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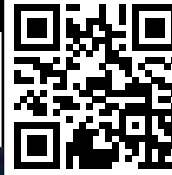
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Time for reflection & revival

Year 2022 didn't really start well for the industry due to Omicron. However, once destinations started opening and international flights resumed, things changed and today the industry is heading towards pre-pandemic numbers. Stakeholders of the industry reflect on the year going by and share their achievements as they head towards revival.



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

“2022 was for offering policy inputs to the government on diverse facets of tourism issues faced by our stakeholders. Only recently e-visa for travellers from United Kingdom has been announced. Indian Association of Tour Operator (IATO) President was selected as domain expert on the subject related to Promotion of Indian Tourism in Overseas Markets - Role of Overseas Tourist Offices and Indian Embassies for detailed examination by the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture. It is a recognition for IATO. On our request, government appointed 20 Nodal Officers for Tourism at our Missions in foreign countries. Withdrawal of TCS on sale of overseas tour packages was done for foreign tourists who book tour through tour operators located in India. The Union Government accepted IATO's recommendations on removal of GST on services provided outside India.”



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI

“This year has been the year of revival for the industry and TAFI has been a part of this. We opened a new chapter and one in a state that has immense potential for tourism – Jammu & Kashmir. It is our 12th chapter and I was very happy to see the support that was extended to the opening of the chapter by the J&K Tourism department. And of course, our annual convention in Malaysia concluded successfully. The convention took place after more than three years in a destination that was not very well known to Indian market. We had 500-plus participants and I do believe in certain areas we have raised the bar for agency association conventions. We have also revamped our website and are offering 100-plus online courses for free to our members – from how to be a better travel consultant, how to be an effective counter staff and also many soft skills. It's very rich in content and we hope our members will take advantage of this.”



Ajeet Bajaj
President, ATOAI

“Pre-pandemic Adventure Travel was a US \$683-billion industry globally, showing 21 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate since 2012. For obvious reasons, 2022 was not a typical year, but adventure tourism is bouncing back. According to the World Bank, adventure travel is the largest niche market with about 238 million travellers annually. The ATOAI is grateful to Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, GoI, and Rakesh Verma, Additional Secretary, Tourism, for their unstinted support to the growth of Responsible Adventure Tourism in India. We hope that the setting up of the National Board for Adventure Tourism will go a long way in ensuring sustainable growth of this sector. We are also excited at the prospect of Ministry of Tourism declaring 2023 as the year of Indian Adventure Tourism and also highlighting India as a prime destination for Responsible Adventure Tourism during India's G20 presidency.”

Contd on page 10 ▶

India reopens e-visa for Brits

The reopening of e-visa facility for British nationals by India will hopefully usher in better times for inbound tourism – even if it is towards the end of the holiday season.



Hazel Jain

Vikram Doraiswami, High Commissioner of India to the United Kingdom, recently shared a video update confirming that the e-visa facility will again be available for the British nationals travelling to India. “The big news today is we are rolling out e-visas once again. This service will be made available to you forthwith. System upgrade is underway, and the visa website will soon be ready to receive applications from friends in the UK,” he said.



Vikram Doraiswami
High Commissioner of
India to the United Kingdom

their holidays. Ajay Prakash, President, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), minces no words and says, “It is high time! We have lost half the season. We barely have three more months to grab this inbound opportunity. I know agents who gave up in utter frustration try-

ing to get an Indian visa on a British passport. Today, when everything is electronic, I fail to understand the rationale behind not permitting British passport holders to be eligible for the e-visa facility and that is our biggest source market.”

Dharmendra Singh, Director, Plaisir Hospitality Services, sounds positive. “This will really help us to increase the flow of our business. During the winter, our NRI clients visit India for a minimum 60 days in India and out of 60 days, they travel minimum 30 days for leisure holidays within India, so it will surely help us to increase our business. Our clients from the UK travelled India during COVID also, but they

Contd on page 7 ▶

MOT focus on soft skills

G Kishan Reddy, MOT, Culture and DoNER, distributes skill training certificates to taxi, cab and coach drivers; says training them before G-20 summit will act as a milestone in development of Indian tourism.



Nisha Verma

G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER, recently distributed skill training certificates to taxi, cab and coach drivers under a Tourism Awareness Programme (TAP), conducted under the Capacity Building for Service Provider programme of the ministry. The training on behavioural and soft skills with one basic foreign language viz. French and German and Arabic was provided by the Ashok Institute of Hospitality & Tourism Management-AIH&TM, run by the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC). G Kamala Vardhana Rao, Managing Director, ITDC, was also present on the occasion. A total of 299 candidates attended



the training, out of them 165 were males and 134 females.

Speaking on the occasion, Reddy said, “India is presiding over the G-20 summit for the next one year from 1st December 2022. Emerging economies of the world are participating in this summit. More than 200 meetings will be held in more than 55 different places

during this summit. People of the world are eager to see India, they are not just tourists for us, but also influencers of India. I think this training programme before the G-20 summit will act as a milestone in the development of Indian tourism.” The training programme was inaugurated by Dr. Sambit Patra, Chairman, ITDC, on 18 June 2022 in New Delhi. ▶

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'Our e-learn platform to equip industry'

The VisitBritain England Expert e-learn platform, in partnership with **TRAVELTALK**, was launched in the first week of October. Shuja Bin Mehdi, B2B Manager – India, VisitBritain, explains how the initiative would educate, familiarise and equip the travel trade about new aspects of England.



Nisha Verma

Please tell us briefly about the VisitBritain England Expert e-learn platform and the launch?

The objective is to educate, familiarise and equip our industry partners with destinations across England, priority focus being on the West Midlands region and London.

Why do you think it's the right time to launch it for the Indian travel trade?

2022 has been a great year for tourism in terms of recovery from India re-visits to the UK. Basis the airline connectivity going up, the momentum seems to continue into 2023. Hence, this is an opportune time to work with partners on increasing destination and product awareness and equip them with new itineraries to be product-ready next year.

What is different about this programme?

This programme has only six modules and takes a short time



Shuja Bin Mehdi
B2B Manager – India, VisitBritain

to be completed. It incentivises the trade by generating a personalised England Expert certificate post completion. With this programme, we are addressing product development for England and showcasing gateway cities to drive regional dispersal.

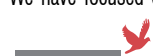
What approach you have adopted to make sure that the programme is effective for the trade to sell VisitBritain product in this market?

We have gathered feedback from our previous online training pro-

gram and made sure that we showcase each region with saleable products with an appeal to the Indian 'experience-seeking' family audience. We have given priority to curate products and attractions with a strong appeal to Indian visitors – keeping in line with our themes of food & drink, shopping, nightlife, countryside & heritage.

What would be the focus of the programme in terms of the destinations being covered?

We have focused on destinations



This is an opportune time to work with partners on increasing destination and product awareness and equip them



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that can be promoted as gateway cities and combined with London, to create open-jaw itineraries for the Indian market. We believe that this will help the trade translate the huge interest in London to other


parts of England and drive conversion to the rest of the UK.

How would assess Year 2022?

2022 was a very positive year, especially from the growth mar-

kets' perspective. Globally, India, GCC and some other markets have shown huge amount of recovery for us, and we have seen good number of visits. We have worked with multiple trade partners across India and done record number of roadshows. We have spoken to around 2,000 travel agents directly face-to-face. We have done so much of account management first time in all these years, to make sure that 2023 will exceed our expectations just like 2022.

We started our roadshows in February from Delhi, where we spoke to around 50 trade partners on how to sell West Midlands, and did six more across India, receiving great support and love from the travel trade. We are also participating in Global Panorama Showcase and reaching out to agents in Tier II and Tier III cities. We hope we have done a fair job in educating the trade about UK and we will continue with the momentum into 2023 also. 🐦



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Profits return to airlines in 2023

Despite cutting losses in 2022, resulting from the pandemic, the global airline industry will return to profitability only in 2023, predicts the International Air Transport Association (IATA). It expects airlines to post a small net profit of \$4.7 billion in the coming year.

The year that was

As the year draws to an end, our last editorial for 2022 focusses on some lessons learnt in this year while analysing the highs and lows of the travel and tourism sector.

In January (2022), interestingly, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) went all out to celebrate National Tourism Day and gave an insight on its plans for the year. Tourism was portrayed as one of the largest employment generating sectors. Domestic tourism took centre stage, echoing the Prime Minister's call asking every citizen to visit at least 15 destinations in 2022 to promote domestic tourism. National Tourism Day celebrations fostered awareness in the country on the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political, and economic value. Further, there was stress on the promotion of tourism with special focus on North-Eastern region.

Then came the unforgettable 27 March 2022, the day Government of India reopened scheduled commercial international passengers services to and from India. The day, which came after a gap of two years, was celebrated by all travel industry stakeholders in India. Since then, there was no looking back for the Indian Tourism!

Summer of 2022 saw some new and interesting travel trends. Indians were travelling abroad, the booking time drastically reduced, the spend on holidays increased and newer destinations came to the forefront. Gone were the days of planning one holiday a year and spending stingily. Now, it's about holidaying is style, travelling the world, experiencing new cultures and going beyond the comfort zone.

Indians soon reached among the top travellers for some historically popular international destinations but the world now wants Indian travellers. Foreign NTOs, international hotel chains and global experiences are all beelining to attract Indian travellers and welcome them with open arms.

While Indians are exploring the world, we are hoping that foreigners are also as excited to explore India. The inbound trends for this year season look extremely promising. Let's hope this growth trajectory continues in 2023 with the National Tourism Policy and the Indian National Tourism Board.

TT Bureau

IATA has revealed that in 2023, they expect airlines to post a small net profit of \$4.7 billion—a 0.6 per cent net profit margin. It is the first profit since 2019 when industry net profits were \$26.4 billion (3.1 per cent net profit margin). On the other hand, in 2022, airline net losses are expected to be \$6.9 billion (an improvement on the \$9.7 billion loss for 2022 in IATA's June outlook). This is significantly better than losses of \$42.0 billion and \$137.7 billion that were realised in 2021 and 2020, respectively.

