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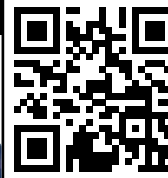
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'Govt helping cruise tourism'

First Incredible India International Cruise Conference 2022 laid emphasis on promoting cruise tourism in the country. It attempted to spread info about the government's preparedness to develop cruise tourism in the country and showcasing it as a desired destination for tourists.

 TT Bureau

Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) **G Kishan Reddy**, speaking at the first Incredible India International Cruise Conference 2022, held recently in Mumbai, laid emphasis on various tourism related themes and

discussions, which included 'Potential of River Cruising and Cruise Tourism: Success Stories and Destination Development'.

"India's 7,500-km-long coastline makes her a leader in the maritime sector. Our rich maritime history is evident from the sphere of influence our civilisation and culture has been able to create

across Asia. India's long coast is not only a key lever for building trade and growing our exports, but also an opportunity to promote tourism. India has long been known as the land of the rivers," he said at the inauguration of the two-day conference.

The conference presented ample business opportunities in India's

cruise tourism sector. The objective of the event was to showcase the country as a desired destination for cruise passengers, highlight the regional connectivity, promote new destinations and attractions like lighthouses, and disseminate information about the country's preparedness for developing the cruise tourism sector.

Reddy highlighted the efforts being made by the Government of India to promote cruise tourism.

Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH, also spoke at the conference and said that cruise tourism is one of the most vibrant and fast-growing components of the leisure industry. "India will be



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region

a magnificent cruise destination. With the participation of global
Contd on page 20 ▶

PATA brings SanJeet to its fold

SanJeet of DDP Group has been elected to PATA International's Executive Board. The announcement was made at the 71st PATA Annual General Meeting held in virtual mode recently. Peter Semone has been declared as the Chair of the Association's Executive Board, which also elected five other new members.



SanJeet
Director, DDP Group

 TT Bureau

Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has announced the new PATA Executive Board. **Peter Semone** has been declared as the Chair of the Association's Executive Board and replaces Soon-Hwa Wong, who was elected Chair in October 2020. The election happened

during the 71st PATA Annual General Meeting held virtually, in which PATA also elected six new members to its Executive Board comprising **Benjamin Liao**, Forte Hotel Group, Chinese Taipei; **Suman Pandey**, Explore Himalaya Travel and Adventure, Nepal; **Tunku Iskandar**, Mitra Malaysia Sdn. Bhd, Malaysia; **SanJeet**, DDP Group, India; **Luzi Matzig**,

Asian Trails Ltd., Thailand and Dr Fanny Vong, Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM), Macao, China.



They will be joining current Executive Board members Dr Abdulla Mausoom, Ministry of Tourism,

Maldives and Noredah Othman, Sabah Tourism Board, Malaysia.

Benjamin Liao and Suman Pandey were elected as the new Vice Chairman and Secretary/Treasurer, respectively.

On his appointment, Semone said, "Today, we are emerging from the most severe crisis to hit

our community since PATA was founded in 1951. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented devastation on tourism destinations and businesses across Asia and the Pacific. It is in these times of crisis, organisations like PATA play a critical role. Now is the time to rethink tourism in Asia Pacific. PATA is central to this narrative." ▶

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KTM reaffirms sustainability



The 11th edition of the Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) concluded recently in Kochi with an underlying message that ‘God’s Own Country’ is open for tourists. Inaugurating the event, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan stressed on sustainable and inclusive development of tourism.

Nisha Verma

KTM was inaugurated by **Arif Mohammad Khan**, Governor, Kerala, who stressed on sustainable and inclusive development of tourism. He said that prolonged restrictions on international flights owing to the pandemic had made Kerala attract domestic tourism to a great extent. “Tourism, apart from being an economic activity, was a cultural experience that transcended borders. Being conscious of the need for a robust partnership in reviving tourism, Kerala has ensured healthy government-industry collaboration in tourism, setting a win-win situation. The state is eminently qualified to become the premium experiential tourism hub of India,” he said.

Venu V., Additional Chief Secretary, Kerala Tourism, in his



Delegates lighting the lamp at the inauguration of 11th Kerala Travel Mart

address said, “I would like to acknowledge the fortitude and the courage of the tourism industry, which, despite a two year slump, has come together to do business again. I believe KTM will mark the turning point and we will all look back upon this mart and say that KTM onwards, the trajectory has been upwards. KTM has become bigger and more successful. It is a humbling and enriching experience for me to come back to each KTM, and see

how it is growing.” He added that the baton of managing this event, which is exclusively run by the industry, has now been passed on to a new generation. “KTM is using technology intelligently and effectively to make sure that the delegates’ time is used efficiently. Almost 55,000 meetings have already been scheduled. It is the spirit of innovation and change that has kept KTM improving from one edition to the next,” he stated.

Speaking about Kerala as a destination, Venu said, “Kerala is constantly refreshing itself. Delegates at KTM will be pleasantly surprised because of the wonderful new offerings. I can see a sense of purpose, determination and strength that has forged its own unique trajectory going against conventional wisdom. We operate small locally owned properties and believe that the community has to be at the centre of what we do. Tourism must contribute to

give back to the community, and we have to make every experience personal and intimate. This is the future of tourism industry.”

KS Srinivas, Principal Secretary, Kerala Tourism, said the situation was favourable for Kerala Tourism to regain its vitality and charm as other states were giving pretty good competition to Kerala. He added that KTM-2022 would set the stage for the state to showcase its strength in the tourism sector before a global audience.

VR Krishna Teja, Director, Kerala Tourism, made a presentation about the state’s tourism potential. “Unlike the previous edition, KTM 2022 has more specialised segments. We have sellers who are into core tourism activities such caravan, houseboats, Ayurveda, adventure, plantation and backwater resorts besides

wedding destination and MICE,” he said.

In his address, **Baby Mathew**, President, KTM Society, said, “Brand Kerala is being built over

It’s humbling and enriching for me to see how KTM is growing each passing year

Venu V.
Additional Chief Secretary
Kerala Tourism

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TRAVELTALK

VIEWPOINT

Outbound Rebounds

Soaring air ticket prices, not enough visa appointments and too many requests for that luxury holiday! Just the kind of problems every agent dreamt of two years back and finally they are coming true. Yes, the phones are constantly ringing and India is ready to travel.

At this point, if you are in the travel fraternity and can't feel India's readiness to travel abroad, you need to change your business strategy now.

India's outbound tourism has large potential despite the pandemic and has started showing signs of a glorious recovery. Six Indian airlines and 60 foreign airlines are connecting India with 63 countries this summer. Foreign airlines operate 1,783 weekly flights, while Indian carriers operate 1,466 departures every week.

Despite this, it is not easy to get a well-priced flight ticket. But putting things into context, before the pandemic hit, a total of 4,700 international flight departures were being operated every week from Indian airports — with the split between international and domestic being approximately 50:50. While there is a shortfall of approximately 1,400 flights, let's hope the winter schedule is more promising.

The other troubling issue is the difficulty in visas. By now, embassies would have sorted this issue and have a plan to scale up operations, but no such luck so far.

In May, we saw a mighty increase in trade networking, from events to exhibitions and parties, the industry is back with the bang and not many were missing. All the rumours about agents shutting shop seem to be untrue and it's good to see the beginning of the rise of India as a travel giant again!

The outbound tourism in India is set to see a considerable increase through economic growth. With a growing economy, young population and growing middle class, India could become one of the most lucrative outbound tourism markets in the world. Current projections show the national GDP of India will reach \$4 trillion, 50% higher than 2021 levels according to GlobalData's Macroeconomic database.

'Unprecedented' travel trends

Increase in connected trips, blurred lines between leisure and business travel, and an accelerated pace of change, a recent survey of decision-makers from airlines and travel agencies reveals how travel is different post-recovery from the pandemic.



TT Bureau

Travel will return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2024, believe over a third of airline and agency leaders, according to a recent survey on the global travel industry.

The wide-ranging study, Mapping Travel's New Normal, identifies prominent shifts in travel. It highlights the different focus areas for airlines and agencies as both sectors seek to capture opportunities for recovery and for future growth.

The study, commissioned by Sabre Corporation, a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, and carried out by Munich-based management consultancy Dr. Fried & Partners, involved both quantitative and qualitative research with 500+ decision-makers from airlines and travel agencies. Respondents were surveyed in eight languages across 20 countries in EMEA, APAC and the USA, along with in-depth interviews with selected industry leaders.

Participants were questioned about the COVID impact on their customers and their businesses, as well as the implications for the future of the travel industry. Key findings cover the differing priorities of airlines and agencies as both sectors prepare to address potential recovery opportunities and create new opportunities for growth, as well as differences in technological investment priorities by global regions. The findings include:

- ❖ More than a third of airline and agency leaders participating in the survey indicated that they believe travel will return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2024; a further third responded that they believe this will happen in 2025 or beyond;
- ❖ Survey results indicate that "revenge travel" – with the objective of making up for lost time – is a meaningful phenomenon, with 68 per cent of travel leaders responding that they are forecasting a higher



spend from consumers on their future travel plans;

- ❖ Travel leaders report that travellers are considering more decision factors than ever before committing to a trip;
- ❖ 82 per cent of airlines executives surveyed said that they expect the combination of business and leisure to be even more prominent;
- ❖ More than half of agencies surveyed responded that they are spending more time now looking into new tools, services and technologies; this is a particular area of focus in APAC, for 71 per cent of responding agencies;
- ❖ 92 percent of travel agencies surveyed indicated that they want the support of travel technology partners to create a more seamless experience in terms of shopping, booking and fulfilment, while 89 per cent said that they want useful tools to personalise travel;
- ❖ 96 per cent of airlines surveyed responded that they expect enhanced possibilities to offer growth opportunities and improved customer service and satisfaction scores.

Talking about the survey, **Darren Rickey**, Senior Vice President, Airline Global Sales and Accounts, Sabre, said, "One thing

that struck us as we were carrying out the research was the unprecedented pace of change in the past few months. This, of course, presents an enormous opportunity, but it also puts strains on travel businesses who must adapt their plans, processes and operations to address these potential changes."

Key trends identified by surveyed agencies in the new research include the importance of organised and connected trips to cut through travel complexities for customers; the ongoing prominence of domestic and regional travel and the challenges (and opportunities) for business travel recovery.

Meanwhile, for airlines participating in the survey, major trends identified include increasing consumer bookings protection; the growth of "bleisure" as a catalyst for potential corporate travel recovery and offering more sustainable flight options. The survey indicates that airlines are also focused on increasing domestic and regional routes as well as how

new product formats such as organised and connected trips can help optimise recovery opportunities while creating personalised experiences for travellers.

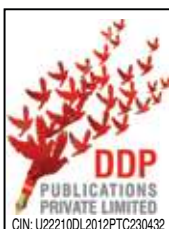
"Our latest Sabre research has highlighted a degree of optimism across the travel ecosystem," said **Andy Finkelstein**, Sr. Vice President, Global Agency Sales and Corporate Solutions, Sabre. "However,

Respondents were surveyed in 8 languages across 20 countries in EMEA, APAC and the USA

it also suggested that not all travel leaders may be ready for these potential changes if they happen quickly," Finkelstein added.

Survey highlights

- ❖ Two-thirds of travel leaders said that they believe travel will fully return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2024, with one third indicating that they believe this will happen in 2025 or beyond
- ❖ Study highlights retail opportunity for travel industry from travellers' spend on "revenge travel"
- ❖ It indicates that complexity is likely to become increasingly challenging for the industry with travellers now considering more decision factors before booking a trip



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Museums of India app will showcase 750 heritages from 8 national museums: Reddy

India focusing on confidence-building strategies to intensify tourism: Brar

It is all about 'ease of travel'

Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), along with Vistara and Accor, hosted some of its members for a Fam trip to Paris. The idea was to make everybody comfortable and see how easy it is to travel after the improvement in COVID situation. Some of the visiting members share their experiences.

