurvedic treatment is the quality of oils, which Kerala offers in abundance owing to its rich biodiversity. The second and most important aspect of Ayurvedic treatment is Kerala's weather, which is warm and moist, and is best suited for Ayurvedic treatment. Thirdly, Ayurveda is part of Kerala's culture since thousands of years with Ashtavaidya, which is eight different disciplines of Ayurveda, each dedicated to one specific treatment. Today, our government is successful in converting this traditional discipline into a scientific discipline by establish-

ing Ayurvedic medical colleges. Hence, in Kerala, you have the right weather, the freshness of oils, a culture and a trained and scientifically disciplined manpower."



V. Krishna Teja  
Ex-Director, Kerala Tourism

He mentioned Kerala backwaters as the another key product. "Kerala is blessed with a large stretch of backwaters, lakes, canals, and the best way to explore these is in a beautiful houseboat or in a resort, located along the shores of the backwaters," he added.

**Active and adventure holidays**  
Saying that Kerala is a new entrant

in the adventure tourism market, Teja explained, "But, we have become famous for nature-based, soft adventure activities. We are blessed with a series of forests and hills. Today Kerala is known for trekking, biking, kayaking and rafting."

## Caravan tourism

In a bid to reinvent itself and offering tourists ways to explore destinations beyond the popular sites, Kerala introduced a concept called Caravan Tourism, revealed Teja. "Tourists opting for Caravan Tourism will be received in a caravan at the airports and then they can choose where and how they want to have their breakfast, lunch, dinner or how they want to spend their day and night. Everything will be provided by the driver as per their wish and they can choose to go for a caravan park located in one of these destinations and the caravan will be provided. The people will be provided the experience like bonfire and barbecue at the park. The

Caravan is a new and youngest product of Kerala tourism. It is also the most successful product of Kerala tourism, especially after houseboat," he informed.

## Forest & wildlife

Another highlight of Kerala is forest and wildlife. "One of the best

all varieties of forests available in Kerala, it is known for its richness in biodiversity," he shared.

## Responsible tourism

Kerala is a land that pioneered responsible tourism, claimed Teja. "If ₹100 is spent by a tourist in Kerala today, we are sure that minimum ₹30-₹40 will reach to the local people living in the surrounding areas. Responsible tourism's ultimate objective is making the local people benefitted out of tourism," he added.

## 2022: Year of Kerala Tourism

Teja suggested, "2022 can be a year of Kerala Tourism because we have lined up a series of adventure activities, sports and events, which make sure that it will attract tourists, like Champion Boat League from September to November; Kочи Mujiris Binale from December to March; Malabar River Festival, Splash, Mountain Terrain Biking, etc. All these will engage tourists all over the year."

**In Kerala, you have the right weather, the freshness of oils, a culture and a trained and disciplined manpower**

aspects of Kerala is having the evergreen forest, the deciduous forest, the Sholas forest, the grassland and mangroves. With almost

## Turkiye: 27,000 and counting!

Turkiye creates a new record by welcoming over 27,000 Indian visitors in June 2022. With its 'Safe Tourism Certification Program', Türkiye expects even higher number of international travellers all through 2022.



TT Bureau

With Türkiye relaxing the COVID-19 related travel restrictions for Indian visitors, the country hosted the highest ever number of travellers

destinations, fascinating history, its architecture, along with the ease of procuring visas for leisure travel. Moreover, with carriers like Turkish Airlines and Indigo resuming direct flights to the country, travelling to Türkiye

in June not only comes as a surprise for the Türkiye Tourism market, but also indicates that more record-breaking numbers will follow in the coming months.

Turkiye is one of the most sought after tourist destinations for Indians. Additionally, with its



from India in June this year. Türkiye received more than 27,000 Indian tourists during the month, breaking all the previous inbound travel records from India in a single month.

As the demand for international travel picks up, this sudden boost to Türkiye tourism from the Indian sector can be attributed to several factors such as the country's mesmerising

has become more convenient for Indians.

India has been one of the top source markets for visitor arrivals into Türkiye and the current peak travelling season has also favoured the numbers immensely. Given that May and October are the most preferred months for Indian tourists to visit Türkiye, the all-time high volume of travellers witnessed

**With carriers like Turkish Airlines and Indigo resuming direct flights, travelling to Türkiye has become easy for Indians**

highly successful 'Safe Tourism Certification Program' in place, Türkiye expects to welcome an even higher number of international travellers from the world over, all through 2022.

## Havila Voyages enters India

Holiday Moods is now the GSA for Havila Voyages, a Norwegian cruise company, and will be making sure that when Indians think about Norwegian excursions, they will think about them.



TT Bureau

Saying that COVID-19 was hard on most companies, **Singh Anand**, MD, Holiday Moods, claims that they also struggled during the period, but they bounced back quickly because they were always there in almost each vertical of the industry. "The first to pick up was the domestic segment and we did well, thanks to both our camps—Snow Monk Camp in Dharamshala and Camp Wild Dhauj in the Aravallis. In fact, December 2021 was the finest we have done in the history of 18 years of the camp," he claimed.

## Havila Voyages

Apart from that, Anand revealed that they even picked up a new product and launched it in the Indian travel industry. "We have been appointed as a distributor or the GSA for Norway coastal cruise company, called Havila Voyages, which has four ships on the water and will be sailing from Bergen to Kirkenes, from South to North of Norway and

back. Thus, we have a north-bound voyage and south-bound voyage spanning over six nights and five nights," he shared.