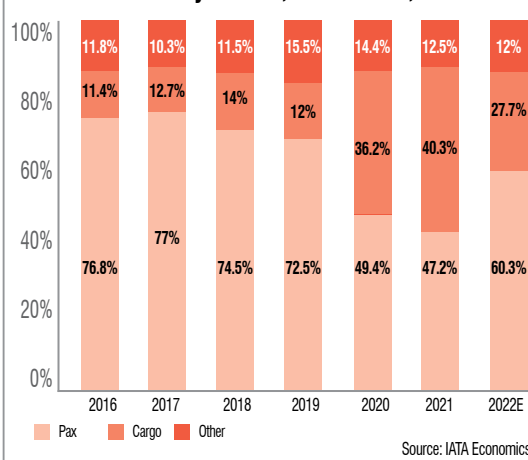
Willie Walsh, Director General, IATA, shared, "Resilience has been the hallmark for airlines in the COVID-19 crisis. As we look

cover to put the global industry on a solid financial footing. Many airlines are sufficiently profitable to attract the capital needed to drive the industry forward as it decarbonizes. But many others are struggling for a variety of reasons. These include onerous regulation, high costs, inconsistent government policies, inefficient infrastructure and a value chain where the rewards of connecting the world are not equitably distributed," he said.

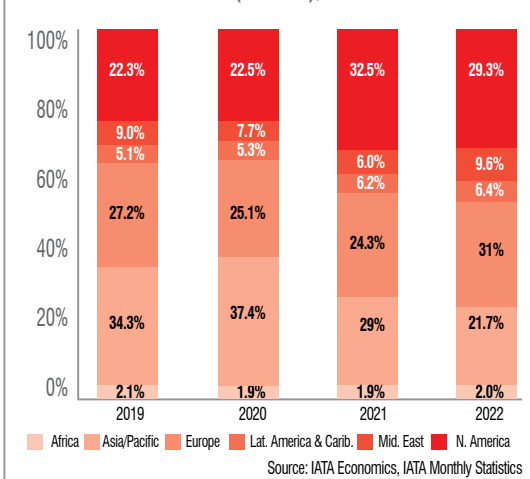
Year gone by

According to IATA finding, there are improved prospects for 2022 coming largely from strengthened yields and strong cost control in the face of rising fuel prices. Passenger yields are ex-

Airline revenue by source, 2016-2021, % of total



Regional shares of global RPKs, 2019-2022 (Jan-Oct), % of total



to 2023, the financial recovery will take shape with a first industry profit since 2019. That is a great achievement considering the scale of the financial and economic damage caused by government-imposed pandemic restrictions. But a \$4.7 billion profit on industry revenues of \$779 billion also illustrates that there is much more ground to

be expected to grow by 8.4 per cent (up from the 5.6 per cent anticipated in June). Propelled by that strength, passenger revenues are expected to grow to \$438 billion (up from \$239 billion in 2021). Overall revenues are expected to grow by 43.6 per cent compared to 2021, reaching an estimated \$727 billion. Majority of other factors evolved in a negative manner

The study also demonstrated the important role that travellers see the airline industry playing

- ❖ 91% said that connectivity by air is critical to the economy
- ❖ 90% said that air travel is a necessity for modern life
- ❖ 87% said that air travel has a positive impact on societies
- ❖ Of the 57% familiar with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 91% understand that air transport is a key contributor

following a downgrade of GDP growth expectations (from 3.4 per cent in June to 2.9 per cent), and delays in removing COVID-19 restrictions in several markets, particularly China. IATA's June forecast anticipated that passenger traffic would reach 82.4 per cent of the pre-crisis levels in 2022, but it now appears that the industry demand recovery will reach 70.6 per cent of the pre-pandemic levels. Coming to cost side, jet kerosene prices are expected to average \$138.8/barrel for the year, considerably higher than the \$125.5/barrel expected in June. That reflects higher oil prices exaggerated by a jet crack spread that is well-above historic averages. Even with lower demand leading to reduced consumption, this raised

growing economic uncertainty speaks volumes about people's desire and need for connectivity. With some key markets like China

Profitability is expected to be seen in the airline industry in 2023, Airlines are anticipated to earn a global net profit of \$4.7 billion

retaining restrictions longer than anticipated, passenger numbers fell somewhat short of expectation. We'll end the year at about 70 per cent of 2019 passenger volumes. But with yield improvement in both cargo and passenger businesses, airlines will reach the cusp of profitability."

New year expectations

Profitability is expected to be seen in the airline industry in 2023. Airlines are anticipated to earn a global net profit of \$4.7 billion on revenues of \$779 billion. This expected improvement comes despite growing economic uncertainties as global GDP growth slows to 1.3 per cent. Despite the economic uncertainties, there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic about 2023. Lower oil price inflation and continuing pent-up demand should help to keep costs in check as the strong growth trend continues," said Walsh.

Resilience has been the hallmark for airlines in the COVID-19 crisis. As we look to 2023, the financial recovery will take shape

the industry's fuel bill to \$222 billion (well above the \$192 billion anticipated in June).

Walsh added, "That airlines were able to cut their losses in 2022, in the face of rising costs, labour shortages, strikes, operational disruptions in many key hubs and

ITA Airways flies Delhi to Rome

Emiliana Limosani, Chief Commercial Officer, ITA Airways and CEO Volare, says that their new direct flight launched this month between New Delhi and Rome, will contribute to cultural and economic relations between two nations.

TT Bureau

ITA Airways' first flight from New Delhi to Rome Fiumicino departed on December 4, 2022 at 03:50 am local time. The new route marks a step forward in the expansion of the company's network towards the Asian market.

"We are happy to inaugurate ITA Airways' Rome Fiumicino-New Delhi connections, the only direct flights between these two capitals," said **Emiliana Limosani**, Chief Commercial Officer ITA Airways and CEO, Volare.

"With the opening of this new route for the transport of passengers and cargo between Italy and India, ITA Airways is further contributing to the cultural integration and development of the economic relationship between the two countries, which have developed a solid political and commercial collaboration in recent years, with the presence of more than 600 Italian companies in India and a bilateral



Emiliana Limosani
Chief Commercial Officer
ITA Airways and CEO Volare

interchange that in 2021 reached a record value of more than 10 billion euros. We have thus taken an important step forward in the project of expanding our intercontinental network towards a fascinating destination and a market full of opportunities. In addition, thanks to the flight departing from New Delhi to Rome, our Indian customers will be able to visit not only Italy but also all of Europe, thanks to convenient connections offered from our Rome Fiumicino hub," concluded the Chief Commercial Officer.

The new route will be operated with an Airbus A330, three times a week, departing from New Delhi, every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 03:50 am and landing in Rome Fiumicino at 08:10 am. Return flights from Rome Fiumicino will depart every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday at 2:10 pm and will arrive at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport at 02:00 am, local time. With the new intercontinental connection, ITA Airways is further expanding into the Asian market, while it continues to strengthen the ability to attract connecting customers, tapping into the flows between India and North America, Germany, Spain and France.

ITA Airways' Indian operations will be enhanced by flights operated in interline agreement with Vistara. Thanks to the collaboration with the Indian full-service airline, customers on ITA Airways' Rome-New Delhi flight will be able to fly on connecting domestic and international flights from Vistara's hub at Indira Gan-

dhi International Airport. These include Mumbai, Amritsar, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Kochi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Chandigarh and Dabolim in the Indian mar-

ITA Airways is contributing to the cultural integration and development of the economic relationship between the two countries

ket and Bangkok, Kathmandu and Dhaka at international level.

To support the new intercontinental flight from New Delhi to Rome and to enhance local awareness of the new Italian flagship carrier, ITA Airways has also launched a multi-channel advertising campaign in India.



E-visa for India: About time

Contd from page 3

stayed in-house and avoided holidays in India. So, this act of government to issue e-visa is welcome," he says.

Nagsri Sashidhar, Chief Happiness Officer, NAGSRI-Creating Special Memories, who creates bespoke itineraries for her high-end clients, says, "India has been ready for a long time now to welcome inbound guests, especially from the UK who form a large segment of arrivals. It is a great way to showcase to the world what we are all about. It is extremely important to open the minds of our global travellers and get them to experience and understand for themselves what India really stands for and has to offer. There is one document that is most important, without which no travel can happen. In a tech-savvy world we are all living in today, where convenience and speed supersedes, e-visa is the best thing that can happen for us."

Rajnish Kaistha, Honorary Secretary, IATO, says that the



Dharmendra Singh
Director, Plaisir Hospitality Services

This (Indian govt issuing e-visa to Brits) will really help us to increase the flow of our business

UK visa was much desired as it has been one of the important source markets. "The British tourists have not been coming to India and with a lot of effort and persuasion by IATO and all the quarters, it was taken up to the level of Piyush Goyal



Nagsri Sashidhar
Chief Happiness Officer, NAGSRI

In a tech-savvy world we are living in today, e-visa is the best thing that can happen for us

(Union Minister) to the Foreign Minister, Secretary, and almost every important person in the Tourism Ministry. I am glad at least UK e-tourist visa has finally been allowed and better senses prevailed, which will help our tourism. But the fact of



Rajnish Kaistha
Honorary Secretary, IATO

I am glad at least UK e-tourist visa has finally been allowed, which will help our tourism

the matter is (that) it has come a little too late in the sense that bookings for the period of Christmas and New Year have already been done. There will not be much hope for the British tourists to come at such a short notice.

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'Little space for run-of-the-mill hotels'

The South India Hotels & Restaurants Association (SIHRA) organises its annual convention in Bengaluru from 18 November to 20 November 2022, even as the hospitality industry grapples with the challenges of manpower and infrastructure. A few patrons of the hospitality industry share their views on how the industry has changed in 2022.

 Janice Alyosius

The year 2022 witnessed both the worst and the best. "We were in the third phase of a partial lockdown when the Omicron struck again in January. The recovery began in February, and it's been a rollercoaster ride since then. Most of the hospitality industry is almost at 2019 levels, but the industry is still facing issues with meeting the guests' expectations keeping other factors at bay," shares **M. R. Narayanan**, MD, Poovar Island Resort. "People are not looking; instead, they are more selective. They want to have a different experience whenever they go on vacation. So, it is important for us to fulfill their demands in order to be successful. After the pandemic I believe you can't have your run-of-the-mill hotel or resort any longer," he adds.

Not only is there a shift in what guests and travellers want, but also how a hotel operates. "It is must to control the operating ex-

penses, which is the name of the game going forward because all costs have increased, the infrastructure for a resort or hotel has increased significantly, and there is competition in the market. As a result, the initial capital investment itself is high now and because of the competition in the market, you cannot demand a high Average Guest Per Room (APR) and Average Daily Rate (ADR). As a result, it is critical that we reduce our operating costs. The main operating costs and the most expensive is the labour costs. The second is power, utility, and energy charges. So, these two must be reduced, and the best way to do so is to introduce numerous new technologies," he further adds.