“It was a great initiative and the group that was formed had very well chosen set of people. For me travelling after two years with a set of like-minded people, was awesome. It was very well coordinated. In terms of ease of travel, there was no problem at all. It was completely comfortable with no additional queues or extra time taken and no communication issues. The only problem is that there were not enough people travelling. One is used to busy hotels, restaurants, malls, roads, sites. Now, everything is waiting and ready.”



Geetanjali Alamshah
Director, Universal Journeys India



Himanshu Patil
Owner, Kesari Tours

“Paris is not new for the trade. However, the idea behind the Fam was to see the change post pandemic and how easy it is to travel to Paris after pandemic. There is absolutely no fear, no restrictions. The intent is to show our members that travel is opening up, and look at a city like Paris and a country like France, where they are welcoming Indian tourists and visas are coming quickly. I think it is an opportunity for travel agents to sell Paris or other European countries. We always try to do such Fams with our partners.”

“The Paris Fam had been in the pipeline since October-November last year. Unfortunately, with the COVID numbers going up in October-November, we had to postpone it twice or thrice. It was a joint Fam with Vistara and OTOAI. This Fam was a good start for 2022 because it was a destination explored by OTOAI members from the trade. We have seen that things in Paris were fully open and one does not need a green pass or COVID negative report to go to a restaurant. Everything is in order and people are moving.”



Shrawan Bhalla
Chief Executive, Hightlyer



Siddharth Khanna
Partner, Khanna Enterprises

“The aim behind the Fam was to better understand the products, i.e. Vistara and Accor, considering the wide body aircraft Vistara had just started for international routes. It was an eye-opener for the Indian trade to actually experience Vistara in all the three segments—economy, premium economy and business. Also, the idea was to change the sentiment of the people. After the improvement in COVID situation, this was the first Fam trip and it was quite informative for us to explore Europe and see the situation there.”

“OTOAI organised this Fam with Vistara and Accor hotels. It was to make everybody comfortable and see how easy it is to travel after the improvement in COVID situation. Since the COVID derailed travel, it was my first trip and I was a little hesitant. But it all seemed so easy and normal. The borders had just opened and even the travel fraternity was not fully aware of the norms. However, everything went smoothly and was handled very well, right from the airport to the hotels in Paris as well as the places we visited.”



Monia Kapoor
Proprietor, Travel O Holidays
Inputs by Nisha Verma

Aus eyes 1 mn visitors from India

While long term goal for Tourism Australia is to achieve a million visitors from India, the goal for next 12-18 months is to achieve its pre-COVID visits of 4 lakh visitors, who would contribute 1.8 bn dollars in spends. For this, they are targeting to tap not just corporates, but also families, honeymooners and young explorers.

Hazel Jain

Tourism Australia is currently promoting two marquee events that Australia will host in 2022-2023. This includes the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2022 and the Australian Open 2023. These two events, says **Nishant Kashikar**, Country Manager, India and Gulf, Tourism Australia, are going to help Australia come back strongly and bounce back to pre-COVID-19 levels of arrivals from India.

“We are specially expecting the India-Pakistan match on October 23, 2022 at MCG and then watch the finals on November 13, 2022. These two events are really important for us and we are working together with DreamSetGo that has launched official travel packages for these two events for sport lovers in Indian,” he says. Events such



L-R-Harbhajan Singh, Monish Shah (Founder & CEO, DreamSetGo), VVS Laxman and Nishant Kashikar (Country Manager - India and Gulf, Tourism Australia)

as these, he adds, play an important role for destinations because it provides them with a PR opportunity. “Every time any Indian team has travelled to Australia, we see visits not just for the event, but also the event helps us to bring a strong awareness for the destination. We use it as a PR opportunity by taking a lot of fans and influencers to experience the destination who, in turn, entice their followers to visit the destination. So, we see a big halo effect created by such events,” Kashikar adds.

‘Money can't buy’ itineraries
Kashikar shares that his team has worked with DreamSetGo to create some ‘money can't buy’ moments. DreamSetGo's packages will include official match tickets, hotel accommodation, intercity transfers, guided tours, access to bespoke events, match-day programmes and other exclusive experiences. These include personal interactions with Indian or Australian sports persons, centre court seating for tennis fans, an exclusive

meal on a private yacht owned by some of the cricketing legends, behind the scenes activities with some of the Australian Masterchefs.

Incentives, but also leisure

Kashikar says, “To our surprise the MICE segment has bounced back very strongly whether it is the tech sector or pharma or fintech – they have all done well and are now travelling to Australia for incentives. Travelling to Australia has become very easy;

we have limited restrictions. We have also seen tripling of aviation capacity between the two countries. So we are looking at not just corporates, but families, honeymooners and young explorers are our target audience right now.”

Kashikar says, “While our long-term goal for the Indian market is to achieve a million visitors out of the Indian market, the goal for the next 12-18 months will be to achieve our pre-COVID-19 visits of 4,00,000 visitors, who would contribute 1.8 billion dollars in spends.”

Monish Shah, Co-Founder and Chief Business Officer, DreamSetGo, said, “India's appetite for cricket is a well-known fact, but the growing interest for other sports, especially tennis, is encouraging for the sports ecosystem. Australia, on the other hand, has a deep-

rooted sporting culture. Adding that with everything else the country has to offer for tourists like superior sports infrastructure, smart cities, food culture, and celebrated sporting leg-

We hosted a delegation of 45 agents from India to Australia to take part in ATE 2022

ends. The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2022 and Australian Open 2023 are going to be unforgettable events and we are excited to create extraordinary experiences for sports fans.”

‘LGBTQ associated or not, India is safe’

LGBTQ travel studies in 2020-21 reveal that LGBTQ travellers are willing to travel. Loann Halden, Vice President, Communications, IGLTA and Tom Kiely, Board Member, IGLTA, want the world to know how India is a safe and comfortable country to travel irrespective of whether you are LGBTQ associated or not.



Janice Alyosius

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) travellers face unique challenges while travelling. IGLTA is the leading global organisation dedicated to connecting businesses in the LGBT

tion wants the world to know that India qualifies as the right place to travel. “From US perspective, India is viewed as a very exotic destination, it is a very aspirational place that a lot of Americans would like to come to. There is always that level of comfort that travellers feel and that is a message we want to

spread, that India is a very safe country, a very fair country, a very comfortable place, an enjoyable place to come and visit, irrespective of whether you are LGBTQ associated or not,” Halden said.

LGBTQ travel studies in 2020-21 find that LGBTQ

travellers are willing to travel. “LGBTQ travellers want to see more of the world and find their community wherever they go. And I think that becomes an important part of the travel experience,” said **Tom Kiely**, Board Member, IGLTA.

Kiely added that LGBTQ travellers want to engage in different kinds of activities like any other traveller, but they are more interested in travelling in their own space versus spending time in largely populated groups in small space. But that trend flipped when Pride events or LGBTQ events were

hosted. And then the numbers went back up again, that desire to connect with the community rose.

IGLTA has a lot of tools on their website to educate people and create awareness. “We have around 30 travel guides on our website,” he said.



Loann Halden
VP Communications, IGLTA

LGBTQ travellers are more interested in solo travel and like to travel in their own space



Tom Kiely
Board Member, IGLTA

LGBTQ travellers want to see more of the world and find their group wherever they go

tourism industry with travellers. **Loann Halden**, Vice President Communications, IGLTA, said that LGBTQ+ travellers look out for comfortable travelling. They want to be very sure where they are going and that they are going to feel welcome there. So, the associa-

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Britain open to welcome visitors

ExploreGB Virtual 2022 successfully concluded recently and saw British travel partners interact with the travel trade across the world, including those from India, on a virtual platform. Senior leaders in the British tourism industry share their views on the current situation in their country and what it has to offer to the visiting tourists.

Nisha Verma

Nigel Huddleston, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society), speaking at the virtual event, said the last two years have been difficult for the tourism industry.



Nigel Huddleston
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society)

"We, in the government, recognised the impact that COVID-19 has had on the tourism industry.

We are committed to supporting the sector's recovery. So far, we have provided £37 billion to the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors through grants, loans, and tax breaks. This includes a billion pounds to support businesses in the tourism industry impacted by Omicron," he revealed.

"I am pleased to say we are now the most open country in Europe for travel. I am optimistic we can work towards pre-pandemic levels of domestic tourism by this year-end and inbound visitor levels by 2023-end. We are on the way to achieving these targets. Inbound travel in the UK is recovering well and arrivals are at the September 2021 levels. Another positive sign is inbound bookings which are at 70 per cent of 2019 levels."

Hotel occupancy rates have recovered to pre-Omicron levels and are

nearing pre-pandemic levels. "We are ready to show the world the UK is open and welcoming visitors

So far, we have given £37 bn to tourism and hospitality sectors through grants, loans, and tax breaks

back from all over the world. This year, we will be showcasing the breadth of the UK's culture, creativity and innovation through the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Birmingham 2022, Commonwealth Games and Unboxed Creativity," he emphasised.

Sally Balcombe, CEO, VisitBritain, said ExploreGB is their flagship trade event. "It is a pleasure to bring together travel profession-



Sally Balcombe
CEO, VisitBritain

als from across the globe and hundreds of UK tourism suppliers, who know the rich and diverse experiences Britain has to offer our visitors," she said.

She said, "Britain is open for business and our businesses

are welcoming people back to enjoy a great experience. People are feeling a renewed confidence about taking global holidays, working with the trade partners, who do such a vital job of selling. But I am confident that we will be able to drive back demand, while encouraging people to stay longer and travel across the nation."

Balcombe said Britain has something for everyone. "In 2022, we had many landmark events, including the Majesty, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Also, there are other things for visitors to see such as three special displays by the Royal collection trust and a super bloom display of flowers at the Tower of London. Second major event is the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, and finally the groundbreaking Unboxed," she said.

In the wake of the ongoing pandemic, she claimed, "We want to build back an industry which is accessible and sustainable to

Britain is open for trade and our businesses are welcoming people to enjoy a great experience

ensure people are able to access a range of destinations in Britain. VisitBritain is working hard to realise the government's tourism recovery plan. This includes proposals to improve accessibility for more rural destinations."

Tricia Warwick, Director, China and APMEA, North East Asia, VisitBritain believes there is a pent-up demand for travel and intentions to visit Britain are strong, and working with the travel trade media is important. "There is a need to boost consumer confidence in global travel, driving back demand and spending.



Tricia Warwick
Director, APMEA, China and North East Asia, VisitBritain

Britain is open for business and tourism businesses are ready to safely welcome back visitors and provide a standout experience. Inbound tourism is a critical industry for our economy and we are competing hard for international visitors. In 2019, we welcomed more than 41 million visitors to our shores. With those visitors spending £28.4 billion across our nations and regions, supporting thousands of small businesses and entrepreneurs vital to our economy. International visitors also contributed to the UK, to

our visitor attractions, shops, city centres, regional gateways, and to our vibrant cultural mix. We also have a year of landmark historic events this year in the UK," she claimed.

Tricia said, "Britain is packed full of fresh and exciting experiences, which travellers must come and enjoy. We were delighted to launch our 10 million pound global GREAT campaign, our first international campaign, in two years titled 'Welcome to another side of Britain' that we launched in Dubai in mid-February. The campaign is underway across our markets using reach of our own global and in-country digital channels, both business and consumer and, of course, working with the travel trade. We are targeting visitors with a commitment to visit Britain this year which has been hit hard by the absence of travellers."

