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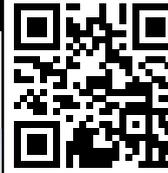
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Sustainable tourism in limelight

The National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Traveller Campaign, launched by the Ministry of Tourism in New Delhi recently, aims to mainstream sustainability in Indian tourism sector and ensure a more resilient, inclusive, carbon neutral and resource efficient tourism, while safeguarding natural and cultural resources.



Janice Alyosius

National Tourism Policy 2022 recognises tourism as a key driver of economic growth in India, as it is one of the fastest growing sectors and has a significant impact on trade, job creation, investment, infrastructure development and social inclusion. Since sustainability is a prerequisite for the long-term growth of tourism, the Union Ministry of Tourism has a prepared national strategy for sustainable tourism in consultation with relevant ministries, state governments and industry stakeholders. The ministry launched the National Strategy for

Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Traveller Campaign in New Delhi recently.

The national strategy aims to mainstream sustainability in Indian tourism sector and ensure a more resilient, inclusive, carbon neutral and resource efficient tourism while safeguarding natural and cultural resources. The strategy document identifies the strategic pillars for development of sustainable tourism like promoting environmental sustainability, protecting biodiversity, promoting economic sustainability, promoting socio-cultural



Arvind Singh
Secretary, MOT, Government of India

sustainability, scheme for certification of sustainable tourism, IEC and capacity building and governance. Promotion and development of sustain-



Rakesh Verma
Additional Secretary, MOT, Government of India

able tourism will involve a diverse set of stakeholders.

Speaking at the event, **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Tour-

ism, Government of India, said, "Tourism and environment share a special relationship. Their interaction with each other is a two-way process. On the one hand, environmental resources constitute one of the basic ingredients of tourism. The natural and manmade setting form the tourism products that the tourist enjoys. On the other hand, the close and direct relationship between visitors, host communities and local environment create a sensitive situation, whereby tourism can be both damaging as well as positive for sustainable development. The pandemic has further forced the tourism sector to shift

its focus to resiliency, sustainability and interconnectedness among diverse stakeholders in the sector."

The MOT also announced Swadesh Darshan 2.0 on the occasion. **Rakesh Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "Our National Strategy for sustainable tourism and Swadesh Darshan schemes are focused on developing sustainable tourist destinations, with the key objective of preserving and enhancing the local culture and natural resources and the contribution of tourism

Contd on page 16 ▶

Maha to check over-tourism

Sustainable tourism policy of the state will help disperse tourists to outskirts, reduce impact on environment and benefit locals, says Dr Dhananjay Sawalkar, Joint MD, Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra.



Hazel Jain

The Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra, is keen on promoting unique things that the state has to offer to attract more international tourists. For instance, caves, says **Dr Dhananjay Sawalkar**, Joint Managing Director, Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra. "Out of the 1,200 caves in India, 800 are in our state. Sea forts are also unique to our state. We are also promoting adventure activities like paragliding at Kamshet and scuba diving in Sindhudurg, along with rural tourism as it will appeal to inbound travellers. We want to look at how foreign tourists are arriving into Maharashtra and how can we get them to stay longer. So, we have identified 10 long-stay circuits that we are pro-



Dr Dhananjay Sawalkar
Joint MD, Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra

moting through roadshows, travel marts and familiarisation tours," he says.

Sharing pre-pandemic figures, Dr Sawalkar says that it ranged from 45-50 lakh international tourists. But they stay for one to two days in Mumbai only and go on to other states like Goa or Kerala.

"Our aim now is to keep them within Maharashtra and encourage them to visit places like Aurangabad, Tadoba and the Konkan

We are seeing instances of over-tourism, land pollution and even water shortage in tourist places

belt where they can stay for more than four or five days," he added. Another sector that has been so

Contd on page 16 ▶

Ayush visa, a gamechanger

Welcoming the recently announced Ayush visa, inbound players say there is a need to take these alternative therapies originating in India to international tourists in a big way.



Nisha Verma

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced that India will soon introduce a special Ayush visa category for foreign nationals who want to come to India to take advantage of Ayush therapy. The announcement sent a ray of hope among the inbound tourism industry.

Medical tourism boon

Sharing how India was already making waves in terms of medical tourism, **EM Najeeb**, Senior Vice President, IATO, said, "Pre-Covid India was the hub of medical tourism taking nearly 18 per cent of the global market. In 2017, 495,056 patients visited India to seek medical care. This points to the fact that this high potential and bounce would take this sector to



EM Najeeb
Senior Vice President, IATO

higher heights in the future. Looking backward, the earlier estimation was that by mid-2020, India's medical tourism sector would have an estimated growth worth US\$5-6 billion."

Najeeb believes that Ayush visa is a great advantage for promoting medical value as well as alternative

therapy travel to India. "We should encourage and ensure that all the international insurance companies are recognised by the hospitals here. Also, the facilities here with the accredited hospitals and wellness centres should be widely publicised in the source markets from where we expect the patients to come here, like South eastern and European countries where long waiting periods are there. Wide publicity should be given digitally as well as through embassies," he said.

Alternative takes centrestage

The Ayush visa, believes **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO, will help business in India. "Whoever will come with this visa, will stay here for a long time, which will always help the business, especially for

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Make tourism national priority: HRAWI

Among the recommendations submitted to the Union government, Hotel & Restaurant Association of Western India has requested for better credit facilities for the hospitality sector. The association has also sought investment subsidies and tax holidays for investments in tourism projects, and continuation of the EPCG Scheme.

TT Bureau

Senior delegates of the Hotel & Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) met with **G. Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development, North-Eastern Region, during his visit to Mumbai recently. The delegation presented the minister with a comprehensive wish-list of the hospitality industry highlighting concerns and recommendations for the revival and growth of the sector. The delegation also apprised the minister about the major concerns of the sector subsequent to the two turbulent years of the pandemic.

The association was represented by **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI; **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI; **Pradeep Shetty**, Senior Vice-President, HRAWI;

Paramjit Ghai, Joint Honorary Secretary, HRAWI and **Kunal Gujral**, Secretary General, HRAWI among others.



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI

"We thank the minister for taking the time out to meet with us during his short visit to Mumbai and for giving us the opportunity to submit a comprehensive representation with the sector's priorities for its revival. We have requested him to consider making tourism a National Priority Sector since tourism and hospitality

are the key drivers to accelerate socio-economic development of the country. Also, as part of the celebrations of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', with the support of the Ministry of Tourism we have proposed organising food festivals across the Western region," says Bhatia. "The minister was keen about hospitality's role in the adoption and preservation of historical monuments. He suggested that the hospitality industry participates in such CSR activities that aid in the maintenance and preservation of historical places and monuments. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has been requested to prepare a report on the subject and HRAWI has accepted the proposal wholeheartedly," he added.

Among the submitted recommendations, HRAWI has requested the minister to consider granting infrastructure status to hotels



and for better credit facilities for the sector. It has requested for investment subsidies and tax holidays for investments in tourism projects. "GST rates for hospitality in India are one of the highest in the world and this makes both domestic and inbound tourism expensive. We have requested that the 18 per cent GST category for hotels above room rates of ₹7,500 be annulled and merged with the 12 per cent GST category. Similarly, restaurants should be allowed to avail the option to either charge a composite GST at 5 per cent with no input tax credit or charge GST at 12 per cent with full input tax credit and that the rate be delinked from any room tariff if they are part of hotels,"

said Pradeep Shetty, Senior Vice-President, HRAWI.

HRAWI also has requested for continuation of the EPCG Scheme, favourable liquor licence policies and a level playing field that covers both conventional and alternate accommodation such as B&B, guest houses, short term rentals and so on. The association requested the minister for support in building a platform similar to Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) for the hospitality industry for ensuring a level playing field and to break the monopoly of OTAs and FSAs.

"The Initiative to build a similar platform like ONDC for the hospitality sector will immensely benefit millions of customers with better deals and better customer experience. It will ensure a mechanism to protect the interest of lakhs of hotels and restaurants

in the country that are in need of protection from the predatory pricing and anti-competitive tactics of OTAs and FSAs. The minister was extremely recep-

Going green is a trend that is now being adopted by everyone in the country

tive about our suggestions and we look forward to his consideration of the same, which can go a long way in transforming the travel and tourism sector in the country," Shetty concluded.

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TRAVELTALK

VIEWPOINT

Tourism with responsibility

Earlier this month, the Ministry of Tourism held a workshop in New Delhi on responsible and sustainable tourism. At the event, experts addressed key challenges in the sector and shared case studies. A full day of learning with a full house of attendees.

Focusing on India, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council shared some interesting data. It stated, "Sometimes referred to as ecotourism in India, sustainable tourism is becoming more and more important." Booking.com research in 2020 said 96% of Indian travellers identified sustainable travel as important to them, while 76% said they were more determined to make sustainable choices when looking to travel again in the future. While these findings are promising, obstacles still exist. 39% of Indian travellers do not know how or where to find sustainable travel options and 54% think there aren't enough sustainable travel options available. While it seems that travellers are gearing up to make responsible choices, we, the tourism industry, need to take charge and rebuild tourism sustainability.

Wellness and Yoga

As India prepares for the eighth edition of the International Day of Yoga on June 21, the Union Ministry of Ayush has 'Yoga for Humanity' as the theme for this year. It aims to portray how yoga served humanity in alleviating sufferings during Covid-19.

While there has been a huge demand for yoga and wellness retreats since the pandemic, connecting with nature, focussing on holistic well-being, nutrition and rejuvenation are now the buzz words.

While holistic healing takes centrestage, is India tourism doing enough to grow its wellness offerings in international markets? While International yoga day can be a huge draw for foreign tourists to visit India in the summer, are we making the most of these opportunities? This year, India is also celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav where 75 iconic national sites will showcase mass yoga demonstration while states will hold similar programmes at 75 important locations, according to their choice. I hope we get to see a few foreign tourists also practice yoga and help make India the healing tourism capital.

Sustainable lifestyle new normal

Indians are becoming more conscious of making eco-friendly lifestyle choices enabling a positive impact on the environment, reveals a recent report by Amex Trendex. About 90 per cent of Indians are apprising themselves about carbon offsetting, it says.



TT Bureau

Around 95 per cent of Indians have become more focused on a variety of sustainability topics with recycling, renewable energy and climate action gaining the most interest, and they made changes in their everyday life to reduce their carbon footprint last year. For 96 per cent of surveyed Indians, one of their goals in 2022 is making more sustainable behaviour choices with purchases of clothing, food, tech and travel.

About 90 per cent of the Indians are apprising themselves about carbon offsetting and around 91

per cent knew about carbon removal. In addition to this, about 92 per cent of Indian adults have a good understanding of their personal carbon footprint and 87

per cent of Indian adults are more likely to purchase environment-friendly products now than before the pandemic. "The findings of our Trendex research clearly

show that Indian consumers are becoming more self-aware and are making more informed decisions to conserve the environment, which is especially true for GenZers and Millennials," said Vibha Bajaj, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Asia, American Express. "At American Express India, we have been driving sustainability initiatives along with multiple partners for increasing the green cover, improving the air quality, and raising awareness among the community in urban spaces. Through volunteering programmes, our colleagues have also been supporting both country-specific and global green initiatives," she added.