He informed that if anyone wishes to experience Norway and see the Northern Lights, or mid-



Singh Anand  
MD, Holiday Moods

est battery back-up and can sail on the battery backup for four hours. Norway has announced not to allow cruise ships running on fossil fuel entry to their fjords from 2026. Thus one must be environmentally friendly

**Havila Voyages offers to Indian travellers an option to cruise Norway and see the Northern Lights right from the ship's cabin**

and have alternate fuels to come into the fjords. Havila has taken a lead in the same," says the Managing Director.

Havila Voyages offers to the Indian travel industry an option to cruise Norway and see the Northern Lights right from the cruise cabin, he said.





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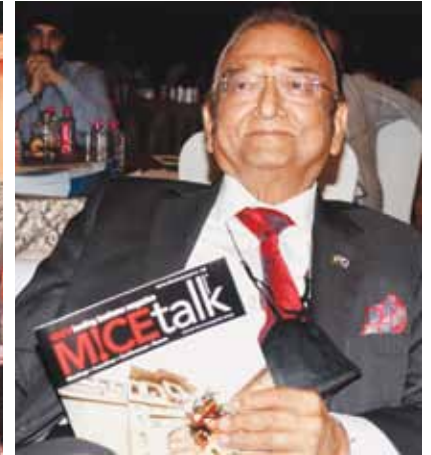
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# nima event sees 2000 B2B meetings

NIMA's MICE Forum 2022, held at the Hotel Crowne Plaza Jaipur from 29 to 31 July, witnessed more than 100 members from all over India and over 20 exhibitors. More than 2,000 B2B meetings were held at the venue. Unveiling vision 2025, Jagdeep Bhagat, National Coordinator, NIMA, announced that the network will soon roll out India specific certification programme.





# Utah: Road trips, a tourist's delight

Utah, a state in the Western United States, is known for its roads. The roads wind through the Mighty Five® national parks, 15 ski resorts, seven national forests, 44 state parks and more one-of-a-kind towns that you would like to visit. Each journey is a photographer's paradise, a hiker's nirvana, a Western historian's feast, and a geologist's dream.



TT Bureau

The geographic size of Utah might seem daunting, but time on the road passes quickly when new discoveries punctuate each mile travelled. With interstates and airplanes, the world can feel pretty small. On Utah's designated scenic byways, the world feels grand; its horizons seem infinite.

In total, Utah's distinct topography provides the surface for 28 scenic byways, which add up to hundreds of miles of vivid travel experiences wherein the road trip is as memorable as the destination. All of Utah's scenic byways are explorative journeys filled with trailheads, scenic overlooks, museums, local flavours and vibrant communities where you can stop for the night or hook up your RV.

### Utah's State Route 12

Sometimes you find yourself on a road that you can sense is something truly special. It is not just the



landscapes, though you can't take your eyes off them. It is something about the byway itself, though it's not just the quality of its surface. There's something in the engineering — the vertiginous "Hogsback" stretch comes to mind — and in the thoughtful lay of the road. The way the road connects with the land, feels somehow a part of the landscape, embedded in the slick-rock. It virtually becomes part of the ecosystem. Utah's State Route 12 is such a road.

### Bryce Canyon National Park

An alpine forest with as many red rock hoodoos as trees. At dawn and dusk, mule deer graze the forested plateau along the road into Bryce Canyon. The alpine environment is home to dozens of species of mammals and birds, all acquainted with a spectacular truth: this is no ordinary forest. Water and wind over millions of years of freezes and thaws, have carved into the plateau endless fields

of distinctive red rock pillars, called hoodoos, as well as into the park's series of natural amphitheatres. And because Bryce Canyon National Park is at an elevation of 8,000 to 9,000 feet, there are even opportunities for winter sports like snowshoeing and skiing.

### Kodachrome Basin State Park

If ever a state park was made to be photographed, it is Kodachrome Basin State Park. The

state park covers 2,240 acres of canyon country and is surrounded by the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument on three sides. With its close proximity to other popular destinations down Cottonwood Road, it makes for a spectacular basecamp or a stop on an event-filled day in the desert with friends.

**Henrieville-Cannonville-Tropic**  
Get to know the welcoming

people who live among the unparalleled natural beauty of Bryce Canyon, Kodachrome Basin and the Grand Staircase.

### Calf Creek Recreation Area

Calf Creek Recreation Area is a premier stop along Scenic Byway 12 in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail is an almost 6-mile moderately strenuous round-trip hike to a stunning 126-foot waterfall.

## Don't Miss

### Torrey

The idyllic and eclectic mountain town has wonderful accommodations at the doorstep to Scenic Byway 12 and Capitol Reef National Park.

### Boulder

Incredible outdoor adventure, the Burr Trail, Anasazi State Park Museum and Zagat-rated cuisine at Hell's Backbone Grill lure travelers off the road.

### Escalante

An adventure town cradled by the Dixie National Forest, Grand Staircase-Escalante and the Escalante Petrified Forest State Park.

(Advertorial)

# Rupinder Brar's mantra for success

The ATOAI Women's Collective hosted a fun-filled evening in New Delhi recently to bid Tourism ADG, Rupinder Brar, farewell. The evening witnessed stories of Brar, her experiences and learnings during her tenure in the tourism sector. The ATOAI Woman's Collective has been working closely with Brar for the past year and a half.