She said that they are encouraging visitors to experience another side of Britain which aligns beautifully with the UK government's refreshed GREAT brand, which is to see things differently. "We are telling the stories of our heritage, our iconic city attractions, buzzing contemporary culture, innovative food and drink scene, but with a modern twist. We have been running a host of activity

and specific campaigns across our APMEA markets, driving inspiration to visiting Britain."

She highlighted that almost two-thirds of travellers they surveyed said they were thinking more about sustainability and the environmental impact, while planning future holidays. "Apart from building our global sustainable tourism content hub such as itin-

There is a need to boost consumer confidence in global travel, driving back demand

eraries and experiences to enjoy in Britain, VisitBritain has also been hosting in-market roundtables to support the travel trade to promote sustainable tourism and launch new tourism itineraries. Many businesses are pushing sustainability and we want to support visitors and our global travel trade partners to find products and experiences that will enrich this day," she added.

Exploring Innsbruck



ATB, the largest Austrian tourism trade fair that showcases the experiences offered by the Austrian tourism industry, was held in Vienna this year and Indian travel agents went on a Farm trip to Innsbruck from 18-20 May.

Head to Ibiza!

Marvel the small coves lapped by the Mediterranean, pine forests that practically embrace the sea and days spent on-board a yacht in paradise-like settings.



TT Bureau

The Spanish island of Ibiza is a heavenly Mediterranean destination, a place where

you can let your hair down and enjoy the laid-back hippy atmosphere of its fashion and street markets, chill out on a Bali bed next to the sea or watch the

sunset. Ibiza is so authentic that it can combine the world's most exciting nightlife with a UNESCO World Heritage town and Biodiversity Reserves.

Congratulations to the winners!

Two winners of 'Spain Specialist Program (SSP)-Know IBIZA Quiz' held on May 5, 2022 take away a 5-day trip to Ibiza (inclusive of international airfare) in Sept. 2022.



Naresh Aggarwal
TRAVEL RAZE

“Spain Specialist Program was an eye opener. While going through this program, I realized Spain has much more to offer to its visitors than I, as a travel professional, knew. Just to quote some:- an accommodation in Paradors or Manor houses and many such unique experiences. When we talk of Gastronomy, of – course Tapas are an integral part of the culture but to experience a Bar to Bar tour can take your gastronomy experience far beyond. When it comes to art and heritage, Spain has total of 48 Heritage sites. I suggest all the travel professionals to go through this program and I am sure they will be able to sell Spain better as a destination. The webinar was conducted by Spain tourism on Ibiza it was absolutely an icing on the cake. It discussed the different accommodation options, how to reach Ibiza and much more.”



Gunjan Maheshwari
EVENTOURS

“The Ibiza webinar which was held on a warm sultry afternoon was a refreshing break from the normal routine and made me very inquisitive and interested in IBIZA as a destination which I realized was much more than the famous IBIZA song. The quiz and the subsequent requirement of doing the Spain Specialist Program in order to win the coveted Ibiza trip made me inquisitive about finishing the Spain Specialist Program. SSP is a very well planned, step by step guide to everything which Spain has to offer, right from its transport, sightseeing, food, art, history, festivals and much more. Completing the specialist program has broadened our perspective of selling Spain better to our clients. Winning this quiz of course was a like the cherry on the cake. Thank you! for a great opportunity and I would recommend all our travel trade friends to also complete SSP at the earliest in order to sell España better.”

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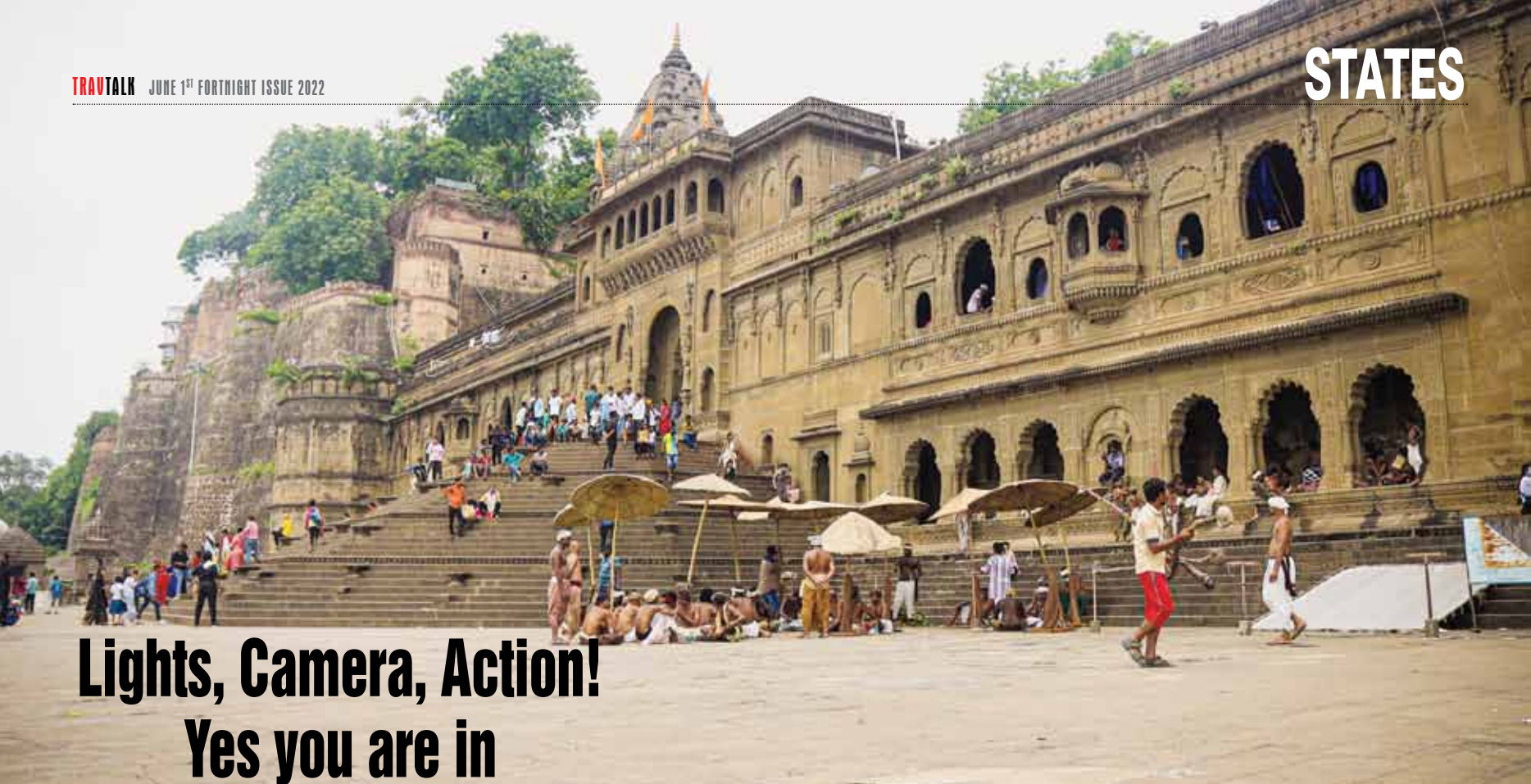


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Lights, Camera, Action! Yes you are in

Madhya Pradesh

Let us explore the stunning and picturesque filming locations that are attracting film makers in droves to Madhya Pradesh.

Madhya Pradesh is truly a gift for everyone who loves watching the beauty of nature through a lens. The natural beauty, historic monuments, local tradition and way of life, all of these are a shutterbugs' dream come true. From some ordinary sites to a landscape amid the majestic hills, the state has given some of the most unique and marvellous shooting locations.

The state's sheer magnificence could not be unheeded by the patrons of film industry since long as the 'heart of incredible India' provides an enormous backdrop to whatever the case is. Be it a crime thriller, a rom-com, historical, so-

cial reform or just a feature film documenting life in India, the state has all such destinations to offer.

Various Bollywood films from Dilip Kumar's *AAN* (1952) to most recently shot films like Bhumi Pednekar's *Durgamati* (2020), and *The Last Show* (2021) all were shot at the most exquisite locations in Madhya Pradesh.

In 2001, Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan performed brilliantly in Santosh Sivan's historical epic, *Asoka*, which was an adaptation on the life of Indian emperor 'Ashoka the Great'. The movie completely bowled over viewers with its visual spectacle. Almost all locations featured looked ethereal and were a treat for sore eyes. The state's destinations such as Pachmarhi, (Rajat Prapat, Apsara Kund, Handi Khoh), Jabalpur (Saraswati Ghat, Panchwati Ghat etc) and Maheshwar among others were featured in various scenes of the film.

This apart, many of the spell-binding locations

shown in the film *Mohenjo Daro* (2016) were shot in the bewitching Bhedaghat. The whole area is extremely beautiful with the lush greenery, river and Dhuandhar Falls serving as the perfect backdrop for any Bollywood flick.

Madhya Pradesh has now become the hub of film shooting and a good number of filmmakers are coming to shoot their films. Till now, more than 150 projects, including Hollywood Projects such as *The Bear*, *A Suitable Boy*, *White Tiger* and *The Lion* and many feature films, TV serial/series, TVCs and reality shows have been shot in the state, of which a few names are *Stree*, *Sui-Dhaga*, *Kalank*, *Manikarnika*, *Luka Chhupi*, *Padman*, *Toilet Ek Prem Katha*, *Bajirao Mastani*, *Paan Singh Tomar*, *Lion*, *C*, *Aarakshan* and *Raajneeti* among others.

One of the most divine, sacred and religious town of Madhya Pradesh, Maheshwar, which is situated on the banks of River Narmada, attracts many tourists and pilgrims each year. The place has become a regular visiting point for filmmakers. You must have seen Maheshwar Fort in many Bollywood and Kollywood (Tamil) movies.

The land of Khajuraho and Sanchi, the jungles of Kanha and Bandhavgarh, the forts and monuments of Gwalior, Maheshwar, Orchha and Mandu, the culture of Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior

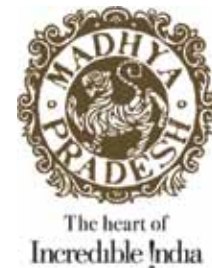
offers film directors the most diverse film making experiences in Madhya Pradesh.

Needless to say, the film industries are probably one of the best ways to promote tourism in the world. It could be an ordinary location, but as soon as it is put in a movie, it becomes a popular tourist destination. Keeping this in mind, Madhya Pradesh Tourism has promoted film tourism in a big way.

After the implementation of Madhya Pradesh Film Tourism Policy-2020, the state government

MP has now become the hub of film shooting and many directors are coming here to shoot flicks

is encouraging film tourism by providing subsidies and all permissions and clearances through single window online system. The availability of line producers, production facilities, local artists and crew among others makes it much more economical to shoot on the state's diverse, rich and beautiful locations. The vision of this policy is to promote tourism in the state and make Madhya Pradesh a major filmmaking hub to create employment opportuni-



ties in Madhya Pradesh. After the COVID-19-induced lockdown, *The Last Show* feature film directed by Vivek Agnihotri, featuring Anupam Kher, Satish Kaushik and Pallavi Joshi, was shot between 25 September 2020 and 22 October in Madhya Pradesh. It was probably the first feature film in the country, which was shot after the lockdown period.