Indians lead the eco-friendly pack

- ❖ More interested in energy efficiency in home/apartment than ever before (97 per cent).
- ❖ Looking for companies to provide them with options to remove carbon emissions associated with their purchases with 98 per cent stating so
- ❖ More focused on a variety of sustainability topics this year with air pollution (96 per cent) and recycling, renewable energy and climate action (95 per cent) gaining the most interest.
- ❖ Wanting to make more travel decisions with climate impact in mind (96 per cent).

May brings travel recovery hope

During the month of May, Indian airports witness steep increase in international passenger traffic to 72 per cent of the pre-Covid levels. This comes within one month of the resumption of international commercial operations on March 27.

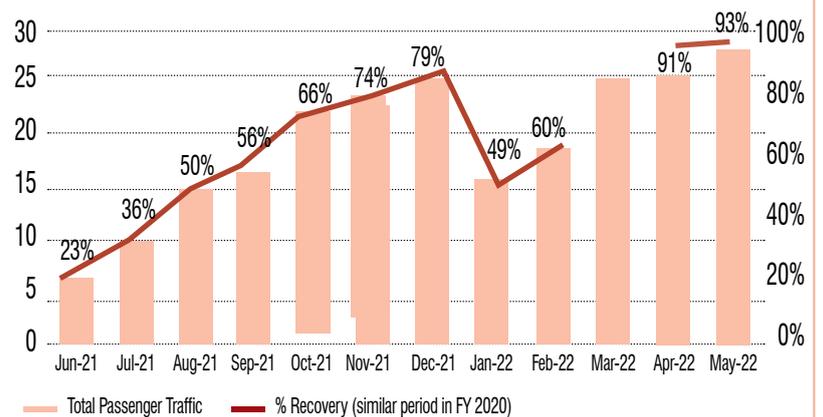


TT Bureau

ICRA expects an increase in the overall passenger traffic up to 97 per cent of the pre-Covid levels in FY2023 on the back of a strong and sharp recovery in domestic passenger traffic and the resumption of international commercial operations. The international commercial operations resumed on March 27 this year, after a two-year ban. Though, special flights were allowed during the banned period.

The ramp up is healthy with international passenger traffic reaching 63 per cent and 72 per cent of pre-Covid levels (similar period in 2019) in April and May 2022 respectively compared to the recovery of less than 50 per cent to that of pre-pandemic levels during FY2022. The recovery in domestic passenger traffic was strong post-Omicron and has reached 98 per cent of pre-Covid levels in April and May 2022. Overall, passenger traffic has reached 93 per cent of pre-

May trend in passenger traffic (in million)



Source: AAI, ICRA Research; * Mar-22 recovery is not given due to closure of airports operations partly during Mar-20

Covid levels in May 2022. As per a recent report published by ICRA on Airport Infrastructure industry, Abhishek Lahoti, Senior Analyst, Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said, "Resumption of international commercial operations has accelerated the traffic recovery. Considering the healthy ramp up in international traffic in the last two months, ICRA expects

international traffic to reach 80-85 per cent of the pre-Covid

level in FY2023 as against earlier estimates of 70-75 per cent."

Highlights

- ❖ The recovery in domestic passenger traffic was strong post-Omicron and has reached 98 per cent of pre-Covid levels in April and May 2022
- ❖ International traffic to reach 80-85 per cent of the pre-Covid level in FY2023 as against earlier estimate of 70-75 per cent.



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Valley looks at brighter times

While travel demand for Kashmir is at an all-time high, local trade is struggling with shortage of hotel rooms and services. Zahoor Qari, Chairman & Managing Executive, Air Links Tours and Travels, explains why it is important to bring down rates and create better infrastructure.

Nisha Verma

Kashmir has seen an unprecedented rise in tourist arrivals, recording around 600,000 tourists in the first four months of 2022, highest in the last 10 years. Commenting on the same, **Zahoor Qari**, Chairman & Managing Executive, Air Links Tours and Travels, said that they are seeing a boom in business. "There is hardly any property where we can get any room these days. We are already booked until July, and some properties are booked until October. We are seeing such traffic in a decade. It is a good step and progress for our Union Territory (UT)."

Issues at hand

While Qari agrees that pressure is there on all segments of tourism ecosystem, Qari highlights that tour operators are still suffering because they are unable to get the

accommodations for the tourists that come to Kashmir. "Previously, the bookings were not going online to such an extent. Tour operators are now facing a lot of problems in getting the tourists and groups



Zahoor Qari
Chairman & Managing Executive
Air Links Tours and Travels

accommodated in different properties. Also, it is difficult to provide the desired properties to tourists because they are either already occupied or are not available. Same is the case with houseboats and shikaras," he said.

The demand is high, said Qari, adding that the infrastructure in the valley is not enough to take on the complete tourist inflow that is coming. "The rates have gone so high that certain people are avoiding to come to Kashmir because of non-availability of properties and services, as there is a shortage of vehicles and rooms. Government is trying to accommodate whatever demand is coming. We have also given suggestion to the government to develop new properties, so that in future we don't have shortage as we have now," he further added.

He agreed that this increase could be a result of Covid, after which people couldn't travel outside India and preferred Kashmir over many other destinations. "Generally, they were going to Thailand, Malaysia or Dubai, but that traffic has come to Kashmir. This time we are seeing that high-end tour-

ists are more compared to budget tourists, due to which the rates have gone very high," he claimed.

This time we are seeing more high-end tourists, due to which the rates have gone very high

Protests

Recently a protest was held in Kashmir by the travel trade against the unethical practices by hotels and other service providers. "I am the convener of United Tourism Forum, which staged those protests. It is a group of 14 associations. The idea was to give a clear

message to the hoteliers charging much more than the amenities and services they provide. The same goes for some transporters and shikarawalas. Not all hotels in Kashmir are worth charging ₹12,000-13,000 per room, and quoting this much for clients creates a bad image on the tour operators if the customers are dissatisfied and feel misguided. It is not the fault of the tour operator," he appealed. He said hotel associations and transporters have assured them for amicable solution.

Govt support

Praising the tourism department, Qari said, "The department is taking the required steps. One of our demands is that they should give more permits to taxi operators. Secondly, the tourism department is in touch with the hoteliers to create more properties. With this, we would be able to overcome the shortage of hotels." 📌

Tourism News

'Succeeded in putting tourism on the UN agenda as a top priority': UNWTO

Senior citizens in Kerala get 50 per cent cut in entry fee in tourism centres

International passenger traffic likely to reach up to 85 per cent of pre-Covid levels in 2023

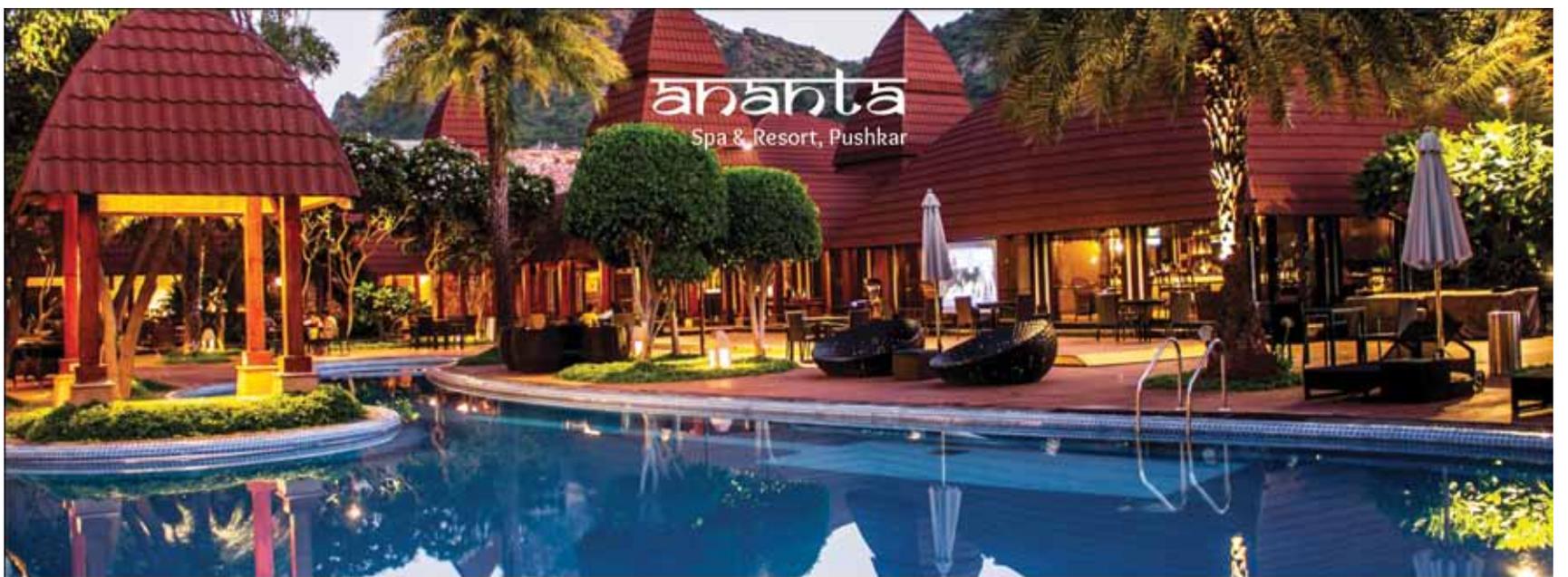
FITUR 2023 to hold 43rd edition of International Tourism Fair from 18 to 22 January 2023

75 per cent Indians ready to spend more than pre-pandemic on travel: MMT

Ananta Hotels & Resorts announces opening of 52-key property in Sasan Gir, Gujarat

Suspected digital fraud attempts against travel industry rise by 68 per cent

Israel removes all RT-PCR testing requirements from 21 May for all international travellers



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'We expect India to be new China'

PATA India chapter's 'Webinar: Asia Pacific Destination Forecast' unveils the impact of Covid on the industry and what the future holds in terms of recovery for the Asia-Pacific, with a focus on India, which is projecting positive growth in the coming years.

 Nisha Verma

Liz Ortuera, CEO, PATA and **Prof. John Koldowski**, Advisor, PATA, shared the tourism trends and projections for India market for next two years (2022-24). Starting the presentation, Ortuera said that people are looking forward to be reconnected and hence "Travel can be a force for good, particularly in Asia". Giving a general outlook, she said, "There are three brief messages—cautious optimism; there are opportunities for the innovative and strategic; and we have to remind the world that the future is Asia."

has outperformed any Asia-Pacific country in the recovery with faster capacity rebuild. We expect India to be the new China over the next five years. While other markets have suffered from under capacity, India has bounced back." She added, "There is a high interest, not just in marketing inbound



Liz Ortuera
CEO, PATA

Employee situation

She underlined the fact that millions of jobs, particularly in Asia-Pacific, have been lost due to the pandemic. "We are all keen to get our livelihood back and get people re-employed. Thus, travel will be the growth engine again for the region," she claimed. Highlighting the role of employees in tourism companies, she said, "The staff has been put through challenges and I think it's an important time to recognise and appreciate them because these are not the jobs they signed up for, but have done the industry a great service through the pandemic, supporting the recovery and coming out of it." Ortuera said that shortage of employees is a common complaint around the world. In North America, Europe and even in China, the great resignation is in effect. "Many hospitality companies are seeing staffing constraints. Also, there is a rise of the conscious consumer and corporate," she informed.

