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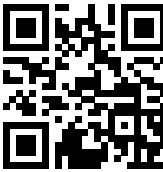
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G20 and the Northeast

The 10th edition of International Tourism Mart, organised recently in Aizawl, Mizoram, saw the Northeast showcasing its tourism offerings as the government focuses on putting its best foot forward for G20 meetings, which are proposed to be held in several states of the region.



TT Bureau

The 10th International Tourism Mart (ITM) for the Northeast was recently held in Aizawl, Mizoram. The inaugural session saw **G Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister- Tourism, Culture & DoNER, addressing the attendees. Objective of ITM 2022 was to highlight tourism potential of the Northeast region in domestic and international markets. Underlining the importance of the upcoming G20 Presidency of India, he said, "The G20 offers the best opportunity for India to showcase its culture, history and tourism potential and to position itself as a major tourist destination in the world. India will soon be presiding over the



G20 from December 2022 to November 2023. We will host over 200 meetings across 55 cities during this period. These meetings are also proposed to be held in several states of Northeast including Aizawl."

He added, "Among the G20 member countries, China, Mex-

ico, India, South Africa and Indonesia are projected to expand their tourism industry post-COVID. With our presidency we definitely can stride ahead of these four-five countries to build the rightful place of India's tourism industry in the global arena. We must plan to showcase our Northeastern cultural richness

while welcoming the world to our country. The International Tourism Mart 2022 will highlight the diverse tourist attractions and products offered in the eight states."

Reddy also laid the foundation stone of Aizawl Convention Center at Chite, PRASHAD Project in

Mizoram and two Bamboo Link Roads during the inauguration of the ITM, along with **Zoramthanga**, Chief Minister of Mizoram. He also launched the Mizoram Tourism Coffee Table Book. Other dignitaries gracing the occasion included **Robert Romawia Royte**, MoS Tourism Govt of Mizoram; **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Tourism; **Gyan Bhusan**, Senior Economic Advisor, Tourism and **Manisha Saxena**, Principal Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of Mizoram.

Sharing that MICE sector will be a key focus in the days to come for the MOT, Reddy said, "India will also hold an investors' conclave in 2023 to promote global invest-

G20 offers best opportunity for India to showcase its culture, history and tourism potential and position itself as a tourist destination

ments and MICE tourism. Our focus will be to increase the global investments not only in the hospitality industry, but also to promote theme parks and entertainment centres, adventure tourism, cruise

Contd on page 13 ▶

Goa beyond sun & sand

Goa is going through a facial change by exploring new tourism segments, reveals **Rohan Khaunte**, Minister for Tourism, IT, Printing and Stationery, Government of Goa.



Nisha Verma

Goa is trying to portray an image beyond the sun, sand and sea, for which it's known for, reveals **Rohan Khaunte**, Minister for Tourism, IT, Printing and Stationery, Government of Goa. "We need to move a little differently. Looking at the way the travellers have been thinking and the choices they make, we are adding software, and are uniquely getting a model of co-working spaces on the beach. This would allow a person to come as a digital nomad and enjoy a Goa vocation—a concept that was introduced during COVID. There are many companies which are sending people in various parts



Rohan Khaunte
Minister for Tourism, IT, Printing and Stationery, Government of Goa

of Goa to make use of creative space and work. We are trying to tap this segment. Also, we want to promote tech-tourism, where somebody can work, surf, or do water sports, and come back to do their work," he shared.

Away from the usual

He added, "Goa is very beautiful throughout the year. We have eco-tourism, which we have started on a big scale. We are moving into the hinterlands, trying to gather local communities, which will touch upon the homestay segment. Also, we are looking at wellness, adventure, as well as spiritual tourism. We are trying to add many more things to sell goa throughout the year. We have already started tapping all these segments through various policies. Within a year, we can showcase Goa in a different light, and the Government of India (GoI) under Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD schemes, has been instrumental in giving us the backbone to the vision we carry."

Tamil Nadu turns a new leaf

Dr. M. Mathiventhan, Minister of Tourism, Govt of Tamil Nadu, shares how they are trying to develop new tourism products in the state, apart from just being a hub for spiritual and religious tourism.



TT Bureau

Sharing that the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu is giving a lot of interest in developing the Department of Tourism as well as Tamil Nadu Tourism Corporation, **Dr. M. Mathiventhan**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu, said, "We have many new plans in tourism. This is the first time, Tamil Nadu Government has formulated a scheme known as the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Scheme, under which we pick 10-20 destinations every year and get the grant from government to develop it from tourism point of view. For example, we are now developing sites in hill stations like Kolli Hills, Javadi Hills, Yelagiri Hills and



Dr. M. Mathiventhan
Minister of Tourism, Govt of Tamil Nadu

Kodaikanal. Also, we are clubbing it with adventure activities." He added, "We are also coming out with the new tourism policy, which will be released soon. In addition, we have many other new plans, which we are kickstarting one-by-one."

Centre support

Claiming that the Central Government and Ministry of Tourism has been "very helpful", he shared, "It's nice to see the Government of India (GoI) giving so much support to tourism. We will push many new projects in tourism, including circuits, corridors and themes. I think the GoI is also allocating more funds when it comes to tourism after COVID."

Big on domestic

When asked about domestic tourism booming now, he shared, "When it comes to Tamil Nadu, it's a spiritual hub. We have many temples and many tourists fly from other countries as well as other states to Tamil Nadu, especially to visit temples."

Switzerland Webinar Series.





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Mt. Titlis is one of the most popular excursions in the market, and is easily accessible from Lucerne. The iconic revolving cable car, the Rotair, takes visitors up to the summit for spectacular views and experiences in the snow and ice.

Our upcoming webinars in December 2022 will showcase Lucerne and Titlis Cableways, along with their various touristic offerings.

Date	Day	Webinar	Time	Registration QR code
6th Dec 2022	Tue	Lucerne	3.00 PM IST	
13th Dec 2022	Tue	Titlis Cableways	3.00 PM IST	

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Changing rules, a hassle for trade

Back to back changes in the advisories by airlines and government over entry to UAE in the second fortnight of November has evoked myriad of reactions from the travel trade. Frequent changes in the rules create a havoc amid the trade and passengers alike, which results in loss of business and money at many levels, they say.



Nisha Verma

Air India, Air India Express and IndiGo issued an advisory that effective from 21 November 2022, passengers with single name on their passports will not be accepted by the UAE immigration as per instruction from the UAE authorities, which led to a panic situation amid the travel trade and the passengers who had already booked packages. Air India's notification stated, "As per National Advanced Information Centre – UAE ... any passport holder with a single name (word) either in surname or single name will not be accepted by UAE immigration

Indigo said, "As per instructions from the UAE authorities, effective 21 November 2022, passengers with a single name on their passports travelling on tourist, visit or any other type of visa shall not be allowed to travel to/from UAE."

However, the rule was changed again on November 24, when The Consulate General of India, Dubai, tweeted that passengers with only one name will be granted entry if they have their father/family's name mentioned on the second page of their passports.

Duress post first ruling

After the first ruling, the travel

"We are seeing people who were holding confirmed packages but had single name in the passport. However, there was no clarity on the ruling. Now, with time there is clarity. It had created a little bit of a turmoil as people holding a US, UK, Canada or multiple Schengen visa with a single name, had to either chalk off Dubai or UAE as a destination or go for a name change in passport, which deems the previous passport and active visas invalid." He shared that such changes should not come suddenly. Agreed **Riaz Munshi**, MD, N. Chirag Travels, saying, "We cannot question a government for any decision. However, they



Valmiki Harikishan
MD, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions



Guldeep Singh Sahni
MD, Weldon Tours and Travels



Siraj Ansari
Managing Director, Avion Holidays



Some clients had valid US visas and changing a name in passport would have been a cumbersome process

Shravan Bhalla, Chief Executive, Highflyer, also shared that not enough time was given to either change booking or passport for the passengers, especially when bookings were made well in advance and with so many services in travel being non-refundable. "Some people are even doing weddings and even if a few people are with single names, it could become an issue. Still, there is not proper clarity among the agents," he claimed.

Not common in India

Valmiki Harikishan, MD, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions, however, said that very few people in India, especially South India, have names with only single word. "Many Indians, particularly South Indians, will have either father name, spouse name or their place of birth as their surname. Thus, this change wasn't very big for us and none of our clients came up with such an issue. However,



Country should also come out with a provision of pre-registration for travellers with passport or visa issues

there were a few cases for many agents, where some clients had valid US visas and changing a name in passport would have been a cumbersome process, owing to legalities. Why the decision was taken in the first place is still a puzzle for us," he said.

Guldeep Singh Sahni, MD, Weldon Tours and Travels, shared that it is difficult for countries to identify people with a single name, and thus it could be a preventive measure from the UAE. "While we should respect a country's decision to take measures to preserve the security of their country and identify people, the country should also come out with a provision of pre-registration for travellers with passport or visa issues," he claimed.