To encourage film tourism in state, the Madhya Pradesh government offers financial subsidy/incentive for film makers on shooting feature film, TV serials/shows, web series/shows and documentaries and the like. Apart from the direct financial subsidy, the state offers land allocation under tourism policy for various film production projects like film city, film studio, pre-post production centres, VFX centre, skill development centre, film and training institutes, incubation centre and other film related start-up projects with an aim to develop film industry and film infrastructure in the state. There is also a provision of subsidy to first films also to provide support to the startups and encourage talent from across the country to come and shoot on Madhya Pradesh's idyllic and attractive locations.

Here are the salient features of Madhya Pradesh Film Tourism Policy, 2020

- ❖ Encourage private investment to make Madhya Pradesh a major attraction for filmmakers.
- ❖ Special grant for more screen time for promotion of sites in the state.
- ❖ Special financial incentives for internationally recognised and South Indian filmmakers.
- ❖ Financial incentives / grants / land allocation on construction of infrastructure of permanent nature.
- ❖ Providing services in units of MPSTDC at concessional rates.
- ❖ Dedicated Film Facilitation Cell for the implementation of Film Policy.
- ❖ Promoting the state by participating in various events related to the film.
- ❖ Development of infrastructure such as housing and transport.
- ❖ To make available infrastructure such as airplanes, helicopters, properties owned by the government to the filmmakers as per the relevant processes.
- ❖ Promoting renovation of single screen cinema, closed cinema houses and upgrading existing cinema halls and encouraging multiplexes.
- ❖ Scholarship to students of FTII, Pune, Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute of Kolkata, National School of Drama, New Delhi and others.
- ❖ Special financial provision for the films securing special branding of MP.



Hotels report higher ADRs, occupancy

Hotels across the country are witnessing an increase in Average Daily Rate (ADR), which has been welcomed by all brands as they prepare not just for the revival, but also for an unprecedented growth, which looks better than what they had seen before COVID hit the industry hard two years ago.



Nisha Verma

April is normally a low travel period in India and hotels do not see high occupancy during the month. But even as recovery from Omicron wave continues, India's hospitality industry

RateGain as part of its monthly PULSE report revealed April saw the same number of bookings made as March inched closer to pre-pandemic levels. "The ADR at which rooms were available was 105 per cent higher in Mumbai and 62 per cent higher

translated into increased summer travel. We are recording healthy ADRs and occupancy rates across our portfolio of 108 hotels in India for leisure and business. Our key markets such as Delhi NCR, Mumbai and leisure destinations such as Lonavala,

for us; we managed April ADRs above 2019 April levels, which is a strong indication of recovery."

Arif Patel, Regional VP, Sales & Marketing, Hyatt India, said the hospitality sector in India has bounced back rapidly. "We are recording a rise in bookings at all our properties. The occupancy rate for the period of 1-27 March 2022 was 69 per cent, an improvement over February, which witnessed 56 per cent. While the ADR for April 2022 was 14 per cent higher than April 2019 levels, the YTD 2022 ADR was eight per cent lower than ADR for 2019. This was due to the impact of the third wave in January. We are positive about long-term re-

Rakshit Sharma, CEO, Rester Hotels & Resorts, shared, "Occupancies are continuing to rise with corporate movement returning beside leisure travel. Room tariffs have gone back to the pre-pandemic level. I believe this year, we will exceed the revenues of 2019 by 10-15 per cent if there is no COVID-19 wave."

Driving the growth

The reason behind this growth are many. For Accor, Badhwar said, "The corporate demand is leading the way in terms of recovery, along with an increase in MICE queries. Our business hotels across the country are seeing the corporate mix increasing."

ery, Saxena stressed. "However, what will solidify this trend is embedding consumer trust by assuring reliability in terms of safety and hygiene. We are noticing an impetus from social MICE across our hotels. Weddings and socials as a segment continue to support our hotels in tier 1 and 2 cities. Overall, we believe the fundamentals of the industry and its leadership are robust, and we are well on our way to bullish growth in the coming months."

Patel attributes the growth to leisure travel. "Recovery in the Indian market has picked up pace, and is being driven, by leisure travel. Even as major cities see an uptick in travel, we foresee



Abinash Manghani
Chief Executive Officer
WelcomHeritage



Zubin Saxena
MD & VP, South Asia
Radisson Hotel Group



Pratima Badhwar
Head of Commercial
(India & South Asia), Accor

ADR levels have not only rose to 2019 levels, but also improved by 22 per cent

We are posting healthy ADRs and occupancy rates across our portfolio of 108 hotels

The ADRs of our hotels has been growing month on month this year so far



Arif Patel
Regional Vice President,
Sales & Marketing, Hyatt India



Himanshu Kumar
Hotel Manager
The Claridges, New Delhi



Rakshit Sharma
Chief Executive Officer
Rester Hotels & Resorts

Occupancy rate for 1-27 March 2022 was 69 per cent, an improvement over February

We are trending at 80 per cent of pre-COVID ADR numbers, ahead of market conditions

We will exceed revenues of 2019 by 10-15 per cent if there is no COVID wave

surpassed the pre-pandemic figures in both occupancy rate and Average Daily Rate (ADR) for three consecutive days (16-18 April 2022). They were above 2019 levels, revealed a STR report recently.

"During a seven-day average, occupancy rate and ADR have been above 90 per cent of pre-pandemic levels compared to late March. On 18 April (Monday), India recorded its highest ADR at 106 per cent, while occupancy rate reached 109 per cent on 25 March," stated STR.

in Delhi as compared to pre-pandemic levels," the report stated. In fact, this scenario got only better in May as ADRs are increasing in the summer months. Normally, March had higher bookings across the country than in April.

From the horse's mouth

Hotels, both chain brands and individual properties, have seen the ADR rise for a variety of reasons. **Zubin Saxena**, MD & VP-Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, shared, "Easing of curbs supported by pent-up demand

Dharamshala, Mussoorie and Shimla are driving recovery for us. We are optimistic of a robust season ahead."

Echoing similar sentiments, **Abinash Manghani**, CEO, WelcomHeritage, said, "The ADR levels have not only increased to 2019 levels, but also improved by 22 per cent in 2021-22 as compared to 2019-20. Leisure destinations of WelcomHeritage have fared well—Jawai in Rajasthan and Shimla in Himachal Pradesh—thereby increasing the ADR levels. Favourable factors—sharp rebound in leisure, weddings, MICE events, and SME business travel in market conditions—facilitated the increase. High demand for our hotels allowed for rate propensity and resulted in profits. We have witnessed frequent extended stays and work-from-home meant that resort cottages, villas and suites became offices, classrooms and home for many."

Pratima Badhwar, Head of Commercial (India & South Asia), Accor, said, "The ADRs of our hotels has been growing month on month this year so far. April has been phenomenal month

covery and expect the ADRs to reach pre-pandemic levels in the coming months," he asserted.

Claridges too has shown the same growth. **Himanshu Kumar**, Hotel Manager, The Claridges, New Delhi, said, "We are trending at 80 per cent of the pre-COVID ADR numbers. This is ahead of the market conditions at large. In my opinion, the 2019 levels will first be achieved by the luxury and upscale segment of hotels by this year-end. This is because they have always been the preferred hotels for the foreign clientele, which will subsequently improve the ADR and occupancy levels. As the rates increase for this segment, there will be a ripple effect on other segments of hotels," he added.

Manghani explained, "The domestic segment with revenge tourism (and restricted outbound travel) is leading the recovery. Recovery from COVID-19 second wave has been faster than the first with fewer restrictions, better awareness and planning; recovery from the third wave appears even more rapid. Domestic segment has been by-and-large undeterred by flight restrictions within the country. Road connectivity is now pretty good leading to new markets for regional destinations. Importance of staycations and short holidays is reflected in the continued lead of weekend demand."

Leisure travel will continue to lead the industry towards recovery,

resorts and leisure destinations at drivable distances from these cities recording high levels of occupancies and bookings. With international travel opening up, the MICE segment has started to pick up and could well witness its peak in 2022, returning to the pre-pandemic demand for this vertical," he claimed.

Managing the demand

Hotels are leaving no stone unturned to meet this demand in the best possible manner. Manghani underlined, "At WelcomHeritage, we have been quick to adapt our offerings to the expectations of the potential domestic traveller. Weddings were an added boost for resorts and enticing staycation packages in city hotels, which were well crafted."

'Uptick in domestic corporate travel'

"Hotel performances across major cities in India witnessed a speedy recovery from the third wave of the pandemic. Domestic leisure, long weekends, weddings and events continued to be the base business for the sector. We are witnessing an uptick in domestic corporate travel as office occupancies have gone up and people have re-started travelling for client meetings and off-sites. Additionally, the steady growth of international corporate travel has boosted confidence in the travel trade. Uncertainty may remain around COVID-19 variants and waves, but we feel the sector is set to recover well in 2022," said **Jaideep Dang**, MD, Hotels and Hospitality Group, South Asia, JLL.



Jaideep Dang
MD, Hotels and Hospitality Group,
South Asia, JLL

New page in tourism business

From pre-pandemic era to now, Indian travel industry has gone through a metamorphosis, both in terms of demand and supply. Not only has the consumer become more aware of what he/she wants, but service providers also have their hands full to suit the needs of every client. On these lines, the India travel recovery does not look like a distant dream.



Experts sharing their views during a panel discussion titled 'The Indian Traveller: Writing the global recovery sequel' at ATM in Dubai

Nisha Verma

At the recent Arabian Travel Market (ATM), TRAVTALK hosted a panel discussion titled 'The Indian Traveller: Writing the global recovery sequel'. It was moderated by SanJeet, Director, DDP Group.

Setting the tone for the discussion, SanJeet said India's outbound tourism market has a large potential. "Despite being hit hard by



COVID-19, outbound tourism from India will see an increase through its economic growth. With a growing economy, young population and growing middle class, India could well become the lucrative outbound market of the world. Current projections show

the Indian GDP will increase to US \$4 trillion, which is 50 per cent higher than the 2021 levels." Going forward, he shared, "With Chinese and Russian markets nearly closing, India is ready to take on the mantle of being the biggest source market for the world."

India: Pandemic market

Deepak Rawat, Senior Vice President, MakeMyTrip, said the ongoing pandemic has restricted Indians from travelling overseas. "Recently, the domestic market has flourished, much better than pre-pandemic times. The spending was more, the travel frequency was more, and it is a built-up for outbound. As destinations reopen, there is a huge demand waiting for Indians to travel overseas. With many countries lifting COVID-19 curbs, searches on various platforms show Indians have moved on and are searching differently. India will be the centre of outbound and become the largest

tourist market in the world in the next three years," he claimed.

Booking trends in India

Sandeep Dwivedi, COO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient,

Outbound tourism from India will witness a rise through its economic growth

SanJeet
Director, DDP Group

said the pandemic has in the last two years taken away a huge amount of travel. "With international flights resuming on 27 March 2022, the Global Trend Report 2022 by Amex has revealed that 94 per cent of Indians want to travel and explore more than what they have travelled earlier. The report promises big business opportunities. In April after international borders opened, we were up to 52 per cent of the pre-pandemic level (April 2019). In domestic, we were already at the pre-pandemic level. This is fascinating since 2018-19 was the year when Jet Airways had packed up. The way the market is opening up, the traffic on domestic side will keep on increasing," he claimed.

Speaking about the destinations Indians are traveling to, he said,

"From an airline perspective, it depends on how much of capacity is being booked. Booking.com survey suggests that Indians are traveling toward London, Paris, Dubai, Amsterdam, Toronto, Middle East and Southeast Asia. The current booking trend is leaning toward Middle East and Southeast Asia. This is so because travellers are interested to book a short haul or a direct flight connection because of complexity of connecting flights. Some parts of Europe are also being booked, but primarily buying is for direct flights."