# Domestic tourism gets a fillip

With a view to improving the tourism market of Rajasthan, the state government recently released Rajasthan Film Tourism Promotion Policy 2022 and an MoU with UNESCO relating to Intangible Cultural Heritage at the three-day Rajasthan Domestic Tourism Market (RDTM) 2022.

 Janice Alyosius

With a view to energize the tourism market of Rajasthan, the state government recently organised a three-day promotion event in Jaipur. The event, Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) - 2022, jointly organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan and the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR), witnessed nearly 9,000 pre-arranged B2B meetings. During the mart, which served as a common platform for interaction and business generation, around 400 domestic tour operators from all over the country networked with 200 exhibitors from Rajasthan, who showcases the power and potential of tourism products such as hotels, resorts and theme parks in the state.

Rajasthan Minister of Art and Culture **Dr. B.D. Kalla**; Chief Secretary **Usha Sharma**; Principal Secretary of Tourism **Gayatri Rathore**; Tour-



Dignitaries present at the Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart - 2022.

ism Director **Rashmi Sharma**; **Apurv Kumar**, President, FHTR; **Gaj Singh**, President Emeritus, Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) and **Bhim Singh**, President Honour, FHTR, were present at the inaugural session, along with other senior officials of the Department of Tourism and office-bearers of FHTR.

On the occasion, two documents pertaining to Rajasthan Film Tourism Promotion Policy 2022 and an MoU with UNESCO relating to

Intangible Cultural Heritage were released. Throwing light on the Rajasthan Film Tourism Promotion Policy 2022, Gayatri Rathore said that the main objective of the policy is to establish Rajasthan as the most sought-after destination for film shooting. "It will also promote film production in Rajasthani language and create employment related to film industry in the state," she added.

With a view to promote the tourism sector, the Rajasthan


government has announced a comprehensive and inclusive budget for tourism. A Tourism Development Fund of ₹1,000 crore has been announced. The Tourism and Hospitality sector has been given a "complete industry" status, which entitles it to avail the industrial tariffs and levies. All tourism units as defined in the Rajasthan Tourism Unit Policy 2015 are eligible for the industry benefits. The government also offers a Certificate of Entitlement online.

Speaking at the venue, Dr. B.D. Kalla said that Rajasthan can boost tourism with its rich and diverse culture. He noted that the state offers many tourism products related to history and heritage, art and culture, wildlife, fairs and festivals, adventure, wedding and film shoot destinations. "The state government, headed by Chief Minister Ashok Gilot, realises that top priority should be given to tourism and announced an industry-friendly budget in March. Also, the state's policies regarding

tourism are visionary and will go a long way in promoting Rajasthan as a preferred tourist destination," he said.

Usha Sharma said that the recovery of the state tourism industry has been "very good" after going through tough times due to

  
**It (policy) will promote film production in Rajasthani and create employment related to film industry in state**

the pandemic. "Even in April, May and June, increasingly more and more domestic tourists are travelling to different parts of the state," she said. 

## Travel mart a hit with trade

Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) 2022, jointly organised by the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) and Rajasthan Tourism at Hotel Clarks Amer in Jaipur, concluded recently. The event, which showcased the potential of tourism products, witnessed a whopping 9000 B2B meetings involving 200 exhibitors and 400 buyers from all over India.





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# Medical Tourism: is it fit-to-fly?

Medical Tourism in the country will never reach its potential unless regular tourism facilities are improved to match international destinations, as they can greatly contribute to medical tourism apart from hospitals, says Dr. M. M. Begani, a proponent of daycare health services.

We, at Abhishek Day Care Nursing Home have a large influx of patients from around the world with the main inflow coming from the Gulf countries such as UAE, Oman, Yemen, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, but also Africa, Europe and the Americas.

The estimated number of days that they stay back in India ranges from a minimum of five days to maximum two months, depending on the treatment they are here for. On an average, their spend per trip is estimated to be anywhere between ₹1,00,000 and ₹3,00,000 for regular procedures and even higher for major surgeries and procedures. To assist us with such high numbers at Abhishek Day Care Nursing Home, we have Dr. Dheeraj Mulchandani.

It is no longer true that medical tourism in India is an untapped potential. I think it is better to say it is still unorganised and being run at random. The challenges



we face are regularisations, visa approvals, bed strength of our private hospitals, and having too many middlemen still trying to figure out the business.

#### Can India become a hub?

The government must ease the issuance of visas for genuine medical tourists. There are many people who apply for a medical visa and face challenges even

when they get here, right from having to register at the FRRO office, stamping their medical documents, requiring a fit-to-fly certificate to exit the country, delays in extensions of visas if required. All these can be made more patient friendly.

Apart from hospitals, even day care clinics such as ours can greatly contribute to medical tourism.

Now, how can day care clinics help or collaborate with travel agents/ tour operators/ travel fraternity to facilitate this?

Day care clinics are the best thing to happen to medical tourism. Day care centres have the fastest turnaround bed-times, so we can really help taking the load of our hospitals. The patients too are happy with day care treatment as they are more relaxed in their hotels after procedures rather than staying at the hospital. Quick in and quick out surgeries are now possible with newer medical and surgical innovations as well as short acting anaesthesia. Not to mention, that most day care procedures have an excellent safety record.

#### Collaboration is key

As of now, we do have a tie-up with some travel groups that bring their patients exclusively to us because of the assured quality of care they are able to obtain at short notice. The way it works is

that we issue an invitation letter to the patient that facilitates their visa approvals. Once they get their medical visas, they can come into the centre, get their treatment and

**Hygiene, world-class hotel rooms, budget-friendly accommodations, patient-friendly services politeness are paramount**

we issue them a medical report and certificate with a fit-to-fly certificate as well, so their exit is without hassle.