Siraj Ansari, Managing Director, Avion Holidays, shared that while this rule was not applicable to resident and employment visa



People whose passports are going to expire within a year, it's better to apply the same with name and surname

holders. "I think people whose passports are going to expire within a year, it's better for them to apply the same with name and surname, to be safe in future. Very small percentage of people in India would have this problem and making an amendment in the passport is a huge task. In such a situation, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India should personally send a message to the authorities in UAE stating that such a hasty decision would not be feasible and they should have given at least six months for people to implement this rule," he said.

While the rule was eventually amended, but the fact remains that any country when coming up with such a rule, should take some time in implementing such rules, so that the travellers and other governments are better prepared, and the host country also gets a chance to assess the impact. 🐦



Siddharth Khanna
Managing Partner, Travel Engineers



We are seeing people who were holding confirmed packages but had single name. However, there was no clarity

and the passenger will be considered INAD (inadmissible passenger). Such passengers will not be issued a visa, and in cases where the visa was issued previously, it will be inadmissible by immigration authorities."



Riaz Munshi
MD, N. Chirag Travels



We cannot question govt, However, they should intimate us in advance and give us a notice of 2-3 months

trade was looking for ways to help their clients. While many didn't have direct clients with such an issue, others had clients who were in a panic state. **Siddharth Khanna**, Managing Partner, Travel Engineers, said,



Shravan Bhalla
Chief Executive, Highflyer



Even if a few people are with single names, it could become an issue. There is no proper clarity among the agents

should intimate us in advance and give us a notice of 2-3 months. Such decisions should not be made effective suddenly and randomly. People have pre-booked their packages and many things are not refundable."

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Northeast: India's big bet on tourism

Northeast is not the hidden gem in India's tourism kitty today. It is the asset that India has been showcasing everywhere, so that it reaps the benefits it is capable of. Seven Sisters, as the Northeastern states are fondly called, were taken up by the Ministry of Tourism for promotions overseas since the region didn't have the funds or the might to market itself internationally. While many raved about the destination, others ignored the initial buzz that the MOT was trying to create.

The International Travel Mart (ITM) was one such initiative to give the NE states the right platform to put its offerings forward. It has been taking place for a long time now, but this time there were many factors that worked for it. The Union Minister of Tourism, being the DoNER Minister too, made sure that the right kind of events and right kind of initiatives were taken up at the ITM. With a lot of infrastructure development and boost in connectivity, the govt has made sure that the Northeast is coveted by both domestic and international travellers alike. Today, many Northeastern states have their own tourism boards, campaigns and mega film stars as their tourism ambassadors. With G20 meetings also planned in the region, it is ready to be explored to its fullest.

What works more to the region's advantage today is the increased interest in natural, green and sustainable destinations across the world. In this regard, the region doesn't really need to work hard. Blessed with natural beauty and the raw wisdom of the tribes, these states are known to use local resources for plethora of tasks as a way of life, a talent that not just Indians from other states, but also international tourists are keen to learn. Especially post-COVID, sustainable tourism is one of the most important factors to drive tourism to any destination and India's Northeast is the perfect candidate to attract tourists from across the world. It is India's dark horse, which is ready to make that big leap.

Indians most confident to fly again

With 90 per cent of air passengers considering onboard Wi-Fi a necessity, inflight connectivity continues to be a top priority for airlines besides simplifying the signing up process, according to a recent survey, which finds that Indians are the most excited to travel by air again in the APAC region.



Indian airline passengers are the most confident about flying again in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, reveals Inmarsat's 2022 Passenger Experience Survey, which polled 4,000 people across the region who have travelled by air in the past 12 months. Three quarters of APAC airline passengers feel confident flying again, a significant rise from just 6 per cent last year, according to the survey. On a country-by-country basis, India topped the list (88 per cent), followed by Australia and Singapore (79 per cent), and South Korea (53 per cent).

Inflight connectivity remains a major factor in influencing the decision of APAC passengers to select an airline. More than four-fifths (83 per cent) more likely to rebook with an airline if quality inflight Wi-Fi was available, extending the increase from 78 per cent in the previous year. This factor is particularly compelling for passengers in India, with more than 9 in 10 (92 per cent) saying they are motivated to do so. It highlighted that 90 per cent of travellers from India feel it is important to stay connected during a flight, compared to the APAC average of 74 per cent. Also, travellers from India are the most willing to pay more for their tickets if it meant reliable inflight connectivity, with 44 per cent happy to do so compared to an APAC average of 29 per cent.

David Coiley, Asia Pacific Regional Vice President, Inmarsat

Aviation, said, "As millions return to the skies, our latest APAC passenger experience survey offers valuable insights into how the

to enhance the overall onboard experience through digitalisation, which our survey results indicate will not only be embraced

travellers to stay connected.

Travellers in APAC are also willing to trade for connectivity. About 36



expectations and behaviours of passengers have evolved since the pandemic. Inflight connectivity is a prime example. Passenger demand for fast and reliable Wi-Fi has never been higher, so provid-

by passengers, helping to drive their future brand loyalty, but also unlocks even greater revenue generation opportunities for airlines in India and across the Asia Pacific region. Passengers are even telling us they would go without an alcoholic drink or a seat to ensure they get good inflight Wi-Fi."

The volume of APAC passengers who use digital devices inflight remains high at 96 per cent – mostly for administrative tasks and entertainment. In addition, 78 per cent have connected to inflight broadband when available on a flight, more than double the percentage from the previous year (38 per cent). This demonstrates how passengers continue to value top-notch inflight connectivity, suggesting airlines should prioritise the availability of reliable Wi-Fi and simplify the signing up process for

per cent of respondents say they will be willing to view advertisements and 32 per cent claim they will even give up alcoholic drinks inflight if it means having access to quality and consistent connectivity. In fact, close to one in three (29 per cent) travellers from India say they would be willing to go as far as standing for the entire duration of the flight if it meant access to reliable Wi-Fi onboard – the highest in the region.

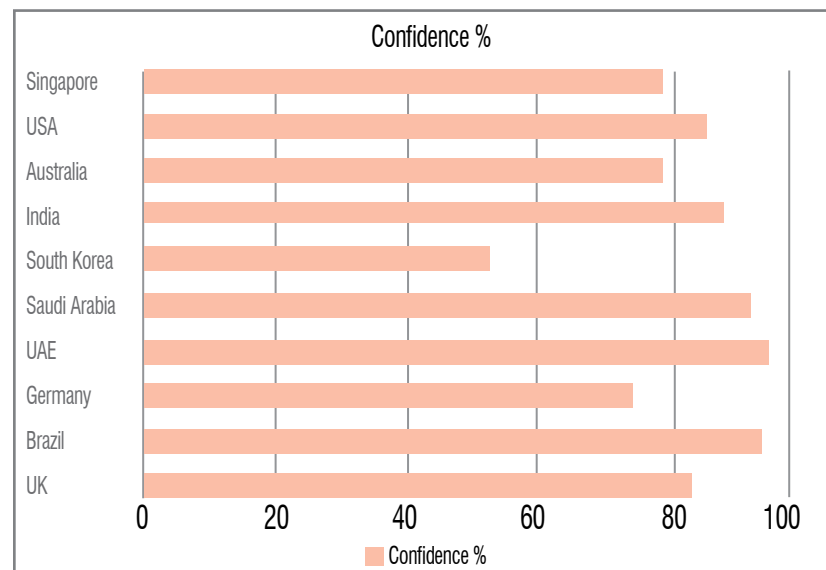
Watching downloaded movies or TV shows was the most popular onboard activity passengers would engage in while connected

Watching downloaded movies was the most popular onboard activity passengers would engage in while being connected

– a figure that is unsurprising, considering that 45 per cent of Indian travellers indicated they would pay more to access exclusive inflight entertainment content while flying (compared to the APAC average of 32 per cent). In addition, Indian travellers would pay more for both unlimited downloads (34 per cent) and social media usage (33 per cent).

90 per cent of visitors from India feel it is important to stay connected during a flight, compared to the APAC average of 74 per cent

ing access to such services is absolutely essential for airlines. This also serves as the foundation



Sustainability in Assam

The Assam Tourism Policy 2022, launched in consultation with the World Bank, aims to drive sustainable tourism development in the state by creating a policy framework and strategic roadmap.



