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HAPPY
New
Year
2022

Ready for a roaring recovery

G. Kamala Vardhan Rao, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, speaking at the 36th IATO Annual Convention in Gandhinagar says, vaccination will play a pivotal role in giving confidence to international tourists visiting India.

Nisha Verma

G. Kamala Vardhan Rao, Director General, Ministry of Tourism believes that vaccination will play a major role in taking India towards the road to recovery. "The most important thing is vaccination. Hence, safety protocols must be followed, only then will there be confidence among the tourists. Tourism develops only when people travel, which in turn happens when there is confidence and the safety levels are increased. I believe the kind of vaccination drive that is taking

place in the country will instil confidence in tourists in the country and they will be visiting," he shared, on the sidelines of the IATO Annual Convention in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Domestic boon

Claiming that domestic tourism has seen a rise during the pandemic, Rao said, "There is hardly any availability of rooms in hotels, especially at tourist spots. We have more than 165 notified destinations in this country and over 80 per cent of the hotels are running at more than 80 per cent occupancy, particularly



G Kamala Vardhan Rao
Director General, Ministry of Tourism

this season. Despite not having as many foreign tourists because of the ban on international travel, domestic tourism has picked up in a big way,

and 80 per cent of the hotels are occupied."

Not a big scare?

Rao claims, "If you see the cases of Omicron internationally, it is infectious, but it's not as fatal as the delta variant, which we have seen earlier, and it is the only ray of hope. We are sure that this will not be there for a long time. We believe that by February to March we will see brighter days. According to surveys and WHO, Omicron is infectious, but the cases of hospitalisation are low, and thus the stress on the health

Contd on page 5 ▶

Exemplary achievement

Subhash Goyal, Founder Chairman, STIC Travel and Air Charter Group, has been conferred with the Hall of Fame Award at the 36th IATO convention.

Nisha Verma

Subhash Goyal holds the record for being the longest standing President of IATO. On receiving the IATO Hall of Fame Award for his contribution, his continued

"I don't think I did so much, as I only motivate people to do it. It's been a happy and interesting journey and I am grateful on receiving this honour. At the same time, getting a lifetime achievement award doesn't mean that it's retirement for



Bhupendrabhai Patel, CM, Gujarat, presents IATO Hall of Fame Award to Subhash Goyal

mentorship and exemplary service, he thanked IATO and credited his team and his wife for their undulated support.

me. I am never going to stop working, and like a soldier I will fight till my last breath.

Even now, in my individual capacity, I have written to and met with many people in various ministries to resolve the issues

"I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the honour that has been bestowed upon me. I would like to thank the Office Bearers & EC and members of IATO who decided to confer this honour on me. I would also like to thank my wife **Gursharn Goyal**, who stood by me like a rock. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the Past Presidents and EC Members, particularly those who are no longer with us," he said in his acceptance speech.

I will continue to leave no stone unturned to make India realise its true potential

He claimed that without everyone's help and guidance, "We could not have got the open skies for domestic and international air travel, we could not have got the visa on arrival or a tourist visa implemented. Also, we could not have got service tax suspended for two years."

of the industry. Till the last day of my life, I will continue to leave no stone unturned to make India, realise its true potential of being the greatest tourist place in the world and through this we will be able to create millions of jobs, eradicate poverty and make India, the country of dreams," he says. ▶

Restarting MICE business

Travel MICE Show saw hotels, corporates make new business connections and look forward to 2022 with positivity. With attendance 50 corporates and 1,250 meetings in two days, participants engaged in meaningful interaction.



Travel MICE Show at The Surya New Delhi

Janice Alyosius

The 6th edition of the Travel MICE Show this year was organised on December 16 and 17 at The Surya New Delhi.

The show entailed pan-Indian 50 corporates and 1250 meetings in two days. The interactions between the corporate and MICE specialists concluded successfully. The event got positive response

from the buyers and exhibitors. Participants were delighted to be attending the event and exchanging information. The MICE show provided a platform for hotels, corporates and MICE groups

to explore business opportunities and make new connections. The buyers and exhibitors showed optimism for the coming year, 2022, and they look forward to restarting MICE. ▶

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Ms. Meena Bhatia
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Hopes ride high at IATO convention

The IATO convention concluded successfully at the Leela Gandhinagar from December 16 to 19, 2021 with a whopping 740 attendees from across the country, including representatives from the government, state tourism boards, hotels, airlines and IATO members.



Nisha Verma

An air of positivity floated around at the Leela Gandhinagar, which saw attendees for the 36th IATO Convention descend from across the country. The three-day convention began on a high note with **Bhupendrabhai Patel**, CM, Gujarat inaugurating the convention alongside **G Kamala Vardhan Rao**, DG, MOT, **Hareet Shukla**,



Inauguration of the 36th IATO Annual Convention held at The Leela Gandhinagar in Gujarat

of the pandemic into a comeback. With the various offerings of Gujarat, we plan to make it a global hub of tourism." Mehra shared that a total of 740 delegates attended the convention.

Day 2 of the convention started with the IATO Run for Responsible Tourism. The session 'Hotels in the New Normal', grabbed attention and saw in presence the head honchos of the hospitality chains in India. One achievement of this discussion was special rates for IATO members and travel agents by IHCL with a promo code. This is being worked out by IHCL and will be announced by first week of January 2022.

The convention had senior officials from the Centre in the panel discussions and in the valedictory session, including, **Rakesh Kumar Verma**, AS, Tourism; **Rupinder Brar**, ADG, Tourism; **Rajiv Jalota**, Chairman Mumbai Port Trust and **Raj Muthuraj**, ADG, DGFT. From the State Governments there was **SK Srivastava**, Dept. of Forests & Environment, Gujarat; **Shilpa Gupta**, Addl. MD, MP Tourism Board; **Manoj Kumar**, MD, Jungle Lodges & Resort, Govt. of Karnataka; **GS Itoo**, Director, Kashmir Tourism; **Rajiv Jain**, Addl. GM, IRCTC and **Dr. Abhay Sinha**, DG, Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC). From the private sector, there was **Sanjay Kumar**,

Chief Strategy & Revenue Officer, IndiGo; **Nakul Anand**, Executive Director, ITC Hotels & Chairman FAITH; **Puneet Chhatwal**, MD & CEO, IHCL; **Anuraag Bhatnagar**, COO, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts; **Ajay Bakaya**, MD, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts and **CA Talati**, Chairman SEPC. Also, renowned film actor **Ashish Vidyarthi** conducted the motivational session.

Concluding the convention, Mehra said, "A lot was discussed during the three days of the convention and we will forward a copy to the MOT with our suggestions and to seek their help in the areas that may need interventions."

In line with the theme 'Brand India- Road to Recovery', we need to work for turning the setback of the COVID into a comeback

— Bhupendrabhai Patel

Secretary, Gujarat Tourism with **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO and other office bearers. Addressing the audience, Patel said, "In line with the theme-'Brand India-Road to Recovery', we need to work towards turning the setback

Rising up to the occasion

Rakesh Verma, Additional Secretary, Tourism, shares details on the five missions that will be an integral part of National Tourism Policy to make the sector (tour operators) competitive. The aim is also to make tourism sector sustainable.



Nisha Verma

Rakesh Verma participated in the 36th IATO convention, where he was part of a panel discussion on digital marketing. Speaking of the same, he stated that the convention deliberated on important post-pandemic issues. The overall theme was Road to Recovery, and within that they discussed the challenges faced by the sector, particularly by the tour operators, and what measures need to be taken, both by the industry and the government.

"They are compiling their recommendations based on the deliberations held at the convention and will be sharing those with the government and the Ministry of Tourism will take them forward," he said.



Rakesh Verma
Additional Secretary, Tourism

National Tourism Policy

Speaking at length about the new National Tourism Policy, Verma shared, "MoT has been thinking of bringing a new tourism policy and, with the backdrop of the pandemic and its impact on the sector, MoT has come up with a draft National Tourism Policy, which tries to bring new structural

changes to the sector and also lays down an ambitious framework for tourism growth in the coming decades."

He revealed that the draft policy has five missions at its core. "First is the National Green Tourism Mission, which looks at mainstreaming sustainability in the tourism sector because that's a key challenge the sector faces and it is also one of the lessons from the pandemic that we need to develop tourism on sustainable and responsible lines. The second is the National Digital Tourism Mission, because the digitalisation of the sector would unleash more opportunities. It can really make our sector more competitive.

"The third mission or pillar is the Tourism and Hospitality

Sector Skill Mission. Here, we are looking at skills as a general framework, but within that, the tourism and hospitality sectors need to be aligned with the skill development framework, so that the sector will be ready from the supply side of manpower. This will make sure that we get employable young graduates and young people to serve in the sector, who can exploit the potential of opportunities that are offered by the tourism and hospitality sectors."

The fourth mission is about destination management. "This is also crucial for the growth and development of destinations. The idea is to make sure that the public agencies and private agencies at the destination jointly work together to bring all

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TRAVTALK

VIEWPOINT

Evolve, but with safety

The last thing I want is to write the first editorial of the year on a negative note, so I decided to dive into the lessons learnt and discuss travel preparedness for the new variant.

First lesson, don't panic! Hasty decisions will cost a lot more than well thought ones. COVID is here to stay and so is our urge to travel. Finding the right balance will be most important. Lesson two, there will be an uneven recovery. We will have good months and bad ones, its best to constantly evolve. Lesson three, the travellers now want more. The focus has moved from budget to experiences. The holiday is now about making memories. Fourth lesson, promote safety. Every tourist wants to be armed with extra information on health safety and know that they can get help, if needed. Use this to rebuild trust. Last lesson, travel soon. While the time spent during a holiday has gone up in most cases, the time spent planning it has drastically gone down. It's more about travelling within 15 days.

Tourism is a lot more than just a holiday. It's impact has shaped many lives. The United Nations has often highlighted that with the right safeguards in place, the tourism sector can provide decent jobs, help to build resilient, sustainable, gender-equal, inclusive economies and societies that work for all.

Tourism can easily qualify as an engine for prosperity, a vehicle for integration, a means to protect the planet and biodiversity, and an agent of cultural understanding between people.

As one of the toughest years for tourism draws to a close, global tourism's commitment to restarting with a focus on sustainability, innovation and solidarity, can help drive the industry to greater heights.

2022 will be a year of great beginnings. Let the virus not hold us back. A WTTC report states that travellers are ready to explore and 2022 could be more popular for trips than pre-pandemic. Looking at get-aways, domestic travel has significantly outpaced global tourism & is expected to rise further in 2022.

While forecasting the future is always tricky, and 2022 is no normal year. To conclude, in words of the UN chief, "It's time to rethink, transform, and safely restart tourism".

Hello 2022!

Looking forward with optimism

In its research, Booking.com reveals a sense of optimism among Indian travellers, fuelling a hunger to embrace the New Normal and get back to experiencing the world in the New Year. Going on a vacation will become a form of self-care in 2022.



TT Bureau

Booking.com has forecast Indian travellers to make up for the last time due to COVID-19 outbreak in 2022. Now that infection cases are on the downhill, it conducted 'Travel Seven Predictions 2022' research, which revealed how people will be reigniting the travel spark in the upcoming year. The Booking.com has commissioned a detailed research with 24,000 travellers across 31 countries and territories, including India.

Travel to be part of self-care

Going on a vacation will become the form of self-care in the New Year, with more than 84 per cent of Indian travellers stating that travel helps them keep the balance between mental and emotional health. As per the

in 2021 with home and work lives blurred. With 76 per cent of Indian travellers claiming to have worked for more hours using less vacation days during the pandemic, we expect to see people setting their well-deserved out of (home) office messages in 2022.

Anticipation of the journey

After being 'stuck' for months together due to COVID-19, travellers will relish every moment of travel. The journeys undertaken in 2022 will be a moment to savor, with a majority of Indian travellers saying that feeling the sun on their skin (75 per cent) or seeing a water body improves their mood (84 per cent).

Time to branch out

For many, the pandemic meant spending time with our close

Key Highlights

- ❖ **Vitamin Vacation:** As per 84 per cent of Indian travellers, travel improves their mental and emotional well-being more than other forms of rest and relaxation.
- ❖ **Out-of-Office Reset:** In 2022, 77 per cent of Indian travellers' vacation time will be completely free of work.
- ❖ **All the First-Time Feelings:** In 2022, each of our 'first' visits will be a memorable experience, with 84 per cent of Indian travellers admitting that seeing a stretch of water of any kind instantly elevates their mood.
- ❖ **Community First:** 75 per cent of Indian travellers would enjoy an app or website that provides recommendations for areas where travel industry will benefit the local community.
- ❖ **Swipe Right on New Places and Faces:** While on vacation, 81 per cent of Indian travellers desire to meet new people
- ❖ **Just Say Yes:** 79 per cent of Indian travellers are more open to different types of vacation than before the pandemic
- ❖ **Embracing the Unpredictable with Technology:** 80 per cent of Indian vacationers believe that technology will be more crucial than ever.

People to re-ignite travel spark



research, 85 per cent of Indian travellers believe that having a vacation has had a positive impact on their emotional well-being and 69 per cent said they did not realize how important travel was.

Work-free vacation time

When the pandemic hit the globe, several homes became offices too. However, 2022 will see a rise in people controlling to re-establish a healthy work-life balance. Vacation time will be strictly work-free for 77 per cent of Indian travellers in 2022, which was not the case

friends and loved ones, but vacations in 2022 will be an opportunity to make new con-

85 per cent of Indian travellers say travel helps keep a balance between mental and emotional health

nections. As 81 per cent of Indian travellers want to meet new people when away, while we expect to see travellers using their

vacations as an opportunity to expand their usual social circles, with 77 per cent of Indian travellers looking forward to meeting people on vacation.

Adopting technology

Uncertainty will continue to be a constant in travel in 2022, and while we cannot change or predict each and every new surprise and challenge what fate has in store for us, people will embrace it. Having leaned on technology in a variety of ways to stay connected and inspired over the past year, the favorite Apps will continue to help navigate

the unknown on our trips, while 76 per cent of Indian travellers agree that technology helps alleviate the anxiety around traveling. Technology will continue to smoothen out unforeseen bumps in the road with increasing finesse and proactivity.

Meanwhile, Ritu Mehrotra, RM, South Asia, Booking.com said, "In 2022, it is our mission to make it easier for everyone to explore again, when the time is right. We will be there for travellers, offering the widest choice, great value and the easiest ex-

2022 will see a rise in people controlling to establish a healthy work-life balance. Vacation time will be strictly work-free

perience from anywhere and on any device, so people can reclaim their travel mojo and enjoy the unforgettable experiences this world has to offer, when it's safe to do so again."



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Durga Das Publications Middle East (FZE)
21-02, PO Box: 9348, Saf Zone, Sharjah, UAE
Ph.: +971-6-5528954; Fax: +971-6-5528956
DDP is printed, published and edited by Sanjeet on behalf of DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd., printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001
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A New Year, a new campaign

Claiming the IATO convention instils a sense of positivity, **Rupinder Brar**, Additional Director General, MOT, shares what kind of campaigns and events they are planning in the New Year to make sure that Incredible India's message reaches a global audience.



Nisha Verma

Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism (MOT) attended the 36th IATO Annual Convention in Gandhinagar and said the physical event of this stature is a positive sign for the industry. "The fact that the convention took place in physical form after Kolkata in 2019, is a good sign. It brought together people post-pandemic with ideas to drive Incredible India forward. It was a rewarding three days with different thoughts, ideas, and important takeaways. The need for convergence among different verticals was the message of the convention," Brar said.