We need to harness the power of international tourism into the medical tourism field. Medical tourism will never reach its

potential unless regular tourism facilities are improved to match international destinations. Cleanliness, hygiene, world-class hotel rooms, budget-friendly accommodations, patient-friendly services, politeness and courtesy are paramount. We have the advantage of having the best doctors in the world who are still able to provide relatively affordable world-class care. We are in the unique position to take complete advantage of this and the next 10 years are full of promise.



**Dr. M. M. Begani**  
Consultant G.I., Colorectal, Laparoscopic and Day Care Specialist Surgeon, and Founder President of Indian Association of Day Surgery

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

## Swosti: Odisha's pride

Within a short span of time, Swosti Chilika Resort, with its luxury cottages, lush green landscaping, and attractive activities for visiting tourists, has made its name as one of the best resorts in India.

TT Bureau

Swosti Group opens its door to Swosti Chilika Resort, a place for all travel seekers and holiday enthusiasts, who revel in the unexplored and untouched tranquility and look to unwind and reconnect in a most spectacular setting one possibly can imagine. Rooted in the scenic setting of the famed Chilika Lake,

the essence of the resort is to unify the mind and the soul with the nature.

The young and dynamic team of Swosti Chilika Resort has also managed to achieve the distinction of becoming the Best Choice of Travellers and receiving the highest recognition from Tripadvisor. It has been judged as the Best Resort – a matter of huge pride for

the hospitality industry of Odisha, and Swosti Chilika in particular.

Within a short span of time, Swosti Chilika Resort, with its luxury cottages, lush green landscaping, facilities of Jet Skies/ Speed Boat, houseboat and other water sports activities, has already made name as one of the best resorts in India. It has been widely acclaimed across the globe and has become

a major tourist destination of the State. VIPs from different places, domestic and foreign tourists, who have visited the property, have highly appreciated the resort and its top-class hospitality.

**Swosti Chilika Resort has achieve the distinction of becoming the 'Best Choice of Travellers' from Tripadvisor**

Swosti Chilika Resort extends its guests cottages and presidential suites with breathtaking views, while being elegant and well-appointed for a comfortable stay. Four types of accommodations, namely Sanctuary-The



Presidential Suites, Millpond-The Pool Villas, Windchime-The Quad Villas and Midlake County-The Hotel Blocks, are on offer for a luxurious indulgence.

This resort is also the first Green Building Certified Resort in Odisha from Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) and ensures least adverse impact on the pristine environment of Chilika Lake. It is

the perfect venue for weddings, conferences, meetings, corporate get-togethers, MICE events or other business meetings. Its conference hall and meeting room furnished with modern amenities and accompanied by our dedicated team promises to create all your corporate events seamless and successful. It has remained the first choice for any mega or mini conferences in Odisha.





# The legacy of Rail Europe

Srijit Nair, General Manager, Rail Europe India, discusses their new booking portal ERA – Easy Rail Access – which allows agents to make booking for all the European train journeys easily, as well as reaching a milestone of 90 fabulous years!



TT Bureau

## What is the current focus area for Rail Europe India right now?

Our current focus is to ensure that all the travel agents have access to our new booking portal ERA – Easy Rail Access – so that they can easily make booking for all the European train journeys. Travel agents can book through our GSAs, as most of them have integrated Rail Europe APIs in their booking platforms. Training has been an important focus area and we have been conducting various training programmes through our GSAs in tier 1, 2 and 3 cities within India, thereby educating travel agents and sharing our latest product offerings. Reconnect with travel partners is also one of our top focus areas and we have been attending and participating in various road shows and trade fairs.

## What products are you promoting to the India market right now?

As we see an increasing demand

for train travel in Europe, we are promoting all the train journeys within Europe in the India market. Switzerland, France and United Kingdom are the top destinations, and we see travellers taking the high-speed trains like Eurostar,



Srijit Nair  
General Manager  
Rail Europe India

Thalys and the TGVs. Apart from the high-speed trains, a lot of travellers are opting for regional and intercity trains. Swiss Travel Pass and Eurail Global Pass are widely promoted and sold in India, as many travellers see a great value in purchasing these passes, as they come with various benefits



like free/ discounted mountain peaks, multiple travel on a single day, free access to famous museums, travel on scenic trains and children travelling free.

## Is there any change in preferences of Indian travellers since the pandemic breakout?

Many Indian travellers are opting for longer stays and prefer mono destinations or maximum two countries to travel at once, thereby they can avoid various COVID protocols and restrictions, and this has resulted in a huge demand for passes like the Swiss Travel Pass or Eurail one country pass or the Eurail Global Mobile pass. There is a lot of awareness among travellers on sustainable travel and they prefer travelling by trains.

## Any new development at RE?

This year, we are celebrating our



90th year of operation. At the start of the year, we had many offers, including up to 50 per cent discount on some journeys, in partnership with top European operators, including SNCF, Eurostar, Lyria, Alleeo, TGV Est, Eurail, France-Spain High Speed Deutsche Bahn and Ouigo Spain. We are going to bring such offers throughout the year as part of the celebration. On the product roadmap, we are continuously adding many new sectors and offers.