TT Bureau

The Assam Government unveiled a new tourism policy on the sidelines of 'Assam Tourism Road Show 2022', organised recently by the Department of Tourism, Government of Assam. The Assam Tourism Policy 2022,

ginnings. **Jayanta Malla Baruah**, Minister, Public Health Engineering, Skill Development Employment & Entrepreneurship and Tourism, Government of Assam, said, "Our goal with this new policy is to enable the world to view it from the point of view of the attraction. The presence of pristine water, forests,

gic roadmap in collaboration with central ministries, various state government departments, local communities and tourism stake-

The presence of pristine water, forests, mountains, and rivers provides the state with limitless possibilities

holders to improve the tourism sector in Assam, to support the private sector engaged in tourism in the state, and to strengthen tourism support segments and its sub-sectors". **Maninder Singh**, Additional CS, Department of Tourism, Govt of Assam, said, "The policy's fundamental guiding principle is to encourage sustainability and foster responsible tourism to make Assam a sustainable and responsible tourism destination."



launched in consultation with the World Bank, aims to drive sustainable tourism development in the state. It aims to create a policy framework and strategic roadmap to strengthen tourism support segments and its sub-sectors. The new tourism policy has been laid out at a time when the state stands at the threshold of new be-

mountains, and rivers provides the state with limitless possibilities in the field of tourism. Assam is sure to enchant the travellers with what it has to offer at every nook and corner. For investors, we have also come up with special packages."

The mission of the policy is "to create a policy framework and strate-

Larger & intimate spaces for hotels

Digital transformation in the hospitality industry is now firmly embedded in the daily activities of hospitality businesses, with some new and emerging trends on the rise.



TT Bureau

The hospitality industry is adjusting to the new normal and noticing an increase in new trends. **Vikram Cotah**, CEO, GRT Hotels and Resorts, shares key insight to the changes in the hospitality industry and how the industry is adapting to it.

Changes and trends

The hospitality 2.0, as we say, is the new normal and there are a lot of things which have changed post COVID. "One is of course the digital transformation, which is taking place in hotels and more and more hotels are turning to technology to do services, experiences and even build hotels with technology. Another big thing which is happening is about human resource. Earlier, we used to call it human resource, now we are calling it human assets because now we know the importance of the employees and how and what role they play in making a hotel successful," shared Cotah.

He added, "Another change in the industry is the change in the design and hotels. New hotels are



Vikram Cotah
Chief Executive Officer, GRT Hotels & Resorts

coming up with larger spaces and more intimate spaces for smaller crowds. The restaurant designs are changing, buffets are going away to a large extent and there are more tasting menus. In the next 5 to 10 years, there is going to be a paradigm shift in hospitality, especially in our country."

Changes in demand

Cotah said, "There is a huge revenge tourism taking place. People are coming back big time to travel. So, we see most of the hotels are doing well, much beyond 2019 numbers. We are making up for what we lost out in the two years."

Digital transformation

Digital transformation per se in hospitality has been very big post pandemic. "We realize that technology plays a major role in creating experiences for guests and this can happen at a much optimal cost rather than depending on hu-

Another change in the industry is the change in the design and hotels. New hotels are coming up with larger spaces and intimate spaces

man resource to do it. And when we use technology, it's consistent," Cotah said.

Hotels are renovating and making sure that their properties are tech savvy. "Almost all hotels are embracing technology, for instance," he said.

SIHRA discusses changing travel trends

South India Hotels & Restaurants Association (SIHRA) organised its annual convention in Bengaluru from 18 to 20 November 2022. More than 600 delegates from the southern states attended the three-day convention, which served as a platform for discussion on new trends, optimising human resource potentials, and opportunities in the hospitality sector.



New Managing Committee takes over at OTOAI, Riaz Munshi re-elected as President

EaseMyTrip and Assam Tourism Development Corporation ink an MOU to develop tourism in Assam

Rajasthan Cabinet approves scheme to boost rural tourism, generate employment

Budget key for Indian travellers with 75 per cent seeking more value for spend: Booking.com

Kerala registers 196 per cent spike in domestic arrivals during first three quarters of 2022 Vs same period in 2019

Nearly half of travellers can't remember OTA they used to book their last leisure trip: Travelport

Thomas Cook India launches digital tool to support its B2B travel agent partners

ATOAI unveils 'Member Advantage Card' to boost marketing & B2B purchases

Customers at centre of innovation

Technology and innovation continue to be at the heart of what makes Amadeus successful and are key to anticipating and fulfilling the customers' needs, shares Rakesh Bansal, CEO, Amadeus Indian Subcontinent.



Janice Alyosius

Over the years, Amadeus has demonstrated the ability to adjust to changing market conditions and client expectations, helping them to increase travel efficiency and providing value to all the stakeholders. **Rakesh Bansal**, CEO, Amadeus Indian Subcontinent, said, "We connect travel players and make personalized journeys happen. We design our solutions around our customers' needs as well as the needs of their customers—the travellers. At all stages of the travel experience—from inspiration to shopping, booking, on-trip and post-trip—our solutions help deliver better service to travellers."

The success of Amadeus is still largely due to its commitment to technology and innovation, which are essential for foreseeing and meeting the clients' requirements. "Our technology and services encompass the full spectrum of travel. Our portfolio includes integrated front, mid and back-office solutions, as well as self-booking



Rakesh Bansal
CEO, Amadeus Indian Subcontinent

and expense management tools that optimise performance and maximise revenue," he added.

Change in distribution system market

During the pandemic, as global travel came to a standstill, the creativity and commitment of the industry to adapt and evolve was impressive. "Delivering on changing traveller needs, developing identification solutions and health certification solutions, rolling out biometrics, building new travel experiences, all helped to

Travel trends for 2023

The Amadeus 2023 travel trends identify five new developments, which the company believes will play a part in shaping travel over the coming year.

❖ Meet a new kind of travel agent: Exploring the metaverse will allow travellers to explore a destination before they arrive or relive their memories once they leave

❖ Smile for your seat: Biometrics will help create a smooth travel payment experience

❖ Travel without baggage:

Hotels will offer travellers more amenities so they can travel lighter

❖ Working from roam: Remote workers will adopt an increasingly nomadic lifestyle, migrating to different locations as 'work from anywhere' policies become normalized

❖ Welcome to bonding business breaks: A new category of business travel, focused on connecting teams, building relationships and unlocking creativity away from the office, will emerge

re-ignite global travel as restrictions lifted. Now once again, we see travel players taking a stand and making bold decisions to address both the ethical and commercial challenges this conflict is creating. We need a reinforced spirit of collabora-

tion and intentional reimagining to rebuild the travel industry and make it more resilient. Amadeus is committed to collaborating with industry partners to design safer travel experiences that inspire trust and restore demand," he shared.