2021 wrap-up

She believes that 2021 will be a year of preparedness. "By the time we closed the year, we had opened chartered flights from

October 15 and regular flights were to start from December 15. However, that has taken a backseat for now. Meanwhile, five lakh free visas are going out and a story being built around how Incredible India is away from the usual destinations, adding many more to the itineraries. The hotels and homestays have prepared themselves, and the trade is ready. It has been a year of preparedness and of using digital technologies. These are good signs for 2022," she said.

Prepping for the New Year

Brar said, "2022 should be a year of aggressive campaigns, both digital as well as through roadshows and physical events. It is time for people to come back and visit Incredible India."

Campaigns galore

She added that MoT is ready with a campaign that would

focus on India being a safe destination. "The content is ready. One promotion will focus



Rupinder Brar
Additional Director General
Ministry of Tourism

on India being vaccinated and the other will feature our hotels, staff, cab drivers, airports, roads and shopping malls communicating that the country is safe to travel in. We will be doing a soft launch on digital mediums initially," she shared.

She expressed that the most important thing to go out is the message of reassurance. "Also, there is a Namaste Campaign coming up, and details of the same will be shared soon. All these campaigns will power Incredible India, showcase new products, new destinations, locations, airports, highways, inland cruises and lots more," she said.

Event series

After wrapping up the ITM in Nagaland, MoT is geared up for many more events. Brar elucidated, "We are working on the State Tourism Ministers' Conference towards January-end in Delhi. On January 25, 2022, we will have a big event at Pochampalli village, recognised by UNWTO for rural tourism. The world's largest tribal festival, will be celebrated in Mulugu from February 16 to 19. We are going to bring sto-

ries and activities such as tribal food and traditions and the like."

MoT will be organising an event to recognise the women contributing to the travel trade and hospitality in India, added Brar. "The event will be held on

The IATO convention brought together people post pandemic with lots of ideas to drive Incredible India forward

International Women's Day on March 8, 2022. This event will be organised to honour the women who make a difference to the country and the industry," she informed.

Tourism News

Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former Executive Director, UN Women is Chairperson, World Committee on Tourism Ethics

V Vigneshwari IAS becomes new Managing Director of Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC)

Caesars Palace Dubai appoints One Rep Global as India representative

Ministry of Tourism starts destination based skill development training program at seven iconic sites

International passengers arriving at six airports from 'at-risk' countries, need to pre-book RT-PCR test

Swiss Airlines set to resume Mumbai - Zurich flights from 12th Jan 2022

Indians spent US\$ 12.6 billion in 2020 on international tourism expenditure and outbound trips: UNWTO

It's time for us to be brave

Contd from page 1

sector is not as much as it was in the last two years. We are using our digital platforms, publicity material and divisions to inform people across the globe. In fact, at more than 20 Indian embassies, we have placed our officers to deal with the tourism sector. Hence, these people are trying to propagate whatever steps we are taking in this country. We are telling people internationally about the health protocols we are following now.

Constant monitoring

While Rao realised the concerns of the inbound industry over the Omicron scare, he said that the government's intent at all levels, including at MOT, is to monitor the daily number of cases and the vaccination, which has crossed over 100 crores a long time ago. "We are looking at all aspects on a daily

basis and trying to see a way towards opening the aviation sector. A few days ago, **Jyotiraditya Scindia**, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, mentioned that our relaxation of international travel purely depends on the infection rates



G Kamala Vardhan Rao
Director General, Ministry of Tourism

We are telling people internationally about the health protocols that we are following in India now

and tour operators, was keen to give out cheques, realising the impact the pandemic had on the sector.

Takeaway

Saying that the takeaway from the convention should be confidence and courage, We should not lose these two things. Let's be strong as good days lie ahead. While the inbound season this year is lost, next year, hopefully, we will have a roaring recovery in the tourism sector of this country," he concluded.

due to Omicron. Hence, daily monitoring is happening to assess the situation," he added.

In addition, he informed us that **G Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture & DoNER, as part of the loan guarantee scheme for guides

As per Expedia's 2022 Travel Trends report: Travellers want the next vacation to be their Greatest of All Trips (GOAT), and are in pursuit of transformative and meaningful travel experiences and are more than ever, willing to splurge on their future travel.

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M!CE Show: A business hotspot

The sixth edition of M!CE Travel show bestowed as a business hub for corporates, travel and hospitality industry. The show provided a platform for the participants to socialize, make new connections and anticipate the opportunities for 2022. The long awaited two-day event concluded with a positive hope to reinstate business profoundly.



MICE show views rejuvenation

The Sixth edition of Travel MICE Show 2021 brought an eclectic mix of professionals from the hospitality and travel sectors together on December 16. With its theme of "Connect, Converse, Collaborate", the participants at the two-day show hoped to conduct good business in the New Normal.



Naveen Kundu
MD, EbixCash Travel Services

“There has to be a collaboration between suppliers and travel agents to ensure the cost are kept under control and offer a competitive pricing to the clients. If that happens, they will hike spending. Business is going to come back to the normal anytime in the next quarters in the New Year, once the pandemic subsides, hopefully. I see an increase in travel, meetings, and domestic conferencing.”

“It was a pleasure to see so many corporates at the MICE Show. We had a great panel discussion, and the MICE events are important for every corporation. I feel that in the coming months we will see more of the MICE events happening. Hygiene and safety will continue to be accorded top priority for all stakeholders in the industry worldwide. There should be a 50 per cent revival in the New Year 2022.”



Greesh Bindra
VP, Operations, The Suryaa, New Delhi

“It is wonderful to be at the Travel MICE Show. The international travel sector has been suffering for the past 18 months, but clearly there are several offerings on the platter and we are all looking forward to it. I believe there is a lot of scope for the hospitality industry to innovate. I trust the industry has to think beyond what they have been doing during the pre-COVID-19 times to succeed.”



Shailesh Saxena
Cluster Head, Wipro Limited
Contd on page 9 ▶

“The biggest challenge we face today is rebuilding ‘trust’. Every travel and MICE partner needs to work towards rebuilding ‘trust’ among travellers, clients, and employees. As an industry, we should focus on data, insights, intelligence, analytics, search engine optimisation and artificial reality. Keeping hybrid MICE events in mind, the hospitality sector should look at the return on investment than just the cost. From what I can see and expect there will be a 50 per cent revival of the industry in the New Year. I am hoping 2022 will be successful for everyone.”



Gaurav Narula
Global Category Manager,
Schneider Electric



Raymond LIM
Area Director
Singapore Tourism Board

“The MICE Show gave a platform to reach out to the corporates and help them understand our programmes in a better manner. We will get to know their concerns in the new environment and seek to deliver them. We must continue to be innovative and creative using technology. It is always good to start with smaller groups and pay attention to details. We must be realistic and work together to face challenges such as COVID-19 and its variant Omicron.”

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Gathering of M!CE professionals



MICE experts attracted by event



Pankaj Gupta
General Manager, Crowne Plaza New
Delhi Mayapuri Vihar - Noida

“The wedding segment has come back significantly. November and December have gone very well for us, and we expect January and February to be strong too. We are expecting good business in the first quarter of 2022. The hotels should start selling at their optimum price and get out of the ‘cheap price’ mind-set pushed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Selling at the right price is most important thing at the moment. We are hoping for a full-fledged MICE revival in the coming year. The main reason for us to participate in the event is to tell everyone that we are fully operational here and taking all proper safety measures.”

“It is a fabulous platform where you get to meet many hotels and travel agents. It works like a directory. In the coming two to three years, there are going to be lot of meetings and travel for corporates as companies want their employees to be rewarded. Though, travellers are looking for new experiences, and price is not a factor here. The industry should keep corporates up to date on the best deals, new MICE spots, technology, and destination advice. In the last six months we have done two big events with 3,500 packs travelling, because we believe employees need to be kept motivated.”



Santosh Upadhyay
Senior Vice President & National Head
- Corporate Services, Bharat Financial
(IndusInd Bank)



Major Aditi Mohan
Vice President, Head Corporate
Services, Fidelity National Financial

“Overall, the MICE show was very well-coordinated. The appointments were put together in a very organised format. The discussions during the show were also relevant, and the people who came for the show made a lot of sense for my organization. As we are aware, we have fallen back by two years due to the pandemic. So this has been a good start for us to be future ready and the New Year looks positive for our organization. But we have to be careful about COVID-19 variant Omicron. We have been talking a lot about technology, so I am very excited to see how well we combine destinations, travel, and leisure in particular with technology in general.”

“My experience with the MICE event was quite good. After a long time of interaction with the tourism boards and hotels, we are looking forward to more such events, which become an easy access platform for good business. We are expecting the central government to do away with travel restrictions in the New Year. We are hoping against hope that the travel restrictions get lifted and air bubbles open up. We are looking forward to that. With the double vaccinations and vaccine booster shots leading to a safer environment for travel, I also believe that for dealers and distributors, it is very important to maintain safety and hygiene after Corona virus.”



Vikul Goyal
Head of Sales and Marketing
Avanta Spirits



Sandeep Dutta
Marketing Manager, Korea Tourism
Organization, New Delhi Office

“I quite liked the platform because it's a closed-door event where everybody gets to meet everybody. This time the selection of buyers was corporates, which is actually and precisely what we were looking for at the moment.” We got the chance to make a healthy selection of buyers from different cities, therefore, we are definitely quite satisfied. We are optimistic about the coming year, 2022, and plan on taking a long-term approach when it comes to restarting the MICE. We want to start slowly and steadily. Therefore, we are keeping a window of one and a half years where we are going to promote the country of Korea as a destination for corporates.”

“There were several corporate clients who wanted to come to the MICE show and interact with us and wanted to know the way forward—how the hotels are implementing the guidelines and taking the business forward, and what they can expect in terms of safety and business plans for the New Year. Overall, it was very good experience. After a very long time, we gathered on a single platform at a physical event. We were very excited catching up with our colleagues and interacting and exchanging information with them. On the whole, the experience was very good. We are looking forward to more such events.”



Nishant Sharma
Senior Sales Manager, MICE,
National Sales, The Leela Palaces,
Hotels and Resorts

Inputs by Janice Alyosius

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Waiting for relief and recovery

The travel fraternity is looking hopefully towards the New Year 2022, charged with new energy and enthusiasm. Here is what stakeholders from different segments of the travel and tourism industry have to say about how they foresee the future. It is all about managing expectations.

ASSOCIATIONS

“In 2021, domestic tourism, ticketing, and some overseas packages started. But that's not enough for us to survive. We were busy in meetings with various ministries discussing the issues, and it was a tight schedule for us. If the flight curbs were lifted and we had scheduled flight ops, e-Visas, for the UK and Canada, and quarantine removed for Europe and the UK, we would have some work till April. We should have a good season if there is no third wave, from October onwards.”



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO



Jatinder Taneja
Vice-Chairman, PATA India Chapter

“Up until a few weeks ago, the New Year, 2022, looked very promising for the inbound business sector and travel trade. However, the new variant of Corona virus has generated uncertainty. However, we are still positive that by mid-2022, we will be able to witness some changes. We are in talks with FTOs and are finalising our contracts for 2022. Based on the responses from our operators, we can say they are keen on promoting India. The conversions and travel plans would depend on the severity and nature of the new variant.”



“We thought the 2020 crisis was going to be a short-lived thing. But this virus has settled in to play a test match. In 2019, we were hopeful that 2020 would bring some relief. Instead, we got hit by a second wave, which was disastrous. But most of our members have managed to survive, albeit with reduced salaries and staff. But now Omicron has ruined all hopes. So 2021 ended



on the same note as 2020 did. We are hoping things will improve because we cannot survive without government aid for long.”



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI



PP Khanna
President, ADTOI

“Having faced a tough time with no business in 2020, it was a sunny year for tourism, with steps taken by the government in providing COVID-19 vaccines to boost confidence of the public to undertake essential travel coupled with public cooperation and support. Inbound and outbound segments will see light of the day. The MoT and state tourism boards are proactive in promoting tourism and are taking the support of stakeholders to do so. We will keep activities of our association rolling and will have road shows and conventions with the support of states.”



“The expectation from the New Year is to move towards a world where COVID-19 which is no longer disruptive and lethal. We are optimistic that the toughest phase for the industry is behind us and things will only look upwards from here in the coming days. The plan is consistent with how we have approached travel in the last few years—to evolve constantly and



inspire travellers with authentic products. We have collaborated with our global partners and focused on curating itineraries that are impactful, purposeful, and responsible.”



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI



Vinayak Koul
Honorary secretary, ATOAI

“I think everyone in the industry would have the same opinion about what they are expecting in the New Year. Not just me, but I hope everyone in the world to get normal. We all want people to come out and travel, yet be safe and healthy. We want people to take more active journeys. COVID-19 has taught us in the last two years that life is not about being indoors and living in luxury hotels, the issue is all about nature-based holidays. I would say, hopefully, that the New Year 2022 will have people walking around in the wilderness, and starting to live and explore a new side of travel.”



“Many experts believe that international tourism will stabilise only by 2023. These realities should shape the planning and strategy of tourism and hospitality in 2022. It will be the year of building blocks for the future and utmost importance should be given to devising innovative policies for long term revival. It should be built on a robust PPP strategy and measures that encourage full blossoming of enterprise in hospitality sector. The government should thoroughly review the roadblocks sapling the industry's growth potential and remove them. In addition to this, the new Omicron variant has raised several concerns.”



Dharmesh Advani
National General Secretary, ETAA

“The tourism and hospitality industry is still in recovery mode and there are clear indications that travel will continue to rebound in the New Year. Many people are keen to travel within the country or to short-haul destinations. Besides, travel restrictions, including testing requirements and quarantine, are also forcing people to opt for domestic travel. However, we expect international borders to open slowly so that more countries allow fully vaccinated people to travel freely with. Business travel is also expected to get back to normal with borders opening. Travelling with friends and family will increase. We have high expectations for 2022 as a successful year.”



“Last year was very challenging for members as the laws and protocols kept changing, and every country had their own rules. The business was hardly around 15-20 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. Business travel has still not taken off, and intl travel is also still a challenge. The new team has started working closely with the govt. agencies. My focus is to give every member a platform



where they can learn and educate themselves. We are doing this by having focused, destination training at our meetings. This helps build better synergies between all industry stakeholders. 2022 will be better for all of us.”



Jitul Mehta
Western Region Chairman, TAFI



Pradeep Shetty
Jt. Sec., Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FH&RA)
Sr. Vice President, Hotel & Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI)

“We will continue engaging with the govt. for the development of the tourism and hospitality sector. The industry is still in survival mode, and hence our priority will be to intensify these engagements to revive the industry at the earliest. Over the next year, we plan to hold capacity building training and workshops to sensitise members on various schemes for MSMEs and FSSAI seminars on food safety. We are also charting out plans to encourage students to pursue a career in hospitality. We will reach out to industry stakeholders to join hands to improve the growth prospects of this sector.”



“The travel industry is innately optimistic and resilient, and we believe in 2022, at least from the second quarter of the calendar year, when we should be able to plan our upcoming inbound season beginning October 2022. The lessons of 2020 and 2021 would be put to use in 2022, making our businesses chart a growth trajectory once again. As a tour operator, we intend to add new destinations, introduce new products to our portfolio and to re-connect with our existing clients and establish ourselves in the new markets. We shall start behaving like start-ups and just be happy with that first ₹100 profit that we got.”



Prateek Hira
IATO Chapter Chairman, Uttar Pradesh; President & CEO, Tornos; and Director, River Rhapsody



Manmeet Singh
MD, Sky High Tours & Travels & Chairman, IATO Punjab Chapter

“The major inflow currently is from domestic tourists. We hope it translates to inbound too. Firstly, health conditions continue to be normal. Once the medical scenario is normal, businesses will grow. We expect that all segments of tourism start operating and that we get a good share of the pie. We have been training ourselves and our staff also to follow the new health protocols and request that all our co-partners in serving our clients and tourists abide by the set of new rules which were laid out for their protection. Secondly, and most importantly, the marketing campaigns should be stepped up.”