Booking source

Jaal Kalpesh Shah, Group MD, Travel Designer Group, asserted, "Initially when the airports opened, there were different interstate rules for travel, including arrival of quarantined tourists. Maharashtra recovered the last. However, pan India is overall busy. The country also has seasons. We know the west traditionally has a lot of honeymoon and wedding travel attractions. During summer, entire India is going to have school holidays. Hence, leisure will be coming in, followed by other festivities in India, which always attract travel. Cities that have direct flights are the ones that are doing well," he said.

India, the new giant

On being asked how NTOs are looking at India, Deepak Rawat shared, "Everybody is focused on India—with more than 28 million passports and two years of pent-up demand to travel overseas. It is more than clear that every NTO wants a portion of the Indian

MMT to help with tourism searches

While the Directorate General of Civil Aviation data (DGCA) will inform you about the travel particulars, I think the National Tourist Organisations (NTOs) will work with partners such as us meticulously on what kind of searches are taking place. In terms of the searches across cities, we cut through as we have a proper data science team, which works on the obtained data with dedication, and it is critical with a real-time process cycle.



Deepak Rawat
Senior Vice President
MakeMyTrip

market as they have realised its potential. There is purchasing power, enough flights, and people willing to travel. The NTOs want to go deeper as they know India has a large population and every segment, including group tours, FITs to senior citizens, every NTO is working hard to get a slice of the pie."

He pointed out, "As per our internal survey, 75 per cent of people are willing to spend more than what they were spending pre-pandemic on travel and 52 per cent are willing to take a loan for travel."

High price market

Referring to the rise in airfares in India, Dwivedi said, "We need to understand the dynamics of macroeconomics here. The market is too volatile, and many things are moving around. But the capacity from the Indian market is 25 to 30 per cent short of pre-pandemic levels. The flight load is over 80 per cent, amazing despite higher fares. This indicates that people are willing to travel."

Stating that 3,200 frequencies per week to start with after intensity of the pandemic subsided is a significantly higher number, he said it is a demand and supply game. "Demand exists from domestic point of view. New Jet Airways is on the anvil. Akasa Air is also coming,

...every NTO wants a portion of the Indian market as they have realised its potential

Deepak Rawat
Senior Vice President, MakeMyTrip

while existing players are revamping themselves. This means there is huge capacity coming from the Indian market with a propensity to travel, especially from tier II and III cities. We should not forget that crude prices and inflation are at

The India picture

SanJeet Director, DDP Group, mentioned India poses an opportunity for destination markets, which can capitalise on India's young population comprising Gen Z and the millennials. "Furthermore, it is improving infrastructure, and developing low-cost airline market means outbound travel is both affordable and accessible. Projections show full recovery by 2024 and by 2025; the outbound will cross US\$ 30 billion. According to UNWTO, outbound tourism expenditure from will increase to US \$23 billion in 2019; 71 per cent of the expenditure is for personal purposes; while only 29 per cent for business and professional purposes," he highlighted.



SanJeet
Director
DDP Group

...MICE waiting to recover fully

an all-time high. He believed that by next year summer or winter schedule, “we can reach pre-pandemic levels or go beyond it”.

Travel in new normal

While everyone talked about the new normal, Shah said, “There are agents specialised in certain segments of travel such as cruises, which are on the path of recovery. They are having a tough time to change and adapt. From a consumer point, our data indicates in the first phase, people wanted to go out (abroad) because they were locked in their houses, leading to a surge in domestic trips,” he said.

India, Malaysia and Singapore are also gaining popularity, but people are careful about how they travel, rules, and refundable travel, as nobody wants to risk their money,” he explained.

Dealing with the change

Agreeing, Rawat said, “People have realised now what they need more than travel is safety, hygiene, quality from hotels to villas to apartments and homestays. Hotels have had a great time within India and in Maldives. There were more numbers to Maldives than we did before the pandemic. The pandemic has taught everybody that we need to fulfil

Health passports

Elaborating on health passports, Dwivedi shared, “It is going to be an app-based platform where one can digitise all your records, including vaccinations, health record, and prescriptions. One might need to carry all their health records, while travelling in future. Secondly, it is easier to have a digital record from a traveller’s perspective. Another thing COVID-19 has taught is that today it is the virus, tomorrow it can be something else. This means, things will keep on changing/altering and we need to keep evolving. So, digitisation is vital and health passport will be a big thing.”

ing the lead with biometric passports,” Dwivedi claimed.

Choose right destination

When it comes to selecting a destination, consumers have become more informed, Shah claimed. “To avoid facing any trouble in case of getting sick or not having proper documentation, they have started inquiring a lot. To answer them, the agents have started reading more and getting updated. We had to change our UX, build certain data, find data to display, including protocols and sanitisation policies, at the hotel. Our industry has built an archive of

What data should NTOs follow

It is difficult with so much data floating around. GDS data can capture only air side or GDS participants. However, in India, 50 to 60 per cent outbound is also via LCC. However, the real data sits with the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), which is the controlling authority and has the airport data. Also, there are many surveys being carried on. Hence, the surveys always give the most relevant information. Plus, some of the information is available from trade bodies.”



Sandeep Dwivedi
Chief Operating Officer
InterGlobe Technology Quotient

celebration getaway. However, we saw families travel to Maldives and resorts that were not kid friendly earlier. In 2021, India had given huge numbers to Maldives and also flights were cheaper than Dubai at times,” he shared.

because first the flight capacity is not back. It will happen in small batches and in smaller numbers. Now we see 500 to 600 pax movement taking place.”

Future of travel agents

Saying that the possibility of small city travel agents to make a consortium is there, Shah added, “Our numbers have grown 3X and 4X, as outbound is growing and we are a completely outbound company—offering everything from adventure, to domestic,

Tapping MICE sector

One sector that is still waiting to recover to its full potential is MICE, said Sanjeet. Agreeing to the same, Rawat added, “The onus for MICE recovery is on the company or the corporates. People be it staff, dealers or business associates are critical part of Indian travel, which was blocked for two years. However, in the last few months, corporate travel has resumed for small, medium and large size accounts. The planning for offsites has started and conferences have started. Now we are at a stage where we see MICE events taking place in India. Some of the events take place in pockets such as Maldives and Dubai where safety and confidence are a key demand. As things open, we have seen a surge in queries for events in countries such as Thailand. In Dubai, we have got multiple MICE groups. For queries to travel destinations such as Europe, there are challenges on visa processing. Currently most companies and corporates want to launch their schemes and start doing MICE events because that is what brings them business.”

In domestic (business), we were already at the pre-pandemic level

Sandeep Dwivedi
Chief Operating Officer
InterGlobe Technology Quotient

to old age travel solutions.” Secondly, he added, “Once they automate the process, they can concentrate on their main business, which is business development or acquiring a customer. With the pandemic they have realised that the staff can work from anywhere if they have automated processes through technology.”

Technology is key

When asked about how necessary technology is for the agents, Dwivedi quoting Darwin’s theory, said, “It is a game of survival of the fittest. The fittest must be ready to adapt to the changes around him/her. Everything is driven by demand and supply.” In a survey done by Booking.com, 74 per cent respondents said technology has taken away their anxiety for travel. People have started realising that adopting technology will automate their entire processes,” he claimed.



However, he insisted going international does not happen overnight. “After getting done with domestic, people started travelling to Maldives. There were segments that came in between and helped the agents survive; transit and business, among others. Hence, multi-layer travel came up and what we see now is predominantly leisure offering easy visa and direct connection. We saw standalone European travel from multi-cities to Switzerland because of the direct flights. Thailand is the next big thing toward

our dreams, and travel is among the top bucket list.”

He agreed people are looking for direct flights and quality accommodation. “New experiences are a priority. If earlier it was Dubai and Maldives for outbound, after lifting on curbs, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Bali are being preferred. The surges are high with people booking quality hotels and resorts with safety standards. Those who were spending for three-star are now looking at five star properties,” he claimed.

However, the biggest challenge is uniformity. “With so many countries and so many app-based platforms, maintaining uniformity of this platform and ensuring that all nations accept it could be a challenge that needs to be addressed,” Dwivedi claimed. He lauded India to be the only country, which started with the first digital vaccination certification.

He said privacy is going to be crucial factor with health passports putting everything out in open.

“Hence, GDPR compliances will become important. Also, California Consumer Protection Private Act will play a role in how privacy is being protected. Once we address these things, health passports will not remain futuristic. India will soon come up with new biometric passports, and then there is no stopping them from linking it with health records. Once this is in place, one can be tracked in case of travel emergencies,” he informed. “Advanced countries will be the first to adopt these things. However, developing countries such as India are tak-

information and, there has not been any misleading information. Airlines played a good role in terms of having informative websites,” he informed.

“Being compulsive travellers in their companies, they waited for an opportunity to fly on kangaroo trips to a particular destination. They wanted to know more and took the risk. On the other hand,

After getting done with domestic, people started travelling to Maldives

Jaal Kalpesh Shah
Group Managing Director
Travel Designer Group

leisure travellers were cautious for they wanted to travel with family and children. We saw this change in Maldives as it was normally a honeymoon and special occasion

Pan India is overall busy

Initially when the airports opened, there were different interstate rules for travel, including arrival of quarantined tourists. Maharashtra recovered the last. However, pan India is overall busy. The country also has seasons. We know the west traditionally has a lot of honeymoon and wedding travel attractions. During summer, entire India is going to have school holidays. Hence, leisure will be coming in, followed by other festivities in India, which always attracts travel.



Jaal Kalpesh Shah
Group Managing Director
Travel Designer Group

Travel trade unwinds over luncheon

An event for the travel trade was organised by Ajay Chhabria at House of Mandarin in Mumbai on a Sunday afternoon with an aim to help de-stress the travel fraternity. 'Shorts, Shades and Summer wear! See you soon!' mentioned the invite. At the lunch, 102 members of the travel fraternity networked and discussed business.



Time to network, discuss business



Industry shares ground realities

MICE TRAVEL SHOW

Two-day MICE Travel Show, organised recently by DDP Exhibitions in Pune, aimed at stimulating the segment by creating synergies between corporate buyers and sellers of travel products and services. Here are important comments from some buyers and sellers attending the show.

BUYERS

“A recent study specifically mentioned how corporate travel is going to evolve. It mentioned that 20 per cent of corporate travel don't want to come back, specifically from the IT sector. Other 20 per cent of the sector, which is pharma and banking, never left. The remaining 60 per cent is in a dilemma and are not sure if they want to have MICE movements. These are the ground realities. For Reliance, we are also looking at mitigating carbon footprint. We have started tighter travel restrictions. Secondly, we want to move to accommodation options that have sustainability goals.”



Gaurav Shekhar Nagwekar
Head (Corporate Travel & Logistics)
Reliance Industries



Shashi Kiran P
Global Front Office Lead, ABB

“I am interested to know what is new in the market and how companies have evolved since the pandemic and what the future will look like. I am looking more at the logistics part of it, in terms of what is being done and how things are shaping up. It is interesting to understand how the vendors are prepping themselves to be relevant to the new normal. We can see that things are getting back to normal and travel has been picking up slowly and steadily. We are in an industry which is customer focused. A lot of things get done face to face. It may not be as 2019 – it may be 80% of that – but still international corporate travel will happen.”

“Presently, we see a lot of corporate group meetings or bigger conferences with the leadership team taking place, where the teams are travelling from across origins to the destination city. This is where people can really meet one on one after a gap of almost two years to share their experiences. Now that most countries are open, people are looking at travelling more to meet the customers and renew their relationships. Meet and greet in person is always better; that way they get a lot more insight into their requirements. We are currently looking at Leadership offsites from Chennai to Singapore.”