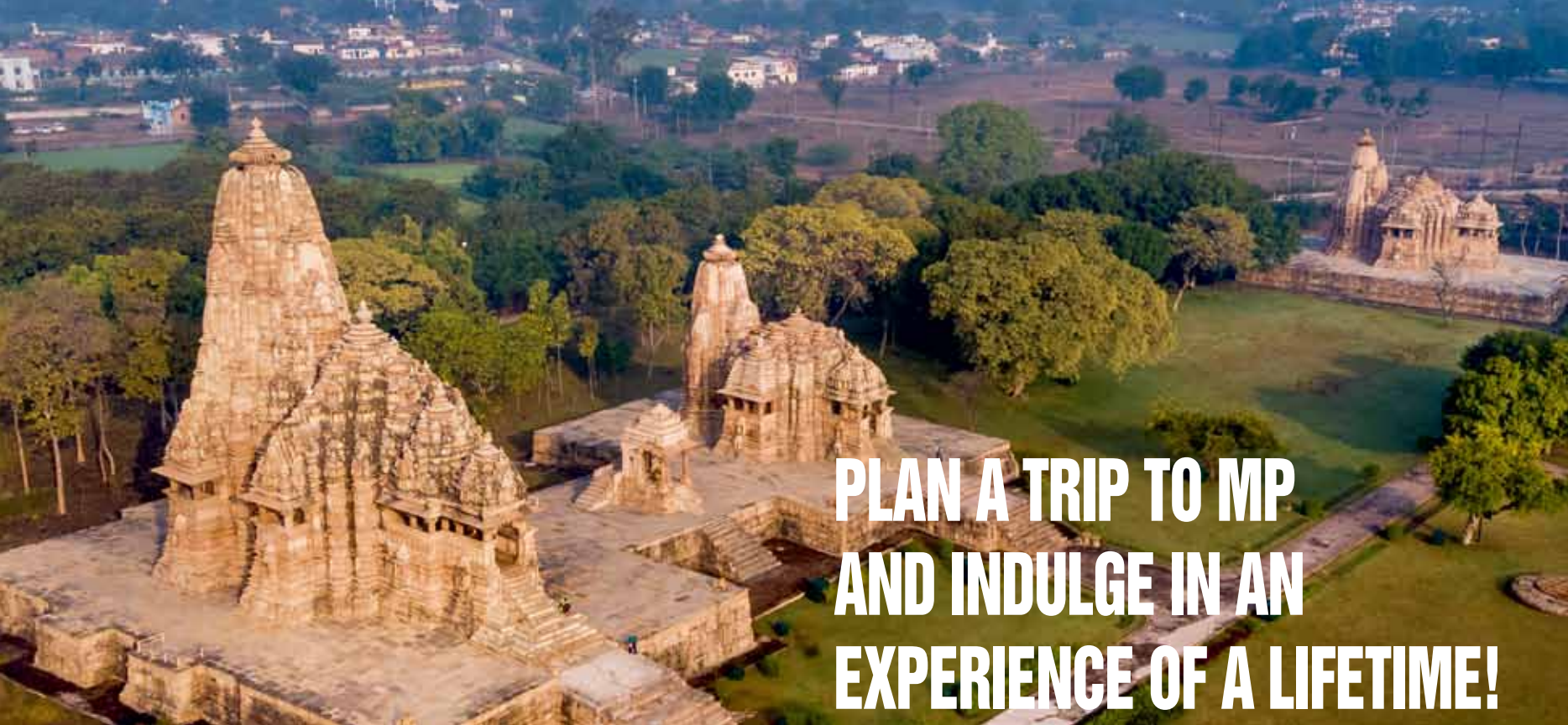
Amadeus' progress with NDC

Amadeus recently shared the key benefits of NDC and how to achieve the full integration of NDC, which is bringing retailing capabilities to life through dynamic and more personalized content. "We are pioneering several technological breakthroughs on NDC and continues to work closely with its partners to make sure NDC addresses the needs of all stakeholders. Amadeus-powered travel agencies are already managing NDC bookings through both Amadeus selling platform connect, as well as the Amadeus web services. When it comes to NDC operational readiness, the challenge many agencies face today is integrating different workflows and different processes in third-party aggregators and other GDS systems. In the Amadeus environment, interoperability is a key strategic initiative. Amadeus offers an unparalleled capacity of NDC aggregation, content harmonization and end-to-end servicing with an aim to provide a seamless experience," he added.

Fern showcases Kasauli resort

Fern Surya Resort Kasauli Hills organised a Fam trip for about 23 travel partners from MICE, inbound and domestic travel sectors. The visitors enjoyed the stay at property, which overlooks the snow-capped mountains and boasts of stylish rooms, multiple dining venues, and a sparkling swimming pool among other facilities.





PLAN A TRIP TO MP AND INDULGE IN AN EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME!

Let's have a small tour of incredible Madhya Pradesh

Some destinations are immutable. They grow on you slowly but their magnetism is eternal. Welcome to Madhya Pradesh... the land of Khajuraho, Sanchi and Bhimbetka, all UNESCO World Heritage sites. And then there are the equally famous medieval townships of Mandu and Orchha which house matchless forts, palaces and temples. The vast plateau of Madhya Pradesh is dotted with the spectacular Satpura and Vindhya mountain ranges, verdant valleys and life-giving rivers like Narmada, Shipra, Betwa, Chambal, Ken and Sone. Situated at the mounting height, the state's most verdant charm, Pachmarhi is the most pristine among the hill-resorts in the country. The state also has many holy cities including Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, Maihar, Chitrakoot and Amarkantak that attract millions of pilgrims from all over the world. The state which is known as the "Tiger State of the India" also gained the tags of "the Leopard State, the Vulture State, the Ghadiyal State and the Wolf State of the country" as the heart of incredible India is

decked with numerous wildlife hotspots that include 11 National Parks & 24 Wildlife Sanctuaries. This is just a small introduction, as Madhya Pradesh is not only a state to explore its heritage sites but also activity filled tourist des-

Vast plateau of MP is dotted with the spectacular Satpura and Vindhya mountain ranges, verdant valleys and life-giving rivers

tinations, tribal culture, adventure activities, camping, water sports, natural scenic beauty, wildlife, spiritual, food, rural and wellness destinations. The state is also a hub to experience amazing arts and crafts that give tourists a lifetime memory by taking home some unique keepsakes to cherish.



Madhya Pradesh Tourism (MPT) brought together gram stays, farm stays and homestays as a safe and culturally rich stay options under rural tourism, which was also praised on the international stage. The rural tourism is slowly gaining popularity among travelers and why not? Exploring rural destinations can help to know the traditional roots of a state!

Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, tourists explore the village mud houses, taste simple yet delicious meal and enjoy the splendid natural and unpolluted surroundings to soak in the rural culture.

MPTB was also felicitated on international stage for its rural tourism and safe tourism for women projects. The local community



Homestay, Ladpura Khas

are involved in tourism activities, including high-class lodging and boarding facilities, local food, folk music and cultural activities, rural sports, local art and crafts and skill development in the youth. This initiative is not only giving new experiences to tourists but also benefit the local community by generating employment.

Madhya Pradesh has also become the hub of 'film shooting' and a good number of filmmakers are coming to shoot their films. Government is promoting film tourism in a big way by providing subsidies and all permissions and clearances through single window online system. Till now, more than 150 projects including feature films, TV Serial/ Series, TVCs and Reality shows have been shot in Madhya Pradesh.

The state also has a treat in store for a solo woman traveller who is free-spirited soul and her passion to travel doesn't get hampered even in the absence of any companion. This vibrant state offers destinations where travelling alone is not just comfortable but one can also get to taste of freedom and fun without fear. Now, let's talk about those who as a tourist, really got

bored of those regular travel trips and are eager to try out some adventure activities. The heart of the country has a lot for them too.

Many thrilling and soft adventure activities are being conducted in the state for the adventure lovers. From river rafting, mountaineering, jungle safari, heritage walk to food walk, there is something

State also has many holy cities including Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, Maihar, Chitrakoot & Amarkantak that attract pilgrims

for everyone. MPTB's adventure department has introduced various adventure activities to attract tourists including jungle safari, off-road luxury car rally, cycling activity in tiger reserve, camping, tree camping and gypsy camping at Satpura National Park. Tourists experience stargazing, bonfire,

and dusk drive, swimming, river-side jungle trail with bird watching and tribal cuisine with barbeque in the jungles of Satpura. Apart from this, the travel bugs also enjoy water sports activities in the heart of the country.

The state offers many activities including windsurfing, water parasailing, water zorbing, jet-skiing, speed boats ride, cruise boats ride, sky diving, paramotoring, banana boat ride, hot air balloon ride, zip line, yoga camp, wellness and spa.

Madhya Pradesh is a paradise for wildlife lovers and the best way to discover national parks and wildlife sanctuaries is by opting for a safari ride. When you visit the heart of incredible India, try different safari experiences offered at our various sites. Balloon safari in Bandhavgarh, elephant safari in Kanha, boat safari in Satpura and Chambal and jeep safari at all national parks of MP.

As we said this is just a small introduction, if you want to know more about this state then visit the heart of incredible India Madhya Pradesh. We are eager to welcome you!



Pench National Park

J&K at its best, gets record tourists

Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary, Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir, shares how the upsurge of tourists in the Union Territory (UT) has been a blessing in disguise for the industry, which has revived like never before. The state has welcomed 1.5 crores tourists this year, making it one of the busiest tourism years since 1980s.



TT Bureau

Jammu & Kashmir saw a huge surge in tourism post-COVID, especially from the domestic market. Reacting on the same, **Sarmad Hafeez**, Secretary, Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir, said, "It's been wonderful, and tourism has been doing very well. This year, we had the best tourism ever, even better than the pre-1989 days. We have already crossed about two million tourists in Kashmir Valley and we are touching about 1.5 crores in J&K. It's fantastic because we are a tourist state, and everybody benefits from tourism. It's a great economic activity as all the stakeholders are very happy and we are hoping that this continues."

Challenges

Such a growth also brings with it challenges. "The UT administration, under the leadership of our Lieutenant Governor, we have taken several initiatives. Firstly, tour-



Sarmad Hafeez
Secretary, Tourism
Jammu & Kashmir

ism in Kashmir started very early. We were one of the first places in the country which opened tourism. We started with vaccinating our entire travel trade. We organised several festivals and events. We were all over the country, and had roadshows in many places. We attended all the travel marts and had a huge advertisement campaign. Having said that, we have also improved a lot as far as infrastructure is concerned," he mentioned.

Addressing the issue of shortage of hotel rooms in the UT, Hafeez said, "I know that the rooms have been a challenge because so many people have been coming. We have recently come out with a new homestay policy, which makes it easier for people to register their homestays. We have opened 75 new untapped destinations. Other tourist services in J&K have also improved."

Safety aspect and perception

With many new destinations being promoted in Kashmir, there can be concerns about some places. Addressing the issue, Hafeez added, "As far as safety is concerned, it's perhaps one of the safest places in the country to travel. Recently, the National Crime Bureau report has reported that there have been zero per cent crimes against tourists. Very few places in the country can boast of that. In fact, new areas have been opened. Recently Gurez Valley was voted as the number one offbeat destination

in the country. Earlier, it was difficult to go there. There are several other places like the Bungus Valley, Lolab Valley and many trekking routes that have been opened. People are coming and enjoying."