MP Bezbaruah
Secretary General, HAI

Optimism keeps industry afloat

“The travel and tourism fraternity is expecting the resumption of scheduled flights at the start of the New Year as the demand is higher. Due to limited flights, airfares are skyrocketing for all intl routes. We expect the hotels and airlines to be flexible with cancellations, and offer a full refund on last-minute cancellations due to COVID-19. They should not make all products completely non-refundable. Such convenience would help the clients book freely and in advance, enabling business to move. We see tourism boards giving regular information on COVID-19 norms for their destinations and expect the same from them in 2022 on a regular basis.”



Strengthening the pillars of Travel



Shrawan Bhalla
General Secretary, OTOAI



Rajesh Arya
Vice President, ADTOI

“The biggest expectation for the New Year for everyone in the industry is that things should be normal at the earliest. The association wants normalcy and have physical meetings in the upcoming year, just like pre-COVID times. We also plan to increase our membership and attend conventions, knowledge sessions, road shows, and FAM trips among others. We are also in consultation with the MoT & state tourism boards to interact with the association members to be able to promote their respective states. Hence, we request the Ministry of Tourism to extend their help in rebuilding the association in the year 2022, so that we can continue seeing the growth in domestic tourism.”



Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India

“The expectations of the tourism and hospitality industry are very high for 2022. I am very optimistic for the upcoming year, and I think we can take appropriate lessons from the current situation and expect good things to happen in 2022. The most important thing is that we need to ensure that our businesses are back to normal, which goes for every player in the industry. It's not going to be easy, but I am sure we would still be able to do it. However, it will take time because of the new Omicron variant situation, but otherwise it could be easier for us. I hope and pray that we will not lose this season. At least from January onwards, we can generate some business for the next four to five months, which will be good for survival and revival.”



EM Najeeb
Senior Vice President, IATO



Ravi Gosain
MD Erco Travels &
Vice President, IATO



Indian Association of Tour Operators

“We didn't have any business since 2020-21, but as soon as the news of the reinstatement of e-visa and the intl flights started coming, we started getting queries for 2022 and the later part of 2021. We still have bookings for the coming year and hope that the situation gets better by February, to be able to get some last-minute business even now. However, in 2022, I am optimistic that people will start making bookings for the New Year, even if the situation remains the same. At the IATO Convention recently, we have seen that the overall mood is towards recovery, and inbound operators are keen to get back to business.”

“We are hopeful that things will get better in the New Year, but nobody can say anything right now. For January-March 2022, we were looking to do some business. My company started getting bookings as well. Some of our clients came to India by the third week of November. They travelled and went back without any hassle. Bookings were there for December and January as well, which have now been cancelled. Some bookings are there for February-April, which may materialise if scheduled flights start. If quarantine restrictions for tourists travelling from tourist generating countries were lifted, then we could get something for the last quarter of our balance sheet and the year. Else, we need to look at 2023 to do our business.”



Rajnish Kaistha
Honorary Secretary, IATO

DESTINATIONS



Elisa Robles Fraga
Director, Spain Tourism Board

“Thankfully, we are now seeing some light at the end of the dark tunnel. At this point, the situation of outbound from India into Spain finds itself in a difficult space, but with a very positive outlook for the future. I am very happy to share that the interest we have received from the tourism sector is tremendous. Along with segments like FITs, couples, and millennials travelling to Spain, we are also seeing interest in segments such as MICE or group family travels. This indeed underlines the position of Spain as a safe tourist destination for tourists. We are providing all the updated information on travel to Spain via our TravelSafe website.”

“As we start 2022 with the evolving Omicron situation, we need to remain vigilant and put in place necessary safeguards to ensure travel safety and experiences at destination. We will continue engaging the travel trade and consumers to position Singapore as a must visit destination as travel conditions stabilise.

The city has added new attractions. These include the Museum of Ice Cream (MOIC), SkyHelix-Sentosa, Singapore's first open-air attraction that allows visitors scenic views of Sentosa and Southern Waterfront. We remain confident in the long-term prospects of Singapore's tourism sectors – both for leisure and MICE and business travel. We will work closely with our travel trade partners to present our offerings to their clients.”



GB Srihar
Regional Director, India
Middle East & South Asia,
Singapore Tourism Board



Pranav Kapadia
Global Destinations

“We already have a lot up our sleeve as we prepare to embrace the New Year with charged energy and positive enthusiasm. Having announced our membership to GTRA (Global Travel Representation Alliance) last month, we are in the process of bringing new and exciting global tourism products to an Indian audience. Furthermore, recently being appointed as the India representative for Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort, we have an exciting first quarter 2022 ahead and we are likely to announce two to three new additions to our portfolio. Also on priority, as soon as borders open, we want to restart our agent fam program. We are already in the planning stages for fams to Russia, Morocco, New Zealand, Mauritius, and Fiji, just to name a few. I am hopeful that the New Year would certainly bring new opportunities.”

“I will continue to be cautiously optimistic and would like to see the New Year 2022 to be totally different from 2021. Definitely, I believe the situation will heal much before the onset of the travel season, which will be a huge benefit for the industry. Apart from the fact, as an industry, we have to come together to help customers navigate the complexity of travelling in a post-pandemic world. The New Year will undoubtedly see new trends focusing on sustainable tourism and slow travel, with the travellers now looking to explore and soak up solo destinations. We will continue to reach out to all our customers of B2B and B2C segments by creating awareness and visibility for all our destination clients and products. I am, however, optimistic and hope to see the new opportunities for business with a lot of positivity in the New Year.”



Ellona Pereira
Head, AVIAREPS India



Sammy Yahia
Director of Tourism
(India & Philippines), Israel Tourism

“In the last year, there has been an increase in demand from Indian tourists to visit short-haul destinations. However, I do believe that it will take at least another year before outbound tourism levels equate to pre-pandemic travel from India. While the world is still trying to understand the full impact of COVID-19, the countries are being cautious about opening their borders and resuming incoming tourism. Travel patterns have also changed now, with travellers becoming more selective about the destinations they will travel to and experiences they can get. I am optimistic that the situation will improve next year, though gradually. Hence, I expect there will be demand for Israel. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the tourism team has focused on maintaining relationships with our various partners and stakeholders.”

“In Los Angeles we are feeling optimistic about the future. For travellers, there are more accommodation options with the opening of new hotels including the iconic Fairmont Century Plaza and a crop of boutique properties in Downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood. Los Angeles remains fully committed to the Indian market. To better help trade partners understand our destination, we offer a refreshed version of the L.A. Insider training program, found at insider.discoverlosangeles.com. This highlights Los Angeles with three chapters and educates the trade on selling and promoting Los Angeles. We also have a dedicated B2B Facebook page to keep them updated. Moreover, we continue working with the travel trade to ensure that itineraries are structured and customized to suit Indian travellers.”



Seema Kadam
Regional Director, India
Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board



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

“As we stand on the brink of 2022, we are optimistic about the future, especially as vaccination rates and consumer confidence surge. We believe that international travel has a very good chance of going back to normal. The Indian travel market will continue to be the focal point of interest for us at the South African Tourism. In the New Year, we specifically expect our new regions to be a big hit amongst Indian travellers, given the demand for open spaces or rural holidays and outdoor activities as travellers actively seek out socially distanced holidays. Reflecting this demand for offbeat, non-tourist experiences, we are packaging and selling itineraries that include the new regions of South Africa, which go beyond the popular cities of Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban.”

Significant challenges ahead

HOTELS

“The pandemic has affected the entire hospitality and travel trade industries equally. During the pandemic, we were expanding and adding hotels at the Leela Palaces, Hotels, and Resorts. We were slightly insulated and used this time to create opportunities out of this adversity. We opened three hotels - The Leela Gandhinagar, The Leela Palace Jaipur, and The Leela Bhartiya City. We used this time to bring in technology, hire some of the best talent in the industry, and set up our systems and processes in the organisations. We had brought in some cost synergies to bring in efficiencies. In 2022, we are working on very interesting and exciting openings.”



Anuraag Bhatnagar
Chief Operating Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts



Puneet Dhawan
Senior Vice President - Operations, Accor India & South Asia

“In 2022, we expect to close the RevPAR gap by 2019, which, incidentally, was a high point for the Indian hospitality industry in the last decade. We sense a proclivity towards personalisation of experiences, staycations at untapped leisure destinations, hybrid models for business and corporate meetings; an inclination towards intimate weddings, and small-scale, cosy social events will continue. We plan to primarily focus on expanding our luxury and premium brand portfolio in India with the Raffles, Fairmont, Sofitel, and Pullman brands. Furthermore, we look forward to some of our much-awaited new openings, like Novotel in New Delhi City Centre and Jodhpur, an ibis in Mumbai Thane and another in Hebbal, Bangalore.”



Sarbendra Sarkar
Founder & MD
Cygnets Hotels & Resorts

“In 2022, we expect the travel and hospitality sectors to do much better than the previous two years. With the vaccination percentage high for India, domestic travel is going to be the basis for good business. I expect better occupancy, more so because business travel will increase. It is expected that by April 2022, international travel will be back. I also expect better ADRs this year, which will drive RevPAR growth. However, by the second quarter of 2022, we will be in a position to assess what 2022 can be for the industry. I hope that there is no further pandemic wave which will allow the travel cycle to roll at full momentum and give hospitality industry the much-needed boost to balance losses faced in the previous two years.”



Hemant Mediratta
Founder, One Rep Global

“The year 2021 was surprisingly pleasant for us because One Rep Global was founded during the pandemic and currently has 14 clients. The last one year has been a year of growth and expansion for our company. We have just announced a new client on board-Caesar's Palace Dubai. Being an optimist, I believe that once Omicron variant will settle down, we have four or five clients in the pipeline who are ready to sign up. There is a beautiful London hotel coming up for out-bound very soon. There are also many more hotels in Europe and some other countries. Clearly, we are on the path that we envisaged, which is to be the biggest player in the ultra-luxury and luxury hospitality brand space, not just in India but in this part of the world in the next two years.”



JK Mohanty
CMD, Swosti Group and
Chairman, IATO Eastern Region

“The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) scheme by the Indian government has saved us during this pandemic. We are thankful to the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Finance for considering this. We utilised this pandemic period for Swosti in planning a new mega resort in Puri, on which work will start next week, and we hope that by 2023, we will be operating the first 5-star hotel on the beach in Puri. As far as Ministry of Tourism is concerned, they haven't given any importance to the potential of Odisha Tourism in their literature, publicity, and promotions. Odisha has been greatly excluded from their publicity campaign. We are speaking to the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism department in Odisha to take it up at the centre.”



Shilendra Mohanachandran
VP-Sales, CGH Earth

“In 2021, by December 26, we had our new hotel in Have-lock on the Andaman, called Tilar Siro ready to welcome guests. It's a 25-room hotel that has 16 villas. It's a new area for us and Andaman is an upcoming destination among Indians as well as for inbound tourists. For the year 2022, we do not have any long-term strategies because the situation is still volatile and one cannot say much about the future. However, we will continue our strategy of 2021 of wooing people travelling within India and within Kerala. Domestic tourism is here to stay. In terms of inbound, when the situation changes, we will change our marketing strategy for the overseas market as well. We are looking at 2022 with optimism and hoping that inbound tourism recovers faster.”

“The year 2021 was a global pandemic disaster for the tourism and hospitality industry, not just in India but across the world. We are hopeful that 2022 will give us some lease of life and hence we have worked towards having a successful 36th IATO convention in Gandhinagar, Gujarat and that to after a long gap of 20 months. However, now we are all quite disturbed because of the new Omicron variant. There are many challenges which are now plaguing the industry. We must overcome all these challenges and keep fighting to get back to normal. At the same time, we will be successfully doing more events, and we are hoping that 2022 will be a great year for everyone in the travel and hospitality industry.”



P. Vijayasathya
Director Sales & Marketing, Benchmark Hotels and EC Member, IATO



Zia Siddiqui
MD, Alliance Hotels & Resorts;
ABH Tourism & EC Member, IATO

“For inbound tour operators, the year 2021 did not prove to be very good, but it was good for domestic tourism. During the pandemic, it has been proven that a lot of people want to see their own country. It was during this difficult period that everyone got an opportunity to discover the various facets of India and experience its hospitality. This also means that we should not depend on one segment and must plan for multiple segments. I am sure in 2022, once international flights open, inbound will be very good, and between 2022 and 2024, it's going to boom for inbound tour operators. I am confident that by the beginning of 2025, we will be at the same level in terms of business as pre-COVID in March 2020.”



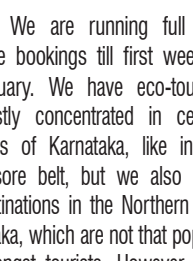
Jose Ramapuram
Director of Marketing
Evolve Back Luxury Resorts

“As we bring in the New Year, we believe that the worst period is behind us. Longer stays, a preference for private experiences, and an emphasis on sustainable tourism were found to be more commonplace in the last one year. We foresee these trends continuing into 2022, with rising demand for immersive cultural experiences, a strong focus on wellness during holidays, and dedication towards sustainable tourism by travellers. Travel bookings are bound to increase in the new year, and we are optimistic that the upcoming years will usher in that much-needed growth and stability for the hospitality industry. As always, our team will continue to follow all government mandates and guidelines with stringency for the safety of our customers and our staff, making sure that guests get a safe experience.”



Kush Kapoor
CEO
Roseate Hotels & Resorts

“We expect to see increased business-leisure travel in 2022. We will see more guests combining work and leisure during business trips. Hence, hotels will need to cater to these demands. Conventional customer-facing services will take a backseat in favour of the contactless, to contain the virus transmission. Mobile check-in or check-out and contactless payments will become order of the day. Hotels will deepen their efforts in personalisation by offering tailor-made customised services. Despite international travel resuming in bits, COVID testing requirements, quarantine protocols, airline price hikes and complicated bureaucracy have made some travellers opt for staycations. Till it regains pre-pandemic momentum, domestic travel and short haul staycations will top the vacationer's agenda.”



Subhadeep Datta
General Manager
Goldfinch Hotel, Mumbai

“We are running full and have bookings till first week of January. We have eco-tourism mostly concentrated in certain parts of Karnataka, like in the Mysore belt, but we also have destinations in the Northern Karnataka, which are not that popular amongst tourists. However, they are equally beautiful and offer a great experience. Hence, my target in the New year 2022 is to ensure that the tourists who are unable to get reservations in prime or popular properties can go to other properties and enjoy themselves. Hence, we are designing a package wherein if you spend two days at one of the popular properties, then you will get one day at another property. The idea is that all the destinations get equal attention and visitation from tourists.”



Manoj Kumar
MD, Jungle Lodges & Resorts

“Though we have good expectations from 2022, however at present situation is unpredictable due to the new variant of COVID- Omicron. We are hopeful that the pandemic situation gets resolved and inbound travel starts soon along with unfettered hotel operations in restaurants etc. As per current situation, 2022 might be slightly slow on inbound in the beginning however situation will not remain same. We are also optimistic that the domestic tourism will not be affected much. We are planning to launch staycation packages as well as food promotions in 2022. With the reducing number of cases and the fact that more and more people have got vaccinated, guests have regained confidence, especially in hotel brands which are known for their strict adherence to hygiene.”

Heralding new opportunities

“The first expectation is that this virus crisis dies down without any further harm to life or livelihood. Expectations from tourism stakeholders are that the basics of business are done right, done fast and with the utmost integrity. All countries should be open to vaccinated travellers with minimal basic checks. Do not kill the joy of visiting new places by placing hurdles in the name of safety. Technology stays an enabling tool and does not become a replacement for a breathing, feeling human workforce. The essence of handling and experiencing tourism should get stronger and pleasurable. Tourism business and functions, trainings, forums and such activities should become more effective for a meaningful impact to nurture newcomers and propel existing talents to the next level.”