India shining

Citing a forecast update by Official Airline Guide, she said, "India

into their holiday plans, majority of travellers in the region agreed. "India is sitting above 60 per cent, while the average is 57 per cent in this region. There is a big shift post pandemic, whether it is consumers or corporates, there is an intention to more sustainable practices, interest and a sense of responsibility. Our advise for destination operators and service providers is to stay current, be more conscious and start to adapt sustainable travel practices," she shared.



to Asia-Pacific, but the power of our consumers, particularly the Indian consumer is one that gets the attention of Europe and North America."

Eight-point agenda

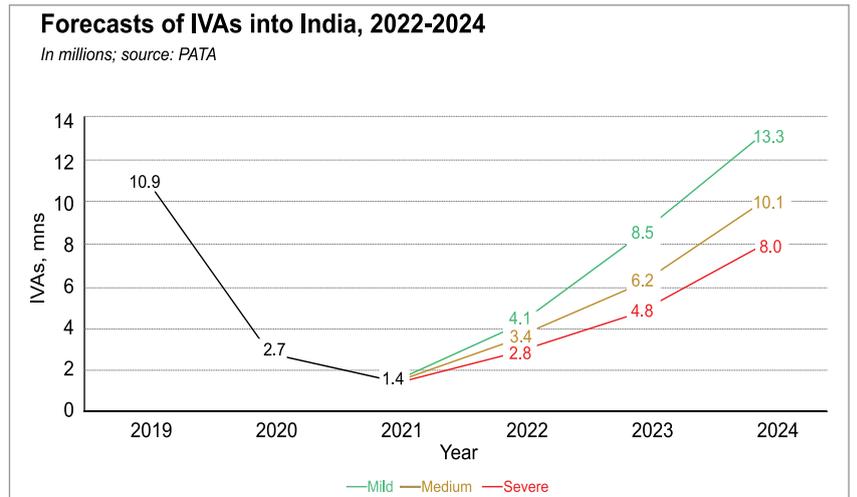
Claiming that their role at PATA would be to share the best practices so that members can stay dynamic and ahead of the curve, Ortuera said, "When I started my role at PATA, I had put in an eight-point plan with the intent of trying to deliver on some essentials that would help our membership base and the industry in terms of recovery. Some topics of interest include recovery initiatives, resilience, sustainability and regenerative travel as important market trends."

Wellness in travel

Adding that all travel today is wellness influenced, Ortuera said, "Even if primary purpose for your trip is not wellness, you are making 100 decisions in the course of your trip that are wellness related. Travellers are far more conscious of wellness than they were before."

Destination management

Ortuera claimed that travellers want to see well-managed



destinations. "They are more aware now after the impact of over-tourism and it is important that destinations do not just pitch what they are offering, but

Summit in Ras Al Khaimah. Lastly, we will be hosting an APAC travel Summit with a travel mart in December in partnership with GBTA," she announced.

Overview of visitor arrivals

Koldowski, in his presentation, gave an overview of how PATA is seeing the potential for visitor arrivals in the next three years, particularly with a focus on South Asia and India. "In 2020, globally International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) fell off a cliff, but in 2021 there was a slight turnaround. According to UNWTO, while some parts of the world were slowly, struggling out of a deficit, Asia and the Pacific regions remained there through 2021."

Corresponding to 2019, Koldowski said, "We are not going to get back to 2019 levels of international tourist arrivals anytime soon. In fact, with Covid, we lost 30 years of growth and it is going to take some time to get back to that level."

India scenario

Sharing the PATA research on Asia-Pacific visitor forecasts 2022-24, Koldowski said, "Looking at the share of international visitor arrivals into India in 2019, India captured 69 per cent of all arrivals into South

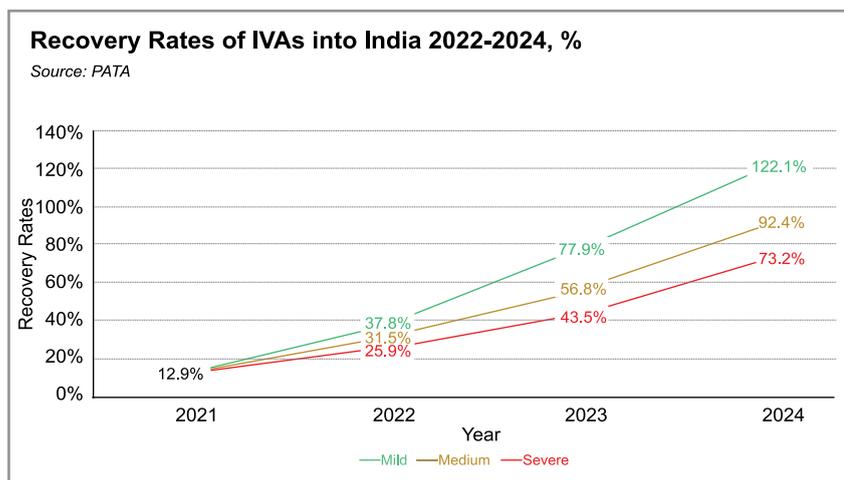
Asia. With the impact of Covid-19 and the regulations required to contain it, it is slowly struggling back to its relative significance. It might take another year beyond 2024 for India to do that," he claimed.

Wicked problems

Koldowski further mentioned that we are now entering an era of wicked problems. "While previously we had relative periods of

 India has outperformed Asia-Pacific in the tourism recovery with faster capacity rebuild

 Looking at foreign tourist footfalls in 2019, India captured 69 per cent of tourists into South Asia
— John Koldowski



also be proactive in terms of management. Hence, we have deployed training to help destinations do that," she said. "As PATA, we are trying to leverage all our channels to keep the industry and consumers informed on the status of different destinations and new products because many destinations have evolved by responding to things like increased interest in wellness offerings," she added.

Upcoming events

She also highlighted PATA's upcoming global events. "We have PATA Destination Marketing Forum in Songkhla, Thailand. Secondly, there is PATA Annual

 While travelling, you make 100 decisions in the course of trip that are related to wellness
— Liz Ortuera

stability with the occasional disruption, we are now moving into an era of constant disruption, with relatively small periods of stability. We need to get used to that."

Digitally forward

Ortuera said, "Digital marketing is essential and critical for any business right now because that is how consumers find business online. If you are not into digital marketing, get into it. Because during Covid many people got used to searching online, ordering online and communicating online. It is not going and will continue." She added, "The rise of distributed workforce has led to a reduced need for big corporate offices. This gives rise to opportunities as new forms of travel that are not defined into pure corporate or pure leisure."

States ready for big tourism leap

Two years after the pandemic brought tourism to a halt in the country, the industry looks well set for recovery. State tourism boards are planning a slew of measures, including media campaigns and other promotional strategies, to revive the confidence of travel fraternity and prepare them to take out maximum advantage of the opportunities.

 Janice Alyosius

Research conducted by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has revealed that the travel and tourism sector's contribution to the Indian economy could surpass the pre-pandemic levels this year with a year-on-year growth of 20.7 per cent. The WTTC's Economic Impact Report says the sector's contribution to the nation's economy could reach almost ₹15.9 trillion (U.S. \$215 billion) in 2022, 1 per cent above 2019 levels. The Union Ministry of Tourism and state governments, optimistic over the recovery, are working towards promoting India with new offerings to the visitors. Campaigns and roadshows are being held in each state with the objective of boosting the confidence of travel fraternity.

Pawan Jain, Joint director, Department of Tourism, Rajasthan, said that the Rajasthan government has allocated a budget of ₹600 crores for the development of tourist places. Additional ₹400 crores has been allocated for marketing and promotions. The government, in cooperation with the hotel and tourism association of Rajasthan, plans to organise an event for domestic tour operators from 22 to 24 July in Jaipur, Jain said.

Rajasthan has witnessed a good number of domestic tourists in the summer season. As the commercial flights have resumed, the state anticipates increase in the influx of foreign tourists in coming days. The state also plans to attract investors with sops. Tourism units like hotels, resorts and museums will be paying tariff on industrial rates, which is almost 25 per cent less than the commercial rate, Jain said. The state has come up with some new pro-

motional schemes. For example, under the heritage certification scheme, the government will certify heritage buildings, especially heritage hotels used for wedding and film shootings, by which the owners of heritage buildings can get subsidised bar licences or excise bar licences at less than 50 per cent rate. Furthermore, the

not just in the big cities like Delhi, Bombay and Chennai, but also in B towns on the state's outskirts," he added.

"These B2B meetings and roadshows are being held with the objective of boosting the confidence and preparing travel fraternity since the market is going to

Gujarat held its first major bloggers meet in December, in which bloggers from all over the country were invited to various destinations of Gujarat.

Mukherjee said the state government is playing a key role in building up a bridge between travel agents from all over India and the suppliers from Gujarat. "The prime thing the government is focusing on at present is to develop the agent base to facilitate smooth operation. In November-December when the Rann Utsav and other winter products of the state will start, by end of this season Gujarat anticipates to reach pre-pandemic levels in tourism," he said.

Zeeshan Khan, Assistant Director, Department of Tourism, Kashmir, said that the state government is working on confidence building measures, as the industry dipped in the last two years. "The government hosted roadshows and media campaigns in various states via different platforms to promote and educate consumers about their new offerings. To mark 75 years of Independence, Jammu and Kashmir has identified 75 offbeat destinations, 38 in Kashmir, 37 in Jammu," he said. "The Union Territories famous for their natural beauty and picturesque locations are favourite destinations for tourists across the world. Jammu is famous for its temples, while Kashmir Valley is known for its lakes and gardens," he added.

Khan revealed that the government has started adventure activities like paragliding, rafting and hot air balloon to attract tourists. "Due to the rigorous promotions, Jammu and Kashmir had record high tourist footfall and witnessed 2,80,000 visitors in April 2022 itself," he said.

Khan also highlighted the state's 24-hour active grievance redressal system, which makes sure that a complaint is resolved within 24 hours, and so the tourists feel satisfied. "After the reopening of borders, Kashmir has observed international tourist arrivals from Bangladesh, Russia, England, US and Thailand. There is a good inflow of international tourists, which makes us confident that through our campaigns and promotional activities, we will have even more interna-

tional visitors visiting Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Tourism contributes towards 15.45 per cent of Uttarakhand's GDP. The state has seen a constant growth rate of approximately 12 per cent of tourism arrivals for the last 10 years. **Colonel Ashvin Pundir**, Additional CEO, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board revealed that the government has initiated multiple development projects to improve the infrastructure around all religious sites, to

der the scheme, a facilitation center and other passenger facilities, entrance gate etc. will be constructed in Yamunotri Dham.