Tourism has been doing very well (in J&K). This year, we had the best tourism ever, even better than the pre-1989 days

Promotions

As far as the promotions are concerned, he revealed, "We have had several roadshows across the country. We work closely with the travel trade and not in isolation as department of tourism. We have a huge social media campaign. We

have presence at several airports around the country, and we have also embarked upon celebrating different occasions and festivals like spring festival and early almond blossom festival. In spring, i.e. March and April we have tulip festival at Asia's largest tulip garden, where 1.5 million tulips grow. There are many summer festivals, winter carnivals and we have a houseboat festival. Such events help us convey a message outside that things are happening in the UT. We had a floating theatre in the Dal Lake. All this is paying dividends and a lot of tourists are visiting. I hope that this continues."

Dealing with over-tourism

To tackle over-tourism, said Hafeez, "We have opened 75 new destinations in the 75th year of independence, not just to keep the tourists longer or enhance their experience, but also to disperse the tourists to larger areas so that not too many people are there in one place. It has helped a great deal."

In Numbers

1.5 tourists J&K received this year, including two million visiting Kashmir Valley

75 new destinations have been opened that were untapped till recently

1.5 million tulips grow in the Asia's largest Tulip Garden in the state

Palladium opens 2 hotels in Ibiza

Sandra Polo Canudas, Asia & MEA Commercial Director, Palladium Hotel Group, is encouraged by the current numbers from India and is confident that 2023 will be a successful year for the hotel group.



TT Bureau

Sandra Polo Canudas, Asia & MEA Commercial Director, Palladium Hotel Group, was in India recently to reconnect with the travel trade here. She visited some tier 1 and tier 2 cities in the country including New Delhi, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad. Sharing her opinion on how the market has recovered for Palladium Hotel Group, she says, "We see things getting back on track and more and more clients are travelling now. I see positive feedback and we are hoping that 2023 is successful."

New hotel openings

The group has opened two new properties. Sharing details, she says, "We have opened a really nice brand - The Royal Suites Ibiza - which is the first TRS property in Europe. This brand is already present in Latin America. It has seen huge success there and it was, therefore, decided to open one in Ibiza as well. It opened its door in May 2022. We have another new opening in Hard Rock Hotel Marbella. We also have a very special product that I think the In-

dian market will love, which is The Signature Level with quite a few value-adds. This is for the high-end segment, and they will love it."

The group is already seeing clients from India. "The market started opening in April 2022. Since then, we have started getting clients



Sandra Polo Canudas
Asia & MEA Commercial Director
Palladium Hotel Group

from India and I have to say that we are quite happy with the results. Considering the number of arrivals from India into Spain, and the share that we used to have in 2019, I have to say that it's not comparable but if we see the percentage increase in terms of

number of arrivals and the share that we have, we exceed our performance," she says.

Of course, a few properties are an all-time favourite with the Indian

Our properties are popular not just with the FITs and leisure segments, but also small groups and honeymooners

market. "One of the most popular properties with the Indian market is our Ushuaia Ibiza Beach Hotel, followed by Hard Rock Hotel Ibiza and the Grand Palladium Palace Ibiza Resort & Spa, along with the Grand Palladium White Island Resort & Spa, which is an all-inclusive family resort. But with two new openings (TRS Ibiza and Hard Rock Hotel Marbella), these two will also pick up," she says.

FITUR portrays positive outlook

The 43rd edition of the International Tourism Fair will take place from 18 to 22 January 2023. Organisers look to the upcoming edition with a positive outlook, backed by the acceleration of tourism activity.



TT Bureau

IFEMA MADRID brings together the world's tourism industry at FITUR 2023 from 18 to 22 January 2023, in what will be one of the greatest editions of the global event. The increase in global tourism activity puts the industry on the road to recovery and opens a scenario of positive expectations.

The marketing process for FITUR 2023 is currently underway, inviting destinations, companies and institutions from all over the world to participate in an edition focused on strengthening reactivation, as well as generating business and opportunities.

FITUR, one of the leading international tourism trade fairs and the most important in its role as a hub for Latin America, is already working on the configuration of a top-level global event, reaffirming its role as the largest business platform for the sector.

FITUR 2023's offer will be strongly marked by specialisa-



tion, represented throughout its different sections, such as: FITUR Know-How & Export, focused on internationalisation;



Fiturtechy, with cutting-edge topics such as big data and artificial intelligence; FITUR Talent, with an emphasis on professional training in the tourism industry; FITUR Screen, which will address the link between tourism and audiovisual

equipment; FITUR LGBT+, focusing on destination diversity and the LGBT segment; FITUR Cruises, dedicated to the cruise industry; FITUR MICE, a meeting point for meetings tourism; and FITUR Next, promoting sustainability. Other relevant sections include FITUR Woman and FITUR Lingua. FITUR will also continue its hybridisation formula through FITUR LIVEConnect.

Guatemala partner country

"Guatemala. Amazing and unstoppable" will be the Partner Country at FITUR 2023, where it will boost its brand image on international markets.



makes maiden entry to Vizag

Global Panorama Show (GPS) made its maiden entry to Vizag recently. The show, conducted at Novotel Vishakhapatnam from 10 to 11 November 2022, witnessed more than 400 registrations and over 200 buyers. It was attended by many stalwarts from the industry and set new benchmark with elaborated presentations.



Spain celebrates Picasso's legacy

On the occasion of the 50th death anniversary of Pablo Picasso, Spain has decided to celebrate the legacy of the great artist through 'Picasso Celebration 1973-2023' program, under which 50 exhibitions will be organised around the world, including 16 in Spain, in cities closely linked to the artist.

TT Bureau

April 8, 2023 marks the 50th death anniversary of Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso and thus the year will represent a celebration of his work and his artistic legacy in Spain. For this occasion, the

The 'Picasso Celebration 1973-2023' program will be based on 50 exhibitions around the world, including 16 in Spain, in cities closely linked to the artist. The cities of Malaga, Madrid, Barcelona, A Coruña and Bilbao will be at the forefront with a program of exhibitions throughout 2023 and

important figures of modern art. His expressive and multiform style continues to influence

While in Málaga, do not miss visiting Museo Picasso Málaga and Picasso Birthplace Museum



Picasso Celebration — 1973.2023



Spanish government has decided to organise a large-scale transnational event through a national commission.

part of 2024. These exhibitions and events will trace a historical approach to Picasso's work. He is one of the most


contemporary art even today. The Picasso Celebration 1973-2023 aims to highlight the career of an essentially European artist who, with a deep knowledge

of heritage, as well as an understanding of both classicalism as an ethical value and of


modern issues in art, has projected throughout the world universal symbols such as

Guernica, today a collective emblem of the defense of human rights.


Spain inspired Picasso, come and find your inspiration




Málaga



A Coruña



Barcelona



Madrid

The international campaign of Turespaña, entitled "Spain inspired Picasso, come and find your inspiration", aims to strengthen Spain's position as a leading cultural tourist destination, generate visits to exhibitions and commemorative events to be held in different destinations in Spain and internationally.

Discover Picasso

In 2023, take a journey that follows in Pablo Picasso's footsteps around Spain. From his birth in Malaga, to his success in Madrid, and his years in Catalonia and Galicia. A journey to discover the places that inspired the master of cubism: "It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child," said Picasso.

It all began in Málaga

On 25 October 1881, Pablo Picasso was born in Málaga (Andalucía), where he spent his childhood. Malaga is one of the best places to learn about the artist, because you can visit both the Museo Picasso Málaga and the Picasso Birthplace Museum. Both places frequently hold exhibitions and in the Birthplace Museum you can find objects that belonged to the artist.

A Coruña. The artist's formative years

We now head to the north of Spain, to Galicia. This is an important part of the trip because this is where Picasso moved to in 1891 after his father was named professor at the school

of Fine Arts. Perhaps this was the spark that lit the fuse because Picasso joined the school himself and started to paint his first portraits. In fact, the first time that the Malaga-born artist publicly exhibited his works was in A Coruña, and many of his recurring themes (doves, bulls, etc.) were already evident. There you can tour the places where the young Pablo enjoyed life in the city, and visit the Picasso House Museum.

And suddenly, the Prado in Madrid

It was in 1895 that Picasso stepped foot inside the Prado Museum in Madrid for the first time. His visit would mark a before and after because he was marked by the works of other great artists such as Velazquez and El Greco. At that time it was not to be expected that he would

become the museum director in 1936. But if there is one unmissable place in Madrid where you can be surprised by Picasso once more, it is the Reina Sofía National Art Museum. Among all of these works, the most iconic piece, which leaves view-

Barcelona and Horta de Sant Joan, in Catalonia

In the summer of 1895 Picasso joined the school of Fine Arts in Barcelona (La Llotja), later moving into his first studio and then holding the first personal exhibition of his works in the legendary Els Quatre Gats. A good way to learn about the artist is to visit the Picasso Museum in Barcelona, where visitors will be surprised by many of his works, including his interpretation of Las Meninas by Velazquez.