Manian SGS
Manager – Administration, Olam



Gaurav Narula
Regional Category Manager – Travel & Marcom, GSC – Indirect Procurement,
Schneider Electric

“MICE from our company has started. Corporate travel has also started but with some level of restrictions in place. Right now, we are looking at conducting smaller events, maybe client-focused events, though not looking at team outings at present. But certainly the pipeline looks good. Till the second quarter of 2022, there is no major scope for travelling coming in because we are expecting some restrictions or challenges to continue. But in case that does not happen, quarter three onwards we may look at bigger events. I would say travel has started to pick up.”

“I met a lot of hoteliers at this show, which works very well for us as far as corporate travel is concerned. But I also met vendors who offer COVID certifications, which is pretty helpful. As an IT company, MICE travel from our company has been restricted and even when we do start, it will be in small numbers to begin with. We do have movement within India. Of course, the movement to the US, the UK and Europe has increased. In terms of hotels, I see a lot of renown brands such as Shangri-La, because we have some specific destinations that are on our radar where these properties are located.”



Sriram Seetharam
General Manager – Global Travel, Hexaware



Beena Kokku
Head – Global Real Estate & Procurement, Excellity

“Ours is a global organisation started in North America, but has now expanded its footprint across the globe. So our travel movement is pretty much around the world. I am looking to sign contracts with interesting vendors such as hotels. While group travel has yet not started on full scale, it is gradually increasing. Ceridian had made an acquisition of another company, so right now we are undergoing an integration process. Having said that, we are also integrating two teams into one space. So, as we are setting up the space, the company is coming together, we are organising world tours.”

EXHIBITORS

“It was important for us to communicate that Singapore MICE is open to Indian corporates. We interacted with many key corporates and they have been asking how they can have meaningful, socially responsible travel. This demand for a sustainable option is a positive signal for destinations, including Singapore, planning meetings and incentives. Singapore was previously a garden city, but now we are a city in a garden. So, for us it is important that we practise sustainable travel and we are making a lot of effort in the MICE space as well.”



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



Sunil V A
Regional Vice President – APAC, Oman Air

“We had flights that operated from Oman to India under the air bubble agreement as well. And once the scheduled flights commenced, we have actually relaunched flights to eight cities in India, which starts from Delhi in the north, then we have Goa, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Cochin, Calicut and Bengaluru. These cities have daily flights, and I am happy to say that the demand has not slowed down. We had a bit of corporate travellers starting to travel again. The exciting thing is that we have been able to close a few MICE groups to Oman. We hope everything goes on in the right direction.”

“Hotel bookings used to be long-term but today they are short-term. Wellness is a differentiator for us, and we are working hard to capitalise on it at our resorts. Fortunately, we have always had a stronghold on domestic leisure, which has only grown. When it begins, international inbound will only fill the gap, providing a healthy mix. To entice buyers, competitive MICE packages are being floated. Participation in business trade shows, as well as a huge number of sales calls and distribution, are beneficial.”



Gagan Kalyal
CGM, Sales & Marketing
Ananta Hotels & Resorts



Ankur Dhawan
Account Director – RSO India,
Corinthia Hotels

“We have hotels in Eastern Europe, London and Russia, and we have exciting projects coming in Doha, Bucharest, Brussels and Moscow, along with a beautiful hotel in New York in the coming year. As per the hotel portfolio Corinthia currently has, we are mostly looking at traffic going into London. And I can see a lot of demand for business travel. Keeping in view the demand for corporate FIT, we are looking at driving business travel to London, working with the corporates for their top management, including long-stay options as well.”

“IT and pharma industries have started to spend a lot on travel. These are the two sectors that we want to focus on right now. We are a leisure destination, so for us the main avenues are MICE, holidays, honeymooners, incentives and, of course, wedding segment, which is our biggest one. Thankfully, all these segments are back to travelling full time. People just want to break away from the monotony of working from home now. They want to splurge, and that is where the Raffles brand is the perfect choice for them.”



Ramnik Choudhary
Director, Sales & Marketing
Raffles Udaipur



Amit Sidana
VP, Sales & Marketing
Pride Hotels & Resorts

“We currently have 44 hotels, of which 35 are operational and by end of this year we will have 50 hotels in total. All our business hotels are either city centre or airport hotels. These are the two prime locations none of the corporates can afford to miss. We also have leisure hotels that can cater to big MICE and wedding groups. While the last two years were painful, the kind of business we are seeing right now, the lost business are going to get cleared within the next six months. The hotel industry will recover, whether it is ADRs or pricing, or occupancies.”

Inputs by Hazel Jain

Ark Travels takes new avatar

One of the leading B2B cruise and luxury resort consolidators, Ark Travels announced launch of a new corporate brand identity - Ark Travel Group. Explaining the idea behind rebranding, Kishan Biyani, MD, Ark Travel Group said that after nine years of success in cruise business, they thought to repeat the same for land packages.



Hazel Jain

Ark Travels, one of the leading B2B cruise and luxury resort consolidators announced the launch of a new corporate brand identity. It rebrands itself as Ark Travel Group with a new logo to represent its expanded focus.

Announcing a complete re-haul and rebranding of the company to consolidate the business after the pandemic abates, **Kishan Biyani**, Managing Director, Ark Travel Group, said, "We have rebranded ourselves. The new company is called Ark Travel Group and will expand its focus from not just cruising, but also tour packages and representation. So we have four main segments: Ark Journeys, Ark Representation, Ark Tech and Ark Cruises, which has been the core of our business. These will be led by different people from the com-

pany. We will keep adding more and more segments to this."

Explaining the thought process behind this rebranding, Biyani says, "After nine years of acquiring Ark Travels and focussing on



Kishan Biyani
Managing Director
Ark Travel Group

the cruise market, we realised that we had done a great job developing that segment in India. I then started thinking about how we could do the same for land packages as well and offer new and different services to my travel partners. While the pandemic

was the worst time for the travel trade, there were opportunities for people to branch out and innovate and try something new. That was the time when we did a lot of contracting with hotels and selling Maldives. Moreover, through Outbound Konnections, we started collaborating with some DMCs, hotel chains and attractions. For the next five years, I don't think we as an industry need to look back. One thing I learnt from the pandemic is that you cannot put all your eggs in one basket."

River cruising will be big

Sharing his perspective on cruising, Biyani said, "When we talk about cruises, it is all about the big ships. But in future we are looking at river cruising, which is untapped market in India and someone needs to take an initiative to develop it. We plan to do that. Having said that, we don't see fly-cruise market taking a backseat. The idea is to offer a lot of value-

adds to the customer at no cost, and that is what excites them. That has been our USP for many years and we plan to continue offering this with river cruises as well. We will do this for our travel agents, which, in turn, translates to benefits to their client." Biyani



revealed that the company is on the verge of closing a charter for March 2023 for a river cruise.

Chatbot: A new launch

Ark Travel Group has recently launched a new, one-of-a-kind

feature—a chatbot—for one of the cruise lines to help the travel fraternity. Biyani said, "We have put it on Facebook for a couple of our travel agents partners and it will answer some of the FAQs. This is a first in the cruising industry, and if it takes off, we will create it for all the cruise lines."

With Ark Representation, the company will acquire clients from Outbound Konnections. Ark Journeys already promotes Europamundo and a few hotels. Ark Tech has the DeckPro platform. But while DeckPro was just a platform, Ark Tech will have APIs for a couple of cruise lines, as well as clients that it represents and plans to bring on that system. This could be to

educate its trade partners with presentations. Ark Travel Group has already signed up Calculus, a

Idea is to offer a lot of value-adds to the customer at no cost. That has been our USP for many years

DMC for South Africa, Cape Town Helicopters, Sarova Hotels & Resorts among others.

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has announced new dates for the next PATA Annual Summit. Originally scheduled to take place live and in-person in March, the forum will now be held from October 25- 27, 2022 in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE.

Of cabin interiors & safety

There have been numerous incidents of airline passengers expressing their displeasure on aircraft cabin interiors and appearances in the country in recent times. Naveen Chawla, CEO, Epsilon Aerospace, offers insights into the world of cabin interiors and how it can contribute to the overall safety of passengers.

Recently, airline passengers in India have expressed their displeasure on aircraft cabin interiors and appearance. In April 2022, Civil Aviation Authority in India ordered a Boeing 737 airplane to be grounded.

This was a resultant effect of a passenger who tweeted his discomfort about cabin appearance. The tweet contained pictures of the ragged cabin interiors. It also showed broken or missing panels. Thus, questioning the plane's interior conditions and hence airworthiness. Another passenger tweeted pictures of one more airline operating in India with Airbus A320 fleet. The picture highlighted worn-out interiors and broken seat parts. All these incidents and passengers' awareness about aircraft interiors, raise questions about the practices of the airline maintenance department or service providers.



There are possibly airlines that consider a safe and clean cabin as a hallmark for their brand positioning, while others may view aircraft cabins as the first element where they can keep the cost to bare minimum. This might sometimes lead the latter to use sub-standard or non-approved material for repairs, local fabrications, incorrect process, or they may simply allow aircrafts with broken cabin parts to operate. Hence, causing nuisance or perhaps safety hazards for the travellers.

The aviation regulations dictate a stringent norm for production and maintenance of aircraft interiors. For instance, it is understood that to manufacture or fabricate an aeronautical product for commercial use, it is important to have Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR)

21 Subpart G approval. While maintenance of the aircraft cabin can be done by the airlines or any service provider that has CAR 145 approval, what it means is that any production has to follow

There are airlines that consider a safe and clean cabin as a hallmark for their brand positioning

an approved design and then the manufacturing of that part using Aviation approved or fire-retardant materials. These materials must pass through any requirement of 'fire resistant or retardant' testing.

Under Maintenance approval 145, the airlines or service provider can then only repair the cabin interior parts. However, for repairs too, the consumables used must be Aviation approved or it may also require certificate of compliance of any fire safety norms. All furnishing or repaired part must accompany with airworthiness tag along with burn certificate, as necessary. The aviation authorities are quite firm on these norms.

However, when compromising on quality and cost, the airlines or service providers may tend to find short-cuts. This implicitly may lead to violation of safety norms as imposed by the regulators. For example, manufacturing parts for the aircraft cabin such as composite or plastic parts, seat covers or signages without using the approved designs or aviation grade consumables will be against the norms. Under CAR 21 Subpart G,

such lapses by service providers or airlines are unlikely to occur. Any compromise of these approvals or norms, therefore, might lead to inconvenience or even cause unwanted injuries during any incident. For instance, the latest incident in India of a Boeing 737 facing turbulence is not related to aircraft upkeep. However, it did raise questions about the practices of the airline's maintenance department that cleared the aircraft to take off despite damage to its interiors being reported.

Hence, it is time that regulatory developments in India lead to a renewed focus on the safety parameters and overall appearance of the aircraft cabin. This will only standardize the industry in terms of performance requirements. Unlike in other areas of maintenance of aircraft engines and airframes where a high level of standardization exists, the standardization in

the aircraft cabin arena is also a must. Any production or maintenance of aircraft parts, interior or exterior, therefore, must comply with the set regulations as mentioned above. Airlines or service providers must be brought to the task for any violation. Gone are the days when customers' unawareness about cabin safety was taken for granted. This, in turn, had led to quick-fixes or usage of sub-standard, non-approved materials causing hazard to the passengers.