He further revealed that the government is promoting offbeat and newer destinations to evenly distribute tourism benefits all around the state. New adventure locations like Tehri, Nayar Valley, Marchula for the tourist who wants to explore the unexplored are being developed and publicised. Besides this, a new Trekking traction cen-



Pawan Jain
Joint Director
Department of Tourism, Rajasthan



Anjit Mukherjee
Deputy Manager
Tourism Corporation of Gujarat

 Tourism units like hotels, resorts and museums in Rajasthan will pay tariff on industrial rates

 B2B meetings and roadshows are being held with objective of boosting the confidence of travel fraternity

state is also focusing on promoting rural tourism, for which the government is planning a rural tourism scheme, which will be launched soon, he added.

Anjit Mukherjee, Deputy Manager, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, said that the state never took a pause during the pandemic and has been continuously working to promote tourism. He said the government is planning to host roadshows to boost the confidence of travel agents. "Several B2B agent meetings have been conducted

boom very soon and the industry needs agents and other travel partners to be ready with all the knowledge about destinations. The government of Gujarat plans to educate, motivate and prepare the industry once again," he said.

As a part of marketing and promotional activities, the government of Gujarat has been doing campaigns and outdoor advertisements, besides familiarisation trips. The government is hosting bloggers meet to promote the state and its tourist attractions. In association with India Tourism,



Zeeshan Khan
Assistant Director
Department of Tourism, Kashmir



Ashvin Pundir
Additional CEO, Uttarakhand Tourism
Development Board

 J&K has identified 75 offbeat destinations, 38 in Kashmir and 37 in Jammu to promote them

 State tourism department is working to develop and improve facilities at Char Dhams

make it easier and more comfortable for the tourists visiting the state for religious tourism. The department is continuously working to develop and improve facilities at the Char Dhams. Last year, ₹12,000 crores have been spent for the construction of all-weather road of over 880 kms and improved infrastructure to facilitate tourism is being planned in Yamunotri and Gangotri Dham at a cost of ₹54.35 crores. Un-

ter policy has been developed where the government is giving subsidy to the people to develop homestays in this region where the treks are taking place. In addition, the government is also making trekking traction centers in these areas, there are about 13 destinations in Uttarakhand, from where the treks start and these are the locations where infrastructure development is taking place.

Important measures by states

- ❖ Rajasthan has allocated ₹600 crores for development of tourist sites. ₹400 crores has been allocated for promotions.
- ❖ Gujarat is planning to bridge the gap between the travel agents from across India and the suppliers from the state.
- ❖ Jammu and Kashmir has identified 75 offbeat destinations, 38 in Kashmir and 37 in Jammu for promotion.
- ❖ Uttarakhand has developed new trekking traction centre policy to provide subsidy for developing homestays.



Hospitality embraces wellness

India is known for its ancient wellness practices around the world, and the pandemic has once again reinforced its importance in the field. As people are discovering new sense of staying healthy and adopting natural way of life, properties and wellness retreats in the country are offering unique therapies and treatments.



Nisha Verma

Hotels, resorts and wellness retreats across India, are offering a range of therapies and programmes from not only India but around the world for both inbound and domestic travellers. Some of these treatments and therapies are worth trying.

Addressing hormonal health

Indian wellness is synonymous with Ananda in the Himalayas, which is famous worldwide for its wellness programmes.

other hormonal changes in men. The uniqueness of the programme lies in its application of traditional Chinese medicine techniques to accurately diagnose the underlying body imbalances leading to the disruption in hormonal systems and its integration of various traditional Oriental therapies such as Acupuncture, Cupping, Moxibustion, Tibetan Kuu Nye, Kundalini and Japanese Shiatsu. Phases such as menopause are also an emotional roller coaster for women, including symptoms of sadness, irritability, anxiety and

Himalayan wellness

Situated amid the picturesque Himalayas, The Khyber Spa by L'OCCITANE, located within the The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa, provides an experience of provence in Gulmarg, along with stunning views, shares **Vinit Chhabra**, General Manager, The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa, Gulmarg, UT J&K. "With three single treatment rooms and two couple suites, each with its own private steam chamber, it is a place to unwind and be pampered, be it after an exhilarating ski session, or a leisurely walk in the dense woods or meadows, or at the beginning of your day. The spa brings to life the invigorating climate of Gulmarg. Be it spring, summer, autumn or winter, guests can choose from a repertoire of signature treatments specially crafted with home grown seasonal flora combined with original L'OCCITANE products and pure water from the springs in the Himalayas," he added.

Desert rose

Emotional wellbeing is an integral pillar of the Raffles Udaipur, claims **Puneet Dhawan**, Senior Vice President Operations, Accor India and South Asia. "At the Raffles Spa, an impeccable blend of healing techniques take guests on a revitalising journey of emotional well-being and provide a unique space for rejuvenation of the mind, body and soul. An element of uniqueness of the Raffles Spa lies in its personalised wellness offerings. Holistic personalised therapies are thoughtfully created through consultations with the guests at the Raffles Spa, to remedy any imbalances in the life-forces or doshas, while taking you on a journey of true relaxation," he said.

Invigorating all senses

Jitendra Varshney, Spa & Wellness Director, Six Senses Fort Barwara, claims that they believe in extensive Ayurvedic and personalised wellness programmes based on the preventative principles of Eastern medicine and result-oriented Western influences.

"Transcendent Sound Journey is a 60-minute treatment and is offered in our sacred meditation hall using different sizes of

ing day of exploration ahead in Dharamshala," he elaborated.

Promotions & engagements

When it comes to spreading the word about these unique therapies and treatments, hotels are adopting various methods.

"Ananda has been building awareness of these unique offerings through educational workshops to travel partners and our guests in residence, supplemented by direct

based on adventure sports, honeymoon, romance and long weekends," he said.

Rajpurohit shared, "The group yoga sessions, along with a host of other engagement activities, are offered at no additional charge to all our in-house guests. We actively highlight and promote these through our social media channels to create awareness among prospective guests. The sales team



Mahesh Natarajan
Chief Operating Officer
Ananda in the Himalayas



Vinit Chhabra
General Manager, The Khyber Himalayan
Resort & Spa, Gulmarg, UT J&K



Jitendra Varshney
Spa & Wellness Director
Six Senses Fort Barwara



Rajesh Rajpurohit
General Manager
Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala



Puneet Dhawan
Senior Vice President Operations
Accor India and South Asia

Ananda now offers emotional healing and therapy spearheaded by holistic experts

Be it spring, summer or winter, guests can choose from a repertoire of treatments

Transcendent Sound Journey is a 60-minute treatment and is offered in our sacred meditation hall

Wellness activities has been started for resident guests to elevate the entire stay experience

An element of uniqueness of the Raffles Spa lies in its personalised wellness offerings

Sharing one of their unique therapies, **Mahesh Natarajan**, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Ananda in the Himalayas, says, "The Ananda Rebalance programme has been designed to address hormonal health, both for menopause in women as well as changes in testosterone and

mood changes. Ananda now offers emotional healing and therapy spearheaded by holistic experts drawing from fields of clinical psychology, energy therapy, hypnosis and NLP, which blend seamlessly into the programme to address emotional stress caused primarily by these hormonal imbalances."

crystal and metal singing bowls, ocean sound drum and gong. The healing sounds of the gong and singing bowls reverberate in your innermost self. It gives you an opportunity to experience your true, limitless nature," he claimed.

Yoga amid mountains

Rajesh Rajpurohit General Manager, Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala, shares that they have introduced a series of wellness as well as nature centric engagement activities for resident guests to elevate the entire stay experience. "Guided group yoga sessions are organised by the poolside every morning. The scenic backdrop of the Kangra valley, fresh mountain breeze and gentle yoga stretches set the tone for an active yet relax-

communication and social media. The hugely positive response that our clients have shown post introduction of this programme has been amplified by word of mouth and references to their respective networks. Ananda's team of doctors are available for online consultations," shared Natarajan.

Chhabra revealed that they work closely with the travel trade community to promote The Khyber. "Other than the traditional marketing activities like print advertisement campaigns and using social media to build our brand, we use public relations very effectively to promote the property. And as we are promoting Gulmarg as a year-round destination, we have special packages for various seasons as well as special interest packages

also includes details on the activities to their sales pitching to B2B partners."

At Six Senses Fort Barwara, it has been integrated as a welcome ritual for the guests arriving at the hotel. Varshney shares, "All the treatments and activities undertaken at the Six Senses Spas begin and finish with a spa specialist striking the singing bowls. The practice creates curiosity in guests' mind resulting in them immersing in a full session of sound journey. The practice is being promoted across the website and social media as part of the brand's commitment to well-being. Also, we are engaging with the travel trade, which most of the time is done by our corporate sales and marketing team." 🐦



Scandinavia is exemplary in its engagement and awareness of sustainability, where 65 per cent of travel businesses already have implemented a sustainability strategy, according to Euromonitor's Voice of the Industry Sustainability Survey (July 2020).



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الطيران العماني
OMAN AIR

Ayush visa attracting foreign tourists

► Contd from page 3

the hotels and the tour operators with whom they have booked," he said.

Ravi Gosain, Vice President, IATO, also agrees that Ayush visa is the step in the right direction by the Union government. "There are many people who come for healing purposes to India and not just regular medical treat-



Ravi Gosain
Vice President, IATO

ment. Ayush is the way forward for them and Ministry of Ayush is aggressive in promoting through embassies overseas. It will be a good step and there will be a new segment for people who just come for alternative therapies



Rajnish Kaistha
Secretary, IATO

and not specifically for critical medical care," he added.

According to **Rajnish Kaistha**, Secretary, IATO, the government's idea behind the Ayush visa is to give a proper name of Ayush tourism to India's centuries old healing traditions like Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, our old medicines and yoga. "With Ayush visa, the government is looking at not only boosting medical tourism, but also alternate medicines aiming at holistic healing of the body," he added.

Getting inbound interest
Sunil Mishra, Honorary Treasurer, IATO, said that they are getting

"very good" response from the European market for Ayurveda and Yoga. "The response is good in that category and we can promote India," he added.

States' focus on wellness
Prateek Hira, Chairman, IATO, UP Chapter agrees that India is being projected as a wellness and alternative therapy destination. "The government's focus on wellness is one of the major reasons for tourists visiting India," he added.



Sunil Mishra
Honorary Treasurer, IATO

What more is needed
Debjit Dutta, Chairman, IATO West Bengal Chapter, said, "I am happy to note that the MOT is focusing more on medical



Prateek Hira
Chairman, IATO, UP Chapter

and wellness tourism in view of the recent policy. The launch of Ayush visa for traditional medical tourism is certainly going to be a major step to boost inbound traffic to India with a theme 'Heal in India'."