About 200 km from Barcelona is Horta de Sant Joan, a



small inland village where Picasso would often escape to and where he said he experienced his purest emotions. You cannot miss the Picasso Centre, which houses all the works the artist created in Horta village.

Turpal promises upsell for agents

A solution for post-reservation sales and revenue earning for agents, Turpal is the answer to all that an agent or a customer needs after they have set out on the tour. The application, which has an online chat tool for effective communication, helps agencies generate more revenue, as tours, activity and attraction are key to making profits.



TT Bureau

Turpal is a post-departure application built by a team of developers who are well-versed with travel technology and are all destination experts in tours, activities and excursions, shared **Vishal Mehra**, India Representative, Turpal, at an exclusive webinar held for the travel trade, where the team gave a demonstration of the system and answered questions. "It helps the agencies to upsell dynamic itinerary, and it's an online chat tool to improve their communication. It is an app, which will help agencies make more money," claimed Mehra.

Vijish Vijayan, Customer Success Manager, Turpal, added, "Turpal primarily has three main components — post reservation system, which is the operation panel; Turpal white label application; and the third component is the channel manager of tours and excursions."

Farshid Rahimkhani, CEO & Co-Founder, Turpal, highlighted that as



Farshid Rahimkhani
CEO & Co-Founder, Turpal

We specialise in post-reservation, as tours, activity and attraction are the most profitable part of the business

per google study 48 per cent of all activities and experiences are sold at the destination and mostly travel agents, who are the owners of this



Vishal Mehra
India Representative, Turpal

App helps the agencies to upsell dynamic itinerary, and it's an online chat tool to improve their communication

booking, do not get an option to quote for the same. Turpal levels the playing field for Travel Agents by providing them a share.



Vijish Vijayan
Customer Success Manager, Turpal

Turpal has 3 main components — post reservation system, white label app and the channel manager of excursions

Tours activities and attractions are the most profitable part of the Business and Turpal being a post reservation system focuses on

this, while respecting the privacy of your customers. Turpal is a SaaS product (Software as a Service), so it is constantly being improved and upgraded, thus making sure that it helps travel agents improve their profitability.

Farshid pointed out, "Turpal is a platform and we don't have any product to sell. We are only providing an empty platform to make sure that you serve your clients in the best way. Turpal has one of the best channel managers for tours and activities, and through that channel manager one will be connected to the suppliers to sell. Thus, customer data is secure from that part and like many developers and system providers, who are providing SaaS products, we are responsible for your data in our contracts and in our structure that we designed in the system."

He further said that being from the industry we understand that a lot of business is B2B and our system is designed to cater to B2B2C. Thus, the app can totally get branded and

customized, which means that you can have Turpal with your own brand," added Rahimkhani. Unlike other SaaS products Turpal does not come with user limitations, this means that the app can be used by an unlimited number of people at the same time. "There is no restriction on how many B2B agents can be enrolled. If a company is handling 10,000 passengers a year and they have 2000 sub-agents who are working with them, it can be customized for every sub-agent," he added.

It can also be used for larger MICE groups, Turpal is the perfect way to communicate the day-to-day itinerary with your customers making sure that everyone is always updated in real time of what is next.

Vishal Mehra, who has been an integral part of the Tourism Industry since 1989, said that among the many USPs the app has for a DMC, the biggest one is the ability to communicate with the customers without invading their privacy and disturbing them.

(Advertisement)

Northeast shows its prowess

► Contd from page 3

tourism, wellness tourism and winter tourism."

He informed that the Government of India has been providing financial assistance to the Northeast region for overall tourism infrastructure development, promotion of fairs/ festivals, tourism-related events in the region and publicity campaigns. "MOT has also formed a committee of active stakeholders in NER. Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of DoNER and Ministry of Road Transport & Highways is developing 100 viewpoints in Northeast region. Twenty-two viewpoints have been taken up for development at a cost of ₹49 crores. In Mizoram, nine viewpoints have been taken up for development at the cost of ₹12.78 crores. In addition to that, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways is also in the process of developing viewpoints on their own," informed the Minister.

He even highlighted the development of tourism at the borders. "The Ministry of Defence through its Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is playing a crucial role in improving road infrastructure in

the border areas. BRO has taken the initiative of providing basic amenities to tourists visiting the scenic locations by building BRO cafes, which are being built in 75 locations in the first phase. In the NE states, BRO cafes are being

Ministries of Tourism, DoNER and Road Transport & Highways are developing 100 viewpoints in the Northeast region

built at 25 locations in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, Nagaland and Assam," he shared.

He claimed that the MOT is emphasising on the development and promotion of tourism in the Northeastern states. "Under Swadesh Darshan Scheme, the Ministry has sanctioned 16 projects in the Northeast region of India for a total amount of

₹1337.63 crore. Close to 25 per cent of Swadesh Darshan Projects have been sanctioned to Northeast states. Under PRA-SHAD Scheme, the Ministry has sanctioned approximately ₹200 crores for various projects in the region," said Reddy.

At the press conference before the event, Reddy also informed that ₹58.63 crores have been sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan scheme for development of Thenzawl and South Zone and Development of eco adventure circuit in the state of Mizoram. "Under PRASHAD scheme of tourism ministry, Ministry has approved a project for development of amenities for pilgrims, congregation area, facilitation centre at Aizawl, Hangi Lunlen, Tlang - Prayer Mountain, Khuangchera Puk, Reiek peak and Khawruhl-ian. The cost is around ₹45 crores. A task force for tourism promotion in the Northeast will be established soon," he added.

Zoramthanga said, "From evergreen hills, dense bamboo jungles, lush green paddy fields and the blue mountains, Mizoram has unpolluted environment and unpolluted atmosphere."

Watch & Cow's bespoke offerings

Swiss DMC Watch & Cow, represented in India by Apsara Voyages, has trained its eyes towards the India market to get more Indians to explore the Alps through its bespoke offerings.



Hazel Jain

Representing Watch & Cow in India is **Sushil Bhatt**, MD, Apsara Voyages, who introduced this product to the travel trade in Mumbai recently at the event. "We have been talking about this for the last couple of years and once it was ready, we wanted to announce it to the trade. We recently did our first event in Mumbai and plan to have similar presentations in other cities in India to create awareness. People know Switzerland anyway, but this is going to offer a totally different experience. It will offer only customised, high-end programme," he says.

"Demand for Switzerland in India is huge. Group tours are off the shelf products and that is only to make people understand what Switzerland has to offer. In Watch and Cow, they pick and choose and we customise for them. I see good demand for that, specially from the high-end travellers — they don't want anything off the shelf," Bhatt adds.

The company is very well-established globally. "Their philosophy is that they don't want to try the entire world at a time. So, they start with South America and India is the

Indians want to explore

Pierre Jaccard, President, Watch and Cow, has been in this business for many years now and he started this company for incom-



Sushil Bhatt
MD, Apsara Voyages



Pierre Jaccard
President, Watch and Cow

third country on their list. They see demand for customised products from India. I feel even if we do 200 pax, we are happy. We want quality people, who appreciate the destination, New Delhi, Kolkata, South India, we already have a customer from Bhubaneswar. We will try and select 8-10 cities with repeated efforts," he further adds.

ing into Switzerland. He started with two countries and the third one he wanted to start was India.

He says, "Our product is a way to promote tourism throughout the Alps. There are many different ways to discover Switzerland, but we concentrate on exploring the Alps."

Identifying the new-age traveller

The new-age millennial traveller is often defined by their age bracket. But Abraham Alapatt, President & Group Head - Marketing, Service Quality, Value Added Services & Innovation, Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel, disagrees. He shares his idea about who these travellers might be and why it makes a lot of business sense to tap them.

Hazel Jain

The risk with defining new-age travellers, says **Abraham Alapatt**, President & Group Head - Marketing, Service Quality, Value Added Services & Innovation, Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel, is that it is often mistaken with the age of the traveller. "According to me, being a millennial traveller is not about age at all, it is about a mindset. It is about the way these travellers think, which is different from the way travellers historically did. To my mind the big difference is that they travel for local experiences that the destination has to offer, rather than to see a place. It needs to be authentic, and to that, it can be about people, culture, art, food, dance, anything. To my mind, this is a major element that separates the new-age traveller," he says.

From the economic standpoint, this new-age traveller is really



Abraham Alapatt
President & Group Head - Marketing, Service Quality, Value Added Services & Innovation, Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel

about willing to invest in experiences rather than the number of places they see, feels Alapatt. "They are willing to spend more to get an experience that is harder to get as long as its genuine and possibly not too mass market," he adds.

Growing niche in India

Is this relevant for the India market? Alapatt answers in the affirmative. "To use a demography like India,

where almost 40 per cent of the population is young, where essentially 440 million travellers are theoretically millennials. India has the youngest demography in the world so to speak. And the centre of economy power has already moved to their hands. They are the ones who are earning and spending more right now. They are the ones who are making India the fastest growing economy in the world – it is not the parents. The parents have already spent and are now in saving mode. They are into retirement in some sense. This is the age of the customer that is spending. Due to the large young population and because they want to spend and enjoy life right now, that is the most crucial economic power that all brands are going after. This is where they will make the most returns," he opines.