Naveen Chawla
CEO, Epsilon Aerospace

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

Tourism boards invite Indians

India ranks at the 54th place in a global travel and tourism development index, down from 46th in 2019, but still remained on the top within South Asia. India remains one of the biggest source markets for overseas tourism boards and they plan to lure Indian visitors through rigorous campaigns and promotional activities.

Janice Alyosius

Following a two-year hiatus, overseas tourism boards are meeting with travel agents are creating product awareness, offering deals and informing about the new destination campaigns. With the decline in COVID numbers and resumption of international passenger flights from India, tourism boards are eyeing Indians looking to travel abroad.

Tanes Petsuwan, Deputy Governor for International Marketing – Asia and the South Pacific, Thailand Tourism, said that Thailand has always been one of the favourite tourist destinations for Indians. According to Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the duration of Indians stays have increased after the pandemic. Indians used to stay in Thailand for an average of five and a half

days per trip pre-COVID. After the travel restrictions eased, the number rose to six and a half days per trip. The reason could be the pent-up demand of two



Tanes Petsuwan
Deputy Governor for International Marketing – Asia and the South Pacific, Thailand Tourism

and a half years. Bangkok and Phuket have been favourite destinations for Indians, TAT has added new destinations to their list and working on to promote those destinations. They are also planning on collaborating with Go

First airlines for upgrading and increasing their flights to Thailand.

Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head – Middle East, India and South East



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

Asia, South African Tourism, revealed that South Africa is focusing on building direct relationship with the consumers through the travel agents and operators. They aim to inspire the consumers, keep them informed and create

awareness about South Africa. Nkani emphasised on their digital space and said they are making sure they are engaged with the consumers by creating interactive itineraries and that their product offerings are unique, especially for the millennials, MICE and high-end honeymooners.

Bahruz Asgarov, Deputy CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board revealed, Pre-COVID Azerbaijan hit the record number of 3.2 million visitors across the globe, India was among the top 10 countries. Azerbaijan wish to achieve this again in 2022, as they believe this year is a pass to recovery and getting back to normal travel. From end of June this year, Azerbaijan airlines, the flag carrier, will be operating direct flights from Baku to Delhi. Asgarov believes that this will further impact the development of the tourism rela-



Bahruz Asgarov
Deputy CEO
Azerbaijan Tourism Board



Anil Jeet Singh Sandhu
Deputy Chairman
Malaysia Tourism

tions between the two countries and further help them in offering the diverse segments like MICE, leisure and corporate travel.

Anil Jeet Singh Sandhu, Deputy Chairman, Malaysia Tourism, indicated that India is among the top five tourist source markets for Malaysia and the announcement of borders reopening has helped in re-building confidence among the travellers. After the improvement

in the pandemic situation, Malaysia has come up with new products and offerings for the travellers. “Genting SkyWorld, Southeast Asia’s most anticipated outdoor theme park is finally open, while Penang has been listed on CNN’s Best Travel Destinations in 2022,” he said. “A once-in-a-generation transformation, Sunway Resort in Kuala Lumpur is also ready to welcome you with cutting-edge technology,” he added.

‘Travel is more of a passion’

Tourism can neither be an industry nor a business, it is more about passion, says Veronique Narayana Swamy, Director, BB Voyage Votre DMC Inde-Nepal and Bhutan, who is following the passion for 21 years.

Janice Alyosius

Travel and tourism world has changed in more than two years and how. People associated with this industry have used this opportunity to bring in new experiences, which open our senses and our world. Travel is not just about ambling around the traditional cities and places, but rather exploring them. Tourism is not an industry, but it is entirely about passion. One has to be passionate enough to make a mark in the industry, says Veronique **Narayana Swamy**, Director, BB Voyage Votre DMC Inde, Nepal, Bhutan.

She has been following her passion for the last 21 years, experiencing and exploring India, from mountains through urban and rural areas. Speaking of how it feels to be a woman traveller, Swamy expressed, “I do not feel that I am a woman adventure tour-operator at all. I am just a human being facilitating other humans to experience



Veronique Narayana Swamy
Director, BB Voyage Votre DMC Inde, Nepal, Bhutan

nature, life, rural and all aspect of life in another country than theirs. I am ready to help them in this journey.”

How and why of her passion
She feels that travelling all day long can be an adventure. For example, people sitting at their office desks or in their homes and dreaming of a life full of travel and adventure; Swamy said, “I can give them the leeway to choose their heart’s desire and fly away. If you have a passion just follow it, I believe.” “I have no plans to inspire the women in the travel industry

or the budding travel entrepreneurs. Travel is not just an industry, it is more of a passion, an inspiration. If you are joining the industry to make money, then better do not join. Travel is not a business; one can find it somewhere else,” Swamy said.

“Life is all about accepting challenges along the way. One has

Life is about accepting the challenges along the way, choosing to keep moving forward

to keep moving forward and savoring it at the same time. I am proud to say that I am not part of any industry. I am happy that I am just me.

Cruising on govt support

Contd from page 3

players, we will develop the sector and capture this growing market,” he shared. Sonowal also announced that three dedicated cruise training academies will be set up, one each in Goa, Kerala and West Bengal, to tackle the talent shortage. “The Maritime India Vision 2030 aims to generate more than two lakh jobs,” he said.

Shripad Yesso Naik, Minister of State for Tourism and Ports, Shipping and Waterways,

said the cruise industry is an emerging industry in India. He said that upgradation of the cruise infrastructure is being carried out at Mumbai, Goa, Mangalore, Kochi, Chennai and Vizag ports.

G Kamala Vardhan Rao, Director General – Tourism, was also present on the occasion. He said the Ministry of Shipping and the Ministry of Tourism have been jointly working to identify and create routes and see that SOPs are issued. “The promotion of

coastal tourism through beach tourism, lighthouse tourism and cruise tourism will help communities. Country’s perennial rivers will offer a historical experience and state governments are developing inland waterways tourism policies to cater to domestic tourists and international travellers,” he mentioned.

Rohan Khaunte, Goa’s Minister of Tourism, revealed the state is trying to position itself as a tech-tourism state by attempting to sell sun, sand and software.

Spree Hospitality enters Pune



Spree Hospitality strengthens its footprint with the opening of Zip by Spree Hotels Chakan, a four-star property in Pune, 20 km from the international airport, in the manufacturing hub of Chakan.

Leaders explore growth @ATM 2022

More than 23,000 visitors attended the 29th edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2022 in Dubai, where industry leaders shared insights into the future of international travel and tourism. HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, CEO and Founder of Emirates Group and chairman of Dubai World, inaugurated the event.





actively adding new agents

Ritam Saha, Manager (Passenger & Cargo Services) – India, Nepal and Bhutan, International Air Transport Association (IATA), reveals that rather than witnessing an exodus, the association is seeing an increase in the number of travel agents. He also speaks at length about the aviation industry’s sustainability initiatives.

Hazel Jain

The lockdown wreaked havoc on the aviation industry and led the industry to prepare for the worst – a mass exodus of IATA travel agents. But **Ritam Saha**, Manager (Passenger & Cargo Services) – India, Nepal and Bhutan, International Air Transport Association (IATA), shares a positive development. “A lot of people thought that many travel agents will exit the industry post the pandemic. But the industry has grown over time. Just to share data, in 2021, we had 430-plus accreditations of fresh travel agents coming onboard the IATA portfolio. So that speaks a lot. We have now become more flexible in terms of our format of accreditation – we now have a cashless mode as well as cash

method. You can come onboard with financial security or even without that. It has translated to more travel agents coming in,” says Saha, adding that IATA has been actively talking to various travel trade national bodies and associations to promote these features to their members.

Saha is also vocal and passionate about being sustainable as an industry. Speaking at the panel discussion on sustainability, organised by DDP Group on the sidelines of the MICE Travel Show in Pune recently, he says, “It was a fantastic idea for DDP Group to organise a discussion on sustainability. It is the topic of the hour. I think it is high time that we realise how we need to consider our actions and take initiatives towards sustainability. Contrary

to popular belief that aviation contributes substantially to carbon emissions, I don’t think that is accurate. Only three per cent



Ritam Saha
Manager (Passenger & Cargo Services) – India, Nepal and Bhutan

of the total emissions are contributed by the aviation industry. Having said that, IATA predicts that 2050, about 10 billion people will take to the air, which is more than the world population today. So, the quantum of

CO₂ emissions expected to be much more than what it is now. But IATA has been working with airlines to commit to a mission called ‘Fly Net Zero’. By 2050, we plan to have emissions reduced to zero.”

Sharing a broad outline of the plan that IATA is building upon, Saha says, “It is built around four strategies. The number one and the best foundation of the strategy is sustainable aviation fuel – not the fossil fuel we are using these days. It involves generation of fuel from urban waste, from plants and trees and this is capable of cutting down emissions by 65 per cent, which is quite substantial. The second thing is newer technology. We have newer planes, we are talking hydrogen engines propelling aircrafts, which will

have zero emissions. It sounds like a dream today but I think the future holds immense potential. We thought electric cars would be a dream too, but today we see many e-vehicles. IATA predicts that by 2035, there will be airports handling aircraft which run on alternate, sustainable aviation fuels.”

Another point is developing infrastructure and operational efficiencies. Saha elaborates, “Infrastructure is a great area to work on. Improved air traffic management will reduce taxi times. This will, in turn, reduce fuel burn-up, thereby reducing carbon footprint. Last but not the least is mapping and capturing carbon emissions per passenger. So, IATA has come up with a calculator which will be published very soon. We have a

method by which we can actually calculate what is the carbon emission per passenger when they travel. Also, IATA actively supports the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme

In 2021, we had 430-plus accreditations of fresh travel agents coming onboard the IATA portfolio

for International Aviation (COR-SIA) programme launched by International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). ↴

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:

JUNE 2022

Date	Event	Time
31 May-2	IMEX Frankfurt	10:00 am
2-4	Dhaka Travel Mart	10:00 am
3-4	Black Travel Expo	9:00 am
3-5	Tourism Fair - Kolkata	11:00 am
3-6	Taipei International Tourism Exhibition	10:00 am
6-8	Routes Asia 2022	5:30 am
6-9	International Conference on Tourism	9:00 am
8-10	Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2022	9:00 am
13-18	Bali & Beyond Travel Fair	9:00 am
14-15	Aviation Festival Asia	9:00 am
15	Know Barcelona Webinar	3:00 pm
24-26	Beijing International Tourism Expo	9:00 am
29-30	Travel Tech Show, London	9:30 am
29-30	The Meetings Show, London	10:00 am

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

Fiji open to embrace travellers

In a welcome news for travellers to Fiji, fully vaccinated visitors into the country are no longer required to produce a COVID-19 pre-departure PCR or Rapid Antigen Test beginning 1 May, according to the Fiji government.

TT Bureau

Beginning 1 May, fully vaccinated visitors into Fiji are no longer required to produce a COVID-19 pre-departure PCR or Rapid Antigen Test.

The change applies to all international visitors entering Fiji by air or sea and is a move that is

travelling to the Pacific Island destination much easier.

All international travellers entering Fiji will now only need to follow the below entry requirements.

- ❖ Be fully vaccinated if you are 16 years old and above with a Fiji recognised dose



Brent Hill
CEO, Tourism Fiji

Known for its white sand beaches, turquoise waters, year-round tropical warmth and world-renowned hospitality, Fiji has welcomed more than 100,000 inter-

The change in COVID guidelines applies to all international visitors entering Fiji by air or sea



in line with best practice entry requirements among highly vaccinated communities. It will save costs for travellers and make

- ❖ Book an in-country COVID-19 RAT prior to departure to Fiji. The test must be completed within 48-72 hours of arrival into Fiji.