Sejoe Jose, Chairman - IATO Southern Region, said that India, despite being the birthplace of Ayurveda was losing a lot of wellness business to Sri Lanka and other South Eastern countries. "Ayush visa will definitely help India regain that lost business and bring in a lot more connections to the country. The government must come out with the benefits for tourists coming

into India because we are already very cost-effective when it comes to medical tourism. Also, now the world is focusing a lot on Ayurveda and Yoga. If the benefits of Ayurveda are showcased as a dedicated promotional campaign, I am sure wellness tourism will flourish in India."

Innovative solution
Sharing his views, **Sunil Singh Rana**, Chairman - IATO Uttarakhand Chapter, said, "The introduction of Ayush visa category



Debjit Dutta
Chairman, IATO West Bengal Chapter

is a very innovative idea not only to promote tourism in India, but to showcase the ancient medical



Sejoe Jose
Chairman - IATO Southern Region

science of India to the world. This will be a superb strategy of cross-selling and making India a global



Sunil Singh Rana
Chairman - IATO Uttarakhand Chapter

brand in the alternative medicine segment along with boosting inbound tourism. ↴

Centara signs hotel in Thailand

Centara Hotels & Resorts have joined hands with Baansuay Group for first property in Surat Thani under the Centra by Centara brand, which will welcome guests from July 2023.

Nisha Verma

Centara Hotels & Resorts and Baansuay Group (Suratthani) have signed a Hotel Management Agreement (HMA) for Centra by Centara Hotel Surat Thani. The agreement was executed by senior executives from the two companies at a ceremony held at Centara's flagship Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld.

Surat Thani is the largest of Thailand's southern provinces and is a main transit point for travellers en route to some of the Kingdom's most famous islands, including Koh Samui and Koh Phangan. The new project includes the complete renovation of an existing low-rise hotel, with work currently underway. The hotel is expected to open on 1 July 2023 after the renovation of 110 rooms, all-day dining Dim Sum restaurant, casual in-style Japanese restaurant and meeting room. The completion

of a second phase is expected in early 2025, which will see the construction of a new building to house additional facilities, including large function room, fitness centre and swimming pool.

"We are excited to announce the partnership with Baansuay Group (Suratthani) PCL. for Centra by Centara Hotel Surat Thani, our twelfth Centra by Centara-



flagged property, and Centara's first hotel in Surat Thani. Centra by Centara's positioning of elevating the essentials by delivering great quality at excellent value make this an ideal brand

for leisure and MICE travellers seeking to explore the province's natural and cultural charms," said **Thirayuth Chirathivat**, Chief Executive Officer, Centara Hotels & Resorts.

"We are delighted to be partnering with Centara for their first hotel in Surat Thani. With their excellent reputation and track record, we are confident that Cen-

tra by Centara Hotel Surat Thani will become a new landmark for travellers exploring southern Thailand," said **Piriya Tanerananonth**, CEO of Baansuay Group (Suratthani) PCL. ↴

Wellness holidays are investment

Health and wellness are on top of mind for people than ever before, and they are not just going on wellness holidays for this, but also leading an active and healthy lifestyle to keep themselves fit.

"People are now taking health, fitness and wellness more seriously than before and hence asking for such holidays. We have many health getaways in India that are very good and doing an honest job. I normally tend to recommend my clients places like Naad Wellness, Vana Retreat, Prakriti Shakti, some of the other CGH Earth places and several good places in Kerala depending on the need. I hope people start looking at taking a wellness holiday as an investment to oneself and not a spa vacation. There is a science involved and each body is different. I think one should approach experienced curators to seek wellness."



Nagsri Prasad Sashidhar
Chief Happiness Officer
NAGSRI (Mumbai)



Anshu Tejuja
Managing Director, Ashoka Dream Holidays

"Wellness tourism picking up among Indian travellers. Today a lot of fitness and wellness enthusiasts are shifting their lifestyle patterns towards clean eating, yoga, sleep, natural forms of cure and exercise. I see a huge demand for people seeking wellness holidays. For wellness holidays in India I recommend Ananda in the Himalayas, Vana, Shreyas Retreat Bangalore, CGH Earth and so on. I speak to the client and know what are they exactly looking for and what is their purpose and recommend accordingly. Internationally, we also recommend Chiva Som, Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, The Farm and many such options. Clients mainly seek cure through healthy lifestyle."

"From our recent visit to India, we gathered that Indian corporates and groups are looking for activities that rejuvenate and reconnect teams and colleagues. Spa tourism or wellness tourism is at the forefront of group travel as well as destination weddings for the Indian market having spoken to many planners during our sales trip. As an international MICE destination, Desaru Coast has four world-class spas. One&Only Desaru Coast features the first ultra-luxury Chenot Spa in Asia. Anantara Desaru Coast Resort and Villas' spa is widely acknowledged as one of the best globally for traditional Thai and Malaysian massages."



Roslina Arbak
MD & CEO, Desaru Development
Holdings One Sdn. Bhd.
Inputs by Hazel Jain

‘Collaborative efforts need of the hour’

At a time when the hospitality industry is on a recovery path, MP Bezbaruah, Secretary General, HAI, says that the industry and the government should come together to discuss, debate and devise safe ways for the future and facilitate the hospitality industry to grow to its full potential and contribute to inclusive growth.

Nisha Verma

Hotel Association of India (HAI) has been engaging with the government at various levels. MP Bezbaruah, Secretary General, HAI, said, “HAI has always emphasised the importance of collaborative partnership with the government. Considering the well-recognised and very important role that the industry plays in employment creation and boosting inclusive growth, we have focused on policy formulations that will promote the growth and development of hotels in the long run.”

He added that two key interventions can help the industry. “According to hotels, the status of an ‘Infrastructure Industry’ and allowing hotels to avail the benefits currently available for the industry. Securing infrastructure status would facilitate soft financing of

hotels, reducing their gestation period making hotel investments more attractive. This will open up vast opportunities for the sector



MP Bezbaruah
Secretary General, HAI

to provide employment to a wide spectrum of job seekers from the unskilled to the specialised, even in the remote parts of the country,” he claimed.

Similarly, the benefits of industry like lower utility tariffs, property tax and licence fees will reduce the fixed operational costs of

hotels and allow them to use surpluses generated for ploughing back into the business. Both have been long-standing demands of the sector.

Pushing for infra status

Bezbaruah revealed that HAI has recently had some engaging interactions on the demand of ‘Infrastructure status’. “The demand has been captured and recommended by the MOT in the draft document of National Tourism Policy. It may be pertinent to mention here that in its 295th report titled ‘Potential of Tourist Spots in the country - Connectivity and Outreach’ placed before both the houses on 27 July 2021, the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, observes that the hospitality industry is in huge distress under the impact of the pandemic and is looking at mass unemployment

and pan India bankruptcies. The committee believes that there is an imperative need to accord infrastructure status to hotel projects with capex above ₹25 crore (excluding land) and include the same in the infrastructure lending list of the RBI. We are very hopeful of a positive development,” he emphasised.

Issues at hand

Commenting on other significant issues that impact the industry, he said, “Rationalisation of GST, shortage of skilled personnel, excessive and heavy licencing, cumbersome procedures for approvals of hotel projects, reduced reward point in of SEIS, DGFT guidelines for schemes such as EPCG that need to be reviewed in light of the unprecedented situation of nil to negligible foreign exchange earnings for hotels in the last couple of years. Due to the pandemic, the Government

has done a lot of work in recent years on promoting ‘ease of doing business’. Bodies like RBI have recognised that the industry is amongst the most stressed

We have focused on policy formulations that will promote growth of hotels in the long run

He added that they will continue to pursue the issues at every level possible and work together with the government in creating a conducive environment for the industry to grow and flourish and continue to make sizeable contributions to the national economy in terms of GDP, jobs, inclusive growth and achieving all that in a sustainable manner benefiting communities at large.

ECLGS scheme

Bezbaruah shared that the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS), its recent extension up to March 2023 and earmarking of an additional ₹50,000 crore for hospitality and related sectors have all been welcome initiatives. “HAI has been requesting that the scheme should be customised and tailored to suit the unique hotel business model and future outlook for the sector,” he said.

and have included the sector in the ECLGS Scheme. The scheme has been extended in the Union Budget of 2022-23 and more funds have been made available to the sector under the scheme.”

‘This year will be wellness year’

With importance of wellness being felt more after Covid-19, hotels are creating wellness packages, says Gagan Katyal, Head of Sales and Marketing, Ananta Hotels and Resorts.

Janice Alyosius

India’s tourism industry stands to benefit greatly from the growth of wellness tourism. Gagan Katyal, Head of Sales and Marketing, Ananta Hotels and Resorts, says that the past two years have been traumatic, and everyone is anxious to return to a normal and healthy life.



Gagan Katyal
Head of Sales and Marketing
Ananta Hotels and Resorts

“This is an ideal time for wellness tourism to grow. This year will be a bumper year for wellness tourism perceiving the ongoing trend,” Katyal said.

He said the major contributing factors behind the success of India in wellness tourism may include ayurveda, yoga, geography, trained manpower and developed infrastructure. “We have a team of specialised staff that works hard to provide our guests with the best service. We are studying and developing the current facilities to achieve that edge. Our locations are serene and thus create a favour-

able atmosphere to be chosen for wellness,” he added.

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) has formulated a National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism in order to create a robust framework and synergy among the central government ministries, state governments and private sector for promoting India as a medical and wellness tourism destination. Katyal said that financial assistance is one of the challenges that the government needs to address on priority, since the tourism and hospital-

ity industries have been badly hit. Currently, Ananta hotels is working on campaigns and packages to offer guests wholesome experience of wellness and experiential stay. Katyal said that wellness tourism segment has accelerated around the world

Financial aid is one of the challenges that the government needs to address on priority

and is quite popular among Indian domestic and inbound travellers. “Developing and offering wellness facilities and consultations is a serious subject for them, and they are working very hard to do so,” he added.

Networking get together



The Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) – North India Chapter conducted a networking session in Delhi recently. The event was attended by more than 100 travel agent members, travel fraternity associates and partners. Some dignitaries were honoured and lucky draws were announced at the event.

South Korea ready for Indian tourists

South Korea is all set to welcome outbound travellers from India, quarantine-free, after a two-year travel halt caused by the pandemic. Indians can now travel to the country with a short term (C-3) visa, allowing them to stay up to 90 days for marketing research, travel, visiting relatives, meetings and other purposes.

 Nisha Verma

With borders opening and countries across the world inviting tourists to their shores, South Korea is all set to welcome outbound travellers from India after a two-year travel halt caused by the pandemic. Effective from 1 June 2022, Indian travellers can apply for a short term (C-3) visa, which allows foreigners to stay up to 90 days for marketing research, travel, visiting relatives, meetings or similar reasons.

Pleased about the reopening of Korea for Indian travellers, **Y.G. Choi**, Director, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), New Delhi, said, "We are very excited to welcome the Indian travellers to South Korea after a long pause. We have just switched on the reset button for South Korea travel. Our offerings will be focused on new market segments like luxury and entertainment for generation Z. There are variety of assets South Korea has in terms of luxu-

ry experiences and entertainment inspired from the world of K-pop and K-drama shoot locations. We will also be focusing on co-working with multiple travel trade



Y.G. Choi
Director, KTO, New Delhi

partners and make the best price options available for the Indian travellers to visit Korea."