Staying relevant

As a travel service provider, the key is to be able to curate the best collection of experi-

ences for budgets, for time and for specific interests that the customers have, he adds. "A provider's ability to do that to

As a travel service provider, key is to be able to curate the best collection of experiences as per budgets, time and specific interest groups

scale and consistently, is important. And because they are experiences, you can't always ensure each customer has the same experience, so you have to be able to pretty much manage those variations and experiences as well," he says. From Thomas Cook India's point of

Digital tool to support its B2B partners

Thomas Cook (India) has launched 'Holiday Mate' - an online B2B tool that empowers its travel agent partners to deliver swift, seamless and accurate services to the end consumer. Holiday Mate allows Thomas Cook's travel agent partners to manage end-to-end holiday bookings seamlessly online – right from selecting suitable products, customisation, to payments. For the first phase of the launch, the Holiday Mate offers Thomas Cook's Group Tours (GIT), with Individual Travel (FIT) to follow in the next phase.

view, Alapatt has seen a huge rise in the FIT segment. "While group travel continues to be important, we are seeing big portion of travellers who want to travel at their own pace, with their own agenda. Therefore, we have built a whole lot of capability there – both from technology point of view, which is the ability to package holidays dynamically where you can get real-time inventory and pricing, and curate a set of experiences and price it on the fly. Moreover, we have built this for niche interest groups – whether it is biking camping,

trekking, glamping, or wildlife. So, we are building around experiences with best-of-class providers who can manage the experience from that niche point of view," he says.

Essentially, what Thomas Cook India doing is involving experts in various special interest tours. "There are providers who specialise in handling biking tours. So, we distribute, we create but we partner with people who can deliver on the ground. The idea is to be able to offer services for these niches," Alapatt adds.

EVENT TALK		
Media Partners:		
DECEMBER 2022		
Date	Event	Time
2-4	India International Travel Mart Hyderabad (IITM)	11:00 am
2-4	SITE China (Shenzhen) International Tourism Expo	10:00 am
5-8	International Luxury Travel Market	06:00 pm
6	Switzerland webinar	03:00 pm
8	Abu Dhabi webinar	03:00 pm
8-9	APAC Travel Summit	09:00 am
9-11	India Travel Mart - Jaipur	11:00 am
12-14	Guangzhou International Travel Fair	09:15 am
12-15	Global Sustainable Tourism Conference	09:00 am
12-16	International Conference on the Travel and Sustainable Tourism for Peace and Development	09:00 am
13	Switzerland webinar	03:00 pm
16-17	International Conference on Sustainable Tourism	09:00 am
16-18	India Travel Mart - Lucknow	11:00 am
16-18	China International Medical Tourism Fair	09:00 am
16-19	37th IATO Convention	09:00 am
For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com		

Is RAF illegal?

Travel agents say that airlines charging ₹300 as Refund Application Fee (RAF) to travel agents is illegal and suggest that an agreement must be made between the travel associations and airlines to stop the practice.

TT Bureau

Sharing details about why RAF and GST (K3) on RAF is not applicable, **Pawan S Jain**, MD, Belair, said that no airline rules by any airline or on the fare basis suggest any charges of ₹300 + GST. "If this RAF is not written in the fare basis of the airline, then it's not applicable. But airlines are pressurizing the agents to pay this amount, which used to be there in the times of paper tickets," he said.

"All IATA airlines abroad are not anymore charging the old traditional RAF ₹300, which is being charged only in India as a 'norm' without any IATA rules. Earlier, paper tickets had substantial cost of about \$20 and 'additional time cost' was required to check each coupon for the correctness and calculation of refund by airline. This has not been the case since e-ticketing. With the automation, e-ticketing, all actions for refund are done by the agents and not airlines."



Pawan S Jain
MD, Belair

Jain pointed out that one can check with many airlines that RAF + GST is not being charged and no IATA rule mentions RAF charge. "Some airlines for reasons best known are still imposing ₹300 RAF charges + GST (suggesting the charges as an old norm). This easy money goes in pockets of the airlines," he underlined.

Lalith Jain, Joint Treasurer & MC Member - TAFI India, agreed, saying, "RAF charged by airlines in today's context is incorrect and should be stopped. This was ini-



Lalith Jain
Joint Treasurer & MC Member - TAFI India

tially started when physical paper tickets were issued and to cover the cost of such tickets, RAF was introduced. A few airlines have non-refundable fares but still charge RAF for refunding taxes and statutory fees to customers. To top it all airlines not only charges penalties and collect the same by raising ADM for wrong issuance of tickets or incorrect ticketing procedures but charge an ADM handling fee."

He advised that agreement must be made between the travel associations and airlines to stop the prac-



Rai Achal Krishna
MC Member, TAFI

tice of collecting RAF and separate fees for handling ADM and cancellations, or the same should be regulated by DGCA/ MoCA or other regulatory bodies in India.

Rai Achal Krishna, CEO, Travel Assistance Bureau and MC Member, TAFI, said that RAF is simply put another module and cash saving exercise the airlines have introduced to make an extra buck. "Since a cancellation is already specified and charged on the ticket, it is a moot question on how the airline justifies this," he said.

GPS impresses Indore

Global Panorama Show (GPS) was conducted successfully at Marriott Indore from 17 to 18 November 2022. The show witnessed more than 400 registrations and over 200 buyers. Many industry leaders attended the event, in which new benchmarks were set, as the organisers made impressive presentations.

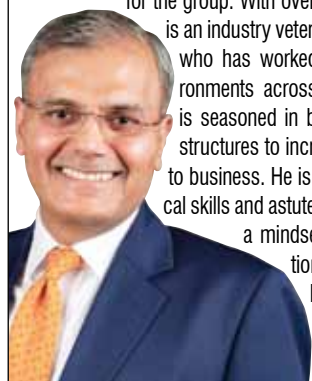


MOVEMENTS

THE LEELA PALACES, HOTELS AND RESORTS

Mumbai

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has appointed **SHARAD PURI** as Senior Vice President – Sales & Distribution for the group. With over 27 years of experience, Puri is an industry veteran and an inspirational leader, who has worked in highly competitive environments across multiple cities in India. He is seasoned in building strong organisational structures to increase efficiency that is critical to business. He is known for his strong analytical skills and astute business acumen along with a mindset of building long term relationships. Prior to joining The Leela, Puri was Cluster General Manager with Marriott in Bengaluru.



Delhi

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts recently announced the promotion and appointment of **AAGMAN BAURY** as the General Manager of The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi. A seasoned and versatile hospitality professional with a career spanning close to two decades, Baury has worked with hotels like IHG in UK (Holiday Inn, Crown Plaza), Park Hyatt Hyderabad, Trident-BKC Mumbai and Marriott Marquis City Centre-Doha. Over the years, he has sharpened his skills in managing a diverse team of people and has championed operational excellence. His attention to detail and meticulous diligence sets him apart from the rest.



KANDIMA

Maldives

Kandima Maldives has appointed **PRATYUSH MOHAPATRA** as the Director of Marketing Communications and PR. He graduated from the Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition at Pusa, New Delhi, with a Degree in Hotel Management and Catering Technology. Mohapatra has more than six years of experience in the field of marketing and started his career in hospitality at The Westin Hyderabad in 2015. Since then he has worked in various luxury 5-star resorts and most recently served as the Director of Marketing at JW Marriott Mauritius, The Westin Turtle Bay and Le Meridien Ile Maurice.



SAYAJI GROUP

Rewa

Enrise by Sayaji, Rewa, has appointed **RABI NARAYAN DALAI** as the Director of Operations of the property. With more than a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, Dalai is a multi-skilled professional with impeccable expertise in food & beverage operations, vendor relations, and profit & loss management. He also has a rich experience of working with reputed hospitality brands. In his new role, he will be in charge of all daily hotel operations to guarantee that guests enjoy an outstanding experience. Sayaji Hotels are a group of luxury 5-star hotels across India. They are located in Indore, Pune, Bhopal, Vadodara, Raipur, Kolhapur, Gurugram and Rajkot.



DOUBLETREE SUITES BY HILTON

Bengaluru

SHAKTI SINGH has been appointed as the new General Manager of DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Bengaluru. Singh will lead the team in all aspects of hotel operations, hotel administration to guest services and satisfaction. Prior to this, Singh was General Manager, Hilton Garden Inn Trivandrum since 2019. Under his leadership, the hotel has been successful in a challenging environment and he has passionately driven guest and team member satisfaction. He has been with Hilton for 7 years during which he also got the opportunity to work at Hilton Mumbai as task force General Manager. He is a business leader with 20 years of experience in hotel operations.