Manas Sinha
Director, ISA Tourism

“We expect domestic tourism to continue booming in the New Year 2022 and room rates to further increase in the New Year. While room occupancies are improving at our properties, the rates continue to be soft. As long as the vaccination rate is high across the country, leisure travel will continue to grow strongly along with religious tourism. Once the fear of new variants subsides, business hotels will also pick up. However, now we see that happening only in the latter half of the year. In terms of the Renest brand, we will continue to expand in leisure and tourist destinations, focusing on the domestic market, which has shown a lot of growth in the last two years. Domestic tourism has proved to be a saviour for all.”



Vishal Lonkar
General Manager- Brand Development, Renest Hotels & Resorts

“While we know that complete recovery is a long shot, we are hopeful that with the onset of 2022, the overall tourism industry will go back to normal. While we are also adapting and accepting that the current situation is as normal as it can be, we can only be prepared for the unexpected and continue delivering the best to our capabilities. Also, the demand for business travel is expected to surge in the New Year, and tourists will also travel for longer durations and to further destinations. For the next year, since we are anticipating an increase in travel plans across the board, we will be introducing packages that will be a leisure traveller's delight. After 2021, we are hopeful and optimistic about the New Year.”



Sunil Kumar
General Manager, The Westin Goa

RAILWAYS



Rajiv Jain
Additional General Manager (Tourism), IRCTC

“While everyone says that 2021 was a bad year, I think it gave us time to think back and strategise our businesses and social life. In 2021, people wanted to move out, and we were offering them solutions, as we re-worked ourselves, and relocated at a lot of things. We accepted technology, and we were ready with certain packages. Things have been good since September. The sentiments of the passengers and tourists have been great. They have been responding very well. We plan to continue in the same spirit. As this sentiment grows, IRCTC's offerings will also grow, and we are treading with caution.”

CORPORATES

“The biggest challenge of today is rebuilding 'trust'. Every travel and MICE partner needs to rebuild 'trust' among travellers, clients and employees. As an industry, we should focus on data, insights, intelligence, analytics, search engine optimisation and artificial reality. Keeping 'hybrid' mode in mind, the hotels should look at the RoI on investment than just cost. Another challenge faced by hospitality sector right now is that corporate travellers are afraid to travel. Hotels should work towards removing the various touch points with the help of technology. Once we are able to win back their trust and instil confidence, there should be 50 per cent revival of MICE in 2022.”



Gaurav Narula
Global Category Manager, Schneider Electric



Santosh Upadhyay
Sr. Vice President & National Head - Corporate Services, Bharat Financial (IndusInd Bank)

“In the coming two to three years, there are going to be a lot of meetings and travel for corporates as companies also want their employees to be rewarded for their contribution. However, the travellers are now looking forward for 'new experiences', and price is not a factor in this regard. Most of the tourism and hospitality sectors are active, and in the past six months, we have organised two big events with 3,500 packs travelling. The corporates need to keep their employees motivated. However, my advise to the hospitality industry is it should focus on keeping the corporates up to date on the best deals, new MICE hotspots, technology, and destination advice.”

TRADE

“At TravelBulz, we are very clear that it is going to be a good year for domestic and international business. Charter flights took off very well at first, and then, of course, Omicron news came in, and hence it has slowed down a little. However, it's all packed for New Year and Christmas. We also have started to see test-and-go packages being booked every day now and the numbers are also rising regularly. Thus, it's quite a healthy sign, but again, we have to watch out for what we are going to face in January and February. Otherwise, I think Thailand, Singapore with the BTL flights is going to come back in a good way. In addition, I strongly believe that everything is going to build up to the second quarter of 2022, and things would look up.”



KD Singh
Founder and President, TravelBulz

“Travel is going to completely rebound in the year 2022, with vaccinations and booster shots creating greater consumer confidence. We expect our travel partners to encourage their clients to start planning their trips. Travel agents who can provide detailed information about the proposed travel plans to customers will be able to build their confidence to a great extent. We are helping many travel agents to go online by having their own end-to-end interactive website/customer portal to connect with their customers and showcase their products on a virtual platform. We are also building a 'Partner with Us' initiative for the travel trade and it is aimed to support our registered travel professionals to get access to global suppliers. We are confident that the New Year would bring new opportunities for the entire travel industry.”



Swapnil Shah
CEO, Tourwiz

“Business is going to come back to normal anytime in the next couple of quarters of year 2022. I see a huge surge in corporate travel, meetings, and domestic conferencing. Domestic travel would see a rise, both for leisure and business. Indian destinations have a lot to offer for corporates and they are getting popular. My advise to the travel fraternity and my colleagues in the industry is to stay relevant and no to try too much. One needs to stick to the basics, because in pursuit of trying too much, one can end up burning a lot of money and cash. It's time to preserve your cash and wait for better things to happen. I am sure that the New Year will be a precursor to new beginnings for the industry in all aspects. Right now, everyone needs to hang on and work towards a better future.”



Naveen Kundu
MD, EbiCash Travel Services



Homa Mistry
CEO, Trail Blazer Tours

“Unfortunately, the policies of the government are always knee-jerk, and we are working in a market that requires timelines. Hence, every time there is a policy change without notification, we can't plan. If they don't open up scheduled airlines, it's going to be difficult. As a company, we have learnt that focusing on only doing one segment is not going to be good in the future. Therefore, in the New Year, we are looking at multiple facets of doing business. In the absence of inbound business, we have entered the domestic market, and in a short time, we have successfully been able to develop some good business. Currently, we do not plan to do domestic business in the short term but want to continue it in the long term. We are hoping that the New Year would finally light up that road to recovery, which the industry is aspiring for.”

“The year 2022 is set to witness the rise of rural travel entrepreneurs in India. With the intervention of technology, aspiring entrepreneurs in the rural travel sector can now start their own business with effectively zero investment. This will not only open up new revenue streams for these new-age travel agents, but it will also result in higher profits and a greater contribution to the overall sector. In the New Year, rural travel agents are set to take the lead towards growth. With the assistance of technology, rural travel agents will now have access to tech-driven solutions for inventory, competitive prices, and direct aggregation from airlines, railways, hotels, and wholesalers. This will bring some much-needed order and organisation to the sector. The future certainly looks bright for this sector.”



Dilip Modi
Founder, Travel Union



Sunil C Gupta
MD, Travel Bureau and Chairman, IATO Northern Region

“We are quite optimistic and have plans to open three more branches of our company. We have been in inbound business for the last 35 years, but it's the first time we looked seriously at domestic, and the last five months have been quite exciting for us as a business. We have set up a team of 20 people to do domestic marketing and the results have been phenomenal. However, we have new challenges because our branches in Varanasi, which cover Ayodhya, Prayagraj, etc., are getting lots of advertisements and publicity. Bodhgaya is also coming up as a destination. Hence, a lot of new markets have opened up for us, and we are sure that it will do well. We are keeping our fingers crossed for the New Year and hoping for the best in terms of business.”

Contd on page 16 ▶



PRE-ARRIVAL

VACCINATION

Fully vaccinated certificate (printed)

- ✓ Travel with fully vaccinated guardians for travellers under 18

INSURANCE

- ✓ Travel insurance policy with COVID-19 worth US\$80,000 (coverage throughout the entire stay in Malaysia)

VISA

- ✓ Apply for visa if applicable

COVID-19 PCR

- ✓ 2 days before departure
- ✓ Printed Rapid Test-PCR (RT-PCR) COVID-19/ Rapid Molecular Test (RMT) result

PASSPORT

- ✓ Validity not less than 6 months

FLIGHT TICKET

- ✓ Confirmed flight ticket (return)

MySEJANTERA

- ✓ Download & install MySejahtera App for contact tracing
- ✓ Complete MySejahtera travel form

ITENERARY

- ✓ Detailed itinerary (ETA/ETD)
- ✓ Confirmed accommodation tours with tour guide (min 3 days)
- ✓ Travel with registered and licensed travel agent under Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture Malaysia

<http://www.motac.gov.my/en/checktobtab>

**All documents MUST be in ENGLISH*



ARRIVAL

ARRIVAL TO KUALALUMPUR

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT 1 (KLIA 1)

- ✓ Rapid Test-PCR (RT-PCR) or Rapid Molecular Test (RMT) is compulsory upon arrival
<http://airport.doctor2u.my>
- ✓ Transit time period should be at least 5-6 hours before the next connecting domestic flight to Langkawi

DIRECT ARRIVAL TO LANGKAWI

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (LIA)

- ✓ Rapid Test-PCR (RT-PCR) or Rapid Molecular Test (RMT) is compulsory or latest by Day 2



NEGATIVE

Continue with Langkawi International Travel Bubble



POSITIVE

Private isolation/quarantine /hospital

MYTRAVELPASS
NOT APPLICABLE



GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL TRAVEL BUBBLE



STAY

3 TO 7 DAYS STAY

- ✓ Only stay in Langkawi
- ✓ RTK Antigen (professional) is compulsory on day 3 and day 5
- ✓ Self Antigen Rapid Test is compulsory on day 2, 4 and 6 – self report in MySejahtera



NEGATIVE

Continue with Langkawi International Travel Bubble



POSITIVE

Private isolation/quarantine /hospital

MORE THAN 7 DAYS STAY IN LANGKAWI OR OTHER DESTINATIONS IN MALAYSIA

- ✓ RTK Antigen (professional) is compulsory on day 3 and day 5
- ✓ Self Antigen Rapid Test is compulsory on day 2, 4 and 6 – self report in MySejahtera
- ✓ Rapid Test – PCR (RT-PCR) or Rapid Molecular Test (RMT) 2 days before departing Langkawi
- ✓ Tourists are allowed to travel to other destinations within Malaysia after 7 days of stay in Langkawi



NEGATIVE

Continue with Langkawi International Travel Bubble



POSITIVE

Private isolation/quarantine /hospital



DEPARTURE TO HOME COUNTRIES

- ✓ Rapid Test–PCR (RT-PCR) or Rapid Molecular Test (RMT) done based on the health protocol of the receiving country before departure from Malaysia



NEGATIVE

Continue with Langkawi International Travel Bubble



POSITIVE

Private isolation/quarantine /hospital

For more details on the SOP, please visit our website:

<https://www.motac.gov.my/en/covid19>

*including list of countries subject to travel restrictions for LITB

Hotline: +603-88917189

Email: ukc19@motac.gov.my

For arrival in KLIA 1 ONLY:

TIC KLIA Meet & Greet

Tel: +603-87764720/21

Email: tic.klia@tourism.gov.my

Updated as on December 8, 2021

Industry shows new zeal

“People have already booked their holidays till September 2022 for domestic holidays, to take advantage of early bird airfares and hotels. The warning on new virus variants is disturbing, but there have been no cancellations of domestic tourism till date. People have realised the importance of double vaccination, which is going to be a vital point for the movement of tourism in India. Once the booster dose starts, there will be enough courage and encouragement to travel. India, as a multifaceted tourist destination, can provide beach, medical, hills, adventure, river rafting, pilgrimage, and so on. I wish to concentrate on experiential tourism products, which are a niche and have huge demand in coming years.”



Ranga Reddy
MD, Garuda Tourism &
Chairman IATO Andhra Pradesh
and Telengana Chapter



Deepak Bhatnagar
MD, Aamantan Travels
& EC Member, IATO

“We are core inbound operators, and we tried to get into domestic, but it was not easy. We had to give up after a certain time because the results were almost zero. We have been trying to motivate industry colleagues by claiming that this will pass and it would eventually come back to normal. Hence, we should keep afloat. While 2021 was not a fantastic year, we are always looking forward to it. We were hoping for flights to get started after the announcement of the e-visa from November 15. Hence, in December we had five to six bookings only. However, when the flights were withdrawn, all bookings were cancelled. The European bookings were cancelled owing to quarantine. We hope the New Year 2022 will bring more cheer to all of us.”

“In my opinion, let's stay calm and not have many expectations from the year 2022 till October. While I think something may change after Sep-Oct, but nothing much will happen before that. It's better to stay without expectations. If anything positive happens, it's a bonus, and if nothing happens, we should remain happy. We will move forward regardless of anything. Our industry will sustain no matter what. We Indians are very strong and can face anything. We will bounce back in 2023, but not in 2022. We must be patient. Let's stay calm in 2022 without having high expectations. For all of us, comeback will be in 2023, and for the next 10 years, India will rock. In 2030, we will be number one in the world.”



K Pandian
MD, Cholan Travels and Chairman
- IATO Tamil Nadu, Andaman &
Nicobar and Puducherry Chapter



Ross Masood Padiyath
Owner, The Great India Tour Company

“The last one year was tough for the entire tourism industry in India. However, the only redeeming factor was that slowly the market is picking up. Domestic tourism is doing well, which is a good sign. However, international business will take some more time to revive. At the UFTAA conference recently, it was mentioned that it is only in 2023 that we can even think of breaking even. All travel and tourism organisations, as well as their staff have suffered during the pandemic, but slowly it's picking up. Just like the 36th IATO Annual Convention, we are planning to do Kerala Travel Mart as a full-fledged physical event from March 24-27, 2022. ITB will be virtual now and I hope and pray that everything becomes fine and that the new COVID-19 strain doesn't create any more problems.”

“Initially, we were expecting some business in 2021, but a second lockdown happened in April-May, which proved further devastating for the industry. However, 2021 has given us a lot of time to prepare ourselves for the future. Now, we are looking at the year 2022. We have heard that the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is not that effective and severe. At the same time, we know that it is spreading fast, despite not being fatal. I believe that from February 2022, we should see tourist arrivals of around 40 per cent. However, summer of 2022 should be normal, and business should be going back to pre-pandemic era, and things will be normal from September of 2022.”



Sunil Mishra
Director, Cosmos Travels and Tours
& Hony. Treasurer, IATO



Maharaj S Wahi
Chairman, Rudra Xp

“The pandemic was a huge setback for the industry because tourism survives only when there is peace and tranquillity around the country. The impact of the pandemic is huge because it happened two years successively and resulted in a multiplier effect. The government has shut its eyes towards a potential industry. We had to reorient ourselves to making a livelihood, and we stand because of the sheer strength and courage of our members. Hopefully, the latter part of 2022 should start travelling again, but under a new norm. There is going to be a paradigm shift in where tourism is going to be in the next 70-75 years. The focus areas are going to change, and we need to adapt ourselves, innovate, and be there.”

“While 2021 did begin on a positive note, there was a huge setback in the middle of the year. By December 2021, it all looked promising and we were very excited to welcome foreign tourists on our shores. Our company even reopened its branches in Chennai, Bengaluru, and all other places. However, with the new variant Omicron spreading, everything has just crashed and all plans went down. At the same time, we at Marvel Tours have moved into the hospitality sector as well. We have started new villas called Moksha Villas. In fact, now we have several villas around the state of Kerala, which is giving us a lot of business. Hence, the New Year made me wear a new hat to survive this crisis. We hope that in the New Year, things will start to get better for us, as well as the industry at large.”



Sejo Jose
MD, Marvel Tours and Chairman -
IATO Southern Region



Dr. Manoj Matta
Director - Oriental vacations and
Journeys & EC Member, IATO

“Year 2021 was a disaster for everyone, and the last 21 months have been without any business for all players in the industry including us, and personally, none of us could even meet our friends. This crisis made us realise that at this time, the most important thing was to stay alive. It is only then that one could think of doing anything. It is only then that we will be able to survive, revive, and thrive in our businesses. The future seems to be bright. We need to accept that in just one year, we won't be able to reach 2019 figures. However, even if the situation remains unchanged and the government opens up visas, flights, and other facilities, people would be able to travel, and we may surpass 2019 numbers in the next three to four years. I am very optimistic about the future of travel and tourism industry.”