Visa procedures

Interested travellers can apply for visa physically at the VFS Global centres. VFS Global South Korea Visa Application Center, New Delhi and Kolkata are accepting all the visa categories, including express visa applications. Ap-

plicants would need to take prior appointment to submit the application in New Delhi. However, for Kolkata, applicant can walk in without appointment to submit the application. Online appointment link is available on website.

Requirements

Starting from 8 June, all international travellers to Korea are not required to quarantine regardless of their vaccination status. Covid-19 testing will still be in effect, making it necessary for travellers to submit a negative Covid-19 test result. Travellers must do a



PCR or Rapid Antigen Test before departing to Korea. After arrival in Korea, another PCR test must be done within three days and a negative PCR test result must be submitted. If travellers do not have a negative test result or lack proper information, they will be unable to board their flight. Also, if travellers get a positive test result upon arrival, they must directly get quarantined. Central



Disease Control Headquarters in South Korea recommend using the Q-code system before getting on the flight to make the arrival process quicker.

India promotions

Choi revealed that KTO has launched multiple campaigns on global and regional level to encourage leisure travel to Korea. One such campaign, Travel to Korea Begins Again, targets travellers world over with a showcase of new recommended attractions like K-drama filming sites, food, culture and unexplored regions to visit in Korea and discount offers on flights.

KTO New Delhi has also launched a regional campaign called 'Let's Go Korea Plan', which focuses on Pan India outbound travellers. The plan was launched by KTO's New Delhi Office in April 2022, in collaboration with Shinhan Bank and Utazzo Travel. The customers have the ease to invest in monthly instalments ranging between ₹2,000 to ₹100,000

with Shinhan Bank for a duration of up to one year. The Shinhan bank offers an attractive rate of interest of 5.75 per cent per annum that can be availed at the

 Our offerings will be focused on new market segments like luxury and entertainment for generation Z 

end of the deposit period. With increasing awareness about Korea and preference of Korean luxury consumer brands in India, especially through Korean entertainment world of K-pop and K-drama, KTO expects a rise in demand for travel to Korea by Indian outbound travellers in 2022-23. 

'We adapt to systems, technology'

K. Sebastian, Director, Cosima Travel & Trade Links, explains why Kerala is a huge draw for domestic as well as international tourists for wellness tourism. Customised products and personalised service that the company provides to its client sets it apart from others, he claims.

 Hazel Jain

What kind of demand are you seeing from your clients right now?

Clients need a very personal experience. Most of them know what they want and it is for the travel consultant to enhance the experience. Apparently, there is regular pattern all the time, the beginners who want to satisfy the appetite of

famous and iconic destinations. Once it happens, they look for less explored or new destinations. Next is a very specific and exclusive search. This is an endless search. It has no limit, even a seasoned travel consultant wonders on the demands. Add personal touch in all segments. Hence, I don't see a specific destination demand, except on the cause of restriction imposed destination wise, spe-



K. Sebastian
Director, Cosima Travel & Trade Links

cially post Covid. Destinations are there for all segments.

Is wellness tourism picking up among Kerala travellers?

Of course, wellness is picking up. But the lack of awareness on 'wellness' is a drawback. Wellness can't be put in a capsule, if anybody claims it is possible it is not right. Wellness demands time and patience. Be in a quality wellness

centre, use the service of professionals and experienced persons. Past two decades, Kerala tourism and health department has been focusing to streamline it, certainly good results are there. We all expect the quality level will improve.

What are they seeking in Kerala for wellness tourism?

One category just looks for rejuvenation, and the second one expects treatment to get relieved from serious health issues. Both are equally important, Kerala's ayurveda system has the oldest traditions and expertise to handle both.

What other destinations do you recommend to your clients looking for wellness tourism?

We do mostly FIT and closed groups from overseas market. Corporates contribute to our

client base. Having the advantage of moderate weather, of course Asian countries such as Indonesia and Thailand are the best. In Europe, we recommend the Mediterranean countries for wellness.

Tell us what sets Cosima Travels apart from other tour operators?

Customised products and personalised service set us apart from everyone else. In wellness, we suggest quality spas and for the treatment we arrange consultation with reputed doctors. We suggest to go forward based on the doctor's suggestion. We provide service across the world, and our varied travel packages suit every traveller – that is our USP. We adapt to systems and technology and introduce new products as the situation demands.

What sets you apart as an expert in Kerala?

We provide village tours, agri-based tours, Kerala culinary tours,

 Of course, wellness is picking up. But the lack of awareness on 'wellness' is a drawback 

day with an elephant programme. MICE and weddings also are our area of expertise. We are also able to provide all travel related services like ticketing and visa. 



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TourWiz adds two new features

In an effort to constantly upgrade and offer more value to its 1,200 strong subscriber base, TourWiz has recently added two new features – a package builder module and a manual invoicing module – which will help its users ease back-office operations and let them focus more on marketing.



Hazel Jain

TourWiz has launched two new features - a package builder module and a manual invoicing module - for its subscribers. Sharing details of the features, **Swapnil Shaha**, CEO, TourWiz, says, "There is no



Swapnil Shaha
CEO, TourWiz

additional cost for this for our current users. We saw a demand for these features from the travel trade during our interactions with them. These features allow them to build their own packages, upload PDF and images and share the same

via a link with their customers and suppliers for the pricing. Everything has been built in an in-house package module. It is indeed one of the best in the industry."

The second feature is a manual invoicing module which helps agents create, print and share invoices with their customers and also collect payments. This is a GST-ready invoice. "So the smaller travel agents need not have any high-tech accounting software – they can just use this. Our current subscribers are using it and loving both these new features. We are also adding a lot of features in the coming months and our subscribers get to use the same at no additional cost to them," Shaha adds.

'Partner with Us' programme
All the features like Complete CRM Module, Package Builder, Itinerary Builder, Invoicing, Accounts and Reconciliation, Payments Management (Customer and Suppliers) are live and



currently subscribed by 1,200-plus users.

"Moreover, our 'Partner with Us' programme is also live and we have almost 25 partners to give the best offers to our subscribers for various destinations. Here, they can start putting in their special deals and promotions for all our subscriber agents to see and promote them to their own clients.

In essence, we are building a community for the travel trade on our platform where the travel agent can come and place a request and benefit from our wide network of tour operators, our partners and other travel agents," Shaha adds. Their community portal is set to launch in September 2022.

The 'Partner with Us' programme includes vendors such as Anda-

man & Nicobar, Kashmir, hoteliers, and aggregators. Speaking about the value that TourWiz brings to users, Shaha says, "Our USP is that we are a cloud-based system, which means that the user can use our module on-the-go on their mobile phones, and it opens on any desktop system. Moreover, the subscription cost, which is less than a cup of tea per day (₹500 per month plus

taxes) with unlimited users, is affordable today for any agency. So this, along with the features that we are offering them, offers a lot of value to the agents. I think it is one of the best modules in the market today. We get about

We saw a demand for these features from the travel trade during our interactions with them

20-30 queries from new agents wanting to join us. Please try this system; it will ease your efforts, help you market well, unlimited users, huge benefits, more and more features." ↴

Caves, creeks to woo tourists

▶ Contd from page 3

far ignored in Maharashtra is creek tourism. Dr Sawalkar says, "We have four to five creeks in the Arabian Sea where we can introduce the houseboat concept."

Beach shacks in state

"We have around 92 beaches. For that we have come up with a Beach Shack policy. We are the second state after Goa to have this. Under this policy, we are developing in first phase, eight beaches – providing the basic facilities like toilets, showers, changing rooms, lockers. Apart from that, there will be deck beds with umbrellas; we will also facilitate permission of F&B on the beaches through this policy. We have already identified the eight beaches, taken their possession, and the work is going on now. From September 2022, we will see the beach shacks come up," Dr Sawalkar adds.

Since this is a coastal area, connectivity is an issue. Maharashtra has, therefore, proposed a coastal highway from Mumbai to Goa till the last point which will be Sindhudurg – on the lines of Samruddhi

Mahamarg (highway) that runs from Mumbai to Nagpur. This work has already started, confirms Dr Sawalkar. "We are also promoting sea forts like Murud-Janjira.

We have identified eight beaches, taken their possession, and the work is going on now

Konkan culture and its cuisine. To promote our destination, we have a 360 media plan. Last year also we spent around ₹48 crore for promotions. We have also gotten more aggressive on social media," he adds.

Responsible Tourism policy

Speaking about future plans, he reveals, "We have created a Responsible Tourism policy for the state because we are seeing in-

stances of over-tourism, land pollution and even water shortages in places where tourist footfalls are high – Lonavala, Ganpatipule and Mahabaleshwar and Matheran. We are seeing adverse effects of tourism in these places. For instance, in Mahabaleshwar, the local population is around 60,000. But around 25 lakh tourists visit the place every year. So, in the summer season, the locals are deprived of drinking water. There is a lot of traffic. So, this sustainable tourism policy will help disperse tourists to adjoining places, reduce impact on environment and channelise benefits to the local communities. This policy is ready; some government level decisions are pending. Hopefully we will release it soon."

He adds, that the DoT is also coming up with a tour operators' accreditation policy. "It is in the final stage and we will start offering it from July 2022. On registering with us, these operators will get a lot of benefits like presence on our website, participation in international and domestic roadshows with us, famils, use of our logo and ad incentives," he says. ↴

Govt revamps Swadesh Darshan

▶ Contd from page 3

to the local economies. We are going to pick up about 50 destinations for holistic development with focus on domestic tourism." He added, "Our plan is to select a destination, and while we do that, we will look at two kinds of interventions, one which are capital intensive, consisting of project development, the second is focused on destination improvement and destination development. So, while promoting Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav at these destinations, we are indirectly recognising our intangible culture heritage and bringing that to the fore."

Singh said, "We need to make use of cleaner fuels. Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) has also announced that India will increase its capacity of non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW and meet 50 per cent of its energy requirements through renewable energy by 2030. State tourism

policies should recognise sustainability principles and the sustainable development goals in their vision and strategic direction for tourism. With the vision to create a sustainable future for tourism, the Ministry of Tourism has also taken various steps in this direction."

He said, "The idea of Swadesh Darshan 2.0 is to undertake holistic development with the vision to develop sustainable and responsible tourist destinations. While formulating the guidelines for Swadesh Darshan 2.0 we have kept various elements in mind in order to undertake destination development in a sustainable and responsible manner. Through the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 sustainable and responsible tourism practices will be implemented in various projects and initiatives. The scheme will encourage adoption of principles of sustainable tourism, including

environmental, socio-cultural and economic sustainability."

Some of the initiatives of Swadesh Darshan 2.0 highlight the responsibilities of the states. According

The idea is to ensure holistic progress with the vision of developing sustainable destinations

to them, states will consult local communities and stakeholders while preparing development projects for destinations. The states will encourage the use of renewable energy and electric vehicles in their projects. ↴

With the online travel bookings witnessing a huge upsurge in last few months leading to massive transactions across digital platforms, the risk of customers being duped online in travel related frauds has increased, said global fraud detection company mFilterIt.