Following the pandemic, hotels are facing significant challenges in managing their daily operations while keeping costs under control and providing the best possible experience to their guests. On the other hand, many hotels are back into business after the pan-



M. R. Narayanan
MD, Poovar Island Resort




George Ramapuram
MD, Evolve Back Resorts




Rakesh Sethi
General Manager, Shangri-la, Bengaluru


It's been a rollercoaster ride since February. Most of the hospitality industry is almost at 2019 levels

dem, and some are doing better than ever. **George Ramapuram**, MD, Evolve Back Resorts, states


I'm confident that in another 3-4 months, that (staff problem) will also be resolved, and that we will be more settled

about the challenges that resorts are facing. "Now that business is nearly restored, more hotels have


We are seeing a lot of pent-up demand (from people). As a result, travel has undoubtedly increased

begun to open, and they are giving numerous offers to the workers. As a result of this churning, retain-

ing manpower becomes a challenge. So, that is the challenge that we face in the hospitality industry, but for the guests, there has not been much of a difference except for the fact that there may be a slight change in service standards as a result of the new hires. The fact that when new people or employees arrive, it takes some time for them to adjust to any particular property. I'm confident that in another 3-4 months, that will also be resolved, and that we will be more settled," he shares.

Hotels are experiencing MICE and corporates coming back. **Rakesh Sethi**, General Manager, Shangri-la, Bengaluru, says, "We are seeing a lot of pent-up demand that people are now acting on. As a result, travel has undoubtedly increased. Previously, it was primarily domestic, but we are also seeing a significant rise in international travel. In November, international arrivals exceeded those in 2019. And I believe that is a very positive sign." 

PATA Annual Summit in RAK

PATA Annual Summit 2022, organised at Ras Al Khaimah in the UAE from 25-27 October, was attended by 237 delegates from 36 destinations across the world, including thought leaders, industry shapers and senior decision-makers from the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and North America. The event provided the participants an opportunity to interact and broaden their network.



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This has been year of revival

ASSOCIATIONS

“Tourism has changed in the last two years. Travellers are choosing destinations that are closer to nature and not very crowded. Taking into considerations, the domestic tourism holds the key. Domestic tourism flourished, particularly when restrictions were imposed and in-bound and outbound travel were not fully opened; this provided an opportunity for India's domestic market to demonstrate its potential. We have seen 30-40 per cent rise in the domestic tourism compared to pre-pandemic levels. In terms of profit, this year was good for us and domestic tour operators are happy that at least domestic tourism has bounced back. In terms of accomplishments, ADTOI hosted the Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart.”



PP Khanna
President, ADTOI



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

“The year 2022 was fantastic for reviving business, and despite challenges such as visa issues, India is doing very well. We see that most high-end travellers want to travel and are willing to spend money on luxury. People are planning their trips despite the fact that airfares and hotel rates are quite high. We anticipate that by 2023, we will surpass the 2019 figures. We have also noticed that new destinations have arrived, and they are launching aggressive marketing campaigns. Previously, destinations did not prioritise branding and promotional activities, but they have now begun and are promoting themselves for 2023. Also, we have the opportunity to send travellers to visa-friendly countries. India is a growing market; and therefore, many countries are interested in doing business with us. I hope that by next summer season, the challenges will be resolved.”

“The year has been a mix bag that witnessed some positive developments, at the same time there were also some challenging concerns for the hospitality sector. Our biggest achievement was getting a favourable order for the industry from Competition Commission of India (CCI) against the unethical business practices of Oyo and MMT-Go. CCI's order monetarily penalizing the aggregators because of anti-competitive and unfair business practices was one of the biggest victories for not just FHRAI but for the hospitality industry, especially the hotels in the mid-market and budget segments. We also managed to get the government consider our request to discontinue the mandatory Air Suvidha form filling for inbound airline passengers. Also, FHRAI successfully convinced the government to dedicate a separate ECLGS allocation.”



Jaison Chacko
Secretary General, FHRAI



MP Bezbaruah
Secretary General, HAI

“2022 has been a good year and we have seen that all indicators for revival are quite robust. ARR and ADRs have been generally very good. We had initial problems of skilled manpower, owing to movement of people because of COVID, which has settled down. Overall, 2022 has been a good year and the foundation for a very good revival in the next year. For hospitality industry, the achievement is that it could survive and revive even without great support we expected from the government. Also, the industry has been a big pillar for COVID relief operations of the government. Also, at HAI, we are getting our voice heard more than before. There is greater awareness about the problems of the industry because our efforts are creating awareness and advocacy. We could have greater interactions with policy makers, parliamentarians, MOT and others.”



Pradeep Shetty
President, HRAWI



EM Najeeb
Senior Vice President, IATO

“We had very bad two years and we are slowly recovering from that period. Our travel business is doing fairly well with all the challenges. Inbound tourism is yet to really happen and we are expecting some traffic from this month onwards. Slowly, it will increase. Probably full recovery will happen only next year after enough promotions are done. Domestic tourism is happening from Kerala, as well as from other states, which is reasonably good. Most of the domestic business is through direct booking to hotel chains because hotels offer many facilities for direct bookings. However, we are also getting some corporates and other regular clients, which we have for the last many years. Hence, we are recovering and we are very hopeful that we will do better next year. For us, the biggest achievement was not to terminate any of our staff during COVID period.”

“2022 was a mixed year for Erco Travels. At the beginning of this year we had high expectation for business but we fell short of our targets due to lack of India promotions, expensive flight tickets and e-visa problems with some important source markets. However, we were able to get 30 per cent of total business in 2022 as compared to 2019. Hence, this came as consolation. I believe this is a kind of achievement because we were able to generate this much of business despite the rising inflation in our source markets and scarcity of staff at overseas partner's offices. But 2023 looks good with kind of inquires and bookings we are getting so far. I hope we will be able to regain lost business provided no other major disturbances happen across the world. On promotional front, we did selective marketing activities this year, but moving forward next year we plan to attend major trade fairs, and we will explore new markets to develop business.”



Ravi Gosain
Vice President, IATO



Shравan Bhalla
General Secretary, OTOAI

“As we have seen the airfares and the hotel stays have gone above the roof in the year 2022, we hope the clients will try to book themselves well in advance to avail special offers whenever it comes through in the year 2023 and avail the benefit on it. We will also see more and more people shifting to luxury stays with an increased number of nights. We expect that the demand will increase further. Also, a few destinations with direct flights in operations have picked up already such as Vietnam, Baku and Almaty. Future of Travel in 2023 looks bright. Now, almost all countries are open with Less or No Restrictions and most of the flights are running full and hotels with more than 80 per cent occupancy. We are, however, hoping that airlines as well as hotels will come up with special offers at regular intervals to allure tourists to book well in advance rather than last minute bookings.”

“Government of India has not provided any kind of financial support to tour operators other than promising some loans (ECLGS), which were of no use to 99.99 per cent of the tour operators, as without any income, taking loan and paying interest on that does not make any business sense. So far in this financial year, we have achieved 30 per cent of our pre-COVID turnover. However, coming into profit is still a dream as the losses during COVID (due to salaries to the staff for over two years and other direct and indirect expenses) were huge. I believe it may take another two years to reach pre-COVID levels. We could pay to the entire team of ours and even recruited new team members (as a few team members left the company) and are alive! I believe staying healthy despite so much of tension has been the biggest achievement. As there was almost no work, I was able to concentrate more on product development.”

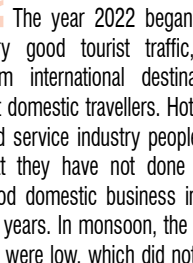


Manoj Kumar Matta
Executive Committee Member, IATO



Sunil C. Gupta
Chairman, IATO Northern Region

“The revival has been very slow for our inbound vertical. However, the domestic segment has been booming and we have seen big jump and huge numbers at our Varanasi/ Ayodhya units. We successfully strengthened our domestic division and expanded into corporate off-sites, music events and weddings. We relaunched our now logo, company branding and have a strong social media release. We are now producing exciting videos on all our experiential products and destinations. Most segments will have strong recovery including MICE. Weddings, events and domestic travel will stay robust. Inbound from a few more countries is expected to start from February 2023 like Japan, Korea and Taiwan in greater numbers. If the e-visa is introduced for the United Kingdom and Canada, we can see quick jump in inbound from these two markets.”



Jatinder Taneja
Vice Chairman, PATA India Chapter

“The year 2022 began with very good tourist traffic, not from international destinations but domestic travellers. Hoteliers and service industry people say that they have not done such good domestic business in last 30 years. In monsoon, the arrivals were low, which did not pick up in October-December owing to high airfare and hotel tariff. For inbound still not picking up, there are many issues that have not been resolved by the government. This includes reduction of visa fee, extension of visa facility for more countries, easing of visa for developed countries like UK, Ireland, France, Germany and Italy; reduction of monument entrance fee for one year; one nation one tax on transport system; more international connections to big cities; and other geopolitical situations. While group movement has not started, individual travel has begun.”



K. Ranga Reddy
Chairman, IATO Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Chapter

“2022 continued to be a difficult year for the tourism industry as COVID did not substantially abate in the first half of the year. Ministry of Tourism took several progressive initiatives to overcome business hurdles and facilitate tourism to India from overseas markets. Resumption of the international flights and visas were giant steps in this direction. However, some countries like the UK and Canada till recently did not have online visa facility. PATA is a not for profit organisation and has extended a 50 per cent rebate on annual membership fee for most of its members. Some inbound business has surely started from the July onwards for our company. It was definitely slower and lower than the expectations but we are glad that inbound clients have started visiting India again. The year 2022 was not to make profits, as it was just a reboot and restart after a long COVID disruption of two-and-a-half years.”