“The financial year 2020-2021 was a learning experience for the entire travel and tourism industry. We have had enough chances to learn from what happened and understand the mistakes that we have made in the past and how we are looking forward to the days to come. In the New Year 2022, we are looking forward to having COVID-free tourism and getting back into action with full vigour and zeal for our respective businesses. After having a great and well-attended IATO Convention in Gandhinagar, we are looking forward to having the next IATO convention in Bengaluru, Karnataka in 2022. I hope at that time, tourism will be back in its full form. While we wait for flights to open and tourists to return, we remain hopeful towards a good future of our industry and everyone who is part of it.”



Debjit Dutta
Director & CEO, Impression Tourism
Services and Chairman IATO West
Bengal Chapter



PS Duggal
Executive Director, Minar Group

“At Minar Group, we operated tourist charters to Goa in 2021. We received our first flight on December 16 from Kazakhstan, which in the pre-pandemic times used to start at the end of October and continued through the season. This time, we only had one weekly flight from Kazakhstan and one weekly flight from Russia, which started on December 29. Earlier, we used to have around 10 weekly flights into Goa from these destinations, and that too on large body aircraft like the Boeing 777 or 747. Now, it is only 10 per cent of the volume we used to receive. Since we don't have any experience other than travel and tourism business, we are waiting for the skies to clear and things to improve. As Minar Travels, we represent 7-8 airlines as their GSA, and some of them have started flying again. We hope to survive this year too.”

“As a company, we did get bookings after the announcement of e-visa resumption, but things have changed after the news of Omicron variant spreading in various parts of the world. We are hoping that 2022 is going to be a good year, but how this new variant is going to impact is still unknown. Although I feel it's a knee-jerk reaction. However, considering the experience after the second wave, which saw multiple deaths in India, I think the government of India is being more careful this time. We are just hoping that the new variant dies down or slows down. While it's not that dangerous yet in India, but until our source countries don't get over it, and restrictions are not lifted, I don't think tourists are going to come to India. Hence, I feel after two-three months are gone, we can only look at some traffic by March 2022.”



Sanjay Razdan
Joint Secretary, IATO



Zahoor Qari
IATO member

“The year 2021 was not good for this fragile industry, but we have good expectations from the New Year because people want to come out of their homes and visit places. Today, in J&K, we do not have hotel rooms available since those going for international holidays from India are flocking our Union Territory in large numbers. In fact, Gulmarg is getting many high-end tourists, staying at its various hotels and resorts. We also think there should be more budget tourists in J&K. The Department of Tourism of the UT has also notified 78 unexplored destinations in J&K, which could result in itineraries going beyond the regular five to six days as well, so that people stay for longer duration. We hope that the Union Territories will have great business and that we will have a bright future in the year 2022.”

Banking on domestic tourism

“While there was no inbound business in 2021, there was some outbound that we did for our company. However, I believe that OTAs have taken away a major chunk of the domestic market from travel agents and tour operators, especially with everyone bent towards buying everything online in the post-pandemic world. Also, for outbound travellers, Maldives turned out to be very popular, along with Dubai, which now requires five sets of RTPCR. I believe that we may not see mass tourism happening until the RTPCRs go away. I hope that in 2022 things will become normal, but at the same time, the Omicron scare is real and it may delay the recovery we are anticipating by some more time.”



Vishal Yadav
Director, Incredible Destination Management and EC Member, IATO

“In terms of the tourism industry, inbound tourism business proved to be zero in 2021 since international borders were closed. However, domestic tourism has been on the rise since scheduled flights were not operating apart from air bubbles and those going for overseas holidays couldn't travel abroad. I believe that in the year 2022, domestic tourism will continue to rise. From what we can anticipate from how things stand today, I am hoping that it will only be in October 2022 that inbound will restart and we will start our bookings. For inbound to thrive, many things are needed, including regular flights and easy immigration without quarantine or RTPCR requirements. Until all this comes back, we can only hope for the best while keeping our fingers crossed.”



Ashok Dhoot
Founder - Harsh Tour & Travels & EC Member, IATO

“For the last two years, inbound operators have just been sitting at home without any business. We have got a response from our partners in other countries that they are ready to travel and as soon as flights restart, they will start coming back to Kashmir. Owing to COVID and the closure of borders, thousands of domestic tourists came to Kashmir. In fact, hotels in Kashmir are already half sold out for 2022 as well. Hence, we are expecting a good number of tourists in the New Year. We also want budget tourists because 80 per cent of our accommodation is budget. A few more hotels are needed, apart from luxury transport. We are also going to Thailand for a roadshow in March-April if the flights start by that time.”



Nasir Shah
MD, Culture & Nature Expeditions Tours & Travels and Chairman - IATO J & K Chapter



S. Mahalingaiah
Director, Skyway International Travel and Chairman, IATO Karnataka Chapter

“In the year 2021, we could survive only because of domestic tourism, and we are sure that this business is going to bounce back in 2022-23 as well. We are expecting that in the New Year, we will have double the tourist arrivals and even domestic travel would keep growing. I am sure we will rebound and things will come back to normal very soon for the entire industry. With e-visa already reinstated for foreign tourists and scheduled flights expected to open very soon, I believe 2022 will see inbound coming back in a big way. I am hopeful that all that, which went wrong due to the pandemic, is eventually going to be a thing of the past and our travel and tourism industry would survive in the new times to come.”

CRUISES

“Cordelia Cruises has received a huge response & interest, and it has been encouraging and overwhelming. We expect the same momentum to continue in 2022. Indians have given travel the utmost importance post pandemic, and it will only get bigger. Destination weddings have become huge, and at Cordelia, there has been immense demand for the same. We look forward to hosting large-scale entertainment in the New Year for families, festivals, weddings, and more destinations. We would also like to add another ship and capture many families and weddings to newer destinations.”



Jurgen Bailom
CEO and President, Waterways Leisure Tourism



Naresh Rawal
VP Sales, Genting Cruise Lines

“We remain highly optimistic about the continued growth and demand for safe cruises in 2022 as we continue to explore new initiatives. We must remain vigilant in the face of a changing landscape and learn to adapt quickly in order to ensure that protocols are constantly reviewed and implemented. In addition, we are also actively in discussion with the various port authorities to create a 'Harmonised Cruising Standard' for the region in the hope of gradually re-opening international cruising in a controlled and safe manner with possible options to offer regional destinations in 2022. We also look forward to having more of our ships operate safe cruises in the region as we also make plans to welcome our Global Class ship in 2022.”

AVIATION

“We expect 2022 to be a travel-positive year. While Etihad Wellness will be a major focus, ensuring the highest standards of hygiene and comfort for passengers, we expect sustainability to take centre stage. The nature of aviation industry is quite dynamic and adapting with the times is the best way to weather any unfavourable situation. We plan to accelerate our focus on implementing sustainable measures like Etihad Wellness, with safety and hygiene being utmost priority, coupled with technological innovation and agility in response time. We have also launched a series of sustainable initiatives to reward members for making 'green' choices, providing them with options to reduce their carbon footprint.”



Neeraj Bhatia
Vice President, Indian Sub-continent, Etihad Airways

“Recently, the Secretary of Tourism Ministry, Arvind Singh, mentioned 10 key markets for inbound development for Indian tourism. Seven are covered well with a mix of Indian carriers (Air India and Vistara) and flag carriers of the countries in question. Three are totally unserved (Australia, Spain, and Portugal). So, is Air India looking at these connections? Madrid had been one of its routes in the past, but, with no date for return. Madrid invested heavily in the link with India. Outbound from Spain to India, will Iberia be interested? As for Portugal, TAP Air Portugal is in a restructuring process. In essence, can the new Air India work with the Ministry to push inbound to India from these key markets and sustain an Indian airline strategy to bring in the demand. In reality, they are markets unserved.”



Gavin Eccles
Managing Partner, GE Consulting & Advisory

TECHNOLOGY

“With 2022, all hopes will be converted into positive business for all our markets and partners. We are launching a new range of products, which will come with more functionalities, giving them more power and a special focus on mobility, because we want everyone, right from drivers, to guides, to the heads of organisations, and the customers, to be connected to mobility like they are connected to social media. That will be our focus throughout the year - simplifying the technology for all our customers and helping them penetrate and focus on cost reduction in their operations. Our key role would be to help them focus on their business while we take care of their issues.”



Syed A Asim, Director
Dbox Global IT Solutions



Santosh Sharma
Founder, Foresee Aviation and BookMyJet

“What we have observed during this period is that general aviation is booming, and we have around six private jets that have come into India now. People are looking at buying their own private jets. We are now focusing in a big way on BookMyJet, our app to book private jets. Considering the scare that COVID has created in the minds of HNIs or flyers, this market, according to me is in huge demand and the only thing that players need to keep in mind now is that they should meet the demand of the customers quickly, because the customer in our business doesn't wait. Hence, we are spending a lot of time on BookMyJet right now, and focusing on upgrading the technology, hiring people on the team, and trying to take this industry and our business to new heights.”

“When it comes to expectations from the New Year, as things stand today, we are quite optimistic about the future. At the same time, we do expect the same to continue going forward as well. We believe people will prefer short haul travel over long haul travel and we will explore more domestic destinations. We also believe that yields will improve for the entire industry in the coming year. We have been planning to enter the hotel booking business for some time, and we are expecting that it will be executed very soon. This new portfolio will surely complement our already existing airline and car representation businesses that InterGlobe Air Transport (IGAT) is well-known for. Overall, we will continue to be looking at the New Year to bring in new opportunities for us and we hope to do well.”



Sunil Talreja
Vice President- India operations, InterGlobe Air Transport



Varun Singal
Executive Director, Dex Group

“It's been rough times for the entire industry. DEX Group's business verticals operate within the travel, tourism & hospitality sectors. COVID-19 has had a big impact on our business activities. As the world learns to live with this pandemic, we hope to see the travel and tourism sectors make a big comeback soon with the restart of scheduled operations of international airlines flying to India. The Indian economy is expected to remain one of the fastest growing in the world; and the purchasing power of Indians is also expected to continue growing rapidly. These macro indicators are very favourable for our industry, as we look to recover from COVID-19 losses. Our focus will be on client retention and the acquisition of new accounts. Hopefully, it will also mean travelling again, which I sorely miss.”

Inputs by TT Bureau

Health & safety assured at

IFEMA Madrid will maximise health and safety at FITUR, its major international tourism fair, by following a strict health protocols for all the fair's participants. The forecast for participation at FITUR 2022 are excellent, with a fair representation and international involvement close to pre-pandemic shows.

 TT Bureau

FITUR 2022, to be held from January 19 to 23, 2022 will be a strategic event in the drive to boost the global tourism market and offer the entire tourism industry, a value chain scenario for the sector's recovery and growth at business and international level. The forecast for participation at FITUR 2022 are excellent, with levels of representation and international involvement close to pre-pandemic shows.

IFEMA MADRID will armor plate its health security, maximising all the measures that guarantee a successful outcome from the trade fair. In this vein, and in a context marked by Spain's high vaccination rate, FITUR 2022 will require all international participants to have valid documen-



tation, such as the EU Digital COVID-19 certificate for attendees from the European Union, or the relevant documentation to meet the official requirements at the border during the period in which FITUR takes place.

IFEMA MADRID has already shown the world that it is possible to host safe events — the FITUR trade fair was

held in May 2021 in a complex situation, and a rigorous protocol of measures and systems will be redeployed in 2022 to ensure the health and safety of all the exhibitors and the visitors.

Capacity limits will be observed in all the pavilions, with automated systems for visitor counts and a smart system for

the digital analysis of spaces, capacity and visitor behaviour, with continuous monitoring of crowds. Wearing of masks will also be required inside the IFEMA MADRID facilities as well as temperature monitoring for attendees as implemented at all its trade fairs.

Alongside all these measures, one of the safety features that sets IFEMA MADRID's facilities apart is its powerful advanced ventilation system, which guar-

antees total elimination of air recirculation, with a filtration system that ensures complete air-renewal every 20 minutes, a critical element in preventing the spread of pathogens. These steps are reinforced by the visitor flow management, the distribution of spaces to ensure safe social distancing, the availability of sanitiser dispensers and disinfectants throughout the exhibition centre, and the use of digital passes to avoid contact.

Organised by IFEMA MADRID, the International Tourism Trade Fair will extend across eight pavilions in the Madrid exhibition centre. With one month still to go, the event promises excellent

A rigorous protocol of measures will be redeployed for 2022 to ensure the health and safety of all exhibitors and visitors



participation — well above the expectations for the special event held in last May — with levels of representation and international involvement very close to the pre-pandemic levels. The trade fair will take place January 19 to 23, 2022.

Advertorial

VisitBritain gets ready for the Games

The event was part of Business & Tourism Program (BATP) where VisitBritain is working with Organising Committee of the Games and West Midlands Growth Company to ensure activities are aligned and complement moments that harness programme's objectives, derived from West Midlands Tourism Strategy, to raise awareness, improve perceptions and attract visitors to this region.



Etihad redefines air travel

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the UAE, was formed in 2003 and quickly went on to become one of the world's leading airlines. Etihad sees tackling the climate crisis as the most important issue of our time, and through strategic partnerships with major global aviation brands and OEMs, Etihad is relentless in its pursuit of industry decarbonisation.



The post-pandemic era has witnessed a profound shift in our attitude towards travelling. The sector is highly sensitive towards the impact of the Omicron variant. With many governments and health bodies constantly updating measures and guidelines, one thing has remained constant: air travel has completely changed. From prioritizing health and wellness, to making conscious sustainability efforts, the future of air travel is here:

Etihad has been a pioneer to launch new and effective ways of elevating its consumer's travel journey. Here are top features which distinguish Etihad as an archetype carrier transforming the future of commercial air travel:

❖ **Sustainable jet fuel, Etihad Greenliner and Sustainable50 Programme** - Exploring the use of sustainable aviation fuel has been at the core of Etihad's business for the last decade with the airline as a key partner of Abu

National Oil Company. Under its Greenliner programme, Etihad partnered with industry leaders Boeing, NASA and Safran on the 2020 ecoDemonstrator programme. As part of its newest programme with Airbus, Etihad introduced A350 into its fleet to further reduce carbon

Etihad announced an ambitious target of zero net carbon emissions by 2050

emission. Under its Greenliner Sustainability program, over the past two years, despite the challenges posed by Covid-19, Etihad has introduced several CO2 reduction initiatives.

❖ **The paradigm shift to greener skies** - Etihad announced an ambitious target of zero net carbon emissions by 2050, with an additional goal of halving 2019 net emission levels by 2035.



cyclable cutlery and plant-based water bottles and pledges to reduce single-use plastics by 80%.

❖ **Digital Innovation** - Partnering with Elenium Automation, Etihad was the first airline to trial an innovative airport technology to help identify medically at-risk travellers. These contactless devices also monitored the temperature, heart rate and respiratory rate of any person using an airport touchpoint. Etihad has



also updated its mobile application, allowing guests to manage their journey with even greater ease. The relaunched mobile app lets guests manage their details, book flights with voice search and enroll in the airline's loyalty programme. Uber and Google Maps are now also integrated into the app to direct travellers to and around the airport.

❖ **Flexible travel** - Etihad introduced flexible travel which permits the passengers to make modifications to their travel plans. The guests are entitled to more freedom and flexibility which lets them book with peace of mind. There's no change fee to rebook and the guest would have to pay only the difference. Etihad also introduced Etihad Credit, giving its guests the free-

dom to delay their travel plans by permitting a free cancellation and offering the original value of their booking to be used as credit towards their next trip.

❖ **Health and Wellness** - Etihad ensures guests safety and wellness through their Wellness Ambassadors. This 24/7 dedicated, multi-lingual team offers reassurance to customers by sharing advice on travel well-being and details of the health

and sanitization measures being implemented throughout their journey. They assist with safety



and wellness in-flight as well as on-ground at the Abu Dhabi International Airport.