PUSHKARA SAROVAR PORTICO

Dibrugarh, Assam

Sarovar Hotels appoints **AMIT MUKHERJEE** as the new General Manager for Pushkara Sarovar Portico, Dibrugarh - Assam. A seasoned and versatile hospitality professional with a career span of more than 30 years, Mukherjee possesses a niche expertise in operations management, F&B operations and guest relationship management. He has worked with brands like ITC Hotels, Intercontinental Group of Hotels and Fortune Park Hotels. He has been associated with pre openings as well as running hotels and has accomplished operational success in all spheres. Earlier, he was associated with Pugdunde Safari. He holds a Hotel Management degree from ISM, Ranchi.



THE FERN KADAMBA HOTEL AND SPA

Goa

RAJEEV KUMAR, currently General Manager, The Fern Kadamba Hotel and Spa, Goa, has been promoted to Area General Manager - Goa, overseeing the operations of all 6 Fern & Beacon hotels in Goa. Rajeev has been associated with the brand for the last 6 years. He comes with more than two decades of vast in-depth experience in the hospitality industry, being associated with brands like Holiday Inn, Mahindra Holidays and Wyndham group, with a strong hold in operations, business strategies, finance management and public relations. He has been the recipient of various hospitality awards. He is committed to the business development of the Goa hotel.



THE DEN

Bengaluru

The Den Bengaluru has appointed **KULPREET KAUR** as its new Director of Sales. She comes with more than 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry and has worked with leading luxury brands including the Marriott International, Starwood hotels & resorts and the Taj Group of Hotels. Prior to joining The Den Bengaluru, Kaur was associated with Marriot International Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel as Director of Sales. In her new role at The Den Bengaluru, she is committed to demonstrating her creative approach to lead the hotel in achieving its key revenue budgets. She graduated from the Institute of Hotel Management, Kolkata.



MAYFAIR HOTELS & RESORTS

Bhubaneswar

RISHI PURI joins Mayfair Hotels & Resorts. Based at the Corporate Office at Bhubaneswar, he will lead Mayfair's operations all over country. An alumnus of the prestigious IHM – Lucknow, he comes with a rich experience spanning over three decades in the hospitality industry. The experience has seen him representing some of the best hotel chains. His core competencies include overall hotel management, operations & development; including revenue, marketing & sales strategy and implementation. Puri's last assignment was as Senior Vice President – Operations & Development with Lords Hotels and Resorts.



TALKing People

RASHI SHARMA, Cluster Marketing and Communication Manager, Sheraton Grand Pune and Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa, enjoys her work, but there are days when she needs something to unwind after a long day. "Music therapy is an assured mood lifter for me. It's a great way to de-stress. I took up art to distract myself. It also helped me in building concentration. In India, I have loved travelling to Himachal Pradesh, the fresh crisp air and the mountains keep calling me back. Internationally, I have loved my vacations in Mauritius, the stunning beaches have my heart. I am looking forward to visit Italy," she says.



KUNAL PATEL, MD, Monika Alcobev, is not someone who gets stressed easily. "But when I do, cooking is my favourite stress buster. I love to experiment in the kitchen. It makes me happy and helps me calm my thoughts. I have learnt to cook Indian fusion and handmade pizzas during the lockdown. In India, I love to go to the mountains or deserts, Manali and Ladakh are my favourites, calm away from the bustling cities, with some local food. Internationally, I love Switzerland's small villages," he says.



MOHIT SHARAD, Associate Vice President - Sales & Marketing (North & East India), The Fern Hotels & Resorts, Concept Hospitality, destress by listening to music. During the lockdown, he has learnt a bit of cooking. "I never got the time to cook before. But I always had an interest in cooking. This lockdown helped me spend more time in Kitchen and I mastered a few dishes. My favourite holiday destination is Dharampur, Kasauli Hills in India and Dubai in the UAE. But next holiday will be to Kerala!"



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UP’s magic to increase inbound

Uttar Pradesh government is eager to showcase the state’s rapid development of tourism infrastructure and tourist attractions to the participants at the 37th IATO convention, scheduled in Lucknow from 16 to 19 December 2022.



Janice Alyosius

With the 37th IATO convention scheduled in Lucknow from 16 to 19 December 2022, the Uttar Pradesh government is thrilled and eager to showcase the rapid development of its tourism infrastructure and tourist attractions in the state to the convention participants.

Mukesh Kumar Meshram, Principal Secretary Tourism and Director General, Uttar Pradesh Tourism, said that the state has adopted an investor-friendly tourism strategy and the government is ready to offer full support to any investor coming to the state, particularly in the sphere of tourism and hospitality. “It is a fantastic opportunity for everyone to interact, participate in this convention, and see what we are doing. They can also learn a lot



It is a fantastic opportunity for everyone to interact, participate in this convention, and see what we are doing

about the state, our tourist circuits, our cultures, our cuisine, and everything else related to tourism,” he said.

The state has seen an increase in international visitors since the pandemic, though the number is not as high as it was before the pandemic. The state is preparing to welcome visitors and working in the fields of connectivity and hospitality. Kushinagar airport is working in full force and Ayodhya

IATO gears up for Lucknow convention

The IATO and its members are enthusiastic about the Lucknow convention.

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, said that many important discussions will take place on key topics such as state offerings, hotels, technology, and the importance of international promotions and branding.

Ravi Gosain, Vice President, IATO, said, “We are working day and night to ensure the success of our IATO convention in Lucknow. It will be our 37th annual convention, and we are expecting a large turnout from our members. We have over 250 registra-



“UP is very excited about IATO because the last convention was in Lucknow in 1996 and then, if I recall correctly, in Agra in 2004. So, after that gap of about 22 years or 24 years, many things have changed, and for the better.”

“This time, the trade and hospitality sectors will be able to see first-hand experience in the Uttar Pradesh capital and the rest of the state. So, our members are very excited, and the UP tourism and government are also very excited about hosting this IATO convention in Uttar Pradesh,” he added.

tions. I believe, it will be a good opportunity for them to network with their principal operators who are active members of IATO in order to gain some business.”

Prateek Hira, Chairman, IATO, Uttar Pradesh Chapter, said,

international airport is to come up in 2024, he informed.

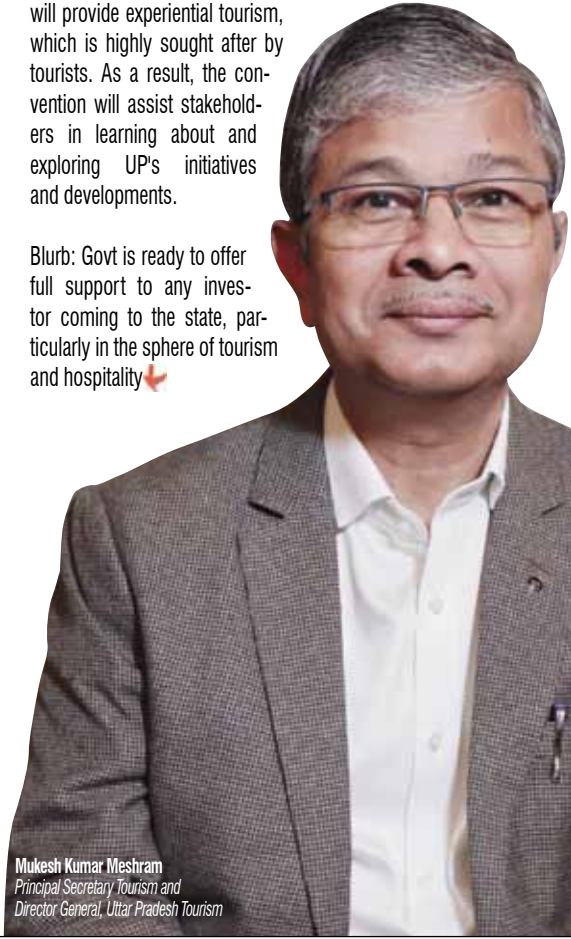
UP is a hub of religious tourist sites with more than 5,000 temples in the state, as well as places like Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Mathura, which reflect the state’s religious importance and potential to attract global tourists. The number of tourists visiting the Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor since it opened in December last year has increased to 40 lakh per month from 10 lakh per month, shared Meshram.

UP has worked hard to raise tourism’s profile and provide visitors with the best possible experience. The newly launched policy of UP Tourism includes the agenda of developing Ramayana and Mahabharata circuits in UP, as well as other places of religious significance that will be given a new identity.

The state also intends to lease forts and palaces to developers for long-term conversion

into heritage hotels. This step will provide experiential tourism, which is highly sought after by tourists. As a result, the convention will assist stakeholders in learning about and exploring UP’s initiatives and developments.

Blurb: Govt is ready to offer full support to any investor coming to the state, particularly in the sphere of tourism and hospitality



Mukesh Kumar Meshram
Principal Secretary Tourism and
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