## Has there been any development on your training programmes?

We have launched our e-learning programme, The Rail Agent Course (TRAC), which is a comprehensive rail training programme. Travel agents and partners can register and complete the assigned modules and contests and win prizes. After completing the course, agents can earn The Rail Expert certificate. We are also updating this programme with more rail carrier modules.

## What kind of bookings are you seeing from India right now?

There is a pent-up demand for the travel to Europe and we see a lot of leisure and family travellers opting for customised holidays, and we see a turnaround in business travel too, as most of the corporates prefer train within Europe. Indians love travelling to Switzerland

**Many Indian travellers are opting for longer stays and prefer mono destinations or maximum two countries to travel at once**

and France. So, there is a huge demand for Swiss passes, along with French train SNCF and Swiss France connecting trains.

(Advertorial)

## International MICE on track

Contd from page 3

activities. "Hong Kong is still closed and is not expected to reopen for another three or six months. Similarly, Japan still needs time to reopen. The countries which have opened up do have some sort of protocol to be followed, so the flow of delegates in and out of those countries is not very smooth. Even in India, there are restrictions, though more relaxed than before. There are still certain protocols and compliances that need to be followed. Therefore, the growth is restricted because of these factors," he said.

"The natural trajectory, which was expected once the world opened up and all tourism activities started, MICE have in fact taken around six months delay in getting that start. But now, as we speak, we are almost there. Activities have started, even our forum, which is a physical event, was held in 2019 and now, after this two-year block, we are back to physical events. So, it has revived and is back on track," he added

## Key takeaways

"The key learning," Bhagat said, "was that we need to adapt

quickly to the demands that the world practically places on us. We have to be quick and adaptable to these changes." He also emphasised on the importance of collaboration. "We need to work together more and put less pressure on ourselves because health

**There are still certain protocols that need to be followed (in India). Therefore, the growth is restricted because of these factors**

has come into play now, although it has always been and should be an important factor."

## MICE trends for 2022

Bhagat revealed that MICE trends for 2022 will be smaller events. "It won't be the big events that happened before, but the number of events will increase. Choosing a destination will be a tough criterion this time around, as clients are

now looking for destinations that are a little offbeat and secluded in terms of what we call as away from the crowd. But we are finding these days what clients are demanding. They don't want to go to big hotels or big venues because they are conducting their events with smaller numbers," he said.

## NIMA's future plans

Sharing NIMA's future plans, Bhagat said, "We are devising programmes by which we will be able to issue certificates. It will be NIMA specified certification programme for MICE professionals that will be known as NIMA Certified MICE Professional (NCMP), and we hope that in the coming years this will become the most sought after certification by any MICE operator, or MICE professional in the country. We are almost halfway through curating the content for the certification programme." He added, "We are planning to create and curate MICE specific exclusive expo; this will be getting the world to India and will be called 'I- MICE'. We expect the first MICE expo to be held in 2025. So, MICE operators and the Indian MICE industry should look forward to I-MICE 2025."

## QualStar audits for Maharashtra

Contd from page 3

non-classified hotels. Since then, non-classified hotels were appealed to register and apply to avail the benefits. And now, as the regional offices have received a considerable number of registrations, the inspection committee will begin their site visits soon.

The committee will be chaired by the Deputy Directors of the respective regions, a representative of the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) department, regional representative of Maharashtra Pollution Control Board



(MPCB), local representative of Hotel and Restaurant Association (HRA) and a representative of Tour Operator Association (TOA). The agency QualStar has prepared a roadmap for inspecting sites, which will be followed by the committee.

**Dr. Dhananjay Sawalkar**, Joint Director, Directorate of Tourism

## Maharashtra to survey travel behaviour



Maharashtra Tourism will soon kick off an exhaustive annual survey that will help the tourism department understand travel behaviour, and the barriers when it comes to visiting Maharashtra. It will also help connect with industry stakeholders to understand the challenges and opportunities that exist in the tourism ecosystem in the state.

(DoT) informed, "So far, 446 applications across Maharashtra have been received by DoT. After inspection, if these hotels fulfil all the said criteria, they will be eligible to receive industrial status. This will make electricity charges, water bill, property tax and non-agricultural tax available to the registered hotels as per industrial rates."

**Supriya Karmarkar**, Deputy Director of Pune Region, has appealed the hoteliers to apply

for industrial status by visiting the official website of 'Maharashtra Tourism' at <https://www.maharashtratourism.gov.in> and submitting the online application form along with all the required documents. Industrial concessions will be applicable from the date of registration certificate of the applicant hotel. Interested hoteliers should check the criteria on the official website of the government <https://www.maharashtra.gov.in/1145/Government-Resolutions>.



# Direct flight key to Oz business

Carolyn Turnbull, Managing Director, Tourism Western Australia, while engaging with the travel trade and airline partners in India, says that a direct air connection between India and Australia can help the Indian market climb from the current 11<sup>th</sup> position to be among the top six for the destination.



Hazel Jain

A delegation from Tourism Western Australia's Perth office was in India recently as part of a seven-day India Trade Mission to highlight the diverse opportunities Western Australia has to offer. Tourism was part of a much larger Western Australia (WA) Government Trade Mission across many sectors and representing tourism was **Carolyn Turnbull**, Managing Director, Tourism Western Australia. She engaged with key travel and aviation stakeholders.