❖ **Etihad Guest Miles** - Etihad Guest, the loyalty program of Etihad Airways, has launched a series of sustainable initiatives to reward members for making green choices and providing options to reduce their carbon footprint. Conscious choices, the new range of sustainable initiatives, aims to assist the airlines ambition of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

Etihad has also recently introduced Etihad World Pass which enables frequent flyers to travel with more flexibility. Etihad WorldPass is available for travel between the UAE and select destinations including the GCC, India, Pakistan, UK and Ireland. Guests can choose between booking a subscription to a single destination or a cluster, for example, all three Etihad destinations in Saudi Arabia. Frequent flyers and corporate travellers will benefit from being able to pre-book between 6 to 40 flights to use in a 12-month period at preferential rates, available in both Business and Economy classes.

❖ **Enhanced Guest Experiences:** Etihad Airways is always taking extra steps to make sure that the guest and the guest's family feel safe and sound when they travel. Keeping in mind the current scenario, guests can stretch out with extra legroom in Economy space or keep an entire row to themselves with economy neighbour-free. Etihad's Economy Smart seats on long-haul flights have a unique headrest,

adjustable back support and generous legroom.

Etihad has also expanded its business with the launch of charter and special flight services. Fully customisable, business and leisure guests can choose from a variety of flight options including a dedicated passenger service, cargo only flight or a combined passenger and cargo package.

Etihad's flexible travel permits passengers to make modifications to their travel plans

These charter flights provide a convenient alternative to travel, providing customers with the flexibility to choose the departure time, destination, and routing.

❖ **USCBP facilities**- The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facility at Terminal 3 (T3) in Abu Dhabi Airport is a purpose-built facility that allows US bound passengers to process all immigration, customs and agriculture inspections in Abu Dhabi, be-



Dhabi's Sustainable Bioenergy Research Consortium, along with Boeing, and the Abu Dhabi

Etihad further practices plastic-free flying by providing their guests with sustainable and re-



fore they depart. It is the only CBP facility in the Middle East, and one of only a few outside of North America. Etihad, the national airline of the UAE offers guests to clear customs and immigrations for the US at Abu Dhabi airport.

With the general sentiment currently remaining around fear and uncertainty, people's needs have evolved and so has the future of commercial air travel.

Aviation insights in New Year

What will be the new vision of Tata and Air India? On the global front, will the cities of Europe and North America be reinstated? Should the international vision of Vistara be integrated? 2022 seems to be throwing a lot more questions than answers, says **Gavin Eccles**, Managing Partner, GE Consulting & Advisory.

Recently, the Secretary of the Tourism Ministry, **Arvind Singh**, mentioned 10 key markets for inbound development for the future of Indian tourism. These are the US, UK, France, Germany, and Russia as the traditional markets, and Australia, Singapore, Spain, Portugal, Japan, and Korea as emerging opportunities. Seven are covered well with a mix of Indian carriers (Air India and Vistara) and flag carriers of the countries in question. Three are unserved (Australia, Spain, and Portugal).

So, is Air India looking at these connections? Madrid had been one of its routes in the past, but, with no date for return. For sure, Madrid invested very heavily in the link with India and supported a vision for inbound, even staging Indian movies in the streets of the Spanish capital. Will Iberia be interested in outbound from Spain to India? As for Portugal, TAP Air



Portugal is presently in a restructuring process, putting some challenges on new international developments as the EU sets forth the conditions of a "bail-out".

However, with the historical ties linking Portugal and Goa, could we see the new Mopa Airport with a direct flight from Lisboa and Australia? Qantas this week launched Perth to Rome on the new 'lets' fly direct across Asia to Europe' route, mirroring what they did pre-

pandemic with Perth to London. Is India on the radar? In essence, can the new Air India work with the Ministry to push inbound to India from these key three markets and sustain an Indian airline strategy to bring in the demand? In reality, they are markets unserved.

Abu Dhabi as a hub

Next up for analysis is Wizz Air and the Abu Dhabi hub. With the recent news from the Dubai air show on the massive order

of Indigo Partners (the US fund that owns Wizz) of 102 new aircraft for Wizz (75 A321neo & 27 A321XLR), how many will go from the European operation to the Middle East base. Can we see a strong connection from this key LCC into India? Watch this space. And, the way Wizz Air works in making money on ancillaries (in a recent study by IdeaWorks, Wizz was making more than 50 per cent of its total revenue from ancillaries, whilst Indigo was mak-

ing only 10 per cent). Also, it is ancillaries that make a low-cost airline profitable.

As people keep stating that corporate travel is slower to return than the leisure travel market, where does this leave the push from the

Air India pre-pandemic launched a Chicago service from Hyderabad. Will it return?

Finally, we have had much speculation about the new long-haul low-cost, 'fly pop'. Their website shows London (Stanstead) linking with seven Indian cities-a mixture of VFR and in-bound leisure with Goa and Kerala. It still says 'coming soon'. Whatever the outcome, for sure, Emirates and Qatar will focus on India and bring the world to India and India to the world.

Emirates and Qatar Airways will focus on India and bring the world to India and India to the world



Gavin Eccles
Managing Partner
GE Consulting & Advisory

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

Kia Ora Mumbai!



Tourism New Zealand along with Air New Zealand and Singapore Airlines recently hosted a networking event in Mumbai for key travel trade fraternity. The event saw attendance from the likes of Thomas Cook India, SOTC, Veena World, Kesari, Kulin Kumar Holidays, Ottila International, and Akbar Holidays.

Wyndham's open in Mohali

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, continues to grow steadily in India with the opening of the 80 keys Wyndham Chandigarh Mohali. This marks the second opening under the flagship brand – 'Wyndham' in the country.

TT Bureau

Wyndham Chandigarh Mohali, located at the crossroads of Mohali and Chandigarh, will serve both the local markets. Its convenient position, just six kilometres from

Wyndham Chandigarh Mohali features spacious rooms between 375 and 750 sq. feet in size, an inviting lobby lounge, an elegant all-day dining restaurant, and a modern bar. The hotel will also offer a refreshing wellness area, an all-weather

feet to 17,000 sq feet giving choice and flexibility to wedding as well as corporate guests. **Nikhil Sharma**, Regional Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts said: "The opening of Wyndham Chandigarh Mohali marks an important milestone for Wyndham as we continue our strong growth trajectory across Eurasia."



Inauguration ceremony of Wyndham Chandigarh

Chandigarh International Airport, makes it ideal for major events and corporate travellers. The property will also be great for sports fans, as it is adjacent to the Mohali Cricket and Hockey Stadiums and overlooks the Mohali Golf Range.

covered pool and eclectic entertainment areas. The hotel has a business centre, multiple meetings and event spaces spread across more than 25,000 sq. feet as well as expansive outdoor event space. Venues range from 5,000 sq

"We are proud and delighted to join hands with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts to bring this one-of-a-kind hospitality offering into Punjab. The Tricity of Chandigarh is the epicentre of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh' economic and social activity and we are delighted to bring a unique product to the Mohali market that caters to this demand. We have worked very closely with the Wyndham Hotels & Resorts Eurasia team to create a world class offering and service," said **Puneet Makkar**, President, The Mohali Club.

Star Cruises in Malaysia soon



Genting Cruise Lines, together with Penang Port Commission (PPC) and Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) has announced that the Malaysian government has granted approval for Star Cruises to restart operations in Malaysia on December 22, 2021 with Star Pisces offering safe cruises from Penang.

We are hoping and coping: TAFI

THE WAY FORWARD

Travel Agents' Federation of India (TAFI) president **Ajay Prakash** feels there is an urgent need for the travel trade to rethink as we enter the New Year 2022. We also must focus on newer destinations and do not leave opportunities to explore domestic tourism.



Hazel Jain

Recently, TAFI delegation led by its President, **Ajay Prakash**, visited Delhi to meet **Jyotiraditya Scindia**, MoCA and discuss the current situation. Prakash said of the meeting, "The minister has sound grasp of the business. Some of the issues that we raised were accepted by him. He said we have suffered enough from the pandemic, and hopes to help the trade. It was a positive meeting, and I am optimistic. He seems to be a man who knows his mind and can get things done."

The team also met **Arvind Singh**, the Tourism Secretary, and called upon **Rupinder Brar**, ADG, MoT. Singh said that some of the issues raised by TAFI were already on the radar and were discussed with the FM. He assured the department's support

for the next TAFI Convention, which will be held in India.

Sharing his views, Prakash said, "There has been virtually no assistance given to this industry by the govt. Giving one lakh rupee loan to an agent or ten lakhs to



TAFI delegations meeting with Jyotiraditya Scindia, MoCA, in New Delhi

TCS is an impediment

Some of the issues that were flagged have been taken up by Scindia, said Prakash. "For instance, the matter of tax collection at source (TCS), places the Indian outbound tour operators at a huge disadvantage, as the same package can be booked by the online aggregators who have an overseas registered, that can make a five per cent difference, which is huge. This is something that the Tourism Secretary said, is being discussed with the FM. The

government has other priorities right now with the Union Budget coming up. Maybe some of the issues will be taken up there."

2022 Prospects

Sharing his perspective, Prakash said, "COVID-19 is not going away. We hope that our government will look at issues pragmatically and slowly begin to open up. Due to restricted air capacity, the fares have shot up. Aviation moves commerce, and we need to get it back in the air. Nothing

can replace the value of in-person meetings. We are hoping for a national convention in India in early 2022. We are looking at the states that are receptive to this idea. We need to rethink, re-skill and re-orient our thinking. This means we need to explore newer destinations and look at opportunities in domestic tourism."

Jitul Mehta, Chairman, WR, TAFI said, "The Regional Director highlighted the schemes that the ministry is offering for tour op-

erators registered with the MoT. The focus for this meeting was domestic tourism. Domestic airlines and hotel brands were also part of the event. This is the first time that IndiaTourism and hotel brands other than IHCL have been part of a TAFI event." Mehta is now leading the Tourism Matters division at TAFI to create synergies between all tourism boards—international

The Regional Director highlighted the schemes that the ministry is offering for tour operators registered with the MoT

Jitul Mehta

an MSME doesn't help. It's too small an amount, and if there is no business, how will the businessmen pay back? So what was needed was a different kind of approach."

There has been virtually no assistance given to this industry by the government

Ajay Prakash

and states. This includes the latest updates, new destinations, creating itineraries, and educational tours.

FHRAI eyes Union Budget for relief

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations' of India (FHRAI) has submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations for the upcoming Union Budget 2022 to 23 to the Union Finance Ministry. In the recommendations, the hotel body has outlined some of the much-needed expectations of the hospitality industry.



TT Bureau

In its recommendations, the FHRAI has requested that the industry be allowed to carry forward business losses up to 12 years and avail the SEIS/EPCG (Service Exports from India Scheme/ Export Promotion Capital Goods) benefits without any capping or rate reductions. It also expects the Budget to provide an extension on the timeline for export obligations under the EPCG scheme and grant the industry, Export Status; inclusion of hotels and tourism-related sectors in the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP); special emphasis on promoting meetings and conferences at hotels due to the pandemic induced setback suffered by them; grant Infrastructure Status to hospitality industry; and provision of special monetary incentives. **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, VP, FHRAI, said, "We are requesting that ho-



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

tels and tourism sectors be included in infrastructure projects listed in the NIP set up under the Development Financial Institution (DFI) by the Ministry of Finance to promote infrastructure funding. This will enable the COVID-hit hospitality sector to avail funds with extended repayment periods at a low rate of interest. The industry's profitability took a massive hit due to the unprecedented pandemic conditions and expects businesses to post losses for the next few years. This may result in hotels

being unable to set off past business losses within a period of eight years, adversely impacting cash flow and RoI. Hence, we request that business losses be allowed to be carried forward from the existing 8 to 12 years."

FHRAI has stated that the sector is relying heavily on the favourable policies of the govt. for its



cent to 40 per cent, and foreign exchange earnings fell over 5 per cent year on year.

The FHRAI has also recommended that special emphasis be given to promoting meetings and conferences at hotels in India. **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hon. Sec., FHRAI, says, "Incentives should be offered to corporates for organising meetings and conferences at hotels in India. This may include giving partial or full tax exemptions to the corporations on the expenses incurred. This will encourage corporations to hold meetings and conferences within the country, which will be a win-win situation for both. Ex-

We request that business losses be allowed to be carried forward from the existing eight years to 12 years

recovery. Hotels, witnessed a huge decline in business, post 2007. Occupancy fell by 20 per

Some of the Recommendations

- ❖ Allowing hotels to avail the SEIS/EPCG benefits without any capping & rate reductions
- ❖ Waiver of secondary condition with regard to average FEE under EPCG scheme retrospectively from FY 2007-08 onwards
- ❖ Extend timeline for Export Obligation under EPCG Scheme & grant Export Status to the Industry
- ❖ Treat payments by foreigners in rupees as foreign exchange earned for the purpose of the EPCG scheme.
- ❖ Special emphasis for promoting meetings & conferences in view of COVID impact to business
- ❖ Granting infrastructure and industry status to the hospitality industry

penses incurred by corporates for meetings and conferences abroad should not be considered as business expenditure. This will discourage MICE events

abroad and help conserve foreign exchange while boosting the sales of domestic hospitality businesses and generate employment at home.

Owner of 4 World Heritage Sites

After Dholavira's inclusion in Unesco World Heritage Sites list, Gujarat is now home to four World Heritage Sites. These include Dholavira (prominent Indus Valley Civilization site), Champaner near Pavagadh, Rani ki Vav in Patan and the city of Ahmedabad, frequently researched by students because of its Gandhian legacy, have made it to the list.



The state of Gujarat offers a wide range of amazing attractions for tourists to enjoy the journey of unmatched traditions and culture of this land. Gujarat is gifted with locations that are significant in terms of natural beauty and spirituality. The recognition of the immense value of these heritage sites will add new dimensions of tourism to explore and enjoy. Today, Gujarat has a complete package of natural, spiritual, and heritage destinations to get ecstatic with their magnanimity.

Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park

This is a heritage site located in the Panchmahal district and is known as the Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park. The site provides a spectacular view of settlements from pre-historic to medieval times. The area was once ruled by the Khichi Chauhan Rajputs during the 13th century, which was gradually shifted to the Turkish rulers of Gujarat in 1484. Sultan Mehmud Begda decided to make this place a capital of Gujarat and many buildings were constructed during that time. Mughal emperor Humayun captured the place in 1535 and gradually the Champaner lost its glory in time. Today, the heritage site consists of the remains of fortifications, palaces, religious buildings, residential precincts, water-retaining installations, and

important attractions is the Citadel, which has a mosque built in the 16th century. The Jami Masjid at the east gate has fine stone carvings, beautiful pillared corridors, a spectacular courtyard, and multiple domes that offer amazing views to people. Other prominent mosques include Shaer Ki Masjid, Kevda Masjid, Nagina Masjid, Lila Gumbaj ki Masjid, and Minar ki Masjid. All these heritage monuments have a beauty of their own, which is incredible to observe. The infrastructure is finely designed with geometrical precision and aesthetic beauty.

Some important aspects of the place

- ❖ Most of the parts of the city are buried and unexcavated.
- ❖ 14th century temples and water-retaining installations are present.
- ❖ The Archaeological Survey of India works with the Champaner-Pavagadh World Heritage Area Management Authority to manage the affairs of the property.
- ❖ In the year 2004, the site was included in UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list.

Rani ki Vaav

Vaav refers to the setwells created at specific times in history to quench the thirst of people. Rani ki Vaav is located in Patan



beauty of the art and architecture, the great detailing in every corner, the geometrical precision and complex structures with great science behind them, makes one bow down to the devoted human beings who brought such a masterpiece into reality.