Sustainable weddings now trending

With an endeavour to provide immersive and enriching experiences, Welcomhotels by ITC Hotels are offering sustainable weddings that are not only eco-friendly, but also lights on the conscience. The trend of sustainable wedding is catching up with the millennials, says Amaan Kidwai, Area Manager, Welcomhotels – North.

 Janice Alyosius

The pandemic has challenged the conventional style of “big fat weddings”. In today’s scenario, people want to reduce the carbon footprint during weddings. Welcomhotels by ITC Hotels is winning appreciation for the enriching experiences that it offers in this field. Its ‘WeAssure’ initiative aims at enhancing the existing hygiene and cleaning protocols across all Welcomhotels addressing every facet of operations.

On how the trend of sustainable wedding is catching up with the millennials, Amaan Kidwai, Area Manager, Welcomhotels - North & General Manager, Welcomhotel Sheraton, New Delhi, said, “Climate change is a much-discussed topic among millennials these days and it is one of the biggest contributors of the environmental crisis that we are witnessing. They

(millennials) want to live with an intent that is focused on reducing the harm to environment through their interactions. Thus, more and more guests at Welcomhotels are choosing outdoor wedding setups for day events making best use of ample natural light and air. They are choosing decor concepts having recyclable natural elements like cane baskets and lanterns, plants and flowers, and earthen pots.”

In sustainable weddings, guests make green choices in every little way, be it adding locally grown flowers, or reusable décor that do not harm the environment.

Kidwai said that sustainable weddings are not only eco-friendly but lights on the conscience too. He said Welcomhotel by ITC, Amritsar, offers heritage setting with beautiful lawns, cost effective initiatives like floral decors and bio-

degradable cutlery to reduce the carbon footprint. The entire supply chain follows responsible practices. Every wedding has many



Amaan Kidwai
Area Manager, Welcomhotels - North
& General Manager, Welcomhotel
Sheraton, New Delhi

areas where shift to sustainability can be practised, from transportation to decors, or something as minor as limiting the usage of fire crackers, he added.

Speaking of the sustainable practices Welcomhotel is adapting in

planning a wedding, Kidwai highlighted elements from their various properties across India. He said that at Welcomhotel Sheraton, New Delhi, they endorse locally produced food. The Sunya Aqua is provided in reusable glass bottles and is purified through a new purification system, meaning no transportation is used, eradicating the creation of emissions and waste management issues, as well as eliminating the single-use plastic. This is zero-mile water, he added.

Welcomhotel Katra has opened new horizons for weddings and MICE in India. The hotel is placed in vicinity where “sattvik weddings” can take place and the curated wedding menus use locally grown ingredients sourced from the farming community of the neighbourhood. The design philosophy of Welcomhotel Shimla is modern with minute elements of the old-world charm and has

all the makings of a “green hotel” with commitment to sustainability – ecological, social and economic. The building is laid out

 **Going green is a trend that is now being adopted by everyone in the country** 

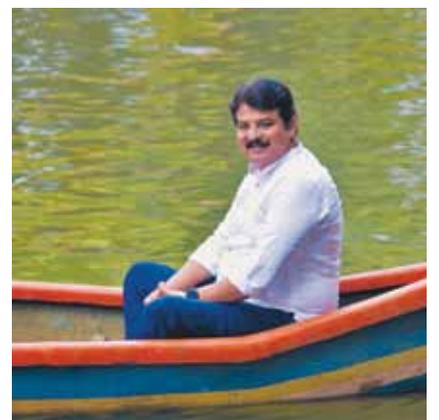
to receive maximum natural light and all guest room windows are designed at very specific angles to receive incessant sunlight from dusk to dawn. Additionally, open lawns and grand heritage at Welcomhotel by ITC Hotels, Amritsar,

helps the guests to envisage a green and floral wedding. As far as using biodegradable cutlery is concerned, hotel uses ‘khumads’ (cups made of clay) and ‘doonas’ (bowls made of dry leaves) for select offerings.

Going green is the trend. The brand Welcomhotels by ITC Hotels is designed with an endeavour to provide immersive and enriching experiences. The brand is reflective of the warmth of Indian culture while upholding the benchmark service standards that ITC Hotels is known for. From curated journeys that enhance leisure trips, to those that help maximise the efficiency of business stays, at Welcomhotel, every effort is made to add value to the new-age traveller. It is this vision that helps enrich the lives of the guests, the community, and our hotel associates through integrated efforts and holistic initiatives, revealed Kidwai. 

Sindhudurg: Maha's hidden treasure

As a Destination Management Company for Sindhudurg, Red Carpet Travels, under the banner of Konkanut Cove, hosted a few travel agents from across India to Sindhudurg in order to promote this beautiful destination. The group enjoyed culinary experiences, visits to forts and beaches, as well as adventure activities such as scuba-diving and hiking over four days.



Fifty shades of green

Many tourism businesses in New Zealand are making positive changes in sustainability. Whether it is carbon neutrality or contributing positively to the environment, these special businesses have conservation at the core.

 TT Bureau

Sustainability and conservation have become increasingly important among travellers these days, with the growth in awareness of the environmental impact of travel. New Zealand invites its visitors to become kaitiakitanga, guardians of the place. Ensuring it is maintained and treated in a way that keeps it in a condition for future generations to

come, visitors are encouraged to make the Tiaki Promise, an initiative launched by Tourism New Zealand and close partners to invite and encourage visitors to care for the country alongside Kiwis.

Many businesses within New Zealand's tourism sector are already making positive changes in sustainability. Whether they are carbon-neutral, carbon-positive, or just doing amazing things for

the environment, here are top four New Zealand tourism businesses with conservation at their core:

Carino Wildlife Cruises
Northland

Carino is the only company in the Bay of Islands to be awarded a Responsible Whale Watching Certificate from the World Cetacean Alliance (the world's largest marine conservation partnership). They offer a variety of

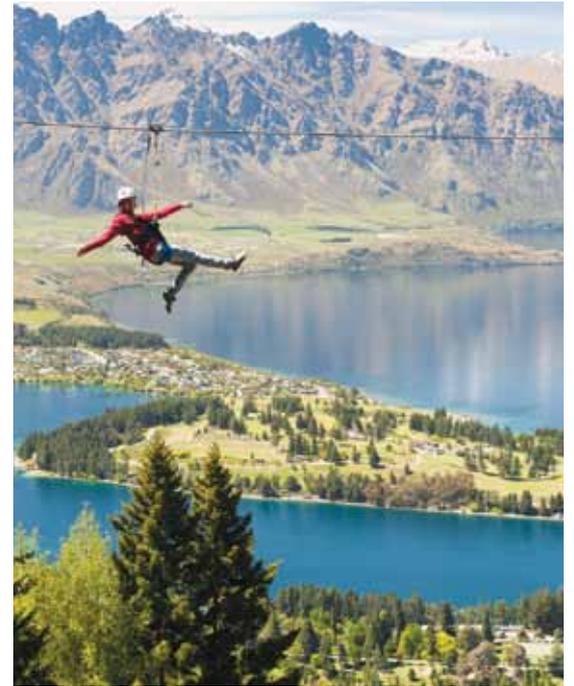
cruises for guests to experience and be inspired by the natural environment around them. They actively work with multiple research universities on conservation and research efforts.

Kaitiaki Adventures
Rotorua

Kaitiaki Adventures is a globally recognised adventure tourism company specialising in white-water rafting and sledging experiences on the Okere section of the historic Kaituna river. In 2021 they won a Qualmark 100% Pure New Zealand Experience Award owing to their priorities in sustainable tourism and Māori prosperity.

Ziptrek Ecotours
Queenstown

Ziptrek Ecotours were the first company in Queenstown to



achieve Zero Carbon Business status in 2019. Some of their community and environment initiatives include planting 5000-plus trees, shrubs and grass over the past 10 years on its zipline site at Gondola Hill and around the local area, through the Wakatipu Re-forestation Trust, sponsoring Paper4Trees, a waste minimisation and native tree planting programme for NZ schools and pre-schools and more.

Dive! Tutukaka
Northland

Dive Tutukaka operates out of the Tutukaka Marina in the Bay of Islands and focuses its visitor experience around the Poor Knights Islands. It is New Zealand's largest dive charter company, taking over 12,000 people to the Poor Knights Islands every year on five boats. It has won many awards for environmental and business practices.



EVENT TALK

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Date	Event	Time
14-15	Aviation Festival Asia	9:00 am
14-17	Bali & Beyond Travel Fair	9:00 am
15	Know Barcelona Webinar	3:00 pm
16	SITE Global Annual Midwest Forum	9:00 am
16	Universal Tourism Exhibition Shanghai	9:00 am
17-19	Black Travel Summit, Miami	9:00 am
19-21	IATA Annual General Meeting 2022	10:00 am
22-23	Travel Agent Forum - Las Vegas	8:00 am
23	#SummerInAbuDhabi Webinar	3.00 pm
24-26	Beijing International Tourism Expo	9:00 am
28	New in New Zealand Webinar	11:00 am
29-30	Travel Tech Show, London	9:30 am
29-30	The Meetings Show, London	10:00 am
29-30	Business Travel Show Europe	9:30 am

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

Discovery Circle eyes Indian market

Discovery Circle Tours appoints TRN Marketing as a representative and consultancy agency with the aim to create lasting relationship with Indian based tour operators by offering them a unique perspective on Jordan.

 TT Bureau

Discovery Circle Tours, a full-service DMC based in Jordan, has appointed TRN Marketing, a division of Indian Travel Promotion, as a representative and consultancy agency to support and advise it in gaining direct business from Indian based tour operators.

Discovery Circle Tours specialises in high-end luxury tours themed by cultural, historical, religious and specialist activities and provides its tour operator partners with exemplary service and attention to detail. It also manages the dedicated adventure travel division Discovery Terhaal, which specialises in walking, trekking and cycling tours across Jordan.

TRN Marketing was chosen for its experience in promoting high-end luxury tours and for its unrivalled contacts within the Indian tour operator market. Sharing details about the partnership, **Jack Farraj**, Owner, Discovery

Circle Tours, said, "We were specifically looking for an agency which understands our unique view on Jordan and how we interact with our tour operator part-



Jack Farraj
Owner, Discovery Circle Tours

ners. We needed a partner in India that understands the luxury market and can help us develop our position in India. We felt that Sidhartha Roy and his team at TRN is not only aligned with our aims and long-term goals, but also has a fantastic reputation in India."

Discovery Circle Tours aims to create lasting partnerships with Indian based tour operators by offering them a unique perspective on Jordan, unparalleled levels of service while providing their clients with the "very best" Jordan experience possible. "We believe TRN will be able to help us achieve this quickly and efficiently," added Farraj.