Also part of the delegation was Western Australian cricketing legend Brad Hogg, promoting Australia's largest state as a must-visit destination, ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Turnbull said, "Our key focus was to engage with our travel trade and airline partners. Our interaction with the agents was very



Carolyn Turnbull, Managing Director, Tourism Western Australia (extreme right), along with other delegation members of the Tourism Western Australia, speaks at an event.

valuable. It was a mix of premium and luxe agents specialising in experiential travel. It was about building on their expertise and knowledge of Western Australia. We are here to also to welcome back the return of world-class cricket to Australia this October."

#### A direct connection key

Pre-COVID numbers from India made it the 11<sup>th</sup> largest market for WA internationally. She said, "India is a prioritised market for us.

Moving forward, we want to reinstate AUD 62 million of tourism spend and grow it even more. We are also trying our best to secure a direct service between Delhi or Mumbai to Perth in WA. We believe that a one-stop connection, whether it is via Changi on Singapore Airlines or via Kuala Lumpur with Malaysian Airlines or via Bangkok on Thai Airlines, will stimulate the market by around 50 per cent, which is what we have seen in other destinations."

Turnbull added that if India was sitting at 11<sup>th</sup> position before COVID, a direct service could unlock its true potential and we could see the India market fast-track to around fifth or sixth top market. "We have already started seeing a significant amount of tourist movement from India into WA since we opened up borders in March. This is predominantly the VFR traffic and we plan to gear it up even more as we inch closer to the T20 World Cup," she said.

#### Focus on VFR and MICE also

Destination WA has a diversified strategy for India. "Obviously driving the initial VFR market is very important, building on that leisure visitation and really inspiring an aspirational traveller to come and explore WA. We are also looking at business and events segment to attract those high-end incentive groups from India. Our new global campaign will be launched in September this year," she said.

**Roger Cook**, Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Jobs & Trade, Tourism, Commerce, says, "Following the return of international visitors to Western Australia, we have seen an influx of visitors from India with WA arrivals in May reaching

**We are trying our best to secure a direct service between Delhi or Mumbai to Perth in Western Australia**

more than 90 per cent of pre-COVID levels, and forward bookings are even higher. Securing a direct aviation route from India to Western Australia is a key aviation priority for the Western Australian Government."

## EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



### AUGUST 2022

Date	Event	Time
18-21	International Travel Expo Hong Kong	10:00 am
18-21	The M.I.C.E. Travel Expo	9:00 am
19-21	Halal Indonesia Expo	9:00 am
19-21	India Travel Mart New Delhi	11:00 am
19-22	Taipei International Tourism Exposition	10:00 am
24	'Curated Qatar' Webinar	3:00 pm
26-28	Holiday Expo - Varanasi	9:00 am
27-29	International Joint World Cultural Tourism Conference	12:00 pm

### SEPTEMBER 2022

2-4	MATTA Fair	9:00 am
2-4	Travel And Tourism Fair - Surat	11:00 am
5-8	ILTM Asia	9:00 am
6	Spain Webinar	03:00 pm
7	VFS Webinar	TBA
6-8	Travel & Tourism Fair - Ahmedabad	11:00 am
9	Switzerland Webinar	03:00 pm
10-11	Business MICE and Luxury Travel Mart Delhi	11:00 am

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

## 'Digi Yatra' to smoothen air travel

► Contd from page 3

"16 States/ UTs have agreed to rationalise the high rate of VAT on aviation fuel, which include Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Arunachal Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu; Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir; Jharkhand, Karnataka, Ladakh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Also, Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate has been reduced from 18 per cent to 5 per cent for domestic Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) services," he said.

#### Digi Yatra

MoCA recently claimed that it will implement the Digi Yatra programme in a phased manner at airports across the country. It was informed that while it is being implemented in Varanasi and Bengaluru from August 2022, it will start functioning in Kolkata, Pune, Vijayawada, Delhi and Hyderabad by March 2023. It will provide a seamless, paperless and hassle-free experience for passengers across all checkpoints at all Indian airports. The main objective is to enhance the passenger experience by eliminating the need for verification of tickets and identity at multiple touch points. It will

simplify the passenger processes at various checkpoints in the airport, right from the terminal entry gate, check-in, bag drop and security check-up to boarding gates said an official.

**Digi Yatra's main goal is to help passengers by doing away with checking of tickets and identity at multiple touch points**

The project is in the implementation stage and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has awarded the work of implementation of Biometric Boarding System at Kolkata, Pune, Vijayawada, and Varanasi airports. Preliminary testing of the Digi Yatra Biometric Boarding System with registration

for the 'Day of Travel' at these airports has been completed.

In fact, DGCA has issued Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) titled 'Implementation on E-Boarding Process (Digi Yatra)' for implementation under the Digi Yatra Platform. Under the system, facial recognition would be done with the consent of the passenger as per the extant data privacy and data protection regulations. Data shared by the passenger would be used for the purpose defined and would not be shared with any other external stakeholder. The data shared by the passenger will not be retained for more than 24 hours after the departure of the flight. Digi Yatra Central Identity Management Platform would be developed.

#### UDAN expansion

The Airport Authority of India (AAI) has awarded 14 Water Aerodromes under UDAN across the country. ₹287 crore have been sanctioned for 14 Water Aerodromes, while Pawan Hans

has been awarded 70 routes by AAI under RCS UDAN.

#### Web check-in for free

As far as check-in at airports is concerned, the MoCA has advised all the scheduled airlines not to charge any additional amount for issuing boarding passes at the airport check-in counters as the same cannot be considered within 'tariff' as provided under Rule 135 of The Aircraft Rules, 1937.