Rani-ki-Vav has seven levels of stairs to reach the water source. The well has a stepped corridor at ground level, floors with pavilions, and a water tank and well. It has several hundred carved panels, 500 principal sculptures, and around a thousand minor sculptures, all with great aesthetic ambience and fine artwork. It's a glorious example of how utilitarian work for society can be combined with the fusion of art, aesthetics, culture, and science. The craftsmanship depicted in the preciseness of infrastructure construction and design speaks a tonne about the level of attention paid to detail by people in creating something phenomenal. The Vaav is a classic example of how water resource storage systems were developed in India at various times. It has intricate technology behind its construction to utilise water sources in an effective way for people. With its authenticity, grandeur, and magnanimity of craftsmanship, Rani ki Vaav was included in the World Heritage List in 2014.

The Historic city of Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad is one of the four mega cities of Gujarat which have a vibrant flavour of culture, rich heritage, and contemporary lifestyle. The rich cultural heritage of the city has been preserved in its essence, which boasts of its glorious past in terms of architecture. The tradi-

also exhibits various important Hindu and Jain temples and other religious institutions. The 28 monuments listed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), one monument listed by the State Department of Archaeology (SDA), and 2,696 important buildings protected by the Heritage Department at the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) showcase the richness of heritage protected in Ahmedabad.

Sidi Saiyed Masjid, Three gates beside Bhadrakali temple, Delhi Gate, Jama Masjid, Various Gates of the walled city, etc. are some of the heritage sites of Ahmedabad to visit. AMC also organises heritage walks to facilitate a visit to various heritage places and inform people about the rich excellence exhibited by the architects of that time. This breathtaking construction and its significance in terms of the multicultural character of the city have ensured its inclusion in the list of UNESCO's World Heritage sites in 2017. Not to forget, one of the most important attraction in the city is Sabarmati Ashram, which spreads the message of peace and humanity as lived by Mahatma Gandhi ji.

Dholavira

After the inscription of Dholavira on the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list in 2021, India entered

the Super 40 club for World Heritage Site inscriptions. Dholavira is the 40th World Heritage Site in India, and apart from India, only Italy, Spain, Germany, China, and France have 40 or more World Heritage Sites. Dholavira is the first site of the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) that has been included in the list. The site is located in Khadir Bet in Gujarat's Kachchh district and represents the ruins of an ancient Harappan city. The site was discovered in 1968 by archaeologist Jagat Pati Joshi and excavation began later on to unearth one of the magnificent settlements of ancient times.

Dholavira is an example of a well-established urban settlement which is a walled city with a fortified castle, ceremonial ground, a fortified middle town, and a lower town. On the east and south sides of the forts, a series of reservoirs have been found. During excavations, various artefacts such as beads, gold and copper ornaments, terracotta pottery, seals, etc., and some imported vessels have also been found.

As **Ravindra Singh Bisht**, the director of the Dholavira excavations, once said, "The kind of efficient system the Harappans of Dholavira developed for conservation, harvesting, and storage of water speaks eloquently about their advanced hydraulic engineering, given the state of technology in the third millennium BCE." Various reservoirs with sophisticated water conservation designs have been built to store rainwater or divert water from other sources. Apart from the series of reservoirs, the site features hemispherical structures like Buddhist Stupas also, two large grounds, special burial structures and nine gates. A huge signboard with 10 letters written on it in Indus script, a giant bronze hammer, a gold wire, copper bangles, shell bangles, square seals, goblets, etc., have also been found during excavation.

With such a complex and yet technologically substantial water management system, urban planning, multi-layered fortifications, phenomenal drainage systems and, artifacts. Dholavira is an outstanding example of the flowering of human genius thousands of years ago.



the living village of Champaner. It is a beautiful amalgamation of Hindu-Islamic architecture that is sophisticated and authentic.

Hindu temples, mosques, tombs, and stepwells are the major attractions of the place. The presence of the Mahakali temple atop the Pavagadh hills draws thousands of devotees. At Champaner, one of the most

(Gujarat), which was built by Rani Udaymati in 1063 to commemorate her husband, King Bhimdev I. She was in lineage from the Solanki dynasty, and documentation from a Jain monk refers to the work of the stepwell being finished 20 years after it was commissioned in 1063. Stepwells are known for their grandeur, and Rani ki Vaav is also a work of fine craft. The sheer

Dholavira is an outstanding example of the flowering of human genius thousands of years ago

tional Indo-Islamic monuments from the 15th to 17th centuries, the traditional medieval residential infrastructure known as Pols, Puras (streets) and various religious places in Ahmedabad are significant in terms of the city's inclusion in the list.

The walled city of Ahmedabad was founded by Sultan Ahmad Shah in the 15th century on the banks of the Sabarmati river. The rich architecture of Islamic times is evidently visible in numerous tombs and mosques of the Sultanate period. The Metropolitan

WH Cheetahgarh launched

Keeping on the regality of the rustic charm and the state-of-the-art hospitality, WelcomHeritage brings in its newest addition of Resort and Spa - WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh in Jawai region of Rajasthan.

TT Bureau

In Rajasthan's Leopard Country, WelcomHeritage unveils the WH Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa. The property is located in the picturesque village of Bera, in the district of Pali, Rajasthan, and is stretched across 20 acres of private estate housing the roaring wild, a leopard habitat.

The property is located far from civilisation, on a vast swath of undeveloped land surrounded by the region's trademark undulating hillocks. Inside the property, there is a swimming pool, clubhouse, gymnasium, large spa, nature hikes, and a variety of other activities. To recondition, the Spa



offers a variety of treatments that include a blend of eastern and western therapeutic therapies.

The Rotela Cafe offers a wide range of culinary options. The food is designed to complement the decor, and all of the products are acquired locally. The Sunset Hill is a wonderful setting with wood-fired pizzas served on the

rock and a breathtaking view of the lake and sunset.

The resort has 18 luxurious accommodations divided into four categories: private pool chalets, garden view chalets, lake view cabins, and presidential suites. It also provides a diverse range of activities, including jungle safaris and Rabari village walks, spotting wild animals and touring ancient temples, trekking, rock climbing, cycling, archery, and a trip to Ranakpur. Bird watching, walking on a trail, learning about local culture and crafts, or simply sitting idle and enjoying in the majesty of nature are just a few of the numerous things available.



Murmansk re-introduced

Export Support & Tourism information centre of Murmansk Region & Official Tour Operator Aurora Xplore with Salvia Group, organized **Murmansk Business Mission** from December 6 to 11, 2021.

TT Bureau

Indian travel companies took part in a reverse business mission in the Murmansk region, the Arctic region of Russia. The Business Mission started as a FAM trip. The third FAM trip was organised with the support of Salvia Group, and large numbers of Indian tourists have begun to visit the region.

The delegation from India included 5 travel companies: Salvia Travels Pvt Ltd, Ebix Travel & Holidays Limited, Travel Boutique Online, Nix Tour India Pvt Ltd, Jetchoice Tours & Travels Pvt.Ltd. Participants got acquainted with the northern region tourist product, conducted inspection trips and met with local tour operators. "We visited many local attractions, monuments, hotels, cottages, restaurants, etc. Also experienced activities like – Husky Sledge, Reindeer Sledge, Snow mobile riding, Banana Riding, Fishing etc. To say precisely, the trip arranged can be considered



as a great success and useful for us," said **Y.S. Rawat** (Head Corporate sales & Operations) – Salvia Travels.

Representatives from the travel companies visited the largest city beyond the Arctic Circle - Murmansk, the coast of the Barents Sea in Teriberka, got acquainted with the life and traditions of the indigenous people of the North - the Sami and visited a modern ski resort in Kirovsk. At the end of the trip, an agreement

was signed with the Murmansk Tourist Information Center and a B2B meetings with local tour operators were held, and signing of framework agreements was done.

Murmansk is famous for pure snow, eternal twilight, northern lights, snow mobile, Husky Sledge, Reindeer Sledge, (In Winter), and the sun shines day and night (In Summer)! Murmansk FAM will help the tourism businesses to survive and adapt to the new reality.

Policy may fortify MSMEs

Contd from page 1

stakeholders together and set a strategic plan for each destination, making sure that there are no gaps, and all of them synergise their efforts towards developing tourism potential of the destination.

"The fifth mission is focused on developing tourism and hospitality MSMEs. We have a lot of small and medium-sized players in our sector. All of them are largely informal. The aim is to formalise that sector, to meet the requirements of MSMEs, to meet the requirements of their capital, and credit and digital scales. This mission around MSMEs will help us develop them to create job opportunities," he added.

He said that these five missions will provide a capacity for the sector to grow. "That's how we have structured our draft policy. We are in consultation with the central ministries, state governments and industry. With the feedback we will be able to finalise it

shortly. We will be releasing it in consultation with public or industrialists and may have workshops before the final consultation. Hence, in five to six weeks, we should be close to finalising the draft policy."

Overseas offices

Saying that demand generation is one of the important aspects



Rakesh Verma
Additional Secretary, Tourism

NIDHI and SAATHI

Speaking of MOT's flagship NIDHI and SAATHI schemes, Verma revealed that they have moved to the second phase, called NIDHI plus. "Here we will also take other tourism service providers on the platform as part of the National Digital Tourism Mission wherein we need to digitise data on destinations, attractions, and tourism service providers. We have now opened it to tour operators, and we are going to the next phase where our entire classification system is going to be revamped, and by January 2022, we should be able to complete that process."

The government has designated offices in Indian missions abroad for promotion and development of tourism

of tourism development and overseas markets in inbound tourism, Verma shared, "We have eight overseas offices for promoting tourism in those countries. Currently, staffing is a challenge, and we are sorting it out. Hence, we need to synergise the efforts of our offices and the mission officers to take inbound tourism forward."

Israel conducts 3-city roadshow



Israel Ministry of Tourism recently conducted its first roadshow in 2021 led by Sammy Yahia, Director of Israel Ministry of Tourism, India & Philippines, across three Indian cities to enhance commercial ties with the travel trade fraternity. The roadshows focused on outbound MICE travel were held in Chennai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata.

Green is the new black



ITC Hotels, the world's largest chain of hotels with the maximum number of LEED Platinum Certified Properties has been accorded yet another distinction by the USGBC (United States Green Building Council), making ITC Grand Chola, Chennai the largest hotel in the world and commercial building to achieve the LEED Zero Carbon Certification.

2022

Date	Event	Time (Virtual) / Location
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JANUARY

7-9	Holiday Expo-Coimbatore	Coimbatore
12	Dubai Accessible Tourism International Summit	Dubai
13	Cordelia Cruises Webinar	3.00 pm
17	Outbound Travel Roadshow Delhi	Delhi
19-23	FTUR 	Madrid
21	India Travel Mart	Dehradun
21-22	India International Travel Mart Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad
27-29	India International Travel Mart	Kochi
29-30	1165 th ICTTL	Delhi

FEBRUARY

3-6	Holiday Fair-Brussels	Belgium
4-6	Travel & Tourism Fair	Bengaluru
4-6	India International Travel Mart	Ahmedabad
5-6	Chicago Travel & Adventure Show	USA
9-11	OTM Mumbai 	Mumbai
9-12	East Mediterranean International	Istanbul
16-18	SATTE 2022 	Delhi
19-20	Vancouver International Travel Expo	Vancouver
25-27	The Outdoor Adventure Show-Toronto	Mississauga
25-27	Travel & Tourism Fair	Chennai
25-27	India Travel Mart	Panjim
26-27	Washington DC Travel & Adventure Show	Washington

MARCH

4-6	India International Travel Mart	Kolkata
4-6	India Travel Mart	Jammu
4-6	International Tourism and Leisure Fair	Poland
5-6	Travel & Adventure Show	Boston
11-13	India Travel Mart	Amritsar
12-13	Adventure Travel Show	London
12-14	Intourmarket - International Travel Fair	Moscow
21-24	PATA Annual Summit 2022 	UAE
29-31	China Outbound Travel & Tourism Market	Beijing
22	IITM Delhi 2022	Delhi

APRIL

4-8	ITB India	Mumbai
5-7	World Travel Market (WTM)	Brazil
7-8	CAPA Airline Leader Summit	Manchester
8-10	Azerbaijan International Travel & Tourism Fair	Azerbaijan
9-10	The Outdoor & Adventure Travel Show	Canada
11-13	World Travel Market Africa	Cape Town
11-13	International Luxury Travel Market	Cape Town
20-22	Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair	Almaty
26-28	IMEX Frankfurt	Frankfurt

MAY

3-6	ILTM Latin America	Brazil
8-11	Arabian Travel Market Dubai (ATM Dubai) 	Dubai
10-12	Asia Amusement & Attraction Expo (AAA)	China
18-19	Bavel Travel Summit	Spain

JUNE

6-9	International Conference on Tourism	Greece
9-12	International Travel Expo Hong Kong	Hong Kong
14-15	Aviation Festival Asia	Singapore
20-23	ILTM Asia	Singapore
25-26	CAPA Americas Aviation & LCCs Summit	San Juan

JULY

1-3	Travel & Tourism Fair	Kolkata
5-6	Travel and Tourism Fair	Hyderabad
28-30	Global Travel Marketplace (GTM)	Hollywood

AUGUST

19-5 Sep	IT&CM China (Virtual)	Toronto
25-26	CAPA Latin America Aviation & LCCs Summit	Kolkata

SEPTEMBER

2-4	Travel & Tourism Fair	Ahmedabad
9-11	Travel And Tourism Fair	Surat
13-14	CAPA Australia Pacific Aviation Summit	Australia
13-15	International Trade Fair for Travel & Tourism	Moscow
16-18	Travel and Tourism Fair	Mumbai
20-23	IFTM Top Resa 	Paris
20-25	Tourism Expo Japan 	Japan
22-25	Tourism Expo	Japan
23-25	Travel and Tourism Fair	Pune

OCTOBER

3-6	Adventure Travel World Summit	Switzerland
11-13	World Travel Expo (WTE)	Miami
12	CAPA Live – Environmental Sustainability	Virtual Event
19-21	ITB Asia	Singapore
28-30	International Tourism & Travel Show (ITTS)	Canada

NOVEMBER

4-7	Taipei International Travel Fair (ITF)	Taiwan
9	CTC Asia Corporate Travel Summit & Sustainability Expo	Singapore
7-9	World Travel Market London 	London
9-10	CAPA Asia Aviation Summit & Awards for Excellence	Singapore
24-26	TT Warsaw	Poland