Speaking about the signing of contracts with Discovery Circle Tours, **Sidhartha Roy**, Senior Vice President, TRN Marketing, India, said, "We believe we can complement the business philosophy of the company in the Indian outbound market in every way."The Discovery Circle Tours brand has been operating for over 20 years and was previously known as Jordan Circle Tours. Discovery Circle Tours is part of the larger Discovery Group, which includes, Discov-

ery Bedu - Jordan's premier Bedouin camp in Wadi Rum, Discovery Terhaal - a dedicated

We believe TRN will be able to help us achieve this quickly and efficiently

adventure tourism brand, Discovery Bespoke - a full-service meeting, incentive, corporate and event planning company and Discovery Gulf - based in Dubai and provides the full-range of tourism activities.

TATA Group continues to be the most valuable brand in India with its brand value up 12 per cent to US\$24 billion. The brand retains its top position as it led by example through the Covid-19 crisis by innovating using technology to reach the masses.

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ACCOR INDIA

New Delhi

Accor India has appointed **VINEET MISHRA** as Cluster General Manager of Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, along with Novotel & Ibis Bengaluru Outer Ring Road and Novotel & Ibis Chennai. A seasoned hospitality veteran, Mishra brings on board an illustrious career spanning over 23 years with an exceptional network in the industry. In his new role, Mishra will take on an elevated leadership role, taking charge for leading the overall operations. Mishra's rich body of work, including successful stints with leading hospitality brands will help in crafting extraordinary experiences while continuing to drive recovery.



THE IMPERIAL

New Delhi

The Imperial New Delhi has appointed **LOUIS SAILER** as Senior Executive Vice President. Reckoned an authority in the industry for building bespoke customer satisfaction-oriented entities, Sailer enjoys an international recognition for his particularly tenacious commitment to offering an uncompromised high standard of service across all companies' front and back of house operations. Throughout his career, he has managed and operated some of the finest hotels and has turned around global luxury hospitality brands and operations in Germany, Japan, Singapore, China, London, California, Hawaii, the Caribbean and India.



THE LEELA BHARTIYA CITY

Bengaluru

The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru promoted **ROHIT PANDEY** to Hotel Manager. Pandey, who has been with the property since its pre-opening days, has been currently working as Executive Assistant F&B Manager. In his current role, Rohit will be responsible for overseeing the hotel's operations across all functions, aiming for operational excellence, achieving high levels of guest satisfaction and driving revenues across all segments, along with maintaining brand standards. He has over two decades of experience with some of the finest properties across Thailand, Seychelles, Maldives and India.



CYGNETT HOTELS & RESORTS

New Delhi

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts has appointed **AMIT MAHAJAN** as Chief Growth Officer. He has more than 23 years of experience in hotel development, hotel real estate acquisitions, investment analysis and growth strategy. Before joining Cygnett, Amit had an entrepreneurial stint in the leisure accommodation space, and before that served as Director of Development with InterGlobe Hotels (a joint venture between InterGlobe Enterprises and Accor Hotels). Congratulating Amit on his appointment, Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, said "We are excited to have Amit in our team."



HYATT REGENCY

Dehradun

PRATITI RAJPAL has been appointed Director of Operations at Hyatt Regency Dehradun. Pratiti brings along years of inspiring experience across Marriott & Hyatt hotels in India, with a decade of the journey being with Hyatt. Starting as the Marketing Communications Manager at Hyatt Regency Chennai in 2012 to cluster role at Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa & Grand Hyatt Mumbai and Cluster Director of Marketing Communications at Andaz Delhi & Grand Hyatt Gurgaon (Pre-Opening), her professional journey has been adventurous. A result oriented and passionate hotelier, Pratiti thrives of creates memorable experiences for guests.



The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru also promoted **SHAHNAAZ ANJUM** from Assistant Food & Beverage Manager to Food & Beverage Manager. Anjum is a strategic business leader in managing overall F&B operations, and has been in the industry for close to 13 years. Shahnaaz's expertise lies in single-handedly managing the F&B operations of multiple outlets and executing enhanced services for improved guest experiences. She would be handling all aspects related to the F&B division thereby focusing on delivering quality guest experiences and relations. Beginning her career with The Westin Hyderabad, she gradually forayed into leadership roles while working with world class luxury and business properties.



FAIRMONT

Jaipur

Fairmont Jaipur has elevated **SUKHPREET SINGH BATH** as the Rooms Division Manager. Sukhpreet will be responsible for handling the Front Office, Housekeeping, Fairmont Butler service, Ruhab Spa, ensuring an exceeding guest experience. Sukhpreet's visionary focus and zeal to drive a comfortable and pleasant experiential stay at Fairmont Jaipur stands as an exemplary inspiration to his team. Sukhpreet has worked with many prestigious hotels, including JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa, JW Marriott Aerocity and Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts Gurgaon.



PRIDE GROUP OF HOTELS

New Delhi

After an illustrious journey of 13 years with the Pride Group of Hotels, **ATUL UPADHYAY** has been elevated to the post of Senior Vice President with the group. In his new role, Upadhyay will continue to oversee the entire operations of the group, spearhead strategic partnerships and drive the company's expansion plans. Prior to this, he was the Vice President of the group. An alumni of Cornell University, he holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics Science from Jiwaji University, Diploma in Hotel Management from MSU, Vadodara and a Master's in Business Administration from Symbiosis International University.



INTERCONTINENTAL CHENNAI

MAHABALIPURAM RESORT

Chennai

NELSON GOMES has been appointed as Marketing and Experience Manager at InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort. In his new role, Nelson will be responsible for strengthening the brand communication strategy, including ideation and implementation of digital marketing strategies to enhance engagement at the hotel. Nelson has an experience of more than 10 years in the hospitality, luxury, lifestyle and media fields with a focus on driving brand awareness, managing and implement key marketing initiatives aligned with regional and global activities.



TALKING PEOPLE

HIMANSHU SHARMA, Multi Property Director of Sales & Marketing for The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi and The Westin Sohna Resort and Spa, is a firm believer of work-life balance. He says, "I love to spend time with my friends and family - especially my daughter - the young minds always inspire me to think beyond the conventional way of life. We like venturing together as a family and are always ready to explore a new destination - a new restaurant or a new game. I am a fan of the hills. I like rafting in Rishikesh."



For **ANTARA PHOOKAN**, Director - Business Development & Design, Assam Bengal Navigation, there is nothing like being amid nature. She takes her boat out on the Brahmaputra, do yoga, dance and take nature and adventure-centric holidays. "I was lucky to have spent my second-half of lockdown at Diphlu River Lodge, so I was able to design an eco-chic spa. My favourite holiday destination in India is Kashmir and Goa. Internationally, I like Europe," she says.



The best de-stress mantra for **SAURABH CHOWDHURY**, Director of Operations, The Westin Mumbai Garden City, is to travel on a short or long holiday. "For me, a holiday breaks the monotony of being at one place and pep up the routine that we have in our day-to-day lives. My favourite holiday destination in India would be Goa, and internationally it would be Turkey. For my next holiday, I am thinking of Thailand, Europe and the Americas. During lockdown, I spent time to refine my skills," he says.



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MOT's mega plans for Yoga Day

All three ministers of tourism will be leading the event at major sites across the country on behalf of the ministry on International Yoga Day 2022 on June 21, says Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General (ADG), Ministry of Tourism.



Nisha Verma

Sharing details for International Yoga Day, **Rupinder Brar**, Additional Director General (ADG), Ministry of Tourism, reveals, "We are excited about the International Yoga Day 2022. To make sure that there is a lot of visibility and people join and know where the events are happening, there is a list of 75 locations that have been sent to us by the Ayush Ministry, the nodal ministry for this event."

She added that all three ministers of tourism will be leading the event at major sites on behalf of the ministry. "Union Minister of Tourism G. Kishan Reddy will be at the Anand Sagar Lake in Hyderabad and State Tourism Minister Ajay Bhatt will be at Wagah Border in Punjab since he handles both defence and tourism portfolio. Also, State Tourism Minister Shripad Yesso Naik, who also handles the portfolio of ports, will be taking it up from Churches and Convents of Goa in Old Goa. At the Trimbakeshwar Temple in Maharashtra, the celebrations will be led by the Home Minister. Apart from that, we will have people joining from all our offices across the country at various other locations, which would include our stakeholders, children, trade and as many people as possible.

Ayush visa

Speaking on how Ayush visa will help boost wellness tourism in India, Brar said, "Ayush is already working with the Ministry of Home Affairs on that and we are supporting the idea because one of India's strength in terms of heritage is yoga, Ayurveda, alternative medicines and the whole way of life we have in our vedic traditional systems. We are supporting that and it will help. As seen in the last few years, e-visa facility has grown for not just tourism, but medical visa

as well. It has only helped India forge its position in these sectors and we will be working closely with both Ayush and Home Ministry to make sure that this visa gets enabled very fast."

Wellness campaign

The emphasis on wellness has grown manifold after the world was struck by COVID. Sharing her views on the same, Brar said, "Hence, we will expand our footprint in terms of creating the outreach in a number of countries, because wherever we are having a conversation on this, whether it is Japan, Korea, or Singapore, or the traditional markets from the West, including Western Europe, North America and Canada, all these

missions and we will be working together with them to make sure that there is maximum participation in whichever countries they are in.

Focus themes and sectors

The MOT will be focusing on other themes too. "We will be working on wellness in a big way, and apart from that we are also working on adventure. These are areas for which India has not been traditionally known. But now, with the improved connectivity in terms of international flights and highways, the opportunities are increasing. We propose to carry that story of India, the way it is unfolding, both for its tangible as well as intangible heritage, including the work of the artisans, the musicians, dance forms and the festivals of India. All these are important parts of the stories of our journey, which we will take forward directly and also through the Indian missions across the world," she informed.

Events galore

Brar revealed that a lot of MOT events are on the anvil. "We are working closely with the trade to make the International Travel Mart happen soon. The Buddhist Conclave is also slated to happen somewhere during this year. A lot of virtual roadshows have already started with our overseas entities, which is also creating a lot of interest. Domestic tourism has been doing

really well in the last few months, which is creating confidence for markets across the world," he said. About the industry now looking at physical roadshows, Brar said, "Of course, we are in the process of making our schedules and we are hopeful that the real roadshow schedule would also start soon."

Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav

She highlighted that the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav iconic week is coming up for MOT. "The dates for the same will be 18-24 July. Work is in progress," she concluded.

Everyone, everywhere will be taking up international day of yoga, including the missions

countries are getting added to our list. Hence, we are in the process of making many more creative, campaigns and getting a lot more digital presence through social media for creating awareness for these products, which are truly India's strength."

Beyond borders

She revealed that there will be events happening at the international missions too. "Everyone, everywhere will be taking up international day of yoga, including the missions. Hence, our officers will be joining the forces with the local



Rupinder Brar
Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism

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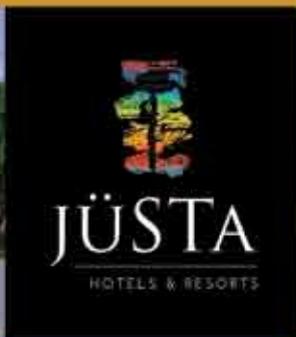
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