Also, MoCA has revealed that India has signed Air Services Agreement (ASAs) with 116 foreign countries. This means that Indian designated carriers are free to mount scheduled operations to/ from any international airport, including Kannur International Airport. Currently, due to imbalance in the number of points of call in favour of foreign carriers, the Government of India is not granting any non-metro airport as a new point of call to any foreign carrier for the purpose of operating passenger services."

*A new study by SAP Concur, a provider for integrated travel, expense and invoice management solutions, has discovered that while managing corporate travel 96 per cent of all businesses across India say their companies are actively focusing on sustainability.*



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# MOVEMENTS

## TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

### Mumbai

Tourism Authority of Thailand has appointed **ISADA SAOVAROS** as the Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand Mumbai Office, effective 1 August 2022. He will be responsible for western and southern India as well as Sri Lanka and the Republic of Maldives. Prior to joining the India office, Saovros was the Director of Trat province. With over 23 years of experience, Saovros is conversant with the travel industry. He looks forward to working closely with trade partners in the region to make sure Thailand remains one of the top overseas destinations in the Indian market. He aims that the number hits 5 lakh by the end of the year.



## HYATT REGENCY DELHI

### New Delhi

Hyatt Regency Delhi has appointed **BARUN GUPTA** as the Director of Sales and Marketing. Specializing in room and MICE sales, Barun has a rich experience spanning over a decade with leading international hotel chains. Highly motivated and passionate, he is known for his ability to scale new business segments. In his new role, Barun will be responsible for leading strategic sales, marketing and business operations and building up MICE strategies. Prior to joining Hyatt Regency Delhi, Barun was working as the Director of Sales & Marketing for IHG's Crowne Plaza Greater Noida.



## THE WESTIN MUMBAI GARDEN CITY

### Mumbai

The Westin Mumbai Garden City has appointed **MOIZE ROCQUE** as the Director of Sales and Marketing for the property. He will be responsible for optimizing the hotel's revenue performances and business development verticals, and will also be strategizing closely with the food and beverage team to enhance their visibility and drive the hotel's reputation. Earlier, Moize was associated with the opening of The Ritz-Carlton, Pune, as Director of Sales and assisted in positioning the hotel as the new luxury destination. He started his career as a Management Trainee - Sales with Novotel Hyderabad & HICC.



## THE FERN HOTELS & RESORTS

### Hyderabad

**VANDITA SINGH** has joined The Fern Hotels & Resorts as General Manager - Marketing & Communication. She brings with her more than 10 years of rich and diverse global experience of working with some of the biggest brands in the world such as Qatar Airways and Ogilvy and Mather across the Middle East, India and Nepal. She has completed MSc in marketing and management from Lancaster University. In her career path, she has contributed to the global success of Qatar Airways with large scale events, CSR and sponsorship tie ups with FIFA, AS Roma, FC Bayern Munich, UNICEF and Farnborough air show. She comes with strong roots in the service industry.



## THE IMPERIAL

### New Delhi

The Imperial New Delhi has announced the appointment of **PRABHNEET KAUR SODHI** as Guest Services Manager. Reckoned in the industry for managing bespoke guest experiences, she has earned several accolades for her organisational dexterities and leadership in the area of customer satisfaction. Throughout her career, she has been part of some of the finest hospitality brands and operations in India. Sodhi holds an MBA degree in marketing and is a Science graduate in Hospitality Management. Her experience spans over a decade, resting on the pillars of powerful guest relations and efficacious communication in the areas of Experience Management and Front office Operations.



The Westin Mumbai Garden City appoints **SMITA MUKHERJEE** as the Director of Human Resources of the property. In her new role, she will be spearheading all operations across various specialties of Human Resources. Smita has an illustrious career spanning over 14 years and brings along a rich experience and proven ability in managing Human Resources operations. Earlier, she was associated with The Westin Pune as the Director of Human Resources. She has worked with prestigious hotels such as JW Marriott Juhu Mumbai, Hilton Al Habtoor City Complex Dubai, Double Tree by Hilton and Hilton Delhi. Her passion, creativity and zeal can be assessed from her luminous and outstanding career growth.



## ITC WINDSOR

### Bengaluru

ITC Hotels has appointed **DEEPAK MENEZES** as the new General Manager of ITC Windsor, Bengaluru. With more than two decades of experience in the hospitality sector, Deepak brings with him an astute sense of business and markets. He is a dynamic, goal-driven and accomplished professional with luxury hospitality experience in customer service, hotel and resort management, complemented with a proven record of success in pre-opening assignments and overseeing daily hotel operations. In his new role, he will be responsible for the day-to-day operations and management of the hotel.



## SAYAJI HOTEL

### Kolhapur

Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur has appointed **AMITABH SHARMA** as General Manager. Sharma is a passionate hospitality professional with over 25 years of work experience in the industry. A Hotel Management alumnus of IHM Meerut, he has been associated with leading hotel brands such as The Oberoi, The Park, Jaypee Palace and Convention Centre, The Grand Bhagwati and Radisson Blu. Prior to joining Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur, he was associated with Essentia Luxury Hotel, Indore, as General Manager. In his new role, he will be looking after the Operations for Sayaji Hotels Limited.



## THE DEN HOTEL

### Bengaluru

The Den Bengaluru, which is a part of Dan Hotels, Israel, has appointed **PRAFUL NARCHAL** as the Director of Sales and Marketing. A passionate and result-oriented professional, Praful has more than 16 years of experience in enhancing sales, marketing, and revenue streams through careful planning, extensive research, and innovative solutions. At the Den, Praful's primary responsibilities will include managing the overall sales and marketing strategy and programmes, annual budgets, revenue, and distribution management, and to overlook all aspects of the sales and marketing department for the five-star luxury property.