Industry breathes a sigh of relief

AGENTS

“ We are happy for the three quarters of this year. In the first quarter there was Omicron, with not much of travel. However, starting April, the business came back strongly. Inbound is still not fully back as it should have been, but we have done very well across our verticals like B2B business, corporate travel, MICE and other products like rail and bus. The best part is that there was no disruption after it resumed. Our biggest achievement is that we kept the company alive and floating. In 2022, achieving the pre-pandemic numbers was not looking easy. However, when the business resumed, we were back to our 2019 numbers and in some businesses even better. This is keeping our board and employees happy. ”



Subhash Goyal
Chairman – STTC Travel & Air Charter Group

“ In 2022, we could recover some of the losses of the COVID period. We made some profit but it could have been much better if visas for Europe, USA and Canada were easily available. However, as an organisation, we have also diversified into MICE, and have taken the GSA of IRCTC luxury trains i.e. Maharaja Express & Golden Chariot, along with some inland river cruises. We hope that in 2023 we will not only come back to 2019 levels, but also surpass it. The biggest achievement for us and most of the people in the travel and tourism industry is that we have been able to survive the pandemic and able to retain most of our old staff, and also added some more staff in our team. The other achievement was that we were able to get the GSA for Nordwind Airline of Russia and Royal Jordanian Airline. ”



Naveen Kundu
MD, EbixCash Travel & Holidays

“ In line with our Digital First strategy, we have consistently demonstrated innovation, agility, and digital astuteness in leveraging technology to deliver increased benefits for customers and the business this year. We unveiled our new logo inspired by the changing environment, renewed energy and excitement that define the company in this new era of travel. To accelerate bookings, we announced a range of special deals like ‘Buy One Get One Free’ across select India & International holidays, early bird and cash discounts on bookings. Our internal survey revealed demand for travel insurance after the pandemic. The cruise opportunity grew rapidly and we saw a 50 per cent recovery for closer to home sailings from Singapore/ S.E. Asia and the Middle East to the Arctic-Antarctica cruises. ”



Daniel D'Souza
President & Country Head - Holidays, SOTC Travel

“ For the October-December quarter, we are at approximately 80 per cent recovery versus 2019. What is noteworthy is that our domestic travel business is witnessing an upward trajectory; an overall growth of 3.7 times versus the pre-pandemic levels, with over 25 per cent of our customer base for the season comprising new customers, also young India. With an intent to induce demand, we introduced a host of offers including ‘Buy One Get One Free’ to a range of select destinations, ‘The Grand India Holiday Sale’ – curated with deals, discounts and spot offers, ‘Holiday Now Pay on Return’, Easy & Free Rescheduling, also special cashbacks and discounts. We partnered with Emirates Holidays, Vistara Getaways – and destinations like Saudi and Turkiye to offer curated itineraries. ”



Rajeev Kale
President & Country Head, Holidays, MICE, Visa - Thomas Cook (India)

“ In terms of the business revival, it was too early for us because post-pandemic disruptions continue. We were in a survival mode because half of the staff went away and after re-starting our business, there was shortage of manpower. Suddenly, the business started bouncing back in a much bigger way than how it was earlier. However, owing to acute shortage of manpower in the market, we cannot find right people. Now, we have decided to hire students and start training them. It's more of survival mode than a revival mode, which we are heading towards and we have our hopes pinned on 2023. For us the biggest achievement was to venture into domestic business, for which we have a dedicated team. Also, we have started hiring people and rebuilt our office. ”



Valmiki Harikishan
MD, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

NTOs



GB Srithar
Regional Director, India, Middle East, South Asia and Africa, STB

“ Singapore started 2022 with direct air connectivity from three Indian cities (Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi) and concludes with 16 direct connections and air capacity restored to near pre-COVID levels. It has been a year of charting our pathways to recovery. With travel restrictions to Singapore fully eased, we are happy to see the city continuing to be among the must-visit destinations for Indian holidaymakers, M&I groups and cruise travellers. With more than a half million Indian tourists arriving into Singapore year-to-date, India is the second most important source market after Indonesia. We anticipate to conclude the year with nearly four million visitors. Key achievements for the year include the SingapoReImagine campaign to rekindle visitors' passion. ”

“ We started this year by outlining a strategic roadmap, which helped us successfully garner a 64 per cent YoY increase in Indian visitors to South Africa. Our efforts to showcase the diversity and value proposition of destination South Africa has helped us surpass our annual target of attracting 33,910 Indian arrivals to South Africa. Our media, trade and marketing efforts have helped us stay top-of-mind and excite Indian audiences. Interest and inquiries for destination South Africa, especially from Indian businesses and leisure travellers has multiplied since the start of our recovery campaign More&More in Q1,2022. This was followed by a four-city roadshow in India and multi-city experiential consumer, corporate and trade activations. We also hosted Indian travel media to INDABA 2022. In July, we announced the launch of an exclusive India airfare campaign in partnership with Air Seychelles. ”



Manas Sinha
Director, ISA Tourism

“ But for the initial setback due to Omicron wave, the year has been on a recovery mode. The international destinations opened up gradually, which helped us in the recovery process, which is still ongoing. As a company we were able to retain our work and core team. Though marketing expense was limited, we managed to connect with our key partners during trade shows and exhibitions. For us, our achievement is being able to sustain the company with the past reserves, keeping our team safe and meeting/ exceeding the revenue goals of our clients are our biggest achievement of 2022. We invested in skill development programs and activities with remarkable results. We also did a huge joint campaign with VISA Card for our hotel brands. In 2022, we also got entrusted with the task to develop the GCC and South Asia markets for our Far East Hospitality group hotels. ”



Neliswa Nkani
Hub Head – Middle East, India and South East Asia, South African Tourism

HOTELS

“ The hospitality industry, which was affected badly for two years owing to the pandemic, has started reviving and most of the hotels are witnessing an impressive occupancy of visitors. In most of the hotels in Odisha the occupancy level is rising to 60 per cent in lean tourist season. Tourism has revived much faster than expected. Corporate businesses have also picked up. At our Swosti Chilika Resort, the weekend occupancy is almost 100 per cent and on other days it's 60 per cent. The situation is the same in Bhubaneswar. We have been flooded with mails and inquiries from tourists, who want to visit the state. The overwhelming response from our guests is the biggest achievement for Swosti Group. Further, Swosti Group has been allotted land parcel by the Government at Gopalpur-on-Sea to set up a luxury beach resort. ”



Rohit Katyal
National Sales Head
JuSta Hotels & Resorts

“ Hospitality industry was adversely affected due to COVID-19 and 2022 saw green shoots. We were able to transform from pure metro cities hotel company to resort company. We were able to strengthen our positioning in small luxury hotels & resort company in 2022. Our ADRs doubled up in 2022 as compared to 2020-21. With persistent efforts we were able to keep our costs under control and overall profitability has improved. We have signed seven resorts in 2022 with around 250 keys and are bullish for 2023 too. Our intent is to add another 7-8 hotels in 2023 and increase room inventory in existing hotels as planned. Though there are signs of global meltdown and India being consumption-based economy, with some precautions we can stay afloat. With domestic traveler's strong desire for travel in India it would help Indian hotels companies to sail through. ”



J K Mohanty
CMD, Swosti Group

“ Cygnett Hotels & Resorts recorded healthy growth in 2022, though the second quarter was quite weak. All our properties have been able to reach demand levels of pre-pandemic time. Our average occupancies were in the high 80s. The Average Daily Rate (ADR) grew by 20 per cent. The wedding segment made a strong comeback this year, apart from leisure and corporate markets. We have been able to expand our presence across the country with brands that cater to different market segments. We stepped up our expansion plans in 2022 with the opening of properties in markets like Jaipur and Dehradun. I think that the industry is going to record overwhelming growth in the new year. The pent-up demand coupled with tremendous improvement in the pandemic situation means that the year 2023 is going to be a fruitful one for the hospitality and tourism sector. ”



Anant Kumar
Co-founder, Brij Hotels

“ After two slow years for the hospitality industry, we can finally see some steady growth. I am delighted to share that 2022 was a phenomenal year for Brij Hotels. It was great to see the exceptional revival of business post-COVID, people now feeling comfortable to travel and explore again. We were fortunate to turn a profit in last year's Q3 and Q4 and are eagerly looking forward to the next year. We endeavour to create an ecosystem of sustainable tourism that keeps the habitats intact while economically uplifting its communities. We, at Brij Hotels imbibe this value at all of our properties through several initiatives. A total of 80 per cent of our staff is hired locally and trained. At a few of our properties, we follow the zero kilometre concept, where everything is sourced locally, from raw materials for construction, food ingredients to the fabrics. We are looking forward to 2023 now. ”



Sarbendra Sarkar
Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

Contd on page 14 ▶



Europamundo MAX

Europamundo is happy to introduce Europamundo MAX, which will allow passenger to choose downtown hotels in major cities like London, Paris, and Madrid at a supplement cost. This new feature will be available for the visitors from the new season.



Europamundo Vacations is a JTB group company, the largest travel and tourism company in Asia. It is the largest coach tour operator in Europe offering 68 countries as destination. Europamundo is the only coach tour operator company in the world affiliated to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation and WTTC. It is a global product and sold only by travel agents across the world. Its versatile online system allows travel agents to quote and book its tours by following simple steps in few minutes.

Europamundo offer great advantages to its passengers. All departures in Europamundo are guaranteed and offer year-round departure dates. Flexibility is one of the biggest USP's of Europamundo which allows passengers to buy only sectors. This feature gives the clients a possibility of joining any tour, at any time and for any duration. As Europamundo has weekly departures passengers can break

their tour in any city and return later to continue the journey with its next departure. Complimentary arrival transfers, return evening transfers and additional discounts for honeymooner and senior citizens are some of its added advantages.

Europamundo's tours for 2023-2024 and departures until March 2024 are available for sale on www.europamundo.com

In Europamundo there is no age restriction hence children of all ages are welcome on board. Language and meals are of great

importance. We have a comprehensive list of restaurants of various cuisine including Indian. Its guides assist guest with meals and it can pre-arrange Indian meals for groups. It also offers vegetarian/halal and kosher options.

Currently, it has tours in Spanish, Portuguese, as well as in English, Bahasa, Arabic and Mandarin for the global market. Europamundo is majorly known as a European coach tour operator, but it also has popular coach tours to Turkey, Japan, Mexico, USA, Canada, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan.

Two new concepts

During the pandemic, Europamundo introduced two new concepts of touring and now we are successfully operating tours in private mini-van with its experienced guides cum driver.



Trip Styles are recommended for group of friends or families

between 2-7 passengers willing to travel on private basis with a driver guide on a regional circuit to discover hidden routes full of experiences. Privatizable tours are selected itineraries that are operated in a chauffeur driven private mini-van for minimum of 2 and maximum of 7 passengers. The itinerary and other services will remain same as per regular departures.

Europamundo app

Europamundo is proud to announce 'Europamundo app' which allows travel agents to find and quote a tour easily using their cell phone. Similarly, post booking it allows passengers to have an easy access to their tour vouchers, list of hotels, time wise itinerary and other important information.

In the 25th Annual convention held in Abu Dhabi from 28th-30th Oct this year, Europamundo introduced new routes for United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Currently there are 30 itineraries for the above sectors including options to add Egypt and Jordan.

Europamundo launched all its tours for the next season 2023-2024 and departures until March 2024 are now available for sale on www.europamundo.com. Currently, all its 540 tours for next season are on pre-sale, which is valid until 15th January, 2023 and can only be booked through their partners.