DECEMBER

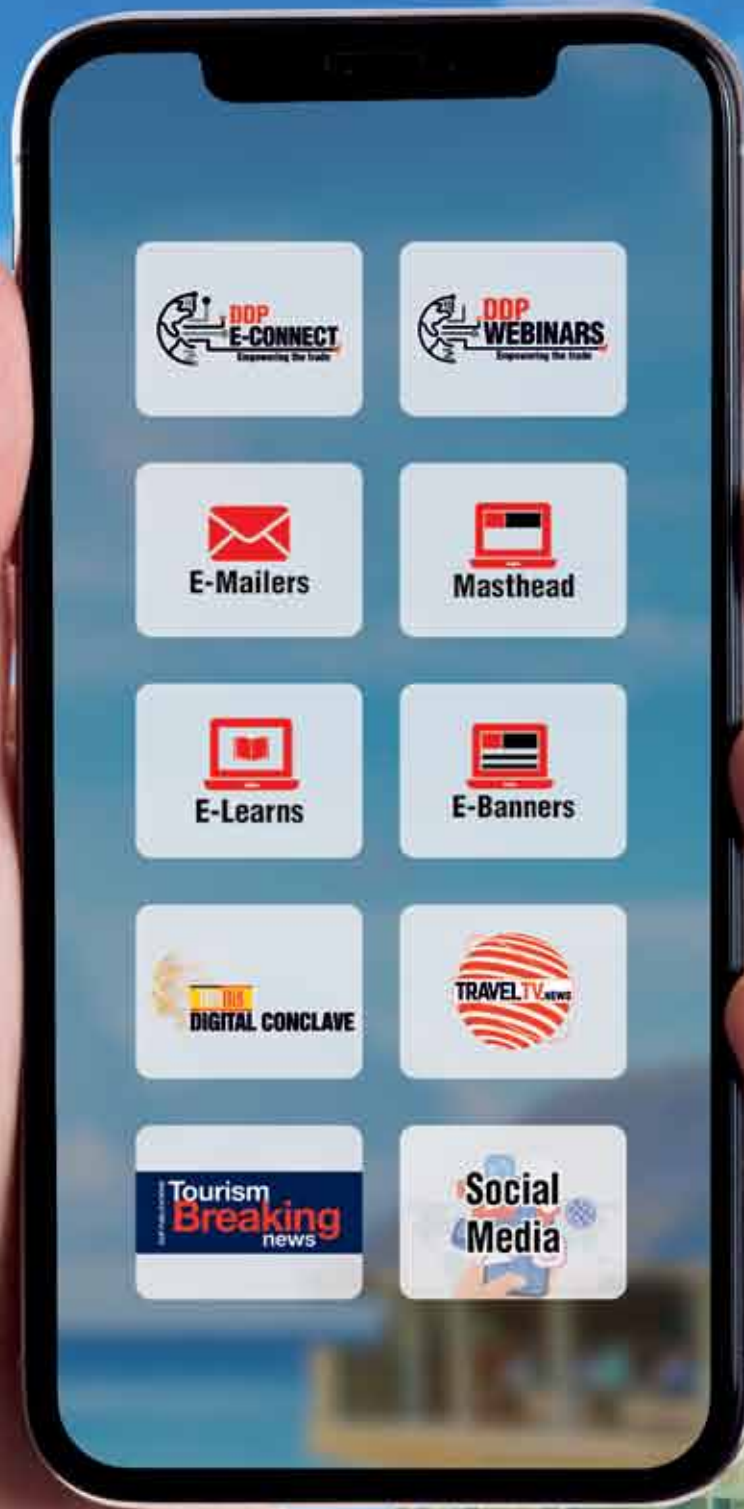
9-10	International Conference on Event Tourism and National Events	Poland
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For more details, contact: talk@ddppl.com

The dates shown on the annual event calendar are subject to change. Please refer to Event Talk in TravTalk to track the changes in dates.



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FHRAI

New Delhi

ABHISHEK KUMAR joins FHRAI, as the Assistant Secretary General. Prior to joining The Federation of Hotel & Restaurants Association of India (FHRAI), Kumar served as the Assistant General Manager at the Indian Direct Selling Association (IDSA). A communications professional with around fifteen years' of experience, he will help drive FHRAI's brand building initiatives and create avenues for enhancing the association's visibility across the media. With experience in liaising with government bodies, industry stakeholders and industry chambers, Kumar will be a value-add to the association's existing liaisoning machinery.



SUMMIT HOTELS AND RESORTS

Siliguri

SHIKHA KHANNA joins Summit Hotels and Resorts as National head of PR and Marketing. Shikha brings with her the experience of over 18 years in Tourism and Hospitality. In her new role, she will be guiding the Marketing team in establishing great relationship with the reputable B2B agents across the country. Summit Hotels and Resorts is the largest Himalayan Hospitality Brand known for premier leisure hospitality services. They cover the major eastern circuit of India namely Gangtok, Lachung, Lachen, Pelling, Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and Kaziranga and to a few other locations like Shimla and Manali.



THE LALIT ASHOK

Bangalore

DEEPTI KAPIL joins The LaLiT Ashok, Bangalore and The LaLiT Resort & Spa Bekal, as the Marketing Manager. She will be handling the overall responsibility of marketing, communication, public relations and promotions to enhance the hotel's visibility and presence. She brings an unconventional approach to her work, full of purpose and passion. Prior to this, she was with M.R.G. Group as a Corporate Manager and & has been associated with hospitality chains like Marriott, Accor and Radisson holding key positions in the same domain.



ATMOSPHERE HOTELS & RESORTS – MALDIVES

Bengaluru

CYRUS MADAN joins Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts as Senior VP, Business Development, India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal. With more than 25 years of hospitality experience, Cyrus Madan brings a wealth of domain expertise in working with brands, acquisitions (both land and hotels), hotel pre-openings and operationalising hotels. Based in India, he comes to AH&R from Lemon Tree Hotels where he served as Senior VP for Business Development and COO, Carnation Hotels. Started his career as a management trainee with Taj Group of Hotels in 1995. He holds a BHM degree from Mangalore University.



SIGNUM HOTEL ACADEMY

Delhi

PARNIKA BHASIN PANDE has been appointed as Head - Signum Hotel Academy. She has previously worked with hotel chains such as Taj, Oberoi, Sheraton, and Le Meridien. She has imparted hospitality trainings at Frankfinn Air-Hostess Academy along with Hotel Management colleges. She has been a soft skill trainer for reputed brands across sectors such as telecom, entertainment, retail, and apparel. At Signum Hotels, Parnika will lead the Company's soon-to-launch hospitality education initiative, Signum Hotel Academy.



LORDS PLAZA

Ankleshwar

VINAY CHOTALIA joins Lords Plaza, Ankleshwar as General Manager with an experience of over 34. He started his career with Hotel Ramada Inn Palm Grove as Front Office Supervisor, and also worked with K. Raheja Group Of Hotels, Leela Kempinski, The Pride Hotels where he started as Office Manager and went on to become Corporate Room Divisions Manager. He then worked as GM with The Cama Hotels, Royal Orchid – Golden Suites, Fortune Park Hotels and then to Intercontinental Hotel Group. Before joining Lord Plaza, he was associated with Mindspace Hotels & Resorts as Corporate General Manager.



ESPIRE™ HOSPITALITY

Delhi

SUSHIL AMLANI has been appointed as the Head of Business Development, with the Espire hospitality group, the owner and operator of six unique hotels. Amlani is an industry veteran with more than two decades of experience in Business Development, Hotel Operations and Sales. He has also worked with leading hospitality brands like Accor, Sayaji Hotels, Sterling Holidays and Best Western Peninsula. In his role as Head of Business Development at Espire Hospitality, he will be supporting the growth objective of the company and achieving the goal of 20 resorts in the next two years.



ANKITA DAWAR has been appointed as the Head of Marketing and Communications, with the Espire hospitality group. A hospitality professional with more than 14 years of experience, Dawar has handled marketing and communications for the hotels at both the corporate and the unit levels. Prior to joining Espire Hospitality, Ankita has worked with The Oberoi Group, The Hilton India, Shangri-La New Delhi and Radisson Hotel Group. At Espire hospitality, she will be focussing on building the brand identity, strategic marketing and corporate communications in line with the goals of the company.



POLO FLOATEL

KOLKATA

SOURMEN HALDER has been appointed as the General Manager of Polo Floatel, Kolkata - India's first floating hotel. After graduating with a degree in commerce, Halder started his expedition in the hospitality industry with a hotel management degree from RIHM Jamshedpur. With a career spanning over two decades, he gained industry exposure across leading hotel chains in India like Taj and Accor. Prior to being appointed in his current role, he was the Director of Operations at Vedic Village Spa Resort, Kolkata. He strives to bring out the best brand value and ensure that each guest leaves with their own bespoke Polo Towers experience!



TALKing People

BABITA KANWAR, General Manager, Le Meridien Goa, unwinds by practicing Reiki on herself and doing regular yoga. Interestingly, during the lockdowns, she discovered her love for stray animals and started taking care of family of cats in her society and developed a close bond with them. "They kept me sane amidst all the negativity around and became my extended family," she said. Her favourite international holiday destination is Norway. "In India, the heart is where the home is so I would say Bhopal is my favourite. My next holiday will be to Scotland, that I had to cancel due to the pandemic last year," Kanwar shares.



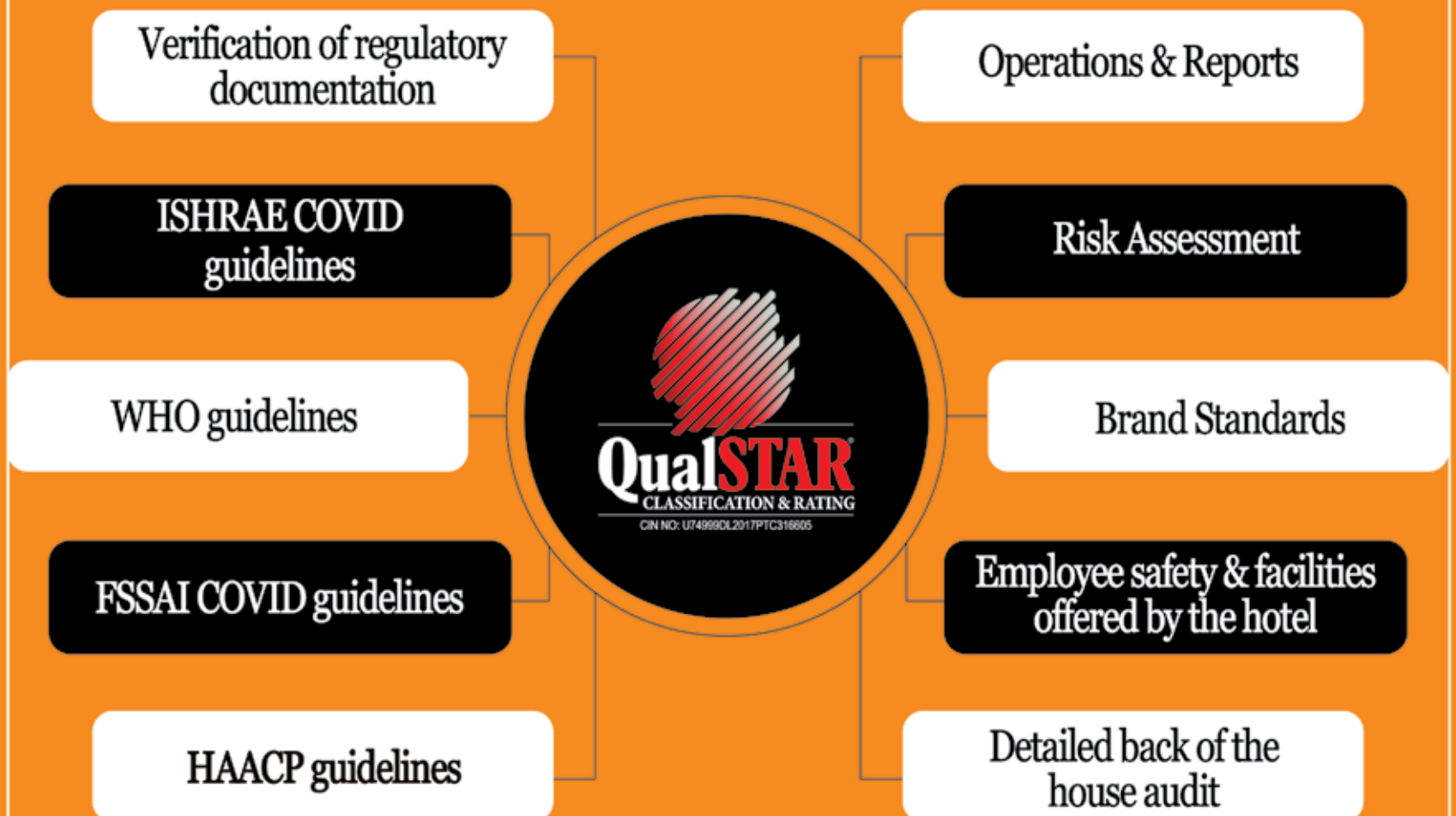
For **GAYATRI BIST**, GM, Novotel Kochi Infopark, cooking is a way to de-stress. "I find it creative and therapeutic and gives lot of satisfaction. I also discovered the love for gardening amidst the lockdown, as it is wonderful to see your plants grow and bloom. I also learnt the virtue of patience," she said. Her favorite holiday is doing a road trip to Leh. Bist also enjoys holidaying in Greece for its turquoise waters and breathtaking sandy beaches. "I am planning my next holiday to Switzerland," she shares.



URVASHI ANAND, Associate Director Training & Quality, Signum Hotels, is a big believer in fitness and feels that exercising is an underrated anti-depressant. "To destress myself, I exercise for minimum of 20 minutes a day. Lifting weights became an addiction during the lockdown. I enjoy listening to music. In India, she likes to holiday in Goa and Italy outside India. "My next holiday will be to the USA and Canada together," Anand adds.



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All about staying 'premium'

Puneet Chhatwal, MD & CEO, IHCL, believes that tour operators are a vital part of their business as they chart a growth trajectory under which they are opening different properties across their brands, and ensuring 'to serve' the community as part of their ethos.



Nisha Verma

Puneet Chhatwal recently participated in a panel discussion at the 36th IATO Convention held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat where, while discussing how hotels can walk hand-in-hand with tour operators, he agreed to give a dedicated promo code for IATO members to get rates for all IHCL properties in advance to quote to their FTOs in time.

Proud partners

Claiming that tour operators are an integral part of their business, Chhatwal said that they are an important source of international and domestic business for them. "As an industry, we have been able to overcome the worst, which we feel is behind us. I think there will be volatility in the short term, but eventually, the sector will emerge, as history has proven," he claimed.

Navigating the pandemic

While different companies have adopted different strategies to stay afloat during the pandemic, Chhatwal says that they have followed a very strong multi-brand strategy. "Today we have a portfolio of 230 hotels, of which 177 are in operation. Recently, we launched a property entirely run by women—our extended stay product, Taj Wellington Mews, Chennai. Every month we open 1-2 of our homestays—amā Stays & Trails. Within two months, we will have reached a portfolio of 60. Our recently launched home delivery platform, called Qmin, is now present in 20 cities. Overall, especially with the Ginger brand, there are aggressive growth plans. We are proud of the way company has progressed."

Ethos to serve

He also acknowledges that COVID has deterred their progress. "Some of our performance has been diluted, but we also indulged in the community service, based on the philosophy of the founder of the Tata Group, who believed that the community is not just another stakeholder, but the purpose of the existence of every business. We are proud of how we stood up to the occasion, served more than five million meals, hosted more than 100,000 bed nights and raised ₹ 70-80 crores. By taking salary cuts, we paid for all the contractual staff of different contractors

A dedicated promo code will be given for IATO members to get all IHCL property rates in advance to quote to their FTOs in time

who worked with us and were laid off. Hence, despite being hit financially, the pandemic gave us opportunity to reimagine, reinvent, restructure ourselves, and serve," he elucidates.

He highlighted that Taj was rated as the world's strongest hotel brand. "This shows that the market has given us a thumbs up on our values. Taj stands for trust, awareness, and joy, and what better time to have trust in our brands," he claimed.

Up and Coming

Claiming that they are bringing out new products almost every day, Chhatwal informs, "We just signed a contract for another Taj Wellington Mews. We are



on track to deliver one hotel a month, which can also become 1.5 or 1.3 hotels a month, depending on the lockdown or construction bans. We are a rapidly growing company, changing our business model every day."

Brand identification

Despite being lauded for its branding strategy a few years back, under which IHCL hotels were divided into a couple of sub brands, the company today is following a different path. "We have moved away from the strategy of a brand house where there was a bit of Taj in everything. Now, one wouldn't see the

Taj connotation with any of our brands, whether it's a salon, a spa, or a home delivery. One principle we maintained, is that in whatever segment we are positioned in, we must be premium. Just like Taj is premium in luxury, and this is the principle being followed without attaching the Taj connotation to any of these brands," he shares.



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