These can be booked at entry-testfiji.com

- ❖ Have trusted travel insurance with COVID-19 coverage

Brent Hill, CEO, Tourism Fiji, said, “This is yet another significant step for Fiji, making it easier than ever to travel to our idyllic shores from around the globe. The Fijian Government has continued to respond to data and science, and moved quickly to make these changes, as more countries around the world also relaxed their protocols. There has never been a better, simpler time to come to Fiji than now.”

national visitors since its borders opened in December 2021.

As Fiji continues to update entry requirements, travellers from around the globe will be able to enjoy a famous Fiji holiday and experience everything the country is known for. ↴

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INDIGO

New Delhi

PIETER ELBERS has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of IndiGo. Elbers will join the office on or before 1 October 2022. He succeeds Ronojoy Dutta, who has decided to retire on 30 September 2022. Born in Schiedam, The Netherlands, Elbers has a Bachelor's degree in Logistics Management and a Master's Degree in Business Economics. Since 2014, he has served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Air France – KLM Group. He started his career at KLM in 1992 at their Schiphol hub and worked in many countries.



JET AIRWAYS

New Delhi

Jet Airways has appointed **VISHESH KHANNA** as Vice President – Sales, Distribution, and Customer Engagement. He will take charge in July 2022. Vishesh joins the airline from VFS Global Ltd, where he currently serves as Business Head e-Visa. He has nearly 30 years of experience in the aviation and travel sectors across B2C and B2B sales, having held executive positions at various airlines in the past. Prior to joining VFS Global, Vishesh was Vice President – Sales for India and Overseas Markets at Vistara (a Tata-Singapore Airlines JV). He also worked with Kingfisher Airlines, IndiGo and Galileo India. At Jet, Vishesh will be overseeing customer engagement as well.



LORDS PLAZA

Jaipur

BRIJESH SINGH has been appointed as the General Manager of Lords Plaza, Jaipur. Brijesh, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Commerce and Diploma in Front Office & Hotel Accounts, has more than 23 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Before joining Lords, he was associated with Costa River Varanasi and Swiss Hotel Nainital as Group General Manager. He spent his initial days at Hotel Umair Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur as Front Office Assistant before moving to Taj Hari Mahal, Jodhpur as Sr. Duty Manager and Holiday Inn Jaipur as Front Office Manager.



THE WESTIN

Pune

The Westin Pune Koregaon Park has appointed **SUDEEP SHARMA** as the General Manager of "the luxury haven of wellness & renewal". Sudeep has primarily been with Marriott International for more than a decade, having worked his way from the Assistant Director Food & Beverage at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu to various leadership positions such as Director of Food & Beverage at Jaipur Marriott Hotel and Director of Operations at Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad. As a seasoned professional, Sudeep aims to bring innovation, operational excellence and renewed energy to The Westin Pune with his fresh perspective.



ITC HOTELS

Mumbai

KEENAN MCKENZIE has been appointed by ITC Hotels as the General Manager for its upcoming luxury property, ITC Narmada in Ahmedabad. Keenan, who began his career as a management trainee at the ITC Hotel Management Institute (formerly known as the Welcome Group Management Institute) in 2000, has 18 years of experience in the hospitality and services sectors. He has pursued his degree in Tourism Studies from IGNOU. He took a leap into the hospitality sector in 2004 when he joined ITC Kakatiya in Hyderabad and later moved on to Welcome Hotel Grand Bay.



JW MARRIOTT

Kolkata

AMRITA RAY has been appointed as Marketing and Communications Manager of JW Marriott, Kolkata. She brings with her over a decade of benchmarking success in integrated marketing and communication projects with diversified industry experience in hospitality, automotive and media. Her knowledge in enhancing business positioning and augmenting brand value, as well as improving public and media relations to propagate brand legacy, makes her an asset to the organisation. Amrita's key responsibility areas include ideation and implementation of marketing strategies.



The Westin Pune has appointed **AMIT KULKARNI** as the new Director of Sales and Marketing. In his new role, he will be responsible for developing key growth sales strategies and action plans. He will also support the regional sales leaders on projects in relation to sales infrastructure development, organisation design and yield improvements within the reward and recognition programmes. Amit has over 20 years of experience in the hospitality space, including nine years of dedicated work in managing sales of many esteemed organisations. He holds a Master's degree in Science (M.Sc) in International Hospitality & Tourism Management from Sheffield Hallam University, England.



Gurgaon

HIMANSHU SHARMA has been appointed as the new Multi Property Director of Sales and Marketing for The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi and The Westin Sohna Resort and Spa. Himanshu will be spearheading the sales & marketing strategy, in addition to building and honing a dynamic sales and marketing team. He will focus on optimising the hotel and resort revenue performances for the sales and business development verticals, and will also be working with the F&B team to enhance visibility of the various outlets and drive revenues for the segment. Earlier, he was leading sales and marketing team at Le Méridien Gurgaon.



IHCL

PANAJI

After a successful tenure of spearheading the Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) in Goa as the Area Director since 2017, **VINCENT RAMOS** has been elevated to Senior Vice President – Goa. In his new role, Ramos will continue to provide strategic direction to IHCL hotels within the Goa region. A perfectionist with over a decade of management experience, Ramos has been instrumental in the expansion of IHCL across the state, comprising of a group of brands - Taj, SeleQtions, Vivanta, Ginger, amā Stays & Trails, Qmin, and TajSats. Under his guidance, IHCL, Goa witnessed growth with greater profitability and market leadership in each of the relative market segments.



TALKING PEOPLE

RENUKA NATU, India Market Advisor, Trans Bhutan Trail, loves to spend time chatting with her family and gardening. "I recently fulfilled my long-pending wish to get certified as a Yoga and Pranayam instructor from the reputed Kaivalyadham Institute in Lonavala," she says. Natu also loves travelling. One of her favourite destinations to holiday internationally is the African bush under the magical African sky. "In India I love Dabhol, which is located in the Konkan/Coastal region of Maharashtra. But my next holiday will be to Bhutan or Morocco hopefully," she adds.



MAINAK RAY, Director of Sales, The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat, loves e-games. "It completely takes me away from the stress while I'm on my PlayStation. When I have a little more time, I like to visit remote locations where there is little to no network connectivity. That is when I am able to truly disconnect and rejuvenate myself. Goa is still my favourite place to visit in India, even though I am looking at exploring the largely undiscovered North-East," he says.



KARTHICK VINCENT, General Manager, Sayaji Hotel Vadodara, releases stress by spending time in nature. "I also connect with people which helps me to reduce stress and enjoy a healthy lifestyle. I also like to unwind by spending time with my family and listening to music. I enjoy travelling too, and one of my favourite places in India is the Turtuk Village in Leh. Internationally, Banas is my favourite place for the holiday. My next holiday will be to Himachal," he says.



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VFS gets ready for season

VFS Global recently concluded an informative webinar for the travel trade, where not only they cleared the issues being faced by the industry and consumers, but also informed the trade about their new products.



Nisha Verma

Pranav Sinha, Head – South Asia, VFS Global, said that customers want to use more do-it-yourself kind of processes and digital solutions.

Visa at doorstep

Sinha shared that Visa At Doorstep (VAYD) is for the convenience of the customer, to apply from the comfort of their residence or offices. It is a great product for travel partners, who could consolidate groups and travellers and get us to come to them instead of arranging customers to come to the Visa Application Centre (VAC). Sharing details, **Elizabeth Samuel**, Deputy Regional Head-Bangladesh, Bhutan, India (North & East), Israel, Nepal & Palestine, VFS Global, said, “Popularly known as mobile biometrics, this service entails end to end personalised assistance; appointments can be made available on weekdays, weekend and on public holidays.”

Digital Submission

Sinha highlighted that Digital Application Submission (DAS) allows customers to talk over a video call and ascertain whether all their documentation is correct or not. Similarly, Digital Document Check will allow customers to submit complete and accurate application form, along with supporting documentation for visas at the comfort of their own home.

Changing processes

There are many changes coming from embassies and consulates in India, as well as the central government offices. “These are in a very periodic manner updated on our websites. The travel trade

should refer to our websites and check the respective government’s host destination website,” Sinha suggested.

Handling the surge

Also, Sinha highlighted that to handle the surge of applications, they are coming up with temporary enrolment locations—pop up VACs/ drop off services. “Our websites are also being modified continuously. We have engaged with Morocco in India and rolled out e-visa solutions for Azerbaijan,” he shared. Also, he suggested, “Please ask customers to apply in advance. There are constraints in terms of what VFS can accept owing to a few governments capping applications.”

UK Visa

On the delay in getting UK visa, Sinha said, “It is taking about six weeks for standard UK application to be processed. However, UK still has priority and super priority options.”

Keep My Passport

Samuel shared that the Keep My Passport service is particularly for UK travellers. “With this option you can retain your passport, while your visa application for UK is still being assessed,” she explained.

Appointment system

VFS is in the process of changing the appointment systems. For the peak season, **Ramita Vyas**, Head - Special Projects, Quality & Customer

the experience is seamless as compared to earlier.” Another change in the appointment management system is the option of bulk appointments.

Delay from embassies

Addressing the issue of delayed embassy decisions on visa, Sinha said “Everyone is trying to edge towards getting to that optimum capacity of working. Same is for the governments to get visas processed on time. However, it is not as bad as it was a year back. Most Schengen governments are turning back with visas within a week or 10 days.”

Working with travel trade

Samuel informed that they have a dedicated team in place, which is playing a critical role in liaising with the travel trade members. “We have representatives across each zone and they will continue to liaison with travel trade partners to help and support them in the season and in the upcoming business,” she said.

Also, she added, for the season 2022, they are prepared to offer the travel trade fraternity premium lounge booklets to cater to bulk requirement. “This has been a feature for many years and we will continue to facilitate our members as and when the business requirements surges,” she claimed.

Dedicated counters

Vyas shared that they have dedicated counter and team for travel and trade fraternity. “At the VAC, they can get dedicated counters, especially if the volumes are higher. Recently in Mumbai, we had a separate entry for travel agents provided so that the journey into the VAC is faster.”



Pranav Sinha
Head – South Asia
VFS Global

Our websites are also being modified continuously (to handle surge in applications)

Services, Regional Head - Western India, VFS Global, informed, “We have relooked at our entire appointment management system, which has been enhanced for multiple client government. We have used technology to ensure that

Visa slots for different countries

Vyas said visa is completely governed by the government. “Thus there is a challenge with the appointments. Also, for the last two years, travel has been restricted. Hence, there are huge demands. On our part, we constantly talk to client governments to help them understand the situation. However, some of the client governments are fairly restricted. For instance, the UK and Canada has no restrictions. The US has restrictions,” she said. For New Zealand and Australia, it is fairly restricted. “The government had not opened its borders for the longest time and therefore, the challenge was seen,” she said.

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Disclaimer: Please note that the service is currently offered for select countries. Availability and the service charges for the above mentioned service may vary depending upon the country/location where it is procured. The choice of location for availing the service may vary depending on the concerned Embassy. The grant or refusal of the visa is at the sole discretion of the Embassy and availing above value-added service will not affect the processing time or decision of your visa as VFS Global is neither involved in the process nor is liable or responsible in any manner whatsoever for the grant or rejection of the visa application of any customer by the Embassy. For further information on the same, kindly refer to the VFS Global website. The above mentioned service is optional and will be charged in addition to the visa application fee. The customer hereby accepts and confirms that they, prior to availing the above mentioned service, have read, understood and agreed to be bound by, without limitation or qualification, all of the terms and conditions associated with the service. | Statistics as on 30 April 2022.

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