(Advertisement)

Maharashtra

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hotels need to register with Maharashtra Tourism

Hotels in the districts of
Konkan, Nasik, and Pune regions
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+91 9871003279, support@qualstar.co.in, subha.bhaskar@qualstar.co.in

Year 2022 has been productive

“We witnessed a growth of 10-12 per cent YOY. We are facing serious challenges at the workforce front. We need to learn how to manage our people better. Flexibility on timings and hybrid systems are need of the hour when hotels want to retain their talent. We are planning to hire hundreds of apprentices. I see India on a boom – strong country under strong leadership, steady govt, stronger infra and an economy that can sustain itself – we are in a good spot. I believe that RevPAR will surpass far ahead of 2019. I am extremely optimistic, and I have been seeing people travel. For sure covid has taught us not to travel without reason. But as business demands, one has to travel. There’s this whole pent-up demand for travel. After a lull of two years, it’s time for us to make some money.”



Pratima Badhwar
Chief Commercial Officer,
India & South Asia, Accor

“The last two years were filled with vigorous learnings that paved the way for vital evolution in the hospitality industry. We entered 2022 equipped with better resources that gave us the confidence to stabilize our business and reinforce our development plans. Post Pandemic, we are witnessing a strong business revival, and are focused on building increased profitability for our stakeholders and brands. We saw travellers looking for meaningful experiences under one roof to create deeper connections with their loved ones & the environment, and our hotels, especially in the leisure destinations were well-positioned to cater to this requirement. Further, in 2022 the domestic travel was a crucial driving force for not just Indian tourism, but markets across the globe.”



Ajay Bakaya
MD, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

TECHNOLOGY

“The travel sector is expected to regain 65 per cent of pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022, as per UNWTO’s World Tourism Barometer. As for ITQ, we already have attained 100 per cent of pre-COVID level of business on GDS for the domestic segment and over 65 per cent for the international segment. However, visa restrictions in some countries and rising crude oil prices have affected the international segment recovery, which should be recouped by the next year. I think in today’s times, the biggest achievement for anybody in our industry would be to be able to put a smile on people’s faces as travel revives. In 2022, we set up new connections and signed a new deal with leading OTA Cleartrip.”



Sandeep Dwivedi
COO, InterGlobe
Technology Quotient

CRUISE



Manoj Singh
Country Head - India
at Norwegian Cruise Line

“This year has been very productive and exciting for Norwegian Cruise Line. We have seen a renewed interest in cruise travel among global travellers. The highlight for this year would undoubtedly be the launch of Norwegian Prima, the first of six vessels in our ground-breaking new Prima Class fleet. Our most in-demand ship ever, Norwegian Prima notched up the single-best booking day and best initial booking week for any of our new-build sales in our 55-year history. With the growing popularity of cruise tourism among travellers in the Indian market, we are excited that Indian travellers are loving the Norwegian Cruise Line difference.”



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

INSURANCE



Dev Karvat
Founder & CEO, Asego

“With the recent surge in insurance awareness and the consequent digital revolution across the globe, 2022 certainly proved to be an amazing year for us at Asego. As experts in the Indian travel assistance and insurance domain, our focus in 2022 was to continue analyzing the changing travel landscape and proactively build relevant products with client centrality at the core of our business operations. We also curated and offered new age covers such as gadget protection, cyber security cover, credit/ debit card protection, and cruise cover during this period. Moreover, we witnessed higher business growth in 2022, not just in terms of sales volume, but also the value and coverage chosen by the customers.”

Compiled by TT Bureau

Minor Hotels interacts with trade

Minor Hotels successfully concluded a three-city India roadshow in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata introducing its signature travel experiences to Indian travel agents. Representatives from 17 Minor properties in the UAE, Europe, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Vietnam and Mauritius interacted with India’s leading travel agencies, luxury wedding planners and MICE firms.





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The Fern: A top wedding venue

Gunjan Pandey, GM, The Fern, says that they have officiated at over 30 weddings, and also provide complete packages for all types of travellers, including leisure, business, and group tourists.

TT Bureau

The Fern has 49 rooms, including eight quarters and 41 rooms, one dining room with a terrace, a pool, a gym, and an SPA, says **Gunjan Pandey**, GM, The Fern. "The guests while having lunch or dinner inside the dining room can have a good view of the hills and valleys through the big windows. Enjoying the scenery, while having lunch or dinner from inside the comfort of the dining room is a luxurious feeling. This apart, we also have two gardens and two terraces, so there is a wide range of open space to hold get-togethers," he adds. "We think that all the variation is in the hills. The guests have no problem in parking their vehicles at the resort. The parking space, I can say, is a sort of our USP. It is difficult to get enough space for parking in the hills. But I can say we are quite fortunate in this area. A bus with 46 passengers can park easily here," he further adds.

MICE opportunities

The resort has hosted many wed-

dings and ranks among the top wedding venues in the hills. "We have hosted more than 30 weddings so far. All of them have been quite lavish. We have expanded



Gunjan Pandey
General Manager
The Fern

MICE business from Pune to other areas. As we are the only resort to have expanded MICE business, we are currently anticipating fantastic opportunities in many other states. The other states approach us for MICE services," he says

Key target audience

"We offer full packages for all types of travellers, including leisure, busi-

ness and group tourists. Therefore, we target both weddings and MICE corporate clients at the regular five-star hotels. We have wedding MICE corporates, as well as group targets, and we are targeting everywhere and perform excellently in all the segments," Pandey says.

Promotion among agents

"Our various sales offices are performing admirably, and we are promoting from the front group of all 90 hotels. As a result, we are succeeding in all our business offices as a corporate sales office, and we are proud of it," he said.

Accommodation services

The resort has 49 total rooms. In addition to a single dinner hall with a terrace, it also has a swimming pool, a gym, and an SPA. "We also provide various adventurous activities to the guests such as Zipline and archery. We offer a comprehensive package for destination wedding, a MICE program, and a honeymoon package. We offer everything on the hills events may possibly need," he concludes.

Resort for leisure, biz travellers

Mohit Sharad, Associate Vice President, Sales and Marketing, North and East India, Fern Surya Resort, says their resort provides everything a visitor may want to make lifelong memories.

TT Bureau

The Fern Surya Resort, located in Dharampur, attracts both leisure and business travellers by offering outstanding value, quality, and service, says **Mohit Sharad**, Associate Vice President, Sales & Marketing, North and East India.



Mohit Sharad
Associate Vice President, Sales and Marketing,
North and East India, Fern Surya Resort

Cocooned in the heart of the Kasauli Hills, the resort provides everything a visitor may want to make lifelong memories. Along with lovely lawns and banquet facilities, this resort also provides outdoor games and adventure activities like the Zipline, Flying Fox, Bridge Walk, Road Walk, Rappelling, Archery, and Monster Car. Having breakfast while floating in the pool gives the guests a sublime experience. The staff also arranges morning excursions throughout the resort for the adventurous guests.

B2B marketing strategy

Mohit says, "We have scheduled a few familiarization trips for B2B agents soon, beginning this month. These trips will give them first-

hand information and aid in the promotion of the property. A few B2B promotions will also be run in the winter to promote the resort."

Fern's portfolio

Fern Hotels & Resorts operates 90 hotels at 75 different locations, totalling more than 5,000 rooms. "We recently opened our doors in The Tamarind Zinc Journey by The Fern in Anjuna, Goa, and Bhanu The Fern Forest Resort & Spa in Jambughoda, Gujarat. The company intends to debut more hotels in the following six months," he shares.

Learning from COVID

He adds, "The ability for multitasking was taught to us by the pandemic. The staff learnt how to work within their means due to scarce resources, which encouraged multitasking. In addition,

We have scheduled a few familiarization trips for B2B agents soon, beginning this month to promote the property

COVID improved our capacity for managing tasks remotely and taught us how to carry out plans effectively and by using technology (online)." The Fern Surya Resort, Dharampur (Kasauli hills), an hour's drive from the Chandigarh airport, is a resort that appeals to both leisure and business tourists.

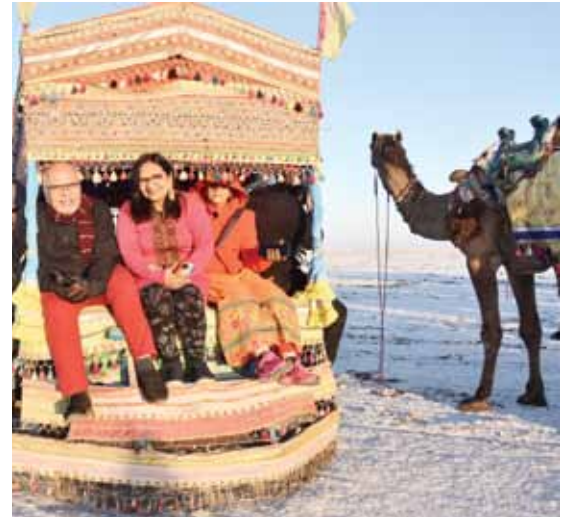
ETAA members learn about Vietnam

As part of its endeavour to inform members about new destination opportunities, the Enterprising Travel Agents' Association (ETAA) organised a destination training session on Vietnam in Mumbai in partnership with Global Destinations – an eminent firm representing Threeland Travel Vietnam.



tripjack launches M!CE vertical

Ushering in a new era for the company, Tripjack has started a MICE vertical and is confident of creating its own space in the segment in India by leveraging its existing network. **TRAVELTALK** finds out more.



Hazel Jain

Amit Parkar, Business Head – MICE, Tripjack, expects demand for MICE in India to grow rapidly, which reflects on some of the potential projects the team is working on already. This was the idea behind launching a new MICE vertical at Tripjack. “We are very bullish about the MICE business, especially in the next three quarters. MICE is a very competitive segment. However, we are confident that right from scouting for unique destinations and delivering unique experiences, if we keep our customers at the heart of everything we do, we will be able to deliver tailor-made ‘wow’ experiences for them, especially curated by our passionate team. Since Tripjack is a tech-driven organization, we are also exploring how our expertise can help us deliver a seamless experience to our customers,” Parkar says.

He believes that corporates in India are always looking for unique



Amit Parkar
Business Head – MICE, Tripjack



Kiran Vinchhi
COO, Corporate & MICE, Tripjack

We are also exploring how our expertise can help us deliver a seamless experience to our customers

experiences at unique destinations but within their budget limitations. “India makes up for a good play-

India is also doing well in the MICE movement with plenty of infrastructure and convention centres

ground for inbound MICE business. I think we are getting there. With the strong infrastructure push-ups, we

are now witnessing things like the upgrade of the railways, record-breaking speedy work to boost road connectivity and port developments under the Sagarmala project. We should be able to dish out world-class experiences for our inbound MICE travellers in the times to come,” he adds.

Listing some factors that can help the recovery of MICE in India, Parkar says, “The things that come to my mind are the good infrastructure, ease of visa norms, and promotions by state tourism boards to showcase the real India and its heritage to the world. All these efforts will be big steps in the right direction to put India on the World MICE tourism map.”

MICE is recovering
Kiran Vinchhi, COO, Corporate & MICE, Tripjack, echoes his sentiments. “MICE business is recovering and doing well. I feel it is faster than leisure travel. Since there was a lull in the MICE movement for the last two years due to

COVID-19, most corporates with their travel budgets yet to be utilized are looking forward to connecting with their people and their industry. Hence, the demand has shot up rapidly. At Tripjack, we have a strong portfolio of travel products and offerings. Thus, MICE has become a natural extension of our service portfolio. There could be no better time or opportunity to set up our MICE vertical,” Vinchhi says.

Will Tripjack be focusing on domestic or international MICE? Vinchhi says, “We will focus on both. India is also doing well in

the MICE movement with plenty of infrastructure and convention centres. We have three defined avenues to reach out to our target customers. Our team brings to the table some strong corporate relationships, which we are leveraging to our advantage. Besides, our existing corporate database is also giving us some great leads to work on. Lastly, we also have a very large Travel Agent network in our B2B space, which we are capitalizing on. In addition, we will be reaching our clients on various social media platforms and doing corporate FAM trips.”

Thailand celebrates Loy Krathong

Soy x Neung Roi, in association with the Royal Thai Embassy and Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi, celebrated Loy Krathong, the Thai Festival of Lights, at the poolside of Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport, which was attended by H.E. Pattarat Hongtong, Ambassador of Thailand to India, along with a guest list of prominent socialites.



Akasa Air operates its maiden flight from Visakhapatnam, the tenth destination on its network

Business travel sees 83 per cent Y-o-Y growth, Delhi the most-booked city: OYO

West Bengal tourism launches 'city pass' to facilitate access to Kerala's 21 tourist spots

Government set to make Kerala women-friendly tourism destination: Riyas

Uttarakhand declares ₹5 lakh incentive to tour operators booking for International Yoga Festival

Four tourism track meetings to be held during G-20 in India, says Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, GoI

62 per cent plan to attend music festivals to celebrate the holidays this year: AmEx report

We will strive to recover to pre-pandemic level by mid-2024: Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, GoI

Go cruising, explore Lucerne

One of the favourite ways for Indian visitors to explore the region, Lake Lucerne Navigation Company is preparing to welcome back Indians – not just FITs and couples but also bigger corporate groups for their MICE requirements.

TT Bureau

Meret Geissbuhler, Sales Manager International, Lake Lucerne Navigation Company, was in India recently to meet their close working partners and share updates with them. Her first stop was Mumbai, followed by Ahmedabad and Delhi. Speaking about the product, she says, "We operate cruises on Lake Lucerne, which is surrounded by many mountains and villages. This includes lunch cruises and dinner cruises and they connect mountain railways with the city of Lucerne, so there is a wide variety of products on offer. We work closely with Mt Titlis in India and Rayo Choksi from the company helps us connect with the market."

Lake Lucerne Navigation Company is also doing online webinars in partnership with Switzerland Tourism and DDP Group. This, Geissbuhler says, is a great way to introduce their products to the travel trade in India. "Indian visitors really like our modern boats.

We have a fleet of 19 different boats – catamaran, panoramic yacht. Also, it's a great way to explore the region of Lucerne in a relaxed way as it doesn't require too much walking. It also doesn't take much time – about an hour-



Meret Geissbuhler
Sales Manager International
Lake Lucerne Navigation Company

long cruise gives a great view of the area. It is perfect for families with kids and couples, honeymooners, etc. specially our sunset cruises. But we also get a lot of group travellers including corporates because it is not a very expensive activity," she says.

MICE a focus

Lake Lucerne Navigation Company has also started receiving requests for chartering from corporates. "Our boats are pretty big – for 50 pax or more for a private charter – so its better to book it for a larger group. We have organised Indian catering also for big Indian groups in the past as we work with caterers that can provide Indian meals. But this needs to be booked at least two months in advance. Alternately, our European cuisine that we offer onboard also has a lot of vegetarian options that we can provide to clients. We can also arrange for live DJs, parties, musical entertainment, and traditional Swiss music on private charter cruises for corporates," Geissbuhler adds.

While Lake Lucerne Navigation Company has started receiving Indian visitors, its still not on the same level as pre-COVID. "But we can see traffic coming back. We missed the main season of Indian travellers during April and May. The visa situation, that we hear from

the trade, also didn't help. High airfares also added to the problem. But I can see many requests and inquiries coming in for the Autumn season which is not the main season for Indian market. And this makes us very positive," she shares.

the cruises for mountains such as Mount Pilatus where you can take the cruise to the station at the base of the mountain to access it by the cogwheel. We work very closely with the mountains such as Mount Pilatus and Mount Titlis and Mount Rigi. Agents can book



It's tough to calculate accurate numbers specially for FIT products since this product is also included in the Swiss Travel Pass which is very popular with Indian visitors. "But India was one of our main markets before the pandemic and we are positive it will regain its spot soon. We get requests for excursions in combination with

our tickets on our website which is very easy to use," she says.

Sharing updates about new products, she says, "During the pandemic, our one-hour Saphir Lake Lucerne cruise with audio guide was also provided in Hindi and it was one of the favourite cruises with our Indian visitors."

LA Tourism thanks the trade

A fun Thanksgiving sundowner, organised by Los Angeles Tourism in Mumbai recently, was attended by the who's who of the travel trade. The tourism board expressed gratitude to its trade partners and celebrated its third anniversary in India. Los Angeles Tourism Board is optimistic that the New Year holds many positives toward travel recovery to the US.



Discover the Kingdom of SAUDI ARABIA

Kingdom's tourism visa in 2019 triggers tourist influx to the destination

Saudi Arabia is widely seen as the final frontier of tourism. As the birthplace of Islam, and a millennia-old crossroads of pilgrims and traders, the Kingdom's rich culture and diverse heritage has no equal. The country opened its doors to non-religious tourists in September 2019. The launch of the Kingdom's tourism visa saw visitors from around the globe flock to explore Saudi's ancient history, striking landscapes, and warm hospitality.

In recent years, the Kingdom has undergone a significant cultural transformation, evolving century-old customs to fit the contemporary world we live in today. The country welcomed 67 million visitors last year. Here are the seven key destinations that highlight Saudi Arabia's rich heritage and traditions.

Riyadh - Where Saudi's past and future meet

Riyadh's blend of medieval and millennial makes for a beguiling cultural union — one where Arabia's first roots can be traced, and where its bold future can be envisioned. The city's fascinating, centuries-old history can be found within its atmospheric souqs, compelling museums, and ancient architecture, but it's also a modern metropolis, with glittering high-ris-

es and a burgeoning contemporary art scene. The winter months are an ideal time to visit Riyadh.

Jeddah - A global art scene awaits you

The all-year-round warm city of Jeddah, the captivating hub, invites you to be part of the millions of worldwide visitors from traders and explorers since ancient times.



The Kingdom has undergone a significant cultural transformation, evolving century-old customs to fit the world we are living in today

Jeddah is the birthplace of worldwide arts and music, and a gathering spot for multi-vibrant cultures, a unique blend that left its mark on Jeddah's exquisite cuisine of many fine dishes with global tastes.

When you visit Jeddah, you will have the opportunity to witness a global heritage celebrated by UNESCO, from "Historical Jeddah"

to exploring the antique designs of balconies, stone walkways and ancient sidewalks, as this destination unearths secrets that have inspired artists and writers. Here, you will also have a chance to see the best view out there of the colourful sunset shades shimmering off the divine Red Sea shores.

Diriyah - What to see, do and eat

Considered by many to be the "pearl of Saudi Arabia", Diriyah is becoming a major tourist destination. One of Saudi's signature projects, developed to encourage tourism to the area, Diriyah will eventually encompass luxury resorts, numerous international hotel brands, as well as dining, shopping and entertainment options. But don't let the modern glitz and glam distract you from Diriyah's deep cultural roots. Diriyah's history goes back thousands of years: It was once an ancient trade and pilgrimage route, and a meeting spot for people traveling to or from Asia, Africa or Europe.

All About AIUla!

In AIUla, which is home to Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, deep in the desert in the northwestern region of the country, you might still be able to play out your fantasy of being an



intrepid archaeologist for a day. Despite all the makings of a bucket list-topping global destination — ancient tombs that remain as the legacy of 7,000 years of human civilisation, stunning natural rock formations and canyons, a plethora of adventure sports options and cutting-edge art installations — AIUla remains largely off the global tourism radar, giving you plenty of space and time for reflection with the monumentality of its beautiful desert landscapes.

Medina - A majestic and historic destination

Medina is one of Islam's two holiest cities, making it a key destination for millions of pilgrims traveling to Saudi Arabia for Hajj or Umrah. The city is centered around Al Masjid an Nabawi, also known as the Prophet's Mosque, which was constructed by the Prophet himself and is also where he is buried. Medina is where the Prophet Muhammad lived and taught after the migration from Makkah in 622 A.D., called Hijrah. This year is so important in the history of Islam that it marks the start of the Islamic calendar. Although the city's name is usually written as Medina in English, its full name is Al Medina Al Munawwarah, meaning "the Enlightened City". Because of the city's pivotal role in the Prophet Muhammad's life, making a trip to Medina is a lifelong dream for many Muslims.

King Abdullah Economic City - Place for luxury and leisure

King Abdullah Economic City, 100 km north of Jeddah along the coast of the Red Sea, is a modern metropolis and booming tourist destination. Though it was conceived of in 2005 to attract international business, lei-

All About Dammam

Boasting endless views of the tranquil Arabian Gulf, Dammam is a modern metropolis that thrives on its coastal location. Although it is known for its lush green parks, airy waterfronts and sandy beaches, it is highly enjoyable in the winter, too. The region also has a



sure is also a big part of KAEC's appeal. International tournaments are played at the Royal Greens Golf & Country Club, one of the most renowned golf clubs in the Middle East, and a motorsports park is being built as part of the recently developed Lagoon leisure area.

growing reputation as an arts, sports and entertainment destination. It is home to the kingdom's first street-art exhibition, in Al Khobar's Bayoonya district, and offers a range of cultural hubs and museums as well, making Dammam a tourist's delight.



5 best luxury wedding destinations

It's the wedding season. One of the biggest hassles for individuals who want a destination wedding is choosing the location from a long checklist. Here's a handy list of most luxurious destinations couples, dreaming of a big, fat, and exotic wedding, would like to choose for tying the knot.

The most memorable day of a person's life is his or her wedding day. What could compare to the thrill of getting the destination offers a plethora of options in venues, caterers and suppliers to meet your taste in food, entertainment, décor,

KOH SAMUI

If you love beaches, Thailand's Koh Samui has scenic white sand beaches and some of the



married to your soul mate and beginning a lifetime of dedication, joy, and companionship? However, let's face it—weddings are difficult.

and other elements as per your cultural rituals.

Hilton Dubai, Al-Habtoor City

When to get married in Dubai: In Dubai, winter usually starts in

best-in-class luxury resorts and villas making it an ideal spot for hosting an intimate, luxurious wedding. It's the best place to relax, unwind, and get inspired before your big important day too.

There are a lot more items on the checklist for a successful wedding than anyone could have anticipated. One of the biggest hassles for individuals who want a destination wedding is choosing the location from that checklist. Indian weddings are well-publicized around the world due to their lavish nature.

DUBAI

No other destination can beat the pleasant weather of this destination, hence making it an award-winning location to host your wedding at. Connected well with the world with direct and connecting flights for easy access, it makes a wonderful destination to invite your friends and family from across the world without any hassle. Its Arabian theme is cherished for weddings. Given its diversity,



October and lasts till March, but the best months to get married are from December to February. An outdoor wedding in Dubai during this time makes for an ideal set up. This time of the year is perfect for an outdoor wedding in Dubai.

Banyan Tree Samui

When to get married in Koh Samui: It is commonly believed that Koh Samui has an all-time summer season. However, it's not true as the island enjoys two seasons, of which one is summer and the other is monsoon when the is-



land sees some good showers. February and March are suitable giving a well-lit background with bright sunny days making it the best time to get hitched there. But, anytime from April to September is cozy and warm too. October to December is when the monsoons hit the island and one must avoid this time for an outdoor wedding in the destination.

BALI

Recognized for its highly developed arts, which include traditional and modern dance, paintings, leather, and music, Bali is also a part of the coral triangle – showcasing the highest biodiversity of marine species, especially turtles and fish. With water sports to enjoy and beaches to bask under the sun, you can plan your pre-wedding, wedding, and post-wedding celebrations in this lovely island destination.

Tirtha Uluwatu

When to get married in Bali: Rainy seasons are not ideal for outdoor setting weddings. May to August sees sunny days over the region making it a good attraction for luxury weddings.

Bali is also a part of the coral triangle – showcasing the biodiversity of marine species, especially turtles and fish

MALAYSIA

Witnessing a good tourist arrival from India, Malaysia has been a preferred destination for hosting several luxury Indian weddings. With much to offer to shoppers, Malaysia has been a paradise for lovers alike given its romantic locations to let one celebrate their most-cherished time with their loved one.

Four Seasons Resort Langkawi, Malaysia

When to get married in Malaysia: The ideal time to get married in Malaysia is from May to October.

TURKEY

Turkey is gaining popularity as

a dreamy destination wedding for couples across the globe. Equipped with all the new-age infrastructure and tech in place, Turkey is emerging as a go-to destination for to-be-weds. Given its Mediterranean cuisine liked by everyone across the world, people get married in this destination to explore authentic foods, music, architecture, and hospitality. With attractive locations offering upscale wedding venues & resorts, the wedding market prefers Istanbul, Antalya, Cappadocia, and Bodrum.

The Titanic Beach Lara

When to get married in Turkey: Turkey is pretty cold during the winter, hence weddings during this season are usually indoors. Summers are good to get married in Turkey with a plethora of outdoor options and also the option of a beach wedding. A countryside wedding or one by the poolside, Turkey makes for a versatile destination for weddings.



Aashay Samel
Director of Weddings and Events,
Tamarind Global

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



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Marriott tees off in Hyderabad



Marriott International hotels in Hyderabad recently hosted The Marriott Bonvoy Golf Tournament 2022 in the City of Nizams. Elevating the sporting experience for guests and patrons with his presence and participation was Arjuna Award winner Shiv Kapur, as a Marriott Bonvoy ambassador. Other players included head honchos and CEOs of leading business conglomerates from the city.

Wonderla to set up 5th park in India



Wonderla Holidays recently organised the ground-breaking ceremony of its 5th amusement park in India, which is coming up in Odisha. It was done by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in the presence of the State Tourism Minister. Wonderla Holidays has taken 50.63-acre land from the government on lease at Kumbharabasta, Khordha, for the ₹125-crore project, which will be completed by 2025.

(Fitur) to show its prowess

FITUR 2023, to be organised by IFEMA MADRID at the Madrid Exhibition Centre from 18 to 22 January 2023, will have 10 major sections to help professionals discover business opportunities.

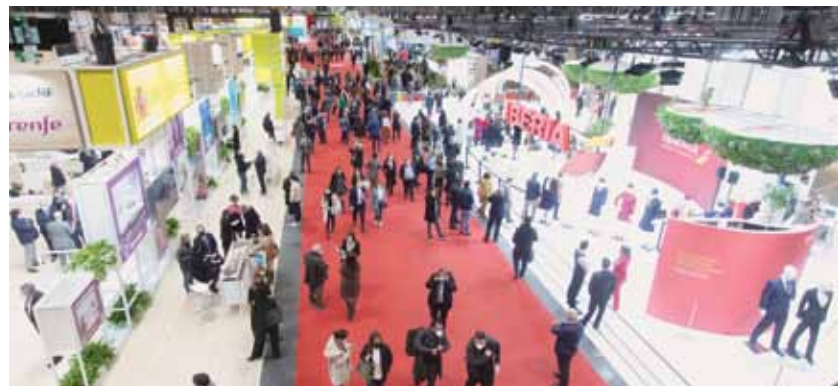


It will be a great fair, representative of the strength of the tourism ecosystem in the world, and the support of all public and private agents in the value chain of the

This edition of the International Tourism Trade Fair will once again demonstrate the strength of the sector, with an estimated growth of 15 per cent in all its parameters, rising to 30 per cent in the international area, as well as the support

ing the pandemic, which distinguishes FITUR as the only major international tourism fair that has been held without interruption.

Sustainability, specialisation, innovation and cutting-edge trends will



tourism industry. FITUR 2023, to be organised by IFEMA MADRID at the Madrid Exhibition Centre from 18 to 22 January 2023, will have 10 major sections, which will allow professionals to gain knowledge and discover the business opportunities offered by different segments in communication with the tourism activity.

of all public and private agents in the tourism industry's value chain.

The participation figures will be "very close" to its historical record, and which will show its leadership both in the international calendar and in its position as a hub with Latin America, reinforced by the resilience exercise developed dur-

be the core themes of FITUR's content, in line with the fair's objective of contributing to the revitalisation and growth of tourism activity. In addition, FITUR will have a strong business focus during its first three days dedicated exclusively to B2B -18, 19 and 20 January- also focusing its B2C proposal during the weekend.

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



DECEMBER 2022

Date	Event	Time
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	37 th IATO Convention	09:00 am
17-18	Tourism Fair Siliguri	01:00 pm
20	SOTC Webinar	03:00 pm

JANUARY 2023

03-05	Gujarat Travel Fair	10:00 am
06-08	Holiday Expo-Coimbatore	09:00 am
07-08	Tourism Fair Oslo	02:00 pm
09-13	Outbound Travel Roadshow Delhi	11:00 am
12-15	Destinations: The Holiday & Travel Show	10:00 am
16	Thailand Tourism Forum	09:00 am
18-22	FITUR	10:00 am
19-21	India International Travel Mart Cochin	11:00 am
18-22	Matka Expo	10:00 am

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

India potential market for France

Clémentine Bajou, Director, Products and Services, Société D'Exploitation de la Tour Eiffel (Sete), says India is a potential travel destination for France and they have a strong commitment to the Indian market and optimistic about its future.



France sees a potential market in India for travel business. "India is a potential travel destination for the French tourism business, and the people of India have a strong desire to travel. Individual tourism is expanding quickly, and Indians are continuously looking for fresh, creative, and distinctive travel experiences. We have a strong commitment to the Indian market and are optimistic about its future," said Clémentine Bajou, Director, Products and Services, Société D'Exploitation de la Tour Eiffel (Sete).

Promoting Eiffel Tower

Indians made about 3 per cent of the foreign visitors to the Eiffel Tower prior to the pandemic. "In order to better welcome them (Indians) at the Eiffel Tower, we modified our culinary menu to include vegetarian alternatives in our restaurants Madame Brasserie and Le Jules Verne, as well as Indian catering in the Gustave Eiffel room, a flexible space

on the first floor, which is dedicated to B2B events. We are also building up VIP-only excursions for small groups of people, as well as individual guided tours," she said.



Clémentine Bajou
Director, Products and Services
Société D'Exploitation de la Tour Eiffel (SETE)

Strategy to get repeat visitors

Bajou said, "Overall our goal is to upgrade the service offered on the monument. The Eiffel Tower is one of the most visited monuments in the world, and probably the most iconic. Exploring the tower is a delight for the senses, from discovering the historic gardens to



the breathtaking view over Paris from each floor." She added, "As a symbol of French excellence, the tower is a gastronomic destination. On the first floor of the tower, in addition to the renowned Jules Verne operated by Chef Frédéric Anton, we recently inaugurated a brand-new eatery called Madame Brasserie. This brand-new, must-visit Parisian landmark is managed by chef Thierry Marx. Visi-

tors can eat exquisite bistro fare prepared there using seasonal, locally-sourced ingredients from French regional producers. In a similar vein, we want the Eiffel Tower to develop into a legitimate shopping destination by creating our own brand so that we can provide our visitors with high-quality products on the tower's official boutiques and co-brandings with French brands."

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MOVEMENTS

EMPIRES HOTELS

Bhubaneswar

SANJAY MISHRA has been promoted as the Vice President of Empires Hotels. From Kitchen to F&B, Banqueting to Sales & Marketing to Entire Operation of a hotel, Mishra has a vast experience of 22 years in the hospitality industry. He worked as General Manager of Empires Paradeep since 2016 and as General Manager of Empires Bhubaneswar & Paradeep before his recent promotion as the Vice President. He started his career at Holiday Inn, Surat (now Taj Gateway) as a Captain in 2000. "Besides acquiring more properties in future, my prime objective is to inculcate a high standard corporate culture and implement powerful marketing strategies," he said.



RENAISSANCE BENGALURU RACE COURSE HOTEL

Bengaluru

NIHAL KURIAN has been appointed as the Director of Sales & Marketing at Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel. His core responsibilities will include planning and implementation of the hotel's sales and marketing strategy, maximizing hotel's revenues, exploring business opportunities through events, setting annual budgets, forecasting, analyzing revenue reports and strategy among others. He has more than 13 years of experience in the Indian hospitality industry and created a portfolio with a proven track record.



ASIA RESORTS

Himachal Pradesh

SHEFALI PARASHAR has been appointed as the new Director of Sales & Marketing at Asia Resorts, which owns properties like Timber-trail Heights, Parwanoo and Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort. With more than 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Parashar will be responsible for the efficient running of Sales and Marketing in line with the hotel's strategies and brand standards. She will be instrumental in providing leadership in all hotel selling activities, working closely with the rooms, events, food and beverage and other revenue-generating departments. She will also be responsible for aligning hotel positioning with the brand promise.



RADISSON

Gurugram

Radisson Hotels Group has appointed **NAMIT VIJH** as Cluster General Manager for Rajasthan and Agra. As part of his new role, Vijh will be responsible for a bigger portfolio comprising Radisson Blu Jaipur, Radisson Jodhpur, Radisson Nathdwara, Radisson Udaipur, Radisson Agra and Country Inn & Suites by Radisson Kota in addition to Radisson Gurugram Udyog Vihar. He has been with Radisson Hotels Group for more than three years as General Manager - Radisson Gurugram, Udyog Vihar, where he contributed immensely to the hotel profitability and soaring the hotel ratings on TripAdvisor. Vijh has a degree in Hospitality Management from IHM Chandigarh.



THE RESORT

Mumbai

ABHIJEET ADURKAR has been appointed as the Hotel Manager of The Resort, Madh-Marve in Malad. Abhijeet brings with him more than 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry. IN his new role, he will look after all operations at the hotel and ensure that it continues to deliver the highest level of guest satisfaction. Before joining The Resort, Abhijeet was General Manager at Yauatcha Mumbai. Prior to this, he has worked with Le Méridien Resort and Spa in Mahabaleshwar, Courtyard by Marriott in Surat, Ritz Carlton in Riyadh, JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar, as well as JW Marriott Juhu, and JW Marriott in Aerocity, New Delhi.



HILTON GARDEN INN

Pune

ANUJ MAJUMDAR has been appointed as the Assistant General Manager of Hilton Garden Inn Pune Hinjawadi. With more than 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Anuj has an intrinsic understanding of hotel operations, fulfilling guest expectations, and great leadership skills. His expertise will play a vital role in elevating the property to new heights. He has worked with several esteemed hospitality brands such as The Leela Mumbai, Holiday Inn Pune, Four Points by Sheraton Jaipur, The Corinthians Resort & Club Pune, and the Pride Hotel, Pune.



FAIRFIELD BY MARRIOTT

Kolkata

Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata has appointed **MANOJ JANGID** as the new Hotel Manager. With over 20 years of enriching industry experience, Jangid is a hospitality veteran and has an intrinsic understanding of hotel operations and guest aspirations. He would be responsible for looking after the strategic initiatives and overall operations of 182-key Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata and the banqueting facilities at Ozone Convention Centre. Jangid started his career in F&B operations and has experience both in curated fine dining spaces as well as large scale catering events. He has earned his reputation working across multiple hotel companies and roles.



THE CROWNE PLAZA TODAY

Gurugram

GAURAV SHARMA has been appointed as Front Office Manager at The Crowne Plaza Today, Gurugram, an IHG hotel. During his decade old journey, he has worked with luxury brands like Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, Marriott International, Leela Reservations Worldwide (Praxis Services) and The Iconic Imperial, New Delhi. His expertise lies in guest profiling and adhering to stringent processes to ensure high-quality guest satisfaction. He is a pro in technology and has analytical capabilities to add to his skill sets. Talking about his appointment, Norton Pereira, the Regional General Manager of the hotel, said, "I am confident that Gaurav's knowledge, skills, and experience will prove to be valuable assets to our company."



CROWNE PLAZA CHENNAI ADYAR PARK

Chennai

JACOB PAUL has been appointed as Human Resource Manager at Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park. Paul brings with him an industry experience of 12 years across brands like Accor and Carlson Rezidor. With his great skills and ability to resolve conflict quickly and efficiently, in his new role Jacob will be responsible for the recruitment of the team, managing payroll, ensuring ethical business practices, statutory compliances, associate well-being, learning & development and team engagement. He has a knack of bringing together professionals from various diverse cultures to collaborate in harmony. He is also an expert in harnessing employee engagement and setting the foundation for great people and work culture.

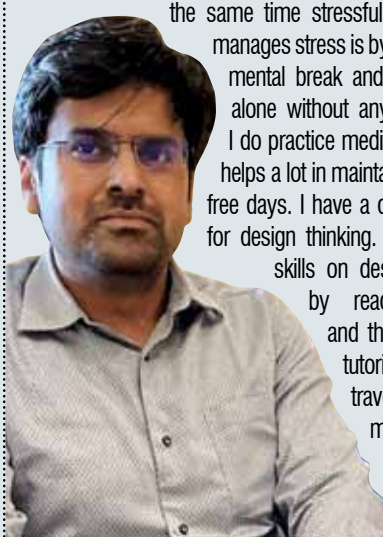


TALKING People

HUZAN FRASER MOTIVALA, Partner at Beautiful Planet, likes to travel to her home in Mandwa, look after the garden, potter around the land, and learn about trees, flowers and vegetables. She also loves to travel. "In India, I haven't been around much, so the go-to destination will be Goa. I recently travelled to Ananda in the Himalayas and I loved the experience. I love wildlife sanctuaries too. Internationally, I love Norway. Of course, my favourite places are the ones we represent - Ireland and Victoria, Melbourne. I would also love to visit Yellow Stone National Park in the USA. Three things I always carry when travelling are good walking shoes, comfortable clothes and a good book to read," she shares.



NITESH SINGH RATHORE, Founder & CMO, Ecobillz, believes that an overwhelmed start-up founder is inevitable. "Running a business is exciting but at the same time stressful. The way I manages stress is by taking short mental break and spend time alone without any distraction. I do practice meditation, which helps a lot in maintaining stress-free days. I have a deep passion for design thinking. I honed my skills on design thinking by reading books and through online tutorial. I enjoy travelling and my favourite in India is Goa," he says.



KAVITA THAPA, Director of Sales, Sayaji Pune, loves to take long walks while listening to music. "Any form of movement is a powerful resource for relieving stress. Swimming is also one of the best exercises for mental health because it is calming and relaxing. During lockdown, I enhanced my digital skills through online sessions. My favourite holiday destination in India is Goa, the land of sun, sands and beaches. Internationally it is Pokhara in Nepal. My next holiday will be to Phuket," she says.



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Making life easier for agents

Thomas Cook India's new Holiday Mate portal offers its B2B agent partners automated processes to ensure speed, accuracy, and efficiency for their customers. It can create a complete itinerary within a span of a few minutes.

 Hazel Jain

The new Thomas Cook India Holiday Mate tool is an enabler for all its channel partners to help them do all its GIT bookings in a seamless way for their customers. Sharing details of the new product, **Romil Pant**, SVP & Head - Leisure Business, Thomas Cook India, says, "We thought there was no better time and opportunity to launch this tool than now when we are standing on the cusp of a fantastic 2023 ahead. The demand has started coming in and business is now back to normal. We wanted to innovate and offer seamless experience to our B2B agent partners. Instead of contacting us, they can now make their bookings directly on this portal."

The portal offers end-to-end solutions in easy steps without the need of human intervention, right from choosing a product, customising it as per customer requirement to transaction in four easy steps. This tool is now live. Agents can send multiple quotations at once for all their customer requirements, they can collect their payments, they can ensure that the booking has entered the Thomas Cook India system, in a seamless manner. "The idea was to make life easier for agents. Most of the tools currently available in the market right now are offered by B2C players. If there are any tools by B2C players, it focuses on a lot of things rather than specifically on the holidays business. Thomas Cook India is a holiday focussed company and our largest business is group tours. We also do a lot

4 easy steps to book

- ❖ Select product and review booking
- ❖ Sign in
- ❖ Enter traveller's details
- ❖ Make payment



of FIT but groups are our largest business. We operate group tours across the globe – whether it is Arctic or Antarctic, USA, Canada, Japan, Russia, Australia or India," Pant says.

Itinerary in a few minutes

Pant adds that the idea behind this was that instead of asking agents to connect telephonically or physically with the company, it gives the power in their hand to

The portal offers end-to-end solutions without the need of human intervention, right from choosing a product to transaction

look, book and execute on their own. "This in no way changes the monetary benefits they get from these bookings. So, in that sense, this product completely stands out. The customer gets a quote quicker and the agent is able to send the quote for multiple destinations in a span of a few minutes," he says.

The size of groups starts from about 15-50 pax depending on the destination. These are coach tours, so the itinerary, dates and rates are pre decided. All details of the product are available online and the pricing is dynamic. "The agent can look at the product within the tool, quote and then explain it to the customer, share the payment link with them, as well as book the tour. This is a classical group tour, it's not an

incentive and these are not customisable but these are our classic products. But they can create a complete itinerary within a span of a few minutes. All this without the intervention of Thomas Cook India at the back end," Pant adds.

Understanding new needs

There is a clear demand for travel and this, feels Pant, is a clear manifestation of the fact that travellers are ready to get out. It's only a matter of time and for borders to re-open. There is certainly a light at the end of the tunnel, which is now visible by the way India and some international destinations have opened up. This also shows that safe travel is possible and is being managed very well at both ends. We are all driving momentum together now – the tourism boards, the travel agents, the DMCs. The early trends are positive. We are putting all our might behind promoting not just our individual brands but collectively promoting travel as an industry, so that we all gain from it and not just an individual operator.

A new era for agents

Agents need to create a user log-in to start. Thomas Cook India is planning webinars to reach out to the travel trade and inform them about this product. This surely is

the new era of travel that Thomas Cook India is ushering in. Its accelerated digital transformation is aimed at delivering an exceptional experience to its key stakeholders. This newly launched B2B platform - Holiday Mate – has been strategically designed to empower its travel agent partners. The idea is to simplify booking processes and strengthen its outreach in India's viable tier II, III and IV key source markets, thus expanding its market share. Holiday Mate currently offers group bookings and will soon also cater to individual travel in its next phase.



Romil Pant
SVP & Head - Leisure Business, Thomas Cook India

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