## TALKing People

**MANISHA SHARMA**, General Manager, Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, says that spending time with family helps her relax. "We all share highlights of our day with each other which keeps us connected considering the hectic work hours we all have. Another alternative is running or taking a long walk, which is the best way to relieve stress. I value that time since it gives me fresh perspective and makes me think more positively about the day. The lockdown (and quarantine) was one of the best phases because I got to spend a lot of time with my teenaged son, and he even taught me new skills," she says.



Cooking de-stresses **VISHAL KHOSLA**, General Manager, Azaya Beach Resort Goa, as it is his passion. Speaking about his time during the lockdown, he says, "I never faced a lockdown I as was involved in upkeep of the resort. But yes, I did learn gardening during that time. Goa is my favourite holiday destination in India. Internationally, I started my career in Glasgow - Scotland and that is a destination I love. But for my next holiday I will go to wherever my daughter decides.!"



Watching a good movie has helped **ANUJ CHAUDHRY**, General Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore, de-stress. "I love watching animations with my seven-year-old son. I enjoy taking photographs; it is a hobby that I am trying to develop. When it comes to travel, I love any beach destination whether in India or internationally. However, a favourite is Shimla because we have a family home there, hence spent many years growing up. Internationally, I think Europe is beautiful, as it is rich in culture," he says.







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# Reposition India correctly: Brar

PATA India Chapter recently held an Exclusive Webinar with Rupinder Brar, former ADG, Ministry of Tourism, and Principal Commissioner, Income Tax, titled 'Shaping the destiny of Incredible India', which saw her covering many areas that may help boost tourism in India.



Nisha Verma

**R**upinder Brar, former ADG, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), and Principal Commissioner, Income Tax, focused on sharing her learnings from the three years of her tenure in the MOT and gave her advice to the PATA India membership. She divided her address in five subjects destinations, hotels, connectivity talent, and heritage.

## What sets India apart

Brar claimed that a SWOT analysis need to be done of the tourism sector. "It's important to do an analysis of the strengths of India, which must happen on a global context. It should be a realistic evaluation, looking at where we are and what are our strengths. Apart from being an ancient civilization with many layers, India is a young country. Looking at the young population in India, there is a demographic dividend, which too is a strength. We are also a country that is driving technology solutions across the world. However, we must know if any other country has all of it together in one place or not. That is what will give us confidence," she said.

## Challenges

Looking at the numbers that come into India in terms of the global traffic, she said, "We have many more milestones to gather. If you look at the revenue earnings in forex, a lot of things must be done there. In terms of domestic tourists, barring the COVID times, we lose a huge amount of money to the world and are not able to retain the domestic tourists. Hence, we need to think what we need to

do on the government side, right from policy formulation to the execution part of it."

## Target UNESCO sites

Saying that the destinations in India can be classified as World Heritage, UNESCO, State held Heritage and privately held heritage. "However, we are not able to create a world-class experience in most of them. We need to do a lot more. At MOT,

**At MOT, we need to identify 40 UNESCO heritage sites and make sure that each of them competes with the best globally**

we need to identify 40 UNESCO heritage sites and make sure that each of them competes with the best globally," she said.

## Skilling & infra crucial

The other thing which also becomes extremely important, Brar said, is, "We should improve, upgrade and upskill the quality of the manpower available at the destinations."

## Focused marketing

Brar said that strategically, as a young country, we need to understand that not every part of the country is going to be marketable at the same time. "While there is a lot of growth stories

happening in terms of infrastructure, we need to be strategic in the short-term, mid-term and in the long-term. We need to identify pockets and step out of the more traditional triangles and say that there is more to India in terms of experiences, connectivity and hospitality," she said.

## Spirituality is key

"While we are remembered for the heritage and ancient history, we are a country where four religions have been born. It is a strength for us and we can definitely market that well. Thus, I believe that spiritual tourism is a fantastic product for India," she claimed.

## Focus areas

Highlighting some focus areas, Brar said, "In terms of mid-term growing areas, medical tourism is growing in a big way. Other potential sectors in the mid-term include cruise tourism, adventure tourism including wildlife. In the mid-term, we need to brand ourselves as a country, which has so much to offer both in terms of adventure as well as wildlife. We are clearly missing out a lot of high-end crowd in these areas."

## Positioning India

She stressed that there is a need to reposition or to chisel the positioning of India. "If the government gets on board to do it, it makes much more sense. Also, since the sector is highly driven by the stakeholders, the nudge and the advocacy needs to be very strong," she claimed.

## Ministry coordination

When it comes to ministry co-ordinating the B2B overseas engagements, Brar shared, "While some bit has started in terms of virtual roadshows, but it's not happening as much as it should. We need to push the pedestal a little more."

## Focus on diaspora

Saying that the Indian diaspora is a huge segment for India. "We have a huge segment there to create an outreach with, because the children growing up in Indian today are virtually on the same page. A lot of work must be done in terms of creating the right communication strategy for those Indians," she claimed.



Rupinder Brar  
former ADG, Ministry of Tourism  
and Principal Commissioner, Income Tax

## A couple of key suggestions made by Brar

- ❖ SWOT analysis need to be done of the Indian tourism sector for a realistic evaluation.
- ❖ Need for focussed marketing, as not every part of the country is going to be marketable at the